WE ALL LIVE IN POLAND

All law is martial law

As almost everyone knows by now, martial law was declared in Poland on December 12. Tanks began attacking striking workers in Gdansk December 15 and Soviet transport planes arrived in Warsaw on December 16. These events are intended to turn into outlaws anyone going to a meeting not okayed by the Communist Party/government or the Catholic Church. Any other sort of organized activity including workplace occupations, strikes, or printing leaflets is banned and punishable by military law and possibly execution.

The outlawing of factory occupations should be very familiar to us in the United States because it has been illegal here since the 1930s. The government here can declare any strike illegal, as witnessed by the recent air controllers' walkout and the 1978-79 coal-miners' strike. Republican or Democrat, Communist or Socialist, all agree that neither the "Free" nor the "Communist" worlds can tolerate extensive workplace occupations or walkouts. Although the U.S. government appears to be incensed at Poland for declaring martial law, the same thing would occur here if 10 million people went on strike. On a smaller scale, it has occurred, such as when the National Guard was called on to intervene against public workers in Massachusetts this year and in 1979 against the coal miners.

In Poland as in the United States

Two complementary events have led to the current weakening of the people's movement in Poland. One was the quick development of a union bureaucracy followed by the discouragement of spontaneous actions and even workplace occupations by this bureaucracy. Lech Walesa and his cadre pushed for a centralized operation with all decisions going through the Gdansk office. He and a few others became the official spokespeople for the union.

The incidents of anti-police actions, the burning down of a station, and the stonings of others were denounced by Solidarity, and union people actually appeared to calm the crowd and appeal to them for the good of Poland. Even anti-Soviet grafitti and leaflets were criticized by the official statements from Gdansk.

The other event is the isolation the Poles have suffered because workers nowhere else have risen with a similar ferocity against their conditions of life and work. This only forces negotiations with the government rather than making a real change in social conditions.

We, in the U.S., can recognize some similarities. The AFL-CIA has actively discouraged workplace occupation and any other spontaneous actions workers under their control might take. At the same time, they and other U.S. union groups somewhat dishonestly support the same actions by those under Solidarity's umbrella.

Unlike the San Francisco Examiner (12/15/81) editorial which says that "the workers have gone too far," the sad fact is that the people of Poland (and those of the U.S.) have not gone far enough.

What the Polish people have done

In previous years ('56, '70, '76), the Poles went very far in that they seized goods from stores and burned down offices of their rulers. Last year, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people seized their workplaces, and goods, in particular food, were provided freely by farmers to workers on strike.

Before and during August of 1980, people were taking control and showing the Communist Party that they didn't need the state but that the state needed them. Local networking was effective on a national level in a show of massive solidarity. Since Solidarity has come to represent the people over the last year and a half, many concessions originally won by the people were bargained away in the name of economic necessity. Also, Lech Walesa was elected to the top position in the union allowing him to influence decisions concerning when, where, and who should strike as well as over what issues.

The strike by the women textile workers two months ago was unusual compared to other strikes. The press even commented on its being "without direction." The usual issues, a boss, wages or food shortages, were not at stake. Rather, they struck over the "hardship of life in Poland." Walesa personally appealed for them to return to work. This they did, winning nothing but a promise now broken.

Now the Polish workers have nothing to lose by taking their struggle further. To stop is likely to lead to a massacre, but to carry on leads only to the unknown. The fate of the Polish population depends not merely on what they do, but also on what we do.

What we can do

There is a lot more to the social movement in Poland than just Solidarity. We support that struggle, the struggle against martial law and against domination and authority in their daily lives.

The choice posed by events in Poland is not one between the

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SURVEYING THE NEW RACISM:

RECENT KLAN ACTIVITIES IN CONNECTICUT

During the past year or so, and to the dismay of most of its residents, Connecticut has had the distinct honor of being the main focus of the Ku Klux Klan's organizational activities in the northern half of the U.S. Having taken many people by surprise, and shocking not a few, the reappearance of this racist organization in a period of general reaction merits close appraisal. Further, it is crucial for people outside Connecticut to be aware of Klan activities in case they are faced with the resurfacing of this disease in their communities.

From the middle 1920s up until 1965, there was a virtually non-existent Klan presence in Connecticut. During the late Sixties, scattered cross burnings and the distribution of Klan literature signaled the resurfacing of the Klan. They became notably visible in 1968 when they helped raise money for the defense of the Minutemen, a right-wing paramilitary group. The Minutemen were on trial for an armed attack on the Voluntown farm where the Committee for Non-violent Action (CNVA) lived.

However, it is only since 1980 that the Klan has openly marched in hooded columns on the streets of Connecticut towns. Their first big rally was in Scotland, Ct., a year and a half ago, at a farm owned by the brother of the man who led the Minutemen in their attack on CNVA. They also gathered at Meriden last year in March to support a white policeman accused of unnecessarily killing a black man accused of shoplifting. This really was notable because of its disruption, mostly by activists in the International Committee Against Racism (INCAR) and black and Puerto Rican youths, who chased the Klan with rocks and bricks, eventually forcing them to seek police protection after several were injured by flying projectiles.

On July 11th, a similar incident occurred when the Klan tried once again to march in Meriden. Once again it was set upon by demonstrators armed with golf clubs, baseball bats, and rocks.

The Klan's most recent action in Connecticut has been a long preparation for a large rally they planned for March 20th of this year, also in Meriden. On the several weekends preceding the 20th, the Klan was seen marching in full regalia—American flags, full capes, hoods—and passing out literature in numerous small towns throughout Connecticut. Notably, there was almost *no* local press concerning these incidents—just a few scattered pictures and no editorializing. This disturbed many anti-Klan organizers who were planning to counter the planned rally on the 20th. However, when the much-publicized rally took place, only about twenty-five Klansmen along with perhaps twice as many supporters showed up. There were easily four times as many policemen as there were Klansmen and about 1,500 anti-Klan demonstrators. Also, that same day, more than 2,000 people—mostly from local trade unions—rallied in Hartford to protest the Klan and support racial unity.

Thus, while the Klan's activities need to be watched very carefully, it does not appear as if they constitute a major destructive force in the Northeast at the moment. And fortunately, it does not appear necessary that a major focus of grass-roots activity be on anti-Klan organizing. Far right-wing groups such as the Klan seem to be able to gather only a small fraction of the support that anti-racist groups and other leftist organizations do in Connecticut, and while the resurgence of the Klan in the last two years is disturbing, it does not appear to be a major threat.

What is disconcerting, however, has been a general tendency, both in the local press and among concerned citizens generally, to suggest that giving press to the Klan's activities can only make the situation worse. This leads to a dangerous passivity. While it is clear that sensationalist coverage can be destructive, it is imperative that clear reporting, strong editorializing, and open, public discussion of the Klan's activities, its violent history, and its racism occur in areas where the Klan is active. If a situation does indeed occur where discussion of racist activity only reinforces racist activity, that is, if we reach a point where we can no longer openly and publicly discuss these issues and the danger and violence they entail, then it is time to move elsewhere, as many people did in Germany in the early 1930s. This logic, fortunately, does not at all describe the present state of affairs, and strong, visible opposition to the Klan is important in making sure that it never becomes so in the future.

The extremely rapid resurgence of Klan activity in Connecticut, however, points to disconcerting aspects of a "free" or managed market society with its representative government and laissez-faire individualism. While gradual racial reform is typically lauded by liberals as a major achievement of liberal capitalism, in situations where Klan activity surfaces almost instantaneously, it beomes apparent that large-scale representative forms and a capitalist economy make it much easier for such racism to occur in an eerily unpreventable manner. The social forms—community and cooperative self-management, and integrated town-meeting-style direct democracy—which would make racist tendencies immediately visible do not exist. Until they do, relatively unaccountable racist activities can surface in a frighteningly rapid manner. Not only is it local organizing

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