

What lies behind the workers' strikes at the Polish Baltic ports?

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As I have written previously in my Political Diary, since the beginning of July, a strike movement of dockers and workers of other sectors commenced in Poland, especially in the Baltic port cities of Gdansk, Gdynia, Szczecin, etc. These strikes assumed large proportions during the two last weeks of August.

Right from the start, the development of events in connection with these strikes showed that, although called by workers against the economic difficulties they have encountered, they were inspired and manipulated from abroad and by the all-powerful Polish Catholic Church. Hence, in essence they were reactionary, of a counterrevolutionary character, and were directed against the existing anti-popular government in Poland.

By following the day-to-day development of the events in Poland during the last two months we can come to certain conclusions.

It was natural that the strikes in Gdansk, Gdynia and Szczecin would lead to some developments and results. First of all, they caused new difficulties for the Polish revisionist leadership and, at the same time, made the political situation all over the country more tense. Besides this, as was expected, confronted with the difficult situations which were created, and internal and external pressures, on August 31, the Polish government was forced to sign in Gdansk an agreement with the strike committee capitulating to its demands and making concessions. Among other things it agreed to the setting up of "independent, self-governing trade unions" in the ports of Gdansk, Gdynia and Szczecin, and recognized the workers' right to strikes and to hold elections by secret ballot. This result was, of course, attained against the wishes of the Polish counter-revolutionary party and government and also against the wishes of the Soviet revisionists.

The setting up of these new "independent self-governing" trade unions is a new attack by the bourgeoisie, international reaction and the modern revisionists on the Leninist theory about the trade unions of the working class as transmission belts to link the party with its class, as voluntary unions of the working class to defend its state power, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and as schools of communism. They are completely the opposite of what V. I. Lenin advocated:

"The trade unions must collaborate closely and constantly with the government, all the political and economic activities of which are guided by the class-conscious vanguard of the working class - the Communist Party" (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 33, Alb. ed., Tirana 1957, pp. 202-203).

The setting up of these new trade unions in Poland now means that there will be two types of trade unions in that country, first, in the three above-mentioned cities, because their influence may spread rapidly over the country, although it may be liquidated in different ways and by means of measures taken from time to time: "the independent self-governing trade unions", and the trade unions led by the United Workers' Party of Poland. For the sake of appearances, the agreement that was signed in Gdansk between the delegates of the government and those of the strike committee says that these "independent self-governing trade unions" recognize the leadership of the party. But according to news agency reports, many strikers were not in agreement with their leaders on this question. They wanted these trade unions to be completely independent, so they could impose their will on the Polish party and state, not only on the question of setting the prices of industrial and food products, but also on other general issues. But it seems that this was not fully achieved and the leader of these

strikes, Lech Walesa, told the workers that for the moment we must be content with what we have achieved, and he pointed out to the Polish vice-premier, Jegielski, who signed the agreement on behalf of the government, that the Polish government must respect the terms of the agreement, otherwise the strikes will start again. In a word, the so-called strikers are threatening the Polish government.

These are the facts we know so far. But I think that all this so-called strike of the workers in the Baltic ports was not caused simply by the shortages of food, and especially of meat, on the market or by the price increases. On the contrary, it had a political character. The strikes were not spontaneous but organized. They were organized from outside by the capitalist-imperialist countries and from inside by Polish reaction, by the Church and by the Gierek clique itself.

Let us explain this analysis and these conclusions and back them with facts.

It is natural for these strikes to be a consequence of the revisionist line of the so-called United Workers' Party of Poland itself and of the all-round subjugation of this country to the revisionist Soviet Union. As a member of the Warsaw Treaty and Comecon, Poland is occupied militarily, exploited economically and dependent politically on the Soviet Union. Besides this the Polish people generally have always been opposed to the Russian influence and domination. Reaction and the Catholic Church have made continuous use of all the means of propaganda and exploited all the economic and political difficulties to deepen the animosity to the Soviet Union, to intensify the contradictions with that country.

On the other hand the pseudo-socialist system in Poland has always been in more advanced capitalist positions than that of the other so-called people's democracies. Socialist agricultural co-operatives were not formed and do not exist in Poland. There are some state farms, but in general, private ownership prevails there. The Polish squires of today, naturally with other titles, possess large areas of land which they work with hired wage labour.

Thus, in the Polish countryside the capitalist agricultural system prevails, a system that is fostered and reinforced with anti-socialist, anti-Soviet religious feelings, by Western capitalist propaganda and by the Vatican through the Polish Church, which are allowed to operate freely. A similar situation prevails in the Polish cities, too, hence also in the factories. Since liberation, except for the period when Boleslaw Bierut was in power, the Catholic Church has played a very important counter-revolutionary role. It has maintained, strengthened and developed its reactionary ideological positions and continues to exercise a profound political influence among the peasantry and the working class, not to speak of its influence on the Polish intelligentsia, which retains and develops idealism and other reactionary ideologies. Gomulka and Gierek gave the Catholic Church this important role and, willy-nilly, the Soviet revisionists have tolerated it, too. Hence it is clear that the Polish Church influences and has its finger in the strikes that are now going on in Poland.

The Polish revisionist leadership of both party and state gives the impression that it is in alliance with the Soviet revisionists, but in reality it is anti-Soviet. Only Poland's geographical position and its membership of the Warsaw Treaty and Comecon compel it to give the impression that it is in unity with the Soviets. The Soviet revisionists are aware of this situation, but they can never allow Poland to slip from their hands. Why? Because were such a thing to happen, then the Soviet hegemony over all the other countries of the revisionist camp would be at risk, because, after the Soviet Union, Poland is the main and most active member of the Warsaw Treaty, and if Poland is lost, the Soviet Union has lost East Germany. Czechoslovakia and Hungary, not to mention Rumania and Bulgaria, from the military standpoint. In other words, such a thing would lead to the destabilization of the strategy of the Warsaw Treaty in Europe and, of course, in that case the Soviet social-imperialists could in no way sit idle.

Naturally, Poland, like the Soviet Union itself, has very highly developed economic and political relations with the capitalist countries of Western Europe and also with the United States of America. These relations have developed continuously. In the economic field Poland has obtained large credits from the capitalist countries. According to recent information, these credits amount to 20 billion dollars. Naturally this has put Poland in great economic difficulties. It has obligations to its creditors that must be met, that is, it has to repay the credits in instalments and also pay the interest, therefore it has been obliged to increase its exports. But to repay the credits in full Poland would have to use the whole of its export income for two successive years, a thing which is impossible in practice.

In recent years economic development in Poland has declined and besides this, the floods of this year have forced it to import millions of tons of grain. Thus Poland is short of grain for the population and fodder for the livestock. This has brought difficulties and shortages on the market, especially of meat, although Poland is one of the greatest exporters of bacon (English in the original), as they call it in England and elsewhere; the black market and speculators have become more active, and as a result, the discontent of the masses of the people and the workers has increased. The difficulties have become even greater because Poland's "allies", headed by the Soviet Union, that supply it with many raw materials, have raised the prices of their goods and do not deliver them on time and in the quantities they have agreed upon. This shows that the relations within Comecon have been becoming difficult for some time, and not just with Poland, but with all the members of this pseudo-socialist economic organization.

In order to improve the situation, some 5 or 6 months ago the Polish leadership changed the prime minister, discharged Jaroszewicz and appointed in his stead a certain Babiusz of whom it was said at the time that he would improve the economic situation of Poland. This was just a tale, because the existing difficult economic situation was caused not by one person, but by the capitalist revisionist line of the Polish party and state. Babiusz and Gierek thought that by raising the prices of meat and other daily necessities they would be able to improve the situation without any great difficulty. In fact, however, they did not succeed either in surmounting the internal economic difficulties or in liquidating the obligations towards the Western capitalist allies and "well-wishers".

So, it was in this internal situation that the strikes of the workers of the Baltic ports began. But we must look at the strikes in the Baltic cities and the Polish question in general in the context of the imperialist-revisionist, global strategy, of the developments of the current policy of the two imperialist superpowers. Thus, before the strikes in Poland, there were profound contradictions between the United States of America and the states of Western Europe, especially France and the Federal Republic of Germany, over a number of issues, such as Iran, the deployment of "Pershing 2" and "Cruise", missiles on the territories of the NATO member countries and of "SS-20", missiles by the Soviet Union in the territories of the Warsaw Treaty member countries, over the Camp David agreements between Israel and Egypt, in other words, over the question of Palestine, the rights of the Palestinian people, etc., over the Olympic games which are to be held in Moscow, etc...

The Soviet Union, for its part, finds itself in economic and political difficulties, and indeed, in military difficulties, following the invasion of Afghanistan manu militari. Hence, in these circumstances the Soviet Union, too, is interested in maintaining the "détente", and co-operation with the United States of America, and if that country continues to make threats, at least it is interested in splitting the front of NATO, by pursuing a policy of "détente" with France and Federal Germany.

The other countries of Eastern Europe, the satellites of the Soviet Union, also, are pursuing this policy. In no way does the Soviet Union want these satellite countries to slip from its grasp, but it is

impossible for it to prevent them from getting into debt to Federal Germany, France, the United States of America and to other Western capitalist countries...

As I have written in the other analyses I have made of them, the strikes in the cities of the Baltic coast are reactionary, counter-revolutionary, are led by Polish capitalists and are directed against other Polish capitalists, the revisionists who are in power. These strikes have an anti-Soviet, pro-Western character. The strikers are in the service of reaction, of internal Polish capital and the Catholic Church.

Two suppositions can be made about the fact that these strikes were launched under the influence of internal and external reactionary forces, but not at a very suitable time to achieve the desired results. First, they may have been launched without careful calculation of the moments and the predisposition of Western capitalist reaction. Second, it may be that the latter wanted a counterrevolution against the counterrevolutionaries in power in Poland, but one that would not go too far, that is, a restrained counter-revolution.

In other words, it is very likely that, through these strikes, France and Federal Germany wanted to put pressure on the Soviet Union, but not on Gierek and his clique, not to go so far as to endanger the positions of this Polish clique, otherwise their whole policy of "détente" towards the East would be compromised. They knew that if things went too far on this question (and this could happen, because the conditions for a counter-revolutionary coup against a group which is equally counter-revolutionary, but which is in power in Poland, have long been prepared), this would cause the armed intervention of the Soviet Union.

So, we can say without any doubt that the West has had a finger in this counter-revolutionary Polish movement and did not fail to pour petrol on the fire, but just enough to get it started, to give it its first taste of opposition, especially opposition by the working class to the Soviet oppression, and this not in a severe, but in a moderate form. I think that the Gierek clique was aware of this orientation and wanted such an action in order to show itself more independent, from Moscow. Gierek is pro-Western. Of this I am convinced. The Western capitalist states, too, including the United States of America, want a Polish government with Gierek, Babiusz or one of their ilk at the head. But to a certain degree, the Western capitalist countries in particular want "to roast the meat without burning the spit". In other words, they want the Polish workers and people to gain some allegedly democratic rights, more than they have now, which means that the Polish revisionist authoritarian regime must be relaxed, must take new steps towards liberalism, but, at the same time, should not go beyond certain limits.

But what about the United States of America, does it have a finger in all this? Maybe it does, maybe it does not. Its non-involvement is relative, because the United States of America is interested in any situation that arouses the Soviet Union to anger and harsh actions which cause friction in Moscow's relations with its allies of Western Europe, so that Carter will be able to accomplish his hegemonic plans in Europe and weaken any opposition to these plans from France and Federal Germany. But there is another possibility: perhaps the contradictions of France and Federal Germany with the United States of America were a diplomatic game on a large scale to bring about the strikes in Poland or to go even further.

I think that this version could not be to the advantage of France and Federal Germany. This was clearly obvious in the stand taken by the Western press, which gave sensational publicity to the workers' strikes at the Polish Baltic ports, but, for their part, the French, German and British governments, and even the American government, were very reserved about them. Moreover, they advised the workers of Gdynia, Gdansk and Szczecin to be prudent in their demands. Even the pope of the Vatican, and consequently the Polish Catholic Church with Wyszyński at the head, told the

workers that they agreed with their demands, but made public appeals to them to do everything in a peaceful. and "orderly" way, to "bear in mind" the conditions of Poland, of the Polish state, etc., etc.

In other words the West was afraid of military intervention by the Soviet Union, and so, as I wrote at the start of this article, an agreement on ending the strikes; was signed at Gdansk between representatives of the government and representatives of the strike committee at the moment armed intervention in Poland by the Soviet Union would not be advantageous to West Germany. France. Britain or the United States of America. Nevertheless, the inspiration for the strikes in the Baltic ports was a Western inspiration, but at the same time restrained and prudent, in order to avoid what happened with Czechoslovakia and Dubcek, who thought that he could go to the extremes dreamed of by capitalism without any dangers from the Soviet Union.

As for Gierek and his clique, he, too, was afraid that the strikers would go too far, which would cause the intervention of the Soviet Union and thus the whole clique and its plans would be endangered. Hence the Gierek clique which, in my opinion has a hand in these strikes, intended through them to tell the people and the workers of Poland: make the Russians understand that you object to dependence on Moscow, but carefully and prudently. At the same time, in order to tell the workers that the allegedly socialist regime in Poland has gone bankrupt, before the Polish people, before the strikers, Gierek made a "frank" scandalous self-criticism in the Central Committee, admitting that grave economic and political mistakes had been made in Poland, especially in recent years, that regular supplies of goods have not been available, the rights of the citizens have been violated and there have been a number of other mistakes which have caused great discontent among the workers and the people.

After this self-criticism the Gierek clique promised that it would reconsider the strikers' demands and would approve some of them, but under the leadership of the Polish United Workers' Party and within the Constitution and laws of the Polish state. Gierek laid the blame for everything on the new prime minister, Babiusz, who had come to power only a few months before, after the fall of Jaroszewicz. Babiusz and a number of other ministers were dismissed and replaced by some men who had been expelled from the Political Bureau and the Central Committee of the Party and dismissed from the cabinet of ministers at the time when Jaroszewicz fell. Thus, Babiusz and the others were made the "scapegoats", while the fault did not lie with Babiusz alone. Faults he had in plenty, but they have their source and cause in the Gierek clique which is reactionary and capitalist. Therefore, if someone had to be removed from the leadership of the party and the state in Poland, Gierek and his clique should have been the first.

As for the social-imperialist Soviet Union, during all these disturbances it said nothing, but kept its ears cocked, like a cat watching a mouse and, without moving any regiment, because it had them inside Poland, kept its weapons ready for any danger that might threaten it. The Soviet revisionists undoubtedly maintained contact with Gierek and his clique and were certainly not in agreement with all that was happening in Poland, with the Gierek clique, with Gierek's self-criticism, and with the decisions which they were preparing to take. On the contrary the Soviet revisionists were openly opposed to all these things. Only when the Gdansk agreement was signed did Moscow briefly report the events in its press and mention something from Gierek's speech. This was the attitude which the Soviet Union maintained during the development of these strikes, and this attitude frightened the United States of America, France, Federal Germany, and. even Gierek himself and the Polish Catholic Church.

At present we observe that both France and the Federal Republic of Germany, as well as the United States of America, through their main official spokesmen are singing Gierek's praises over the way he solved the crisis. Thus Brzezinski, adviser to President Carter on security questions, and Poniatoski, a former minister of the Interior of the French government, called Gierek "a mature

man" "of great experience", and an ardent "patriot" who was able to find the best solution to the disagreements between the striking workers and the government and the Polish United Workers' Party. But the fact is that for the moment the Western Powers want things to be left as they are, while the victories achieved in the strikes at the Baltic ports are consolidated and spread to all the work centres of Poland. They want the so-called independent self-governing trade unions to be consolidated and turned into a political party in opposition to the so-called communist party of Poland.

The press of these countries writes openly that "the victory achieved by the Polish workers is a historic victory", because this occurred in an allegedly socialist country, where, in fact, the communist regime has gone bankrupt and where pluralism of parties does not exist. Hence, world capitalism considers the so-called independent self-governing trade unions, which were born from the compromise of the Gierek clique with the counter-revolutionary strikers of the Baltic ports, as a future political party, which has already gained its independence from the Polish United Workers' Party...

We must regard the creation of the "independent self-governing trade unions" in Poland as a springboard to go over from an anarcho-syndicalist system of the structures and superstructures of revisionist countries to a completely capitalist system. What happened in Poland has similarities with what happened earlier in Yugoslavia, the work of Tito's traitor group. But Yugoslavia, which passed through the phase of a pseudo-socialist regime after the war, definitely broke away from the socialist camp and, after some ups and downs, adopted the system of self-administration. In Yugoslavia the role of the party as a communist party was eliminated. The role of the trade unions was eliminated, too. State centralism and democratic centralism were eliminated and replaced with economic decentralization while, allegedly, retaining a political centralism and a common federal administration.

Now restrictions of various types are being placed on self-administration in Yugoslavia. Why? Because as the anarchist system it is, it cannot withstand the great economic crisis that has engulfed Yugoslavia and the capitalist countries which give it aid. With the investments, credits and the loans which they provide, the capitalists of the West and American imperialism want to secure profits from Yugoslavia. For a time, until the end of the stage of completely breaking away from the alleged socialist system, self-administration served their aims. Now it is no longer of any value and the world capitalist bourgeoisie aims to ensure another system for Yugoslavia, that of bureaucratic centralism.

Meanwhile in Poland, Polish revisionism, like the revisionism in the Soviet Union and the other member countries of the Warsaw Treaty, retains the old forms of the structure and the superstructure, that is, centralism is still retained there in the economy and in the organization of the state. The Polish United Workers' Party is in the leadership; the trade unions play the role of the transmission belt to carry the policy of the revisionist party to the working class, etc., etc. The Western capitalist bourgeoisie has to find a way to further weaken this state system which, as it knows, is pseudo-socialist and completely under the influence of the Soviet Union. Hence in order to weaken the capitalist-revisionist systems in the countries allied to the Soviet Union, Western capitalism and American imperialism have to act, but naturally, with prudence, because any open interference on their part could cause events like those in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan, from which, presumably, they have drawn lessons.

Hence, in order to infiltrate into these countries more deeply, they, that is, the Westerners, are not only trying to bring about the degeneration of the society there and to continue to invest their capital, which brings them profits and, at the same time, also erodes the military, economic and political power of the Soviet Union in those countries, but are also not overlooking the need to work

for the degeneration of the system that prevails there at present. And the best means to bring about the degeneration of the system of the revisionist countries is self-administration, which was applied in Yugoslavia, is being applied in China, is now advocated by the Euro-communists, by the French and Italian revisionist parties, etc., and now ought to be applied by the countries of the Warsaw Treaty.

The world capitalist bourgeoisie has thought, and from the standpoint of its own interests it has not thought badly, that for the present it could not make such an attempt in Hungary, the German Democratic Republic or Rumania, so it found Poland. Why? Because the revisionist system that prevails in Poland at present has been weakened, the Catholic Church is a dominant force and Gomulka and Gierek have given it this force and the important role that it has. Like it or not, the Soviet revisionists, too, have tolerated it. So, in Poland the world capitalist bourgeoisie has the support of the Catholic Church, which constitutes a major force within the Polish state itself, where the so-called communist party is rotten and seeking ways to liquidate the elements which are trying to keep the present situation going.

The world capitalist bourgeoisie is relying, also, on the great anti-Sovietism of the Poles, as well as on the fact that, irrespective of the formal aspects, the Gierek clique is not completely obedient to the Soviet revisionists. The anti-Sovietism of Gierek and his clique consists in their encouragement of secret aspirations for independence from the Soviet revisionists.

In this situation, those who stand behind the strikes in the Baltic ports are trying to give the newly formed trade unions a "free, self-governing" character, with the aim of forming an opposition to the Polish United Workers' Party and then applying the self-administrative system gradually to the economy, too, as was done in Yugoslavia. We must also bear in mind the fact that these "striking workers", inspired by the capitalist bourgeoisie and by the Catholic Church will undertake activities in the Polish countryside, and the "independent self-governing trade unions" will try to rally under their leadership all the small enterprises or workshops which exist there, "in order to self-administer them" economically and politically. The new trade-union organizations will undoubtedly extend their political activity and consequently also their economic activity. In the state enterprises in which the "right", to strike and all the other rights included in the 21 points will be introduced, things will reach the point that their decisions will be imposed on the government and the Polish United Workers' Party by means of strikes.

So think the Western capitalist bourgeoisie and those who led the strikes of the workers of the Baltic ports, with which the Gierek group, which is throwing the stone and hiding its hand in order to gain ground in reformist ways and to avoid the intervention of the Soviet Union in the internal affairs of Poland, is indirectly implicated. Will they achieve this aim? This is questionable. I have expressed my opinion above and I repeat that it would be very *hasardeux* (Hazardous (French in the original)), as the French say, very bold of them to carry matters further. It is hardly likely that the Soviet revisionists and the other Warsaw Treaty countries or the cliques which rule in those countries will allow the Western bourgeoisie and Polish reaction to accomplish their aims completely. The Soviet Union is determined to maintain its power in all the countries of Comecon and the Warsaw Treaty, that is, to keep both the political system, the state forms, the pseudo-socialist structures and superstructures, and present economic and military systems unaltered. To this end the Soviet revisionists created the so-called theory of the limited sovereignty.

I think that the compromise reached between the strikers and the Polish government is only a *modus vivendi*. The social-imperialist Soviet Union will not allow another ultra-revisionist clan to grow within its revisionist clan. And it is clear that, despite the great political, military and economic difficulties it has within the country and in the ranks of the Warsaw Treaty, the Soviet Union still has sufficient forces, and indeed has them concentrated in the vassal countries of Eastern Europe, to

prevent such a threatening activity from spreading and becoming dangerous to it and to the cliques in its service which are in power in those countries.

On all these matters, it is particularly important that the international working class does not make the mistake of considering the strikes in the Baltic ports of Poland as revolutionary activity. In no way should they be considered as revolutionary activity. They have a counterrevolutionary inspiration and are directed against a leadership which is equally counter-revolutionary. They have the aim of releasing Poland from the clutches of the Soviet social-imperialists, but by turning it into an instrument of world capitalism.

The Polish working class itself must understand this it should understand that the true road to salvation requires the Polish working class, under the leadership of a genuine Marxist-Leninist party and inspired by Marxism-Leninism to arouse the Polish people and to lead them into battle to overthrow the internal capitalist-revisionist cliques, to get rid of the yoke of the revisionist Soviet Union, to shake off the yoke of world capitalism and liquidate the destructive influence of the Catholic Church. The working class and the Polish people must understand that their present anti-Sovietism is not based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology, but is an anti-Sovietism inspired by the chauvinist ideas of the Polish bourgeoisie.

As for our people, through the press and the other means of propaganda, they should analyse and gain a correct understanding of the circumstances in which these events are taking place, should analyse and understand them in the light of Marxism-Leninism and not draw wrong conclusions from the fact that allegedly those who rose in revolt were workers and that those workers were against the Gierek clique and against the Soviet Union. Whether they knew it or not, those workers were not on the road of the revolution, but on the capitalist road. They were against Gierek, but not for the overthrow of the revisionist system, they were against the Soviet Union, but not for freeing themselves by force from the Soviet social-imperialist jackboot, were not for marching on the revolutionary road, for decisive changes, for the genuine construction of socialism in Poland. The Western capitalist bourgeoisie and world reaction are able to use them to weaken their rivals and to strengthen their own positions. In order to create new difficulties and disturbances, and there are more than a few of them already, to strengthen their own positions and weaken those of their opponents, the world capitalist bourgeoisie and, especially the European and American capitalist bourgeoisie will continue to work with these methods, not only in Poland, but also in East Germany, in the other so-called countries of the people's democracy and within the Soviet Union, too. In fact, now that the strikes in the Polish ports have ended and work is said to have started again today, the West German capitalist bourgeoisie, Bonn, has again begun to push the issue of the meeting and the talks which had been put off, with Honecker, and even with Gierek. The press is saying, also, that West Germany has allocated Poland a new credit of 500 million marks "to help it" overcome the difficulties it has. France will do likewise. Appeals are being made to all the developed capitalist countries "to help". Poland in this situation. So, the sugar-coated poison is still being served out in order to strengthen Gierek's shaky position, to encourage Polish reaction and the Catholic Church to continue their subversive work, to increase the resentment and hostility towards the Soviet Union, etc. For its part the Soviet Union is undoubtedly working to create a new team favourable to it, and when it has done so it will topple Gierek and replace him with a more reliable pro-Soviet Gierek.

For the time being, however, Gierek seems to have saved his own skin and escaped the Soviet intervention. Nevertheless, the troubled situation in Poland has not come to an end. It is developing and will develop. I think that the Soviet Union will tighten the screws on Poland.