

Poland: Origins of Martial Law

by David Miller

The seizure of power by the military in Poland marks a major change in the dynamics of class struggle in the countries of Eastern Europe and in the evolution of stalinian socialism as a distinct historical trend. This article has a limited purpose: examination of the social, political, and economic background of these changes, their long-term implications for the ruling strata in Poland and other Eastern European countries and for the socialist working class movement. We will not be able to cover in any great detail the internal stresses in Solidarity and its strategy after the coup, the role of the Church in Polish social life, or the agricultural policies of the respective Polish governments. These are all important, but there is the handicap of space limitations. The focus will be, therefore, on the major structural problems that faced the old government and now face the military, the crisis of leadership at the top and its manifestations, and the evolution of the consciousness of the Polish military elite to the point where it seized power on its own behalf.

1. Quicksand: The Polish Economy Before the Deluge

Although there have been attempts to portray the crisis in Poland as a political one, the foundation of the political crisis and the crisis in leadership is the severe economic crisis. The planned economy is, of course, theoretically a crisis-free economic system. In the case of Poland there were certainly external sources, but there were internal problems which were far more germane to this analysis. We can cite the ever-increasing foreign debt, the low quality of manufactured goods, the low level of productivity, the increasing failure of domestic supply mechanisms, but these are manifestations of the real problem: the unitarian view of economic planning and development that is the living legacy of Soviet type socialism. Poland's economic problems are organic and

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structural. They can be seen to a lesser extent in other Eastern European countries and in other stalinist regimes. They are evident in Romania where there is an increasing indebtedness to the West, lower productivity and raw material shortages. They are evident in Czechoslovakia, where there are growing trade deficits, fuel and energy supply problems, lower labor productivity and low growth rates. They are evident in the GDR primarily through the drastic reduction in the production and supply of goods for the domestic market and in a steadily growing indebtedness to the West. They are evident in China with the rapid increase and then sudden massive cutbacks in model economic projects and in exports from the West. They are evident in Cuba and Indochina in the pauperization of their respective economies and their increasing reliance on the USSR for their basic economic needs. Only two countries in Eastern Europe can be said to be relatively stable: Hungary, and in Albania, where they enjoy the economic stability of many militaristic regimes that deify autarky and a minimalist view of the standard of life of the people.

The Polish economic crisis is not a temporary problem that will be solved by gradual reforms in production and marketing. It will not be solved by martial law either. The foundation of the permanent crisis lies in the entire socioeconomic order that was created at the end of World War II. It is merely necessary to say that the advancing Soviet army brought with it, virtually intact, the entire socioeconomic system that had come to be in the USSR and the political superstructure as well. There was a period at the end of the war when Stalin carried out a new variation of "private socialist accumulation" and looted much of Eastern Europe of its basic industrial plant, its transportation systems, its plumbing, etc. and tried to transplant it to the USSR. But by 1947 the focus changed to the massive industrialization of many of these countries along Soviet lines. Primacy was given to heavy industrialization, to the manufacture of means of production, of hyper-accelerated urban development. The film "Man of Marble" provides a superb overview of this period in Polish history. Bureaucratic centralist methods of planning, strategies of development and mechanisms for maintaining social order were transplanted lock, stock, and barrel.¹ As laudable as the creation of the "new man" may appear, we have to remember that in the case of stalinian socialism that this means a broken and

terrorized working class, a massive system of forced labor, the imposition of an antisocialist system of hierarchy and privilege, closely resembling the barracks socialism that Marx and Engels wrote so strongly against.

From the standpoint of the Polish Party and state leaders, the USSR and their respective economic planners this period was successful. The massive industrialization program was carried out, and a new and massive urban proletariat came into being, and there was a massive growth in the realm of statistics of the production of means of production, military hardware, etc. Not incidentally, there was a profound sense of success and victory among the economic planners and party elite who had struggled with the "right-wing" in the state and party for such a program of super-industrialization. Just as their counterparts in the USSR had in the 1930s, they felt that they had performed an economic miracle and decisively broken with Western capitalism. The stalinian ideology of central planning, of heavy industrialization at the expense of the internal consumer market, of one-man management and authoritarian labor discipline, of shock-force capital and labor investment, Stakhanovism, etc. became an article of faith among the party and state economic cadre. Those who objected or pointed out the structural weaknesses that had been created, such as Gomulka, were purged or killed. We will see, in the decades that follow, an almost messianic belief in the Soviet style economics, even as its political concepts are debunked. This would handicap and ultimately reap havoc in the Polish economy.

The 1956 Polish revolt was as much a revolt against the stalinian economic norms as it was against the abuses of power committed by the party. It was a demand for a new course, just as the revolt in Hungary had been. Both the proclaimed economic programs of Gomulka and Nagy were in essence the open revival of the "right-wing" view of economic planning and development. There is a direct linear connection with the program of the Bukharinists in the late 1920s, with NEP, and thus, with the last statements of Lenin. The return of Gomulka to power with a mass working class base made such an evolution of economic policies quite realistic. Gomulka's first public speech in 1956 was a blast at the past. He noted that the "successes" of the planned economy had lowered the actual wage and standard of living of the urban proletariat, caused a downturn in coal production, an obsolete auto industry, a severe housing crisis and of course a major downturn in agricultural and meat production, all the result of forced collectivization. Gomulka declared:

Generally speaking, after the conclusion of the Six-Year Plan, which according to its premises was meant to raise high the standard of living of the working class and of the entire nation, we are faced today, in the first year of the Five-Year Plan, with immense economic difficulties which are growing from day to day. We contracted important investment credits for the expansion of industry, and when the time came for the payment of the first installment, we found ourselves in the situation of an insolvent bankruptcy. We had to ask our creditors for a moratorium. Those in charge of our national economy were obviously

unable to grasp the simple fact that credits have to be husbanded in such a way, that is, invested, so that they can be repaid to the creditors within the time limits laid down by means of the production achieved with the aid of those credits.

In the meantime, a considerable part of these credits in the shape of machines and installations has so far found no application in production and will not find any such application for long years to come, and part of it must be considered irretrievably lost. Machines or equipment which have been ordered for projects long ago deleted from our economic plans continue to arrive to this day. The results of the Six-Year Plan, our present position, and our chances for the future are clearly shown by the adverse balance of payments in our foreign dealings.²

The most remarkable thing about this summation, aside from its candor, is the fact that it could have been delivered with no substantial changes at any time since the mid-1970s. The problems and their sources and the reality of the crisis are identical. Why? Are the Polish central planners infatuated with being an insolvent state? Obviously not. But there is an ideological conception of the methods for 'constructing socialism' that has led to economic debacle in every decade since the imposition of stalinian economics. It may have been understandable to pour billions of dollars in the 1940s and 1950s into heavy industrial projects which were bound to be a short-term drain of the economy, but to continue with the same pattern of development in the 1960s and 1970s was criminal and stupid. The entire system of power was becoming bound up with economic gigantism and the consequent economic debacles. The Polish "Experience and the Future" group wrote in their report:

Although the conditions, plans and concepts in the two periods were entirely different (despite the inevitable simplifications of our analysis), the upshot of the similarities, of the astounding repetitiveness—one is tempted to say cyclical nature—in the breakdowns in the economy and in domestic policy is, we think, to confirm, almost beyond question, the thesis that the country's present state stems from factors inherent in the system. These factors are not of an economic nature but rather have to do with matters that might be called ways to practice politics and wield power.³

Although Gomulka had come to power on the legitimate basis of a reformist criticism of the stalinian system and promises to reorient the economy so as to better satisfy the immediate material needs of the organized working class, by the 1960s his economic policies had returned to the familiar pattern of massive capital investment in heavy industry and declining wages and a lowered standard of living for the working class. He compounded his problems late in the 1970s by trying to create more capital for investment by raising food prices. This led directly to the 1970 revolts and, of course, the rise to power of Gierek. It again became necessary to formulate and implement a new economic program which would prevent further working class revolts and restabilize the national economy. One of Gierek's main qualifications was the relative economic and political successes that were achieved in his base of Silesia. The Silesian coal miners did not strike in 1970. Production was generally

high. But in the case of Gierek, it became apparent that the successes in Silesia were due more to the relatively high output of the region than to any inherent economic wisdom that he possessed. In retrospect, Gierek proved to be even more of a dogmatist and failure than Gomulka. Suffice it to note that after 1956 and 1970 it was possible to satisfy certain short-term material demands of the working class and to attempt a limited reorientation of the national economy. After Gierek, this proved to be impossible.

And so Gierek brought forth his "New Development Strategy" (NDS). The workers were told to tighten their belts once again, to sacrifice for the future. They were promised an economically stable and dynamic economy by 1980. The NDS aimed at the revitalization of the economy through an intensive program of modernization of an obsolescent industrial base and the creation of new export-oriented industries. It should be recalled that much of Polish heavy industry, built on the Soviet model of the 1930s and 1940s, which was in turn built along Western lines of the late 1920s and early 1930s, had only reached the technological level of pre-war Europe and America. There was a definite need for modernization. The NDS would in essence be a rerun of the Soviet experience of the 1930s, the wholesale importation of entire factories and technologies from the West, but the NDS would bring in 1970s Western technology and it would be paid for by Western loans and credits. Theoretically, a massive infusion of foreign credits, foreign technology and foreign production techniques would make the Polish heavy industrial system a highly competitive rival to Western Europe, Japan and the entire CMEA system. The planners felt confident that the infusion of credits and technology from the West would also lead to an expansion of trade with the West. They perceived untapped markets out there. Poland would be able to penetrate them because of the low price and high quality of its goods, and because the West would not want to see its sizable investments go down the tubes. It is implicit that the Western markets will continue to be open and profitable. For all that the Soviet-bloc economists talk about the deepening structural crisis of Western capitalism, they seemed to assume that this crisis would not affect their exports. This reveals a utopianism that defies all logic and reason.

Shortly after breaking with the Polish government, former Ambassador to Japan Zdzislaw Rurarz, also a former leading economic advisor to Gierek, told the *New York Times*:

We were opening to the West, acquiring a lot of credit, and there was deep chaos. We must have a consistent plan of what we would do next and also beyond the five year period, because various investments were going to mature after 1975. But Gierek told me, "No, sorry, that's something which I am really not very much interested in. Our people know what they are doing." I was told by my successor that until 1979, he didn't want to look into the balance of payments problem. He didn't understand all that. He didn't want to listen. Too complicated.⁴

The Gierek economic strategy initially described the process of industrial modernization as part of a larger

structural reform of the Polish economy. But for the entire program of modernization to succeed, there were a number of other variables that had to fall into place also. The higher productivity demanded of the working class was one variable. Expanded access to Western markets was another variable. Economic stability in the West and in the CMEA was another variable (Poland was particularly outspoken in opposing Cuba and Vietnam's entry into CMEA, seeing them as a drain on the rest of them). Indefinite goodwill in regard to loan rescheduling and repayment on the part of the Western bankers was another variable. Were any of these to fail to come to fruition, the entire modernization program would be affected. But for the modernization to really succeed, the regime would have had to deliver on its promise of greater overall reform. The overall program of reforms that was sought by both the organized working class and the managerial strata included greater latitude in Hungarian-style economic experimentation, greater responsibility to local authorities and to factory councils, greater input into actual decision-making, a price freeze, an expanded production of consumer goods for the domestic market, etc. These are demands in the socio-economic sense that they were the aspirations of a broad part of Polish society. They remained social aspirations throughout the 1970s, but in the main they were never satisfied. They collided with the ingrown economic dogmatism of the apparatus.

With the world recession of 1974, the reversion to the old stalinian methods becomes more pronounced. Many of the best Polish economists found themselves ignored or in the opposition. This is the origin of groups such as "Experience and the Future." They emphasized repeatedly that the actual grouping making the fundamental economic decisions was growing more isolated, to those closest to Gierek, that they were closing themselves off from both economic input and from economic realities. Had the entire reform and modernization program been carried out, there is a good chance that there would have been equally disastrous results (I am basing this primarily on the downturn in the economy which they could not have affected) but the burden of responsibility could have been spread wider. As it was, since Gierek and his Silesian supporters had monopolized decision making, and staked their political future on the program as a whole, they had no one to blame but themselves when the bottom fell out and in the late 1970s there was an effective rupture between that isolated elite and the rest of society. This rupture can be initially perceived in the emergence of internal oppositions such as "Experience and the Future" and, on the right, the Moczar clique, but it was most prominent when the working class took their discontent to the streets. There came to be a growing realization that the real source of Poland's economic crisis was the existence of the ruling elite. We could justly paraphrase Marx and say that the Polish elite's existence was becoming incompatible with the existence of society.

In 1956 and 1970, there had come to be a social process where bankrupt and discredited leaders responsible for social disorder and economic failures were toppled; facing opposition both from within the elite and from the organized working class, economic

reforms were inaugurated and the crisis of leadership was apparently resolved. It seemed that there was a connection between social discontent, the ascension of a new ruling core and economic recovery. "Experience and the Future" noted:

In the sphere of, as we will call it, the nation's household, we find that after 1956, just as after 1970, there was an improvement in the standard of living, a rash of dramatic and ambitious plans, and an upsurge in activity generally; but that in each case it was confined to the first few years. In both periods the crisis struck at similar moments and for similar reasons: toward the end of the first five-year planning period, and as a result of a breakdown in investment policy.⁵

They go on to note that this cyclical reoccurrence of downturns has a definite impact on working class consciousness and production:

We also find such similarities in the changes that took place in public consciousness. After an initial period of approbation and a desire to do one's share, in both the midseventies and in the sixties we find growing apathy among the public, lack of identification with achievements—even those that were beyond question—and mounting frustration bordering on open conflict.⁶

The optimal best that the Polish elite could hope for is that the working class would continue to be frozen in an attitude of cynicism and apathy. The mounting frustration did in fact erupt shortly after the issuance of this report, in the strikes in Gdansk. But just as Gierek and his forces ignored the warnings of a resurgence of working class action, they also persisted in policies that could only deepen the breakdown in investment policy. The few modifications that they made in the original program were all for the worse. The Huwa Katowice steel mill project is a case in point.

This project was a central component in the overall economic plan that Gierek formulated. It was as much a political project as an economic one. The steel mill complex was designed to be the most advanced and efficient in Eastern Europe, rivaling even Soviet steel complexes. An incredible 5% of the total foreign debt accumulated in the 1970s went into this one mill. An entire city was built around it. A massive 300 mile wide-gauge railway track was built to bring in ore from the USSR, since the plant was located hundreds of miles from any ore deposits. Over \$300 million worth of imported machinery and technology to this day sits in warehouses, rusting. And it consistently turned out low quality steel, virtually unexportable. It was far poorer than either German or Japanese steel, and most CMEA countries either have domestic steel industries or no need for steel. The complex produced, at its best, 70% less than its projected targets. But the most fundamental problem was that there was no possibility of abandoning the project. It was a matter of personal and political prestige for Gierek and his followers. There was no, until they fell from power, acknowledgement in the press of the massive problems being encountered, or the gross mismanagement that was the root of the problem. It was an economic Vietnam and the light at the end of the

tunnel was the economic ministry burning up barrels of western money. The only modification made in the original plan was to channel more resources into the construction of the complex and accelerate the capital investment.

This was part of a larger pattern of reorientation of the scope and character of industrial development. It was originally planned that the key export-oriented sectors of the economy would be modernized and made more competitive, and then attention would be turned to a secondary level of export-oriented industries. The net result would be a broad spectrum of export-oriented industries that would in essence cover for one another, given the fluctuations of the world market. The crucial thing here is that one follows the other. But as the ability to export from the primary sector began to falter and then cease, the Gierek regime began to pour capital into the secondary export sector. There was massive over-extension. The planned character of the export-oriented program became dubious. Polish economist Włodzimierz Brus noted:

It is a bitter paradox that an economy defended on the basis of its planned character against the introduction of self-regulating elements of any sort, even of the Hungarian variety, is increasingly given over to drifting under the influence of processes which are not controlled either by the plan or by the market.⁷

But the most important thing that the Polish leaders did not take into account in this massive export-oriented strategy was the necessity for there to be markets that want the exported items and that will pay the price necessary to make the investment worthwhile. In sheer volume exports did grow during the 1970s, but they were outdistanced by the rise in imports. There was no attempt made to balance the two (remember what Rurarz said) until late in the decade, and then the way that they were balanced was by unplanned and unilateral slashes in imports, with little or no regard for the effect that this would have on capital construction. A Joint Economic Committee study noted:

Instead of a gradual reduction of the deficit in trade with non-socialist countries in such a way that the transfer of Western technology would not be interrupted, there was a drastic cut in imports from the West which endangered not only the long-run prospects for further development, but also the current level of output and, in effect, also of export.⁸

The effect of the slash in imports on industrial production was to reduce the percentage of industrial growth from 5.8% in 1978 to 2.8% in 1979 to -1.3% in 1980. (The effect of the rise of Solidarity in the last figure is undoubtedly significant, but not the sole reason for the drop.) The foreign debt in the same period climbed from \$17.8 billion to \$24 billion. If Solidarity had not come on the scene the fundamental collapse of the export-oriented strategy would have happened in any case.

All in all, the Polish ruling elite turned the 1970s into the most disastrous economic period in postwar Polish history. Thus evaporated the last residue of public trust and confidence left over from 1956 and 1970. One group

of leaders after another had proven to be spectacularly inept in the basics of economic management and planning. They caused a new fundamental rupture in civil society, they corrupted and corroded the elite of the "Inner Party," they made Poland one of the most insolvent industrial countries in the world and they proved incapable of self-reform. For all these reasons and more, calls began to be voiced, mutely at first for a new leading force in society, for a new socioeconomic arrangement. In the past that sort of call had been filled from within the Party. But in 1980 there was no new dynamic leader emerging from within the Party, with new and daring proposals for economic reform. There is little or no room for economic experimentation since the world economy is in its worst shape since the worldwide depression of the 1920-1930s. This vacuum of leadership, the effective end of the feasibility of the Gierk program, and the rise of Solidarity are all significant backdrops to the military decision to seize power.

2. Driftage and Disintegration: The Crisis in the PUWP

A year of disintegration, a year of ideological and political disunity, a year of Party driftage lies behind us. The membership of all our Party organizations has dropped.⁹

Delivered by an obscure Russian socialist of the early 20th Century, this report could just as well have been delivered by any leading official of the ruling Polish United Workers Party at any time since the emergence of Solidarity. Parties in power are supposed to be different than their out-of-power counterparts. They aren't supposed to disintegrate. But they do when there is a general disintegration going on around them. In the situation of a one-party state, this is even more the case. In the stalinian conception of things, the party is the sole instrument for exercising the dictatorship of the proletariat. The exceptions to this rule are spectacular: the principal period of stalinian socialism in the USSR is marked by the destruction of the Bolshevik party as the leading force in society and its replacement by the transient inner core that surrounded Stalin; the Hungarian revolution of 1956 saw an actual disintegration of the party and its replacement by organs of self-government, soviets. There were periods in the Cultural Revolution where we can also speak of the effective end of its exercise of power by the party as a whole. But the norm in most stalinian societies is for the party to be the leading force in society.

It directly controls the operation of the state and the management of the national economy. It controls the armed forces through permeation by political commissars. It is present in the productive process from the top to the bottom. It is in the stalinian societies that we can see the fullest vindication of Gramsci's opinions on "The Modern Prince" and the various functions of the modern political party. Having said all that, it is also important to note that such ruling parties are in fact segmented into various levels with varied powers and responsibilities. This is important to understand. The

anarchists and trotskysts only show political ignorance when they portray "the party" as a unified counter-revolutionary whole. Gramsci distinguished a relatively small central core of party leaders from a much broader "outer party," subordinate to the leaders yet directly linking the leaders to the masses to whom they carry the insights of the "party line." In between are middle level cadre who have the responsibility of providing the necessary link between leaders and lead to develop a consistent line for the rank and file, "outer party" to communicate to the masses. Taking this scheme as our model we can examine the fundamental changes in the nature of these ruling parties since the time of Stalin. There is still a distinct division between the ruling inner core and the outer party, but there is also an easing of the police terror within the party and society and a widening of the class base of these parties. They become "mass parties." C. L. R. James has noted:

The climax is reached when the masses of the petty bourgeoisie in Czechoslovakia poured into the communist party after the coup. In Eastern Germany the process is rapidly at work...¹¹

This petty bourgeoisie, the administrative bureaucratic section of the class is not permanently and incurably counter-revolutionary. Not at all. But it can become revolutionary in the sense of *State and Revolution* only under the violent impact of the proletariat as proletariat.¹²

This should be remembered as we discuss the internal fragmentation of the PUWP. It should also stand as a more realistic view than that of people like Bahro, who underplay the role of the working class in struggle. When the Eastern European parties became mass, ruling parties, they absorbed not a small number of working class militants, as a safety measure to insure that the best elements of the class would be within the political structure established by the elite and to solidify their control over the country as a whole. They also absorbed large sections of the formerly powerful socialist parties, although the tactics used certainly estranged many more. I contend that while the social order that is in place in Eastern Europe is a variant of stalinian socialism, just as the social system of the USSR and China are variants of this system it cannot be denied that there are major differences between that which existed in the USSR from 1929-1956 and that which exists in these societies now. That is also the case with these parties. It is not an exaggeration to speak of the ruling parties of Eastern Europe, the USSR, China, etc. as stalinian parties. But they are mutated by different socioeconomic conditions. They have altered, to a major degree, their basic internal life. It has to be appreciated that for the membership and the inner core of the Eastern European parties, the postwar terror was a very traumatic period of time. There was also a traumatizing effect on economic planners, factory managers, cultural figures, etc. There is a real materialist explanation for the cessation of the blood purges. That particular legacy of the Stalin system has been, to date, renounced. But in every party in Eastern Europe and fraternal parties outside the Soviet bloc, the inner core of the party is still firmly committed to the premises and theoretical views that were implanted during the Stalin period. Their common view of the state

is a one-party dictatorship of the proletariat. Their common view of the role of the working class is that of a productive force subordinate to the party. Their common view of economic development has been described above. There is, consequently, no room for a real multiparty system, independent unions, self-management, or the existence of socially autonomous intellectual and cultural groupings. In as far as there has been an easing up of the bureaucratic centralist domination of the national economy, it is because it has proven economically disastrous. When they changed their parties into mass parties, they increased the numbers and the social base widened, but the distribution of power remained the same as always. What we actually have in these ruling parties is three distinct parties. There is the Central Core: the Political Bureau, State Defense Council or whatever. There is a secondary level which has access to and influence on the inner core, but that access and influence is defined and limited. They can be a power bloc in their own right, but only on rare occasions. This secondary level included the respective Central Committees, leading cadre in economic planning bodies, loyal party intellectuals, leading military figures and regional party leaders not in the Political Bureau. The tertiary level is what I refer to as the "outer party." It needs little description. What should be noted is that its proximity to the base of society makes it the most potentially dangerous section of the party. It is more potentially dangerous in part because it is organically tied to the working class and in part because it is at the point of production. Designed to be the social cement that binds the top to the bottom, it can be the key force in the breakup of the existing social order. Hungary in 1956 provides a clear example of this process. The secondary level, which in a class sense is the petty bourgeoisie, is also potentially dangerous, although less so, because it will and does vacillate during times of extreme social crisis (as James points out), but it is most likely to give its support to the ruling core at such periods of crisis. It is more likely to seek a typically centrist position, opposition to the motion of the independent working class and opposition to the reversion to the classic stalinian methods of repression. This analysis all bears directly on the conduct of the PUWP in the era of Solidarity and the reason that the military had to replace it as a new governing elite.

After 1956 and a bout with an intellectual opposition in the mid and late 1960s, the PUWP fell into a narcotized state. It performed its role as a source of cadre for the state machine and as a social regulation body, but, especially with the rise of Gierak, it became characterized by the rampant lumpenbourgeois decadence of the inner core and a sizeable section of the secondary level. Jaruzelski stands out in this period precisely because he continues to live the sort of ascetic life that was mandatory under Gomulka. This internal rot of the party core and secondary strata angered and alienated both the more orthodox section of the secondary strata and the working class section. It only amplified in the consciousness of the masses the gap between them and the elite. In the riots of 1976, party offices that were seized by the workers were revealed to be stocked with large amounts of expensive foods, liquor, unavailable

consumer goods, etc. But the decadence continued unabated. The internal, sociological divisions in the party remain semi-hidden. Such divisions do not become apparent until there is wider social motion which allows them to emerge. In Poland, this of course is the era of Solidarity. There are such semi-visible oppositional currents in most ruling parties. There are Eurocommunists in the GDR party, there are the remnants of the Dubcek forces in Czechoslovakia, there is a vigorous New Left current in Hungary. It is fundamentally wrong to picture most of these parties as monoliths. But neither are they forums for the free interchange of ideas and programs.

In Poland in 1980 we saw a growing social division within the PUWP. There was general discontent over the handling of the economy. There was intellectual ferment that can be traced in part to the nonparty dissident intellectuals. There was frustration over the growing and deepening centralization of decision making in the hands of Gierak and his supporters. It is here that we run directly into the crisis of leadership. Since every economic and political decision of the last decade had been made by this clique, with apparently little real input from the secondary level of the party, the entire weight of the economic crisis and the renewed overt class struggle came down square on their heads. From the time that the Gdansk strikes began and spread, the fate of the Gierak regime was sealed. It had systematically alienated every other center of power in the party and the country as a whole. Thus a winnowing process began. The question of who would become the new leading core began. This was of course a tremendous source of instability at the heights of the apparatus, a lesser concern of the secondary and tertiary levels of the party and of little interest to society as a whole. Polish workers as a whole have a new leading force, Solidarity. But the struggle goes on. The liberals, in alliance with the reformist forces at the base of the party (the horizontal integrationists) tried to become the new leading force through a trial of strength before the Emergency Congress and by being the force that tamed Solidarity. They lost in both arenas. The "neostalinists," who came to us as the Grunwald Association and the Katowice Forum, made their case quite bluntly: civil war is looming, the counter-revolution is preparing to seize power and liquidate us, and the only response is the iron heel. But neither the liberals nor the "neostalinists" could become the leading force in the party and thus seize state power. The liberals were handicapped by the most basic political belief in a stalinian system: that any motion towards liberalization will produce another Hungary, another Czechoslovakia. In the economic sphere, their advocacy of enterprise autonomy and the reduction of the role of the party apparatus in economic control creates determined opposition by the state planning mechanism and the governmental managerial strata. In an essay by the Joint Economic Committee it is pointed out that:

This has a negative impact on the party apparatus, the key decision-making body in post-Stalinist society. Historically considered, the prime task of the apparatus has been forced-draft industrialization. To disassociate the ruling body from most of its economic

responsibilities, particularly at the provincial level, is demoralizing and disorienting.¹³

This is an important factor in considering why the liberals were unable to become the new political center of the party. They faced the opposition of the entrenched economic planners, a large part of the party secondary strata and everyone who feared greater social turmoil. The most insecure sections of the party had visions of Budapest dancing in their heads. As for the "neostalinists," the horrors that they brought to mind were even more appalling to a wide section of the country. They also faced the determined opposition of the USSR. From the great historical perspective of Brezhnev, Suslov, et. al., the "neostalinists" represented a dangerous nationalist deviation whose communism was suspect and whose adherence to classical Soviet socialism brought to mind no less than Mao Zedong. There are several reports that military intervention was threatened if Moczar and his supporters seized power at a Central Committee meeting. Paradoxically, the Soviet press and leadership did support and encourage this grouping as long as it was condemning the drift to centrism by Kania, the vacillations of the Party Center and the lumpenbourgeois decadence of the Gierekists. As an out-of-power critic from the left the USSR could tolerate them. As a new party center, well, that would not have been tolerated. We have emphasized the Soviet factor firstly because of its relative importance and secondly because it should serve to prove that the USSR does not make its political alliances strictly along ideological grounds. Ideologically, Suslov undoubtedly was closest to Moczar and his crowd. But pragmatically they recognized the need to support the neutered centrist current in the party. Soviet opposition was not the main thing that kept the Moczar group from taking power. Far more important was that they would have faced the unified opposition of Solidarity, the party liberals and centrists and the better part of the state bureaucracy, all fearing Thermidor. Their rise to power would have split the party and lead to a state of civil war.

So, the best that the PUWP could produce in this time of great moral crisis was a bureaucratic mediocrity from the center who came and went with absolutely no social impact, except to preside over the rise of Solidarity. The emergence of Kania as the best that the PUWP could produce in its factionalized state made its political barrenness apparent to all concerned. It was its death knell as the center of power in Poland.

There was factionalism from the top of the party to the bottom. At the base of the party, in the working class, a million party members joined Solidarity. In a previous period this could have legitimately caused concern that the PUWP was trying to dilute or divide Solidarity from within by encouraging a massive influx of their cadres. It is very significant that this was never a source of concern for the leaders of Solidarity. It was not the leaders of Solidarity who demanded that they choose between the party and Solidarity. It was just the opposite. The PUWP leaders found themselves worrying about a de facto Solidarity takeover of the factory branches and demanded that PUWP members resign from Solidarity. We should recall that Solidarity



penetration of the party even extended to the Central Committee. The million party members who joined Solidarity represented virtually every working class member of the party. This is not the picture of a consolidated force that is on the offensive against socially dangerous elements. It is more the picture of a waning political force which is being superceded by a new and more dynamic force, Solidarity.

The factionalism of course, to the people outside the party, only further debilitated the potential of the party as a socially progressive force. It's fundamental impotence made that possibility dubious. We can contrast this with Czechoslovakia in 1968, where the party did hold on to its leading social role precisely by being the visible center of progressive social change. The effect of this factionalism is described by Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz:

A Communist Party in power, which by its nature should be expert in handling the language of ideology, saw its credibility utterly eroded and its language subject to derision by the whole nation. The only recourse was to call in the army and let its generals speak of danger to the country and of citizens' duty to obey orders. As a result, force—that is, the essence of any totalitarian system—appeared without the disguise of slogans, to which so many people of the left all over the world are sensitive.¹⁴

The organic factionalism was reflected at its most debilitating level of development at the Emergency Congress held in July 1981. It was this Congress which dumped over 90% of the former Central Committee, all but four of the former Political Bureau and brought in a new and entirely unknown set of committeemen (one cannot in any way consider them to be party leaders, despite their seats on the Central Committee). It was this congress which gave Jaruzelski more votes than any other former top party leader, more even than Kania and Rakowski.

But it was more than this. It was the organizational and psychological triumph of centrism. This centrism meant that both the liberals and the "neostalinists" were rejected in their thrust for power. It meant that some of the most powerful regional leaders of the party were ousted, less because of politics and more because of regional rivalries. In the Western press this was pictured as the triumph of reason over extremism, along the lines of the political compromises that have made us great, such as the Dred Scott decision and the pardoning of Richard Nixon. But what was generally overlooked was the purpose of this *Emergency* congress: to bring to the foreground a new leadership core and to break through

the political, social and economic logjam that was preventing the party from fulfilling its inherent role as the leading force in society. It failed miserably on both counts. *Washington Post* writer Michael Dobbs noted:

For seven days (two longer than had been originally planned) Polish Communists argued freely with each other, shouted down government ministers, and voted three-quarters of their leaders out of office. There was genuine suspense about the outcome. Yet at the end of it, Poland looked much the same as at the beginning.¹⁵

At times the delegates appeared preoccupied with settling past scores, apportioning blame for the crisis, and voting out of office anyone tainted by the mistakes of the previous leadership. Remarkably little attention was paid to the future and the meeting failed to agree on a vision and a program for coming out of the crisis.¹⁶

So, as impressive as the show of discontent and democracy may have been for the Western press, the net effect of this Congress was even worse for the continued political hegemony of the Party than the crisis which had preceded it. One can imagine the impression that Jaruzelski and the other generals came away from this meeting with. It must have been clear to them that the Party was incapable of being the mechanism that stopped the spread of social unrest and brought the national economy back to a degree of rationality. Two months later Kania passed into obscurity. Jaruzelski became the new and unchallenged leader of the party. Two weeks after that the first massive regional deployment of troops began. Two weeks after that Jaruzelski demanded a ban on strikes, which he did not get. Two weeks after that the PUWP fraction in the Sejm voted down a government proposal on factory management and endorsed a Solidarity backed measure instead. After the coup broken liberal Rakowski offered this post-mortem evaluation of the party:

Disintegrated, I agree. Which is quite clear since the military had to take its place in the government. Who could deny that it went bankrupt intellectually and politically, that it was unable to organize the society, to get the country out of disaster, even to defend the State? In the end you are right: We are the ones to be blamed, not Solidarity.¹⁷

I think that this is sufficient evidence to debunk the hoary anti-communist myth that the party was a secret guiding hand behind the military, that 'it' had to use the military to hold power because 'it' was discredited. The position of the party at the time of the coup is best described by Marx:

The Party of Order hunches its shoulders, lets the bourgeois-republicans tumble and throws itself on the shoulders of armed force. It fancies it is still sitting on its shoulders when, one fine morning, it perceives that the shoulders have transformed themselves into bayonets. Each party kicks at the one behind, which presses upon it, and leans against the one in front, which pushes backwards. No wonder that in this ridiculous posture it loses its balance and, having made the inevitable grimaces, collapses with curious capers.¹⁸

Here we leave the political irrelevance known as the Polish United Workers Party and move on to the central actor in the tragedy: the military.

3. The Military Prepares to Take Power

The politicization of the military is in large part a function of the institutional weaknesses and the incapacity of civilian leadership to resolve major issues of public policy.¹⁹

When we analyze other significant social and political forces in Poland in the period before the coup, it is clear that in every case they were unwilling, unready or incapable of filling the vacuum in leadership. This includes Solidarity. Its power was to be found in its character of a mass social movement. It was not a party or a de-facto government. Jacek Kuron pointed out after the Emergency Congress of the PUWP that:

The economic and political apparatus is falling apart, but there is no Solidarity organization, so there is a vacuum in society. This is a revolution in which the old order has been overthrown, but no attempt has been made to create a new one. We have to know if we want to reach for power as the trade union, as a party or whether we want to make some sort of new arrangement. Solidarity cannot organize a new system—it has to be organized by the whole society.²⁰

Examination of other major social institutions also reveals an incapacity to supplant the party and rule. The state bureaucracy had never developed as an independent force with its own political views or a desire to rule. It had been so massively permeated by the PUWP that any independence that it had was illusory. One respondent to an "Experience and the Future" survey described party/state relations in this way:

The exercise of political and economic power is based on a centralized administrative, party and government apparatus with a series of appended facades in the form of the Sejm and the local people's councils, which are dominated by the administration . . . The integrating link in the bureaucracy of power is the party, which runs the state and pervades all levels of its organization, but is, however, not able to overcome or even consistently check any dualism created by the existence of these two interpenetrating apparatuses...²¹

Although there was this duality, there was no independent development of the bureaucracy which would have made it a power-broker in the struggle for power. The old statist trade unions had disintegrated in the wake of the rise of Solidarity. The Sejm had also been historically stunted as a center of political power. The security apparatus was precluded by the past and the ambivalence of the military toward it from affecting a unilateral coup (it is a secondary participant nonetheless). Thus we are left with one major national institution with the ability to take power and govern in their own right. That is the military. But ability is one thing, and willingness or consciousness is another thing. It would be ridiculous to suggest that the Polish military has always had a secret desire to become the new rulers

of Poland, to imitate their cousins in Chile and Argentina. The seizure of power by the military came at the end of a long process of political disintegration and economic chaos. It was not lightly undertaken. Having said that, we should also be clear that once the decision was made to prepare to assume unilateral state power, there was a deliberate and conscious program put into effect which could lead nowhere else. This section will try to describe the internal evolution of the military high command towards a realization that it must supplant the party and govern directly, and describe the concrete steps taken in preparation for the coup. It is very important to understand that the decision to seize power *in itself* marks a qualitative change in the collective consciousness of the military. From being a servant and partial partner of the old ruling elite, it began to see itself as the logical and only successor to that elite. This is a leap in consciousness which deserves a serious analysis:

Despite the opposition of conservatives like Wrangel and Manteuffel, the spirit of the Prussian officer corps had been slowly transformed from an aristocratic class spirit into a military caste spirit. After the middle of the century the emphasis was increasingly upon the close unity and comradeship of all officers regardless of their social origins. The line was drawn between military and civilian rather than between bourgeois and noble. The aristocracy of birth had been replaced by the aristocracy of education and achievement.²²

Huntington is of course recognized as a leading authority in the development of military consciousness in newly emerging nations, in particular the underdeveloped nations. Poland bears a certain similarity to many of the underdeveloped nations in that it lacks a developed mechanism for the transition of state power. Recall that there are major leadership changes in Poland only under the pressure of mass working class unrest and rebellion.

Previous to the events in Poland one form of struggle for power that had not become part of the stalinian repertory was the military coup. This can be explained in great part by the fact that the military in most stalinian societies does not acquire the insularity of the military in the underdeveloped countries where the coup is a more common form of struggle. In those cases, the military is in essence an expanded police force, which is factionalized and politicized along the lines of the class structure in the given country. Huntington notes the fear of political involvement of the more sophisticated military groups:

Politics is beyond the scope of military competence, and the participation of military officers in politics undermines their professionalism, curtailing their professional competence, dividing the profession against itself, and substituting extraneous values for professional values.²³

Before 1973, the Chilean military was one of the more sophisticated Latin American military formations because of its refusal to become infected with party partisanship. The lack of coups in Chile was obviously not due to their love of the democratic process. It was more a function of their advanced view of themselves as a force above political squabbles. Other Latin American and African military groupings are markedly the

opposite; divided and manipulated along class and political lines, they are called in to resolve one class or political conflict or another and then returned to the barracks. Or they are used by one section of the economic elite to eliminate a threat by another section. Hence we have the phenomenon of the revolving door military coups. But the military can and does tire of being the armed enforcer of the oscillating will of an alien social strata and decides that it can rule just as well, or better, than the paramours of the civilian aristocracy and bourgeoisie. So it does. And thus falls upon it all the responsibilities of a new ruling class.

In many parts of the underdeveloped world this pattern is becoming more and more prevalent. Where the state bureaucracy is weak, the national bourgeoisie is weak, the politicians are factionalized to the point of impotence, the military is the logical and sometimes exclusive force capable of ruling. They bring to fruition a militarist state capitalism. But to have this sort of development in an industrialized country ruled for several decades by the stalinian party, a "socialist" country, is another matter entirely.

There have been other points in the development of Soviet style socialism when the armed forces have played a significant role in the resolution of political antagonisms at the highest levels of the party. But in these cases the dominance of party rule was never in doubt. The military mobilization was short in duration and limited to certain defined political goals, defined by the civilian party leadership. Khrushchev utilized the services of General Zhukov to insure that his majority in the Central Committee vote in 1957 would not be negated by the use of the secret police by the "stalinists" around Molotov. Zhukov presented the C. C. and the "stalinists" with a *fait accompli*, surrounding the Kremlin and making clear the military's unwillingness to tolerate Molotov as a new CPSU leader. During the Cultural Revolution, the military was reluctantly pressed into service "to support the left" against the ultraleft primarily, and when it overstepped the bounds, as in the Wuhan incident and backed the mainstream party and working class organizations against the ultraleft in a most decisive fashion, they were suppressed by the Maoists. In the struggle after Mao's death we also see a very limited use of military power to insure that the gang of four would not carry through their own plans for a coup, but it is laughable to suggest that the events in China after Mao's death were some sort of military coup. (It is worth noting that because of the militaristic tradition of the CPC and its historical base in the old war-lord tradition, and the underdeveloped state of Chinese civil and political life, there is more probability of a military coup as the outcome of a paralyzing struggle for power than in most other stalinian societies.) But in the cases of Zhukov, the Cultural Revolution and Wang Tung-Hsiang, the military was thanked for their services to the party power elite and then removed from any proximity to the center of power. Zhukov and Wang Tung-Hsiang were in essence penalized for their intervention, even though they backed the winning side. We can only wonder if this historical lesson was absorbed by Jaruzelski and his friends, who then decided

to cease being a patsy for the ruling political elite. In any case, in Poland the party leadership had no input into the decision to impose martial law, it was done without their knowledge or consent, and they were dragooned into a belated endorsement. Clearly, if they had refused to endorse it, the military would have brushed them aside.

Jaruzelski has been in the Political Bureau since 1970, although for most of that period he was a nonvoting alternate member. This gave him a birdseye view of the gradual distintegration of the PB as a realistic decision-making body. Every PB session from 1978 to 1980 was concerned with the worsening economy and nothing else. Yet the Polish economy continued to disintegrate anyway. This undoubtedly caused Jaruzelski and the other generals who joined him in the PB to doubt the overall wisdom of allowing the PB to continue as the sole center of political decision making in the country. They may have thought that the elimination of Gierk and his supporters would improve matters, but it didn't. Then came the Emergency Congress which must have revealed to them a factionalized and impotent party more concerned with revenge for the past than with charting a program and direction for the future. (Understanding what is very possibly their developing perspective on the party will be useful in understanding future party-military relations.) Outside the swamp of the party the military watched the steadily growing social power of Solidarity, the creation of a dangerous 'dual power' situation, the emergence of Rural Solidarity, and the growing liberal domination of the mass media and cultural organs of the state. Then there was the persistent threat of Soviet invasion. It is worth recalling that the Soviet open letter which many thought presaged an invasion attacked both Kania and Jaruzelski:

We wish to emphasize that, on all these issues, S. Kania, W. Jaruzelski and other Polish comrades expressed agreement with our point of view. But nothing has changed, and the policy of concession and compromise has not been corrected.²⁴

Jaruzelski was being attacked for going along with the politics of compromise, he was not under attack for his aggressiveness. Hence there is an implied incentive for the military to take a more active role. It is obviously difficult to document such an evolution in Soviet thinking, to the point where they would approve a coup. But the approval was clearly in place as of December 13th. At some point after Jaruzelski and the military began the discussions which culminate in the decision to seize power, the support of the Soviet leadership was undoubtedly sought and received. It is political gibberish of the usual anticommunist sort to paint pictures of planeloads of Soviet generals landing and directing the takeover. Approval, very likely. Direction, very doubtful.

This brings us to the first major preparatory step for the coup: the regional deployment of commando-type military units in late October. By this time Kania had bitten the dust. The strike wave continued as a major social problem, and at the base of Polish society there was a growing duality of power. It was at the base of society that the Polish military asserted initially its new and more political functions. It did so both as a

stabilizing, mediating force and also for reasons that we can put under the heading of social reconnaissance. In this stage, the military became a more overt political and governmental power. It did not seize power, but it expanded its control and supervisory role over both local government agencies and party organizations. In an announcement made on October 23rd we read:

The presidium of the government has undertaken today a decision to set up territorial operational groups. They will be led by professional soldiers and include officers and warrant officers who are serving terms prolonged by two months.²⁵

The mobilization was placed in the following social context:

Extraordinary situations require extraordinary measures in acting on behalf of the people's needs. The plenipotentiary powers granted to the operational groups (i.e., the army-DM) is a move aimed at solving the problems in an urgent way and signaling directly to the leadership of the people the needs or facts of injustice.²⁶

The seriousness of the economic situation and its effect on the state power were made very clear in the declaration, which noted:

The economic catastrophe would result in a catastrophe for human beings, and the state, *leaning towards a fall*, must undertake all indispensable actions in saving the state.²⁷ (Emphasis added)

It would have been just as logical for the military to seize total power at this time as in early December. The main reason that they probably did not was the need to carry out the social reconnaissance. An article in the *Washington Post* after the coup offered this view of the reconnaissance:

The Polish military strategy in taking over the country this week was begun six or eight weeks ago when hundreds, or possibly even thousands, of small commando-like teams were formed and sent into the countryside.

These groups were usually headed by an officer and included a senior noncommissioned officer and six to twelve soldiers. Their job was to position themselves visibly in village squares or city neighborhoods, to establish the idea that the Army was interested in seeing that the wishes of the government were carried out. In addition, they were apparently under general orders that allowed them to intervene if such matters as local administration, food distribution or access to hospitals were not being handled correctly.

Finally, they were there to acquaint themselves with the area itself: who was who, how things worked, who the local members of Solidarity were, who the church activists were and how the local Communist Party functioned.²⁸

This same sort of grass-roots, quasi-social service intervention is a standard technique of the more sophisticated counter-insurgency forces in the underdeveloped world. There were, in the early days of the Vietnam war, elite American and South Vietnamese units which were sent into the villages to play the role of being primarily a social service and governmental force and only secondarily a military force. The Polish media

played up this social service function, the army as the friend of the people, the army as a force capable of bringing about a degree of economic order, especially in the distribution aspect of the system. By this time there were several cities where Solidarity had been given food rationing and distribution authority by the state agencies, since they were unable to enforce rationing decisions due to their reputation as an extremely corrupt section of the government machine.

In taking such a decisive step into the management of state affairs at the local level, the military altered the balance of power in their favor. They reversed the traditional party-state-military distribution of power found in stalinian societies.

At the base of Polish society the military came face to face with the duality of power, with the growing dysfunctional state of the party and the growing inability of the state apparatus to fulfill many of its most important roles. After the coup, one Western journalist remarked that the only part of the state machine that seemed to be as effective as ever was the secret police, as seen in their relative decapitation of Solidarity. The military found that in many factories that it was Solidarity who wielded the real decision-making authority. By the time of this deployment the struggle over the mass media had in effect been won by Solidarity. In late August 1981 Kania made this declaration concerning the mass media:

The party does not hide the fact that it exercises a leading role over the media. I can declare that our patience will not run out in the talks, we will also remain determined to prevent the disruption or immobilization of such an important element in the country's life...²⁹

But the disruption and immobilization that he swore not to tolerate had occurred a week earlier, when Solidarity stopped the publication of every government and party newspaper in the country and showed its mass base by having a nationally successful boycott of the press. Solidarity's newspaper at this time had over a million readers. Kania was selling wolf tickets. The military was certainly aware of this. Taken as a whole, it was clear to the military that they were confronted with a dual power situation that was growing in depth on a daily basis. They had a legitimate right to be worried about the survival of *their* state. It was not that the government as a whole was paralyzed. But the power to deal with the organized working class, the internal discipline and *esprit d'etat* necessary to crush the mass movements was not there. This reflected on the military post-mortem on the state machine:

Our country is on the edge of the abyss. Achievements of many generations, raised from the ashes, are collapsing into ruin. State structures no longer function.³⁰

The military had to be concerned that the growing dysfunctional state of the government, the pervasive growth of what it and the Soviets saw as dangerous liberal tendencies would in time infect the armed forces. Any student of revolution knows that the breakdown of the old order has an impact on the armed forces of that order. Lenin merely codified, in his demand for the

breakup of the standing army, a social reality from the time of the French Revolution. Both the Russian and German Revolutions of 1918 were preceded by a massive breakdown in morale among the front line troops. In Hungary in 1956 it was key sections of the military that opened their arsenals to the insurgent workers, even before the Soviet invasion. The workers in the main did not have to seize arms. The armed forces and the armed people merged and became one.

In Poland, there must have been a strategic concern by the high command that they would not be able to count on the state halting the social movement represented by Solidarity before it reached the armed forces. Hence there is an additional rationale for a decisive military move that would illustrate in reality that the social movements that emerged in 1980 had come to an end.

It is from this point on that it is possible to see and understand the military perspective of the danger of "counter-revolution" and their acquisition of a level of self-consciousness that made them perceive themselves as the only force left capable of "saving Poland." This is a qualitative leap in consciousness.

The military thus found itself at the banks of the Rubicon. Once it crossed the river, there was no turning back. They recognized that the act had to be unilateral, that they had to take complete charge, or not act at all. The significance of the preparatory stage lay in the fact that it in essence was the last chance that the military gave the civilians to share power. But the Parliament rejected their proposals on factory management, the strikes continued and Solidarity continued to press forward. The fundamental significance of the coup lies in the fact that the only way that the military could defend the state was to take it over, and reducing the former power elite to a position subordinate to them. Far from taking power as a transient force to preserve the rule and social domination of the former elite, it did so to make itself the new ruling elite.

Thus we arrive at the actual seizure of power. If in the last section it was not crystal clear how and when the military began to reconsider and redefine its former role in society, it will become very clear in the next section. Any attempt to understand the development of organizational consciousness is very tricky business. There is yet to be a satisfactory Marxist explanation of the development of bureaucratic class consciousness under stalinian socialism. Trotsky tried to explain that the bureaucracy chose Stalin, but he could never explain how the same bureaucracy fell under the ax of the Checka. Was its historical ambition to commit group suicide? What I have tried to show is the series of events in Poland throughout 1981, both in the class struggle and in the realm of the ruling apparatus, that in effect forced the military to take power or fall victim to the new social consciousness that appeared in the wake of Solidarity.

4. The Military Takes Over

But barrack and bivouac, which were thus periodically laid on French society's head to compress its brain and render it quiet; sabre and musket, which were

periodically allowed to act as judges and administrators, as guardians and censors, to play policeman and do night watchman's duty, moustache and uniform, which were periodically trumpeted forth as the highest wisdom of society and as its rector—were not barrack and bivouac, sabre and musket, moustache and uniform finally bound to hit upon the idea of rather saving society once and for all by proclaiming their own regime as the highest and freeing civil society completely from the trouble of governing itself?³¹

When the military high command made the decision to take power and exercise it on their own behalf, in their own name, this marked a major departure from the norms of Marxism-Leninism. Ever since the 1917 Bolshevik revolution there has been a consistent fear of what is referred to as Bonapartism.

Trotsky was severely handicapped by the perception of many Bolsheviks, not just pro-Stalin apologists, that he had suspicious Bonapartist tendencies. There was little outcry over Stalin's extermination of the Soviet officer corps in the mid-1930s when he claimed that they planned to seize power and eliminate the party leadership. Zhukov was cashiered after 1957 for "suspicion of Bonapartism." The ruling elites in many countries have historically feared the gradual acquisition of power by the military, or the development of what Huntington calls "caste spirit." It is a general practice to rotate regional military leaders so as to forestall any development of loyalty by their troops towards the commander. The system of commissars was originally improvised to prevent sabotage by former Tsarist officers now leading the Red Army. It speaks to a definite mistrust of the military that sixty years later the commissar system is still in place.

Thus it is highly ironic that the first real manifestation of Bonapartism in the present historical era should receive the concurrence and support of every ruling communist party in the world and the vast majority of the world communist movement. The subordination of the military to the party, while a maxim of Marxism-Leninism, is in this case subordinated to an even more fundamental maxim: keep power any way you can. Kto Kgo: didn't Lenin threaten to break with the Bolsheviks, go to the sailors and seize power that way, if he was forced to? Absolutely.

The generals who have seized power are certainly not anarchists. They do not seek to destroy the old state or the old communist party. But comments made after the coup make it clear that they view both institutions as contaminated organisms which have to be purified so that they can serve in the consolidation of a new political order: military socialism. Before the coup the military saw itself as the only force holding back the counter-revolution. It surely reflected on the reasons for that. It is natural to conclude that at some point it critically counterposed the state and party apparatus and its degeneration with its own firmness. In the party it saw "ultra-democracy" and rampant corruption and self-indulgence. In the state it saw rampant liberalism and impotence. In itself it saw unity, order, a common purpose, devotion to the nation. They have not seized power to merely fall into the same debilitation as the

former ruling elite. Nor have they seized power to preside over the last days of bureaucratic collectivism. The most important aspect of the coup, and of its long-term social consequences, lies in the reconstruction and reorientation of the state and the party by the military and what that indicates about the self-consciousness of the military.

In the first place, it was clear from the beginning that the military would position itself in and over every state organ and see to it that they would become part of the reshaping of Polish society along the lines demanded by the military. In his first speech Jaruzelski said:

The committee for the country's defense nominated army military commissars on every level of state administration and in certain economic units. They are granted a law for supervising the activity of state administrative organs from the ministry down to the local government level. The declaration of the Military Council of National Salvation and other decrees published today define the terms and standards of public order for the duration of the state of emergency. The army military council will be disbanded when law governs the country and when the conditions for the functioning of civilian administration and representative bodies are created.³²

The ambiguity in this statement is so wide that you could drive a column of tanks through it. But it is clear who is on top and who will decide when the conditions are favorable for the partial restoration of state power to the civilian state apparatus. Overt dominance of the state machine by the military and the tasks of the civilians are made very clear in the joint Council statement:

The Council calls on all state administrative bodies to understand that the extraordinary situation renders their normal functioning impossible. . . . It calls on the bodies of state administration for the punctual and consistent implementation of the tasks and undertakings resulting from the introduction of the state of martial law. At the same time the council warns those guilty of failing to perform their duties against possible consequences and reminds them of the principle of individual responsibility.³³

This virtual expansion of the state of martial law into the terrain of the existing state bureaucracy is an excellent illustration of the military perception of the state machine as a potential center of opposition. This would have especially been true of the mass media and the parliament. As early as June, the Soviet Union was claiming that antisocialist forces had taken control of the mass media. We noted earlier the refusal of the PUWP fraction in the Sejm to support a military initiated bill on the appointment of factory managers and their preference for a compromise bill drawn up by Solidarity. In the statement announcing martial law this summary of the functioning of the state before the coup was made:

The efforts of the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic, of the government and the organs of state administration have proven ineffective.³⁴

Having declared them ineffective, and viewing them as dangerously liberal, the military imposed its centralized apparatus atop theirs. The military debated suspending the party also, but rested content on the first period after

the coup with leaving it in a state of limbo.

After they superceded the state and the party, the next step was to intervene in them and begin a process of "rectification." A military newspaper in early January made this comment:

Martial law created ideal conditions for a real, effective and not merely superficial verification of personnel in the party, administrative apparatus, economy, press, radio, television and several other branches of our life. This will entail checking thoroughly the political and ideological positions and professional abilities of personnel. Those people who took two-sided positions during the period of intensified political struggle or held wait-and-see attitudes or openly spoke for the political enemy must be removed.³⁵

The same army newspaper had this comment on the overall response of the old apparatus to the coup:

Unfortunately, we cannot ignore the fact that only a small part of the party members are standing the test. So far martial law has neither revived the party as a whole nor affected an essential, deep and lasting change in it and in the attitudes and activities of its members.³⁶

The unilateral dissolution of the national Journalists Association is a clear indication of just how recalcitrant and stubborn the mass media has been in submitting to the new military order. As for the party, as we will see, it continues to thrash about uncontrollably, still dominated by factionalism.

The rectification of the party is in essence the creation of a new party, an organization subordinate to the military leadership. The purge is not one of the liberals, or the conservatives. The working class section of the party and the most progressive of the reformers did not have to be expelled after the coup. They walked. By many estimates it has lost half of its membership of the period immediately before the rise of Solidarity. Since the coup, entire party organizations at Lubin University, the Katowice steel mill, the Polmo shock absorber plant and the Ursus tractor factory have been dissolved. *Kultura* and *Literatura* magazines, both voices of the liberal reformists, have been suspended indefinitely. Political Bureau member Kazimierz Barcikowski was quoted as admitting that the PB was taking its orders from the military, not vice versa. The CC was dispersed after the coup and did not meet for several months. It is apparent that it will not be allowed to become a center of power or even of dissent. Given all this, and the military's previous criticisms of the party as a factionalized and impotent tool, it is not unreasonable to suggest that what will take place of the old apparatus will be a political agency of the military with no organizational autonomy.

It is worth remembering that the primary ideology of the military is civil peace and its role as the directive force in society. It requires little else. There will not be an ideological purge of the party in the traditional sense. The party is not being purged to restore the traditional values and discipline of the stalinian party, but to make the party an effective and subordinate tool of the new

power elite. This doesn't mean its re-stalinization, but rather its militarization.

The task of a party member under the conditions of martial law is to carry out the orders of the military. The unreliable, the corrupt, and the heretical will be purged. In January, 90 provincial officials were removed from office. The provincial defense committees created in October as de facto governing bodies are now de jure governing bodies. In the TV stations it is reported that:

Soldiers are assigned to watch civilians and other soldiers to watch their fellows. Although the militarized state-run television station found it necessary to retain some civilian employees, each is supervised by two privates who are in turn watched by a sergeant. No conversation is allowed: if this rule is broken, the soldiers are replaced by another pair.³⁷

The hostility of the military to the state apparatus and the former party apparatus is deep-rooted: if Solidarity and the working class could legitimately place the blame for the economic crisis on the incompetent and elephantine bureaucracy, the military can blame them both for the crisis and the development of Solidarity. There is a greater latent antagonism. The resolution of this antagonism can now be accomplished on the terms of the military. And they are proceeding to do this. It is unrealistic to expect that, having crossed the Rubicon, and with the hostility that is clear through the actions of the military, that they will hand back power to the former ruling elite and retire to the barracks. If they tolerate the presence of liberals in the National Council, like Rakowski, they do so in the same way that the former PB tolerated the military in its ranks, or that Stalin tolerated broken Trotskyists like Radek in his inner circle.

What we have in Poland, therefore, is the first successful liquidation of the "party-state" in the historical epoch of stalinian socialism. This is a dramatic break with the pattern of authoritarian stateism as established in this century. The party has failed in its fundamental tasks and a new ruling core with a profoundly different historical experience and internal consciousness has taken its place. This is not a fluke. It is the consolidation of Bonapartism in societies that pride themselves on creating institutional and political barriers against such an occurrence.

The previous history of the emergence of new power elites in stalinian societies has been one of the downward spiral, where the party as a whole becomes an adjunct to the Central Committee, the Central Committee becomes a ratifying body for the decisions of a Political Bureau and the PB can and does become part of the apparatus of any individual and subordinate to that individual. There are other social and institutional forces which can be brought in to solidify this arrangement (Stalin with the secret police, Mao with the Red Guards) and Krushchev unilaterally changed the rules of the game by deviation for which he paid in 1964. But never have we seen an outside force superimpose itself on this process, negate the power of the various levels of the political apparatus, and become the center of a new arrangement. It should have been the proletariat. There will come a

point in time where a proletariat in a stalinian society will in fact do this. But the fact that it was the military does not change the revolutionary implications of the coup. It was a revolutionary change in power relations, with socially reactionary goals. The military chose to act in defense of stagnation, in defense of a social system which is dangerous, counter-revolutionary and obsolescent. The coup only goes to show just how obsolete it is.

5. The Threat of Dual Power

It is not a constitutional, but a revolutionary fact. It implies that a destruction of the social equilibrium has already split the state superstructure. It arises where hostile classes are already each relying upon essentially incompatible governmental organizations—the one outlived, the other in the process of formation—which jostle against each other at every step in the sphere of government. The amount of power which falls to each of these struggling classes in such a situation is determined by the correlation of forces in the course of the struggle.³⁸

Trotsky's analysis of dual power in 1917 has much to commend it. But the dual power that he described above was a real "power vs. power" situation. Dual power in Poland before the coup never reached the stage that it did in Russia before the Bolshevik seizure of power. But it did resemble closely dual power as it existed immediately after the February Revolution. The correlation of forces in Poland was not such to allow the extension of Solidarity's powers at the point of production and as a moral force into the armed forces. Militarily, dual power that stops at the factory gate is the easiest to dispose of. Italy in 1920 is an illustration of this. It would seem that with the organizational destruction of the old Solidarity network and the imposition of martial law that any discussion of dual power would be either a post-mortem or a hypothetical view of a possible future. But I think that a closer examination of the situation in Poland and a re-definition of what constitutes dual power in a modern society will provide more illumination on what happened in Poland and what is going to happen in the future. It would be very short-sighted to declare that the struggle was at an end. Not only would this be a defeatist position, but it would lead to a distorted perspective on the cycles of class struggle under Soviet style socialism.

Dual power in Poland before the coup was undoubtedly the central concern of the military leadership and the Soviets. Whenever we hear that "antisocialist" forces are posing a serious threat to any stalinian country, it should be an automatic signal that the latent revolutionary forces in those countries are moving to attack the positions of power of the ruling elite. In the fourth decade of the consolidation of Soviet type socialism as a multinational system, the forms that the class struggle takes are more muted than obvious, until the flash points arrive. In the period before the rise of Solidarity there was wide-spread cynicism and apathy among the workers, with the exception of those times when they stormed the stage of history. "Experience and

the Future" pointed that out in their report. But in 1970 and 1976 the working class had shown that it had the ability to substantially change the rules of the game in Polish politics. Polish workers are distinct from the working classes in other Eastern European nations by the "learning process" that they have gone through. In its final consolidation stage, stalinian rule is typified by a conscious attempt to keep the working class, the peasantry and the intellectuals demobilized and depoliticized. One of the most remarkable events to occur during the Polish upheavals was the Soviet decision to hold mass factory mobilizations to denounce Solidarity. Even in the heyday of the struggle against Stalin and later against the Chinese, mass proletarian mobilizations were rare if not unknown. The reason is obvious: if workers and other strata are politically mobilized for one reason or another, they might get used to it, they might begin to understand that it is possible for them to mobilize in their own self-interest. In the USSR in particular, where there has not been a collective act of working class action against the ruling elite since the early 1920s, where there are no historical memories of anything but subordination and "internal migration," we are able to see the ideal working class from the viewpoint of the authoritarian state. But not so in Poland.

When the threat of a Soviet military move against the newly installed Gomulka regime loomed, the Polish armed forces bypassed their Soviet command structure, the internal security forces prepared to defend the government buildings, and the workers in large factories were placed on a war footing. This was a unique and important step. It is true that in Hungary, the organized workers were also armed and mobilized in defense of the insurgent government, but they were crushed ruthlessly. A lesson of defeat was learned there. But when Gomulka faced the Soviet Union down, the working class was able to feel that it had played a major role in the victory. They became conscious of their latent power as a class. In 1970 and 1976 they learned of their power to collectively negate unpopular economic decisions and to force a change in the ruling core. In 1980 the lesson that they could force a radical change in the composition of the elite was re-emphasized. And in 1980 they discovered a new and powerful form of organization that united the entire working class, including a major part of the party, in a common effort; united and disciplined, mass and democratic, from below. There is no equivalent to this in any other Eastern European country. Polish exile Tadeusz Walendowski noted:

But this time things look much different from December 1970 and June 1976—the most important difference being the maturity, confidence and determination gained by the working class. The workers have displayed in recent weeks—in their actions and demands—a level of courage, coordination and political wisdom that one hardly could have expected from people still deprived of the right to organize freely, to choose their leaders, to discuss their demands openly.³⁹

Counterposed to this new maturity and level of organization we have the militarist conception of social

life. The military concept of state power is that of a unilateral power over society. In the case of Poland and other stalinian societies the traditions of militarism are compounded by the traditions of 'democratic' centralism. The hybrid is militarist or military centralism. The military now seeks to stabilize Polish society in their own image, not only by liquidating and erasing the actual dual power that Solidarity brought into the open, but the consciousness that went with it, that being the impulse for working class democratic socialism. The former PUWP liberal, now gendarme Rakowski complained to Oriana Fallaci:

Freedom, freedom, freedom! For 200 years the Poles sold nothing but freedom, Chopin, the Polonaise. What freedom is a freedom which doesn't provide anything to put in the stomach? The hotheads of Solidarity supplied those poor workers with the most unrealistic ideas about freedom, and look where we are!⁴⁰

Had Solidarity only been a trade union movement and not a social and moral movement, its liquidation would have been far easier. In the consolidation of fascism in Italy, all the Black Shirts generally had to do in any given town or region was physically destroy the physical institutions of the working class—the union headquarters, party offices, *casas del popolo*, etc., to paralyze and end working class resistance. The same held true when Hitler consolidated power. The forced Nazi occupation of the trade union headquarters throughout Germany on May Day 1933 destroyed the German trade union movement. This is the inevitable result of the hegemony of bureaucratic centralism over organic working class consciousness. But Solidarity, as a non-bureaucratized, organic institution of the workers was not shattered quite that easily. The dual power that they had with the Polish state was more than just the existence of union halls, printing presses, newspapers, etc. It was a matter of consciousness. In a strike bulletin of August 1980 this challenge was issued to the ruling elite:

Gentlemen! You are talking to different people! You are not addressing those who in December 1970 replied to the question "Will you help us?" with the answer "We will!" We are different above all because we are united and no longer powerless. We are different because thirty years have taught us that your promises are not kept.⁴¹

Solidarity and the social movements that accompany it were not just a force for social justice or for the satisfaction of the material needs of the working class and peasantry. They were organized on a regional basis, that is, as a future political power. If the demands for elections posed at the Radom meeting had come to pass, Solidarity in many ways would have been the long-overdue resurrection of the Polish Socialist Party.

Solidarity was in addition a cultural and educational force in Poland. It expanded the educational process of the underground "Flying Universities" by the thousandfold. Its publishing house NOWA became a major center of Polish cultural life. It was NOWA that finally issued the "Experience and the Future" report "Poland Today: The State of the Republic." The

equivalent for this in the US would be if the ADA turned to Monthly Review Press to get their position papers out to the public. Solidarity had a press network equal to that of the state. For a short period of time its press was directly counterposed to the sterility of the official press. Polish journalists began to see where their interests as progressive, professional press people could best be satisfied.

The above survey only hints at the massive social impact that Solidarity had on Polish society. It is in this impact that the real dual power that came in the wake of Solidarity is clearest. It was far greater than a mere organizational power, and for that reason the military crackdown had to be that much more precise and sophisticated.

In its advance planning for the coup, the military clearly hoped that its decisive elimination of Solidarity's communication network would facilitate the hoped-for split in the Solidarity national leadership. From that point, it hoped for the organizational liquidation of Solidarity and from there a collapse of working class morale, marked by a reversion to the powerlessness, hopelessness and cynicism of the pre-Solidarity era. It hoped that by eliminating the first string leadership and the intellectuals that the workers would lose a sense of historical perspective about the coup and the struggle for working class power. It is clear that the attitude of Solidarity, its counter-motion, has been to avoid adventurist excesses and prepare for a protracted struggle that will keep the consciousness of the working class intact and ultimately force the military to come to an accommodation with them as a whole. Hence the method of the "Italian strike," the unified stance vis-a-vis negotiations and the stress on bringing forward regional and factory leadership to replace the imprisoned militants. These tactics are quite different from that of a truly defeated oppositional force just biding its time. They are definitely pegged to the resumption of overt struggle and the rebirth of the movement. Hence, the dual power survives.

The consolidation of any authoritarian regime requires the physical destruction of the organic leadership of the working class, and other social forces, and the substitution from the top, of a new leadership, completely subordinate to the ruling elite. If the entire infrastructure of Solidarity had been ripped out of Polish society, had Solidarity been a bureaucratic centralist organization as described earlier (i.e., Germany) and had the military been able to substitute its own cadre for those of the fallen Solidarity leaders, then we could speak of a permanent defeat of the working class. Such defeats are not unknown. The experience of Nazi Germany is a case in point.

But in Poland the survival of the Solidarity infrastructure, the historical experience of the working class, and the developed view that the workers have acquired of themselves and their role in society, makes them as much a strategic threat to the military today as the organizationally strong Solidarity was to Gierek and Kania.

The military seizure of power has not had a permanently narcotizing effect on Polish society and it has not resolved the organic contradictions of Polish

society. The framework for a massive emergence of Solidarity is still in place. The duality of power in Poland is still very much a fact. The contradictions have only been given a new dimension.

6. Bonapartism in Poland: Stability and Instability

This paper began with a lengthy analysis of the economic crisis in Poland because it was this crisis that was the foundation of everything that came after it. When we speak of the growing awareness of the Polish workers, the oppositional forces and even the military that the ruling elite was incapable of governing and regulating the internal dynamics of the social formation, this was most glaringly apparent in the economic sphere.

This leads us to the question of sources of instability for the junta. They desire an indefinite period without social strain during which time they can discipline and reconstruct Polish society in their own image. By force of arms, they can insure that overt, confrontational resistance to them will in the main not be a threat. They will be able to purge the state machine and the party so as to complete the subordination process. But they cannot solve the economic crisis by military means. They have to come to an economic solution. And without resolving their economic problems, the new militarist social changes they bring into being will be dangerously precarious.

There are concrete reasons why a program of economic dynamism is not a real possibility for the Polish military. There are no more untapped internal sources of wealth that could be harnessed in rebuilding the economy; no possibility of the traditional "primitive socialist accumulation." The main hope that they have is for a massive external infusion of aid, rivaling that of the Marshall Plan. They have a no-growth economy at the present. Before the rise of Solidarity, "Experience and the Future" noted in their report:

The current economic and political crisis is unique in the history of postwar Poland, not only with regard to the collapse of our growth rate and our enormous debt, which has made further growth impossible, but also because the last decade has demonstrated the total inability of the present system of institutions to deal with economic and political problems in a rational way and to work out a long-term strategy of development.⁴³

Recall that the long-term Gierekist program of economic recovery and growth was based on the realization of certain concrete variables, the failure of any particular variable upset the entire plan. The NDS program was an open program, its general development was made clear in the media. The military has produced no such program. One reads the press in vain to discover what their future plans are.

There will be certain areas of the economy in which the military will be able to bring about more order and discipline. As it disciplines and rebuilds the party as an auxiliary to itself, it will end the sizable drain on the national treasury caused by the lumpenbourgeois

excesses of the Gierek period. There will be an absolute reduction in the production and importation of consumer oriented goods. There is in effect a wage freeze and price hikes have already been announced. The managerial strata in the factories and in the planning agencies, who are literally under the gun, will be under great compulsion to produce, cheaper. But it was not the lumpenbourgeois excesses of the party elite, or the laziness of the proletariat, or the slothfulness of the managers that lead to the collapse of the Polish economy. It was the entire stalinian conception of economic planning and development and its automatic implementation that lead to the economic collapse. With the deepening economic crisis in both the West and in the Soviet bloc, no one is going to bail out Poland this time around. It is ludicrous to imagine the Soviets, busily selling off large amounts of gold at below-market prices to pay for food imports, committing massive amounts of capital, technology and cadre to restore the economic equilibrium of Poland. It's concern over Poland is strictly geographical.

There is no feasible long-term program that the military can bring to fruition which will change the economic system or halt the forward motion of economic decay. When Rakowski was asked for their concrete economic program he replied: "We know how to get out of it, step by step. First step, to reestablish the economy. And we will, thanks to martial law."⁴⁴ Yes, but how? What is the magic elixir that makes the imposition of a military regime a remedy for economic problems? Bonapartism has historically depended on a consolidation of power through economic growth and social welfarism. It aims at the creation of a strata of the petty bourgeoisie and the working class that directly benefits from the rule of the new elite. But neither economic growth nor social welfarism is possible in Poland. They could remove one source of financial drain by declaring the foreign debts null and void, but they would also find themselves economically ostracized by the entire industrialized West. Taken as a whole, it seems apparent that the Polish economic crisis will deepen and become more chronic until the bottom falls out. With no program of economic recovery, with no possibility of an external bailout by CMEA or the Soviet Union, the economy is the central source of instability that confronts the Polish military in their desire to consolidate their rule over the rest of the country.

The second source of instability lies in the revival or rebuilding of social and governing institutions; namely, the party, the unions and the state machine. I noted earlier that the generals are not anarchists. They will have to bring back the party in some form, as a social control force, and they cannot unilaterally break up the state and substitute the military bureaucracy for it. And they will be under pressure to revive some sort of union structure.

I noted earlier that the militarist conception of civil society is that of a society where they exercise unilateral power. They view all other organizations, elites and social institutions as vehicles for the implementation of their general program. This is a very substantial change and one that will inevitably produce resistance.

It is utopian to think that after all Poland has gone through that the State Machine will be a pliant

instrument of the military with no problems. We are already seeing indications of the resumption of the struggle between old state apparatus and the military: the defection of the ambassadors, the resignation of the Justice Minister, threatened mass resignations by university administrators and faculties, dissolution of the Journalists Association. Universities can be closed indefinitely and there are always journalists who can be bought and sold. But the enforcement of the demands made on the state apparatus issued early after the coup is a substantial problem. We of course have no way of documenting the resistance of the state functionaries to the military. Bureaucratic sabotage can be a very subtle, but effective weapon against a new ruling elite. It certainly was in Washington during much of the Nixon era.

When the PUWP gained hegemony in the late 1940s, it was able to permeate the entire state machine with its cadre and in the conditions of the purges and terror, to break resistance to them. They prevented the bureaucracy from consolidating as an independent social force. But the shakiness of the consolidation of power by the military and its real lack of cadre makes this a far more difficult task. It is more likely that where possible the military will substitute its own organizational apparatus for that of the state apparatus (judiciary, food distribution, managerial functions in the shops, etc.) and cut back the bureaucracy wherever possible. Thus the reconstitution of the state is likely to have two aspects: with the military taking an overt directive role in many agencies and a reduction of the actual numbers and scope of the bureaucracy. In as far as the parliament is concerned, there is no indication that it will return to its temporary activism of the Kania era. Its controlled existence is therefore very probable.

It is with the reconstruction of the party that the contradictions are likely to be very acute. Czech exile Pavel Machala noted:

The imposition of the Military Council on the existing institutional pyramid, the arrests of a number of former prominent members of the Communist oligarchy and the replacement of many high provincial party officials by the military cannot but further erode the already weakened legitimacy of the party.⁴⁵

The "neostalinists" in the party have made their feelings known: that the military should return to the barracks as soon as domestic order has been consolidated, and give power to them. A report in the *Washington Post* on a speech by "neostalinist" PUWP Control Committee head Jerzy Urbanski noted:

Urbanski's speech makes clear that the party hierarchy regards the military takeover as an interlude during which it will cleanse its own ranks in preparation for resuming a leading role In his speech, Urbanski said that the speed with which Poland emerges from its political and economic crisis depends on the "ideological uniformity" of the party and its ability to regain the people's trust. "No other body can replace the party," he added in an apparent attempt to squelch suggestions that the ruling Military Council for National Salvation may be unwilling to give up power.⁴⁶

But when the military finally called the Central Committee together to ratify the coup and the subsequent steps (historically this is hauntingly similar to the Central Committee meeting of the CPSU of February 1937 where the CC endorsed the expansion of the Great Purge and thus committed collective political suicide), Jaruzelski used the opportunity to condemn the CC for its failure to govern Poland, for its continued factionalism, for failures in taking up the tasks mandated under martial law and for exerting pressure to return to the barracks. He strongly condemned the position of the "neostalinists," as laid out in the document of the "left wing." It seems clear that the military continues to view the party as a whole as a dangerously factional body that has to be kept under tight discipline and ultimately replaced by something else. It is worth noting that there have emerged new "civic committees for national salvation" which are filling the traditional roles of party cells in urban neighborhoods and in towns; in essence, as a superior substitute of one grass-roots political organization for another. This step would not be characteristic of a military desire to restore the party under civilian leadership to its former leading role. This continuing jockeying is a definite source of instability for the military.

Every military spokesman that has addressed the question of the party emphasizes that it will re-emerge "in a new form." I strongly believe that this means that the party will be militarized to the greatest extent possible and that the factional elements, nowadays mainly the "neostalinists," will be removed from active participation in the political life of the country. The military's best interests could be served by continuing to emasculate the party and reduce it to a permanent position of subordination. This might cause some problems in other places however. Czech exile Machala noted:

In fact, the leading role played by the Polish military, not the Polish Communist Party, is undermining the ideological monopoly of the Soviet model of socialism. In the Kremlin's eyes, such an innovation in the configuration of power in Eastern Europe is as great a heresy as democratic socialism, if not a greater one.⁴⁷

It cannot be overlooked that such a radical subordination of the Polish party to the Military Council could have very unexpected results in party-military relations in other Eastern Europe countries, including the USSR. Hence the particular problems that the military is facing with regards to its final decision concerning the status of the party. Party-military relations are another source of instability for the military.

Next, we have the question of the unions. I am deliberately restricting this to the question of what sort of unions could emerge under martial law and discussing separately the question of the unstable relationship between the military and the working class as a whole.

I noted earlier that all the material and political pre-conditions for the massive resurgence of a Solidarity-type union are still present. From the evidence that we have, the communications network of Solidarity is still functioning at a surprising level of competence. The military has failed completely in its attempts to split the

union, whether in regard to splitting the national body, splitting the professional organizers from the rank and file, or splitting the working class leaders from the intellectuals.

The question of the unions is an organizational question. It is a question of whether to bring them back, or not; whether to bring back a "Solidarity" denuded of its intellectuals, former leaders and social vision, or not; or whether just to freeze Solidarity indefinitely with illusionary promises to "bring it back," "when the conditions are right." As an organizational question it would seem to be fairly easy to resolve. It should have been resolved even before the coup began. I mean, when the old gang is sitting around deciding who to arrest and what buildings to seize and what to tell Leonid, doesn't the question of Solidarity come up at least once? Or was it raised and dealt with by deciding to jail all their leaders, and left at that? That possibility, when combined with the unexpected cohesion that the union leaders and the workers showed could explain the continuing ambiguity of military statements about unions, any unions. But when Military Spokesman A says that they will rule until the memory of Solidarity is erased from the memory of the Polish people, that is an indication of one train of thought in the military. When Spokesman B says that Solidarity can return, but as a trade union and nothing else, that is indicative of another trend. The indefinite suspension of Solidarity is a clear sign of the military's difficulty in formulating a new general program as regards the union. It is well worth keeping in mind that there is nothing in the historical experience of Soviet style socialism that even remotely resembles what has happened in Poland. Even the earlier government responses to the 1970 and 1976 revolts do not provide an orientation for the military, since they in essence involved concessions to the workers, not repression.

If they do bring the old, discredited union structure, they will be faced with a dual danger. In the first place, any new union structure that the military creates will be viewed by the working class as a scab outfit. The creation of new statist unions would signify a final military decision to end the era of Solidarity. In contrast with the suspension now in force, new unions would mark the definitive end of the Solidarity era. This would only widen the abyss between the junta and the working class.

In the second place, such unions could be transformed over a period of time into organizations for the reassertion of working class power and militancy. Given the high level of class consciousness in Poland, there would not be nearly as long a preparatory and educational period required for such a transformation of these new statist unions. Then the military would be forced to backtrack and take organizational measures against these unions, unions that were created precisely to squash the working class struggle.

For these reasons, I think it is most likely that the military will opt for the indefinite suspension of Solidarity as their exclusive union program. They will enforce discipline in the factory in the same way they do in society: through the barrel of a gun. They will hope for a gradual change in working class consciousness that

will eventually make the question of unions a moot question.

This leads us to the final source of instability that confronts the military: relations with the working class as a whole.

The repeated revolutionary experience of the Polish working class has fundamentally altered its view of itself and the society that it lives in. We should all be familiar with the basic Marxist distinction of a class-in-itself and a class-for-itself. In the US the working class as a whole has been stripped of its consciousness as a class and has been fragmented and atomized in various ways. That is not the situation in Poland. We can briefly sum up the tasks of the military in relation to the working class as bringing about its atomization, its demoralization and making it revert to its former consciousness. It can never hope to bring the working class around to a position of support for the bureaucratic regime. The ideal working class, from the position of the stalinian socialism is one whose class identity is subordinated to the struggle for production, whose demands for a better life can be postponed from generation to generation, whose political activity is marginal or nonexistent, whose social and cultural life is under the hegemony of the ruling elite. That is the most desirable working class from the viewpoint of the Polish military also.

There are historical grounds, very short-sighted it must be said, for the military to hope that with the end of Solidarity in its former form, that the working class, the intellectuals and the peasantry will withdraw sullenly from social and class mass mobilizations, thus permitting the military to build their new social order without having to worry about a resurgence of the class struggle. In 1968, there was a tragic and historic division of the insurgent student movement from the working class movement, which allowed the State to bring the full force of its repressive apparatus on the students. In 1970, the students stood by and did nothing as the workers brought down Gomulka. The film "Man of Iron" has several scenes that reflect on this cycle of division and the damage that resulted from it. Such disunity, the resulting passivity, cannot help but be a general goal of the junta in this period.

In general, it cannot be denied that after long periods of intense class struggle, with a degree of mobilization and confrontation approaching civil war, there is always a strategic withdrawal by the insurgent forces and that such retreats tend to be accompanied by the withdrawal of the active class forces from any overt social role. We can see this in Russia after the 1905 revolution, in the college-based and Black movements in this country after the '1960s' and it also happened in Poland after 1956 and 1970. Only the most utopian revolutionaries can dream of a working class or popular social movement that maintains itself in a state of permanent mobilization against an entrenched oligarchy. Such things do not happen.

It seems clear that what the Polish military is hoping for is that for the next historical era, the workers will succumb to defeatism, to historical pessimism; that they will internalize their rebellion or fall into cynicism and apathy. This is not a very pleasant prognosis, but as

materialists we have to concede that such a regression is very possible. The primary reason that we can have a degree of confidence that this eventually will not occur is for the reasons given earlier: the defeat is not permanent, the leadership of the class has not been obliterated, the organizational form of Solidarity, its communications channels, have survived. This makes the question of the working class and how to force it into social apathy the most fundamental problem facing the military.

From the above survey we can see the extent of the structural and social sources of instability that confront the military. The sources of stability are few: the balance of armed power inside Poland, the support of the Soviet leadership, the possibility of further Western extensions of debt repayment. I think it is no exaggeration to say that such a balance of sources of stability and instability does not at all give us reason to conclude that the military is in the saddle for the duration, with no problems. The past, as Shakespeare teaches us, is prologue.

7. The Strategic and Historical Implications of the Coup

For the first time in the history of the Soviet-bloc states, for the first time in the historical epoch of stalinian socialism, the military forces of the state, the military section of the bureaucracy, has taken power on their own and proclaimed their intention to rule. Bonapartism as it has been historically defined by communists and socialists, is now a fact. And it does not come as a thief in the night. It appears with the support of every ruling communist party in the world, and the vast majority of the nonruling parties. The substitution of a military elite for a political elite may not seem to be that big of a deal, but I think that its strategic implications are. Given that the stalinian parties are instruments for the consolidation of bureaucratic power and the disenfranchisement of the working class, it is also true that they have within them the potential for readjustment and reformation. It is typical of the irrational ultra-leftism of trotskism that it denies *any* potential for reform or that reform is a legitimate goal of the mass democratic movement. It flies in the face of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, or in the emergence of Eurocommunism. But this potential for reform cannot be extended to any of the military systems in any stalinian state. Military structures do not reform themselves in the direction of political pluralism. They can be broken apart and ruptured, as in Hungary, but they cannot be arenas for the emergence of mass democratic forces. This makes the prospect of a spread of Bonapartism particularly ominous both for mass democratic forces and for the entrenched party elites. Machala points out:

What will be the consequences of the military regime's possible permanency on Moscow's international position? Most importantly, a "message" will be sent to the military in other Eastern European countries that the Communist Party is no longer the absolute authority and sole representative of the will of the people. Indeed, the greater the role of the military establishments in those countries, the more likely that

they will grow increasingly independent of the Soviet Union.⁴⁸

When we counterpose the polycentric tendencies of Nagy or Dubcek with the "polycentrism" of groupings of aggressive military cliques superceding ossified communist party elites in countries adjacent to the USSR, then it is clear that the latter is more of a strategic threat to the USSR. Why then did the USSR authorize and approve the coup?

The answer to that also speaks to the strategic implications of the coup. We come face to face with the central problem of stalinian socialism in its fifth decade of existence: the crisis of succession.

The Polish military was forced to seize power unilaterally because of a severe crisis of leadership in society as a whole. The vacuum could not be filled by the various actors in the drama. The internal mechanics of the stalinian party in themselves create severe problems in the area of transition of leadership. Gramsci describes the life and methodology of an authoritarian party in this way:

And secondly, in the more recent period, there is a type of party constituted this time not by an elite but by masses—who as such have no other political function than a generic loyalty, of a military kind, to a visible or invisible political center. (Often the visible centre is the mechanism of command of forces which are unwilling to show themselves in the open, but operate indirectly, through proxies and a "proxy ideology.") This mass following is simply for "manoeuvre" and is kept happy by means of moralizing sermons, emotional stimuli, and messianic myths of an awaited golden age, in which all present contradictions will be automatically resolved and made well.⁴⁹

A more precise description of the stalinian party and its mass function is hard to imagine.

In such a social environment, the caliber of leaders that emerge can be summed up with the names Brezhnev, Zhikov, Kania, Hua Guo-Feng, Kim Chong Il. And worse. In Albania, of the inner core that surrounded Hoxha in 1972, four have been shot for being pro-Chinese, several were shot for beginning to drift towards the economics of self-management, and one committed suicide or was shot at a PB meeting by Hoxha for "despondency over the future of the revolution." In both Romania and North Korea the inner core of the party is the immediate family of the leader. We now have the unique stage of "dynastic socialism." If one cannot inherit factories, one can inherit the state! The point is not that this is inherently an evil system. The point is that this sort of process of transition and debilitation makes it very possible that other such crises of leadership, such as what we see in Poland, could be emerging in other stalinian regimes in the next decade. And with the precedent of the military coup in Poland, such crises can now be resolved through the active intervention of the military, over the party. The genie is out of the bottle. That is why the events in Poland have a historical importance that the generals themselves have not grasped.

That is the international implication of the coup as it relates to the consolidation and changes of the

political order of stalinian socialism. The end of party hegemony, even for a short time, and the emergence of a new power elite, marks as distinct a historical development as did the original emergence and consolidation of socialism. If imperialism can be described simultaneously as the highest and last stage of capitalism, cannot it be said that "military stalinism" is the highest and last stage of that chapter in human history? I think that we can. This may be overly optimistic. Socialism and the independent working class movement towards socialism has suffered many setbacks in the 20th Century, grave historical setbacks, most particularly the stalinian system. But as this system expanded geographically it produced for the first time military confrontation between the state and the working class and it revived as an open and major force the social and political ideas of traditional socialism, as seen in the Czech reform movement, the Workers Councils in Hungary and Solidarity. It has caused the Eurocommunists to reassess their conceptions of socialism and the Soviet bloc to an even greater extent. Since the coup, it is the Eurocommunists that have drawn the most far-reaching conclusions from it. While Willy Brandt was tip-toeing around so as not to lose his visiting privileges to East Germany and the USSR, Berlinguer declared: "A phase has come to an end. The driving force, which had its origins in the October Revolution, has exhausted itself."⁶⁰ Pietro Ingrao said: "We used to call them countries on the road to socialism. Today I see no connection between socialism and the military regime that has replaced the communist party."⁵¹ The Eurocommunists have finally come to realize that a part of the global struggle for socialism is the struggle to dismantle the economic and political structures of the stalinian system and achieve the fruits of a democratic revolution. There is fast ceasing to be any fundamental distinction in the question of "real socialism" between the Eurocommunists and democratic socialists, a potential healing of the rift caused by the Bolshevik revolution.

The Soviet style regimes are revealing their structural flaws. Time after time, forces for mass democratic change and workers power have emerged from within the communist parties and from society as a whole. They have been defeated, but not annihilated. Simultaneously, there has emerged the crisis of leadership. This leads us to the latent dual power situation that was overtly manifested in Poland with the rise of Solidarity. This in turn leads to the discrediting of the old party elite and the need for either reform of the party, its ossification, or the emergence of a new set of rulers, in this case the military. Before the coup, the military could pose as a socially neutral force. Now it cannot. Its apparent neutralism has been transformed into an active antagonism between itself and the people. One more illusion has fallen. The final resolution of the conflict between the proletariat and a social system antagonistic to its interests is closer since the terrain of the conflict has been transformed from a party-class struggle to a military-social struggle. It is not only the working class that stands in opposition to the military now. The sources of instability are now wider, the potential oppositional bloc is wider also. The workers have been driven from the center of the stage. The lowering of the

curtain means that the first act is over. But when the curtain is raised, it will mark the beginning of a second act, and with the twin obstacles of the party bureaucracy and illusions about the military removed, the second act could be the decisive one.

¹ Brzezinski: *The Soviet Bloc* (101)

² Zinner: *National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe* (200-201).

³ *Experience and the Future: Poland Today* (12-13).

⁴ *New York Times* (no date).

⁵ *Poland Today* (12).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Davies: *East European Economic Assessment, Part 1* (27).

⁸ Fallenbuchl: *East European Economic Assessment, Part 1* (48).

⁹ Lenin: *Collected Works* (15: 345).

¹¹ James: *Notes on Dialectics* (216).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Burks: *Reorientation and Commercial relations of the Economies of Eastern Europe* (56).

¹⁴ *New York Times* (n.d.).

¹⁵ *Washington Post* 7/23/81 (1).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Washington Post* 2/21/82.

¹⁸ Marx: *18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*.

¹⁹ Schneider: *The Political System of Brazil* (16).

²⁰ *New York Times* 8/16/81.

²¹ *Poland Today* (33-34).

²² Huntington: *The Soldier and the State* (54).

²³ *Ibid.* (71).

²⁴ *New York Times* 6/10/81.

²⁵ *New York Times* 10/24/81.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Washington Post* 12/16/81.

²⁹ *Washington Post* 8/28/81.

³⁰ *New York Times* 12/13/81.

³¹ Marx: *18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*.

³² *New York Times* 12/13/81.

³³ *Washington Post* 12/13/81.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Washington Post* 1/15/82.

³⁶ *Washington Post* (n.d.).

³⁷ *Washington Post* 12/16/81.

³⁸ Trotsky: *History of the Russian Revolution* (I: 207-208).

³⁹ *New York Times* (n.d.).

⁴⁰ *Washington Post* 2/21/82.

⁴¹ Szkolny: *Monthly Review* 6/81 (15).

⁴³ *Poland Today* (157).

⁴⁴ *Washington Post* 2/21/82.

⁴⁵ *New York Times* (n.d.).

⁴⁶ *Washington Post* 1/12/82.

⁴⁷ *New York Times* (n.d.).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Gramsci: *Prison Notebooks* (150).

⁵⁰ *New York Times* 12/18/81.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*