

Poland: what next?

Alexander Shtromas on Poland - A free life interview

FL: What is your assessment of the situation in Poland?

SHTROMAS: I would like to begin by referring to my book, *Political Change: The Case of the Soviet Union*, (Verlag Peter Lang, Bern, 1981). I handed over the manuscript for publication in September, 1980, just after the emergence of Solidarity. And this is what I wrote there about Polish events of that time. 'There were no inner constraints preventing this newly established and officially recognised public body (Solidarity) from fully realising its immense potential. Without the external constraint of possible Soviet intervention the whole official totalitarian system in Poland would have been toppled by this 'second pivot' (of political organisation of society independent from and opposing the 'one-pivotal' system of the state; or in the case of Poland, of the Party-state - A.S.) immediately and irreversibly. But the presence of this external constraint, of which all the forces comprising the Polish 'second pivot' are only too well aware (not least because of the Catholic Church and the dissident workers' defence committee, KOR, constantly drawing the workers' attention to it), restrained the operation of this 'second pivot' to an extent which allowed the official system to survive and remain essentially unaffected. This does not mean that the 'second pivot' has faded away and disappeared from the Polish scene altogether. On the contrary, transformed into the institution of the independent trade union Solidarity, which was conceded by the authorities as part of the settlement ending the strikes, it is establishing itself within the enlarged framework of the official system with a view to a long-term coexistence with it. It is a cumbersome and uneasy arrangement and no one can predict whether it will fully materialise and, if so, for how long.

The history of the Polish 'second pivot' is only now beginning to develop and we shall

have to wait and see what it will produce. It is an event, as yet unprecedented in history, in the sense that it brings forward the prospect for a long-term peaceful coexistence of 'two pivots' of one country's political system based on a kind of social contract, whereas in previous history, if a 'two-pivotal' situation emerged, it was a short-term event based on a straightforward confrontation and competition of both 'pivots' for power in which one of them would quite quickly come out on top. *I have little doubt that the Party will try to breach this 'social contract' at the earliest opportunity in order to reestablish its totally unrestricted control over all walks of life in Poland* (emphasis added - A.S.). It is difficult to say what the 'second pivot's' reaction to these moves of the Party will be. *In spite of all precautions taken it would still produce the system's breakdown and provoke Soviet intervention to restore it again* (emphasis added - A.S.). One thing is sure however. If the Polish example could make a sufficient impact on the USSR, thus either initiating the process of change there or at least substantially weakening the USSR's potential for military intervention in Poland, then the Polish 'second pivot' could realise its full potential, carrying the day in Poland and paving the way for similar developments in the rest of the Soviet bloc - first and foremost in Moscow itself. For it goes without saying that *change in Moscow is the prerequisite for a definite and irreversible change in all other countries of the bloc* (emphasis added - A.S.), not excluding Poland" (p.130). I stick to what I wrote then.

FL: Do you have anything to add to what you wrote?

SHTROMAS: I would only like to emphasise two points. Firstly that it was clear from the very beginning that the situation in Poland as it was established by September 1980 could not last for long. It was obvious that the Party was not genuine in its commitment to the 21-point agreement with Solidarity and would take the earliest opportunity to restore the previous situation of its unchallenged and uncontrolled absolute rule by destroying the potentially dangerous and actually challenging and restraining

presence of the 'second pivot', Solidarity. There was also no doubt that the Polish Party would use all means within its power, including the Polish army or, if necessary, the Soviet forces, to reverse the process that threatened the very substance of its domination in Poland. I thought that this would happen not later than December 1980, whereas it happened a year later by which time the Party lost momentum and, whatever the appearances, finds itself now in great difficulty.

Secondly, it is illusory to believe that the situation could change in Poland with every other country remaining as it was before. That some people thought that this could be the case shows how prone we are to delusions, especially if they coincide with wishful thinking. It should be realised that irreversible change can materialise in the satellite countries of the USSR only after such changes have been accomplished in the metropolis, i.e. Moscow itself, although of course the process of such change there could be initiated by the striving for changes in the colonies, such as Poland, etc. Hence changes in colonies could detonate change in the Soviet Union which, in turn, would bring about change in the rest of the Soviet bloc. Hence, the Soviet problem is that if they concede the reforms in Poland they will immediately be faced with even stronger demands for the same reforms elsewhere, and not least in the USSR itself. In other words, if the Poles had been allowed to get away with what they had achieved in August-September 1980, if these achievements had been recognised and legitimised by the USSR as compatible with 'real socialism', the whole communist system throughout the Soviet bloc, not excluding the USSR itself, would have immediately collapsed and ceased to exist.

Hence, there are only two possible solutions of the Polish crisis: either the Poles win and by that explode all the communist regimes within the Soviet bloc producing the collapse of the entire existing political system from Berlin to Vladivostok (and God help them in this endeavour!), or the united communist regimes, led by Moscow, strangle Polish freedom before it has taken proper root. *Tertium non datur* - the third choice is not given. It should be obvious to everyone that

the communist rulers in Moscow and elsewhere will try, whatever the cost and effort, to apply the latter solution. They are not yet in a suicidal mood and will defend themselves and the political system assuring their dominion by all means in their power. They know only too well that by conceding even an inch they are going to lose all. That has nothing to do with ideological intransigence. It is pure and simple political realism.

In the book I have indicated that the Polish crisis will develop in two stages: 1) the Polish Party will try to restore the *status quo ante*, i.e. its position of an absolute ruler, by its own means - this is what had already happened with Jaruzelski's introduction of the martial law on December 13, 1981; 2) if this is to fail, and there is very little doubt that it will fail, indeed, the Soviets will have no choice but to intervene in Poland either directly or by East European satellites' proxy - this has not yet happened; hence, we are still in the middle of the scenario given in my book. The problem is whether the Soviets will have enough moral and political strength, not military hardware; that is the real question.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

If they haven't, the system is finished. It is exactly like the situation in the Biblical story about the battle between David and Goliath. Through my many contacts with people from the USSR and Eastern Europe - East Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, Russians and my own Lithuanians, etc. - I have sensed, and one could say established, that the almost unanimous psychological attitude of all these people was deep anxiety over the events in Poland. Almost all of them firmly believe that the Soviets will sooner or later crush Solidarity by whatever means, that the Poles stand no chance to succeed and were crazy to start the whole confrontation with the Soviet giant in the first place. They are also extremely anxious about the repercussions of the crackdown on Poland from which they themselves will suffer - such as tougher Party control over all walks of life, increase of international tensions, etc. For themselves they therefore decided to keep a very low profile, not letting themselves be provoked by the Poles in any way, let alone

following them in their endeavour. It is by no means an accident that after August 1980 dissident activities in the USSR and East European countries other than Poland significantly diminished. Nobody wants to pay because of (and for) the Poles, the heavy price of a Soviet crackdown.

It has happened so many times before and they have determined not to let it happen again. Indeed, in 1956, the Poles started the movement for 'renewal' and the Hungarians who took up the Polish initiative were crushed; in 1968 the Poles started to demand reforms and the Czech reformists who followed suit were crushed. The Poles, however, were always lucky in avoiding the worst and somehow 'getting away with it' without experiencing the Soviet stick. Seeing the Soviet muscle flexed elsewhere they always then managed to restrain themselves and fall back into line. So now all the others in the Soviet bloc have decided that this time the Poles should play the game alone to the very end, while they will be silently waiting to see how the Poles - the David - fare in this confrontation with the dreadful giant - the Soviet Goliath. One must remember, however, that when David cut off Goliath's head and showed it to his hesitant and frightened troops, they became so enthusiastic that without any hesitation they stormed the Philistine army, previously deemed by them invincible and succeeded in crushing it. If the Soviet Union shows weakness in (or, even more, inability of) putting down the Poles, exactly this will happen to the Soviet Empire - it will be crushed like the Philistine army. Hence, the present calm is the one before the storm.

One final example will illustrate this. There is a joke in the Soviet Union which has spread across the bloc; it involves a man who has been queuing for eight hours to buy some food. When he finally gets to the counter there is no food left. Very angry, he starts to curse the regime, the Party, communism, etc., until a plainclothes policeman takes him to one side and asks him what he thinks would have happened to him if he had been heard to say such things in public a year ago. The man knows full well but, astonished, he asks if the same won't happen now. And the policeman tells him no, nothing will happen now, but next

time he had better be careful. So the man rushes home relieved and happy. At home he tells his wife what has happened to him and concludes the story by saying: "It seems that now the country really is bust. We knew for a long time that there were food shortages, but now they are even short of bullets!" And this is the test to come: if they are really short of 'bullets' then David will slay Goliath; if they are not, they will probably be able to win (by putting down the Poles) a short respite before the next crisis emerges.

FL: Could you be more explicit on just why the Soviets didn't intervene in Poland in 1956 and 1968?

SHTROMAS: In 1956 the Poles concentrated their demands on bringing Gomulka back to power. In 1948 Stalin accused Gomulka of nationalist and bourgeois deviations, removed him from office and put him under arrest. Therefore everyone in Poland believed that he must be the right man to lead the party and the people away from Stalinism to a far better and more decent life. Very soon, however, the Poles discovered that their hopes were misplaced. This disenchantment was expressed in a nutshell by a then popular Polish 'question and answer' joke. The question: 'What had changed in the country after the Polish October of 1956?' (the events which brought Gomulka back to power). 'Nothing but Gomulka' was the answer. It was easy for the Soviets to handle one person and they did it. The Poles got away in 1956 because Gomulka skilfully did the Soviet job for them. He put the Poles down surreptitiously, after luring them into believing that things were going to change. The bloody suppression of the 1956 Hungarian revolution also came as a strong warning to the Poles not to push too far. So the Hungarians paid the price and Poland didn't. One of the chief causes of this was the fact that Gomulka cooperated but Imre Nagy did not. So this led to a confrontation of two governmental lines, and the same happened in 1968 when the Czech government refused to toe the Soviet line and was crushed whereas, against the background of the invasion in Czechoslovakia, Gomulka's government found enough strength to put down the 1968 movement for reform in Poland without 'Soviet help'.

Now in Poland for the time being the government is doing the Soviet job, but as soon as the government either starts confronting the Soviets or becomes paralysed and unable to perform the Soviet job properly the Soviet Union will have no choice but to intervene in Poland. We now have the Soviet and Polish governments cooperating; for the time being the Polish government is in effective control, so there is as yet no need for an outright Soviet intervention.

FL: In 1968 the Poles did appear to win some concessions, such as greater religious freedom. How did they manage this?

SHTROMAS: Yes, 1968 was interesting because the Party won by playing on the nationalist sentiments of the Poles. To make the nationalist pledge more convincing the Party had to agree to give the Church more freedom. When in 1968 the Polish intellectuals and students went out on protest demonstrations and marches in Warsaw and other cities, the Party claimed that the people who were protesting were themselves the culprits, the very backbone of the Stalinist regime in Poland. This was a hint at the Jewish origins of many of the protesters, some of whom (but very few) indeed were previously quite closely associated with the regime. They were called 'Stalinists-Zionists'. And General Moczar, the Party man behind these moves, said that all the Stalinists now turned Zionists should be expelled from Poland, and that Poles should now stand together and run the system by and for themselves. The people swallowed this and were appeased, naively believing that no real Pole, Communist or not, would serve the interests of Moscow in preference to those of Poland. The Jews could, but the 'pure' Poles, never.

This meant that the working-class people were split from the intelligentsia and the latter were left on their own. Then the movement of the intelligentsia, left alone and deprived of mass support, was easily crushed by the regime. The nationalist majority gave the Party a chance to rule as Poles should. Yet by 1970 they were already disappointed and the workers' strikes and riots started, the most important one in Gdansk's Lenin shipyard. The regime brutally suppressed the

workers, shooting many of them in direct street clashes. By doing so the regime, along with the shot workers, killed also the last remnants of its credibility among them. Urgent measures had to be taken by the Party to bridge this credibility gap. Since it was now impossible to play the trump card of anti-semitism again, the Party had to sacrifice its leader, Gomulka, blaming him for everything that went wrong. Gierek was brought in, and announced new measures such as consultations with the people in a new framework of democratic feedback, etc. This didn't materialize either. In 1976 there were strikes and riots again, and again promises were made and broken, with many workers severely punished for the part they played in the 1976 events. It was within this pattern that 1980 was shaped. The 1980 movement was cleverer and reflected past experience.

FL: So now they wanted more than just promises?

SHTROMAS: Yes, they had been deceived so many times. And so many times manipulated. The Party is now almost resourceless as far as new gimmicks and ploys are concerned. All the possible cards have been already played by it. It played the Jewish trump card, which had temporarily borne some fruit due to the fact that the Polish Communist Party was originally very small and almost entirely Jewish. (Hence, for the Poles, communism was always a Jewish movement having nothing in common with Poland and the Poles). The security police and the ideology were under the control of Bermann, a Polish Jew, the greatest butcher of Polish people. The KGB apparatus itself was run mainly by Jews. One of them, Swiatlo, who invented all sorts of nasty tortures, afraid of Gomulka's comeback, was the first to escape in 1956 to the West, where he has written the most eloquent and cynical memoirs about KGB activities in Poland. The Planning Commission, the chief economic body of the country, was also run by a Jewish old Party man, Hillary Minc. Even Poles who were not Jews were considered by the Poles to be Jews if they had a pre-war communist record. Almost all the Jews were expelled from Poland in 1968, right down to the fourth and fifth generations.

Hitler, as one knows, was interested only in Jews of the third generation. Because of this massive expulsion there was no outsider left to be blamed for the anti-Polish policies of the regime. In a very hard way the Poles learned that their real enemies are not only outsiders (like the Jews) or foreigners (like the Russians) but the Communist Party as such, whether run by Jews or the Poles themselves.

FL: What then is the Party in Poland?

SHTROMAS: By Party, I mean the sovereign body of power. If one could make a parallel with the British political system, it combines the powers of the Parliament, the Cabinet, all the Ministries and local authorities. The Party is thus an apparatus, the individual membership playing only a subsidiary role as a reservoir for the recruitment of apparatchiks and as the agents of the apparat within all public bodies. (The latter role is assured by the strict rules of party discipline formulated in the principles of so-called democratic centralism.) The Politburo is here the highest authority, combining the roles of the supreme legislator (Parliament), policymaker (Cabinet) and executive body (Cabinet again). Under the Politburo there is the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Party - the executive Cabinet - running all the day-to-day affairs of the country. The membership of the Secretariat to a great extent overlaps with that of the Politburo. The head of the Secretariat, the General Secretary of the Party's CC, is *ex officio* also the Chairman of the Politburo and thus the only real boss of the whole country directly responsible and accountable to Moscow. Then there is the huge apparatus of the Party's Central Committee working under the Secretariat with numerous departments acting as the real ministries and covering all fields - all without exception - of the country's political, social, economic and cultural life. This central apparatus of real authority is directly extending its absolute power to all provinces, down to the tiniest administrative districts, via the local committees of the Party; these are also complex apparatuses, and it is the first secretaries of these committees who are the real bosses of the localities subordinated to their committees. All other institutions - like the Parliament (Sejm), the Council of

Ministers, the official ministries, the local councils and their executives, the Army, the trade unions, the youth organisations and other so-called public bodies (for example, the prestigious Writers' Union) - are either rubber-stamping the Party's decisions or executing them under constant and full control of the ubiquitous Party bodies. The system of nomenklatura entitles the Party to fill all the responsible positions outside the Party's apparatus as well as within it.

NO PARTY COLLAPSE

FL: What do you think of the notion that it is the military who have taken power in Poland?

SHTROMAS: I think it is utterly wrong. It was the Party, using its military branch to strengthen its position and restore its absolute and unchallengeable authority over the country. This is what the so-called 'military coup' was all about and nothing else besides. One should not be misled by the military uniforms of the people who are running Poland today. The military have not overthrown the Party's rule; on the contrary, they have strengthened it by means of martial law - the last and ultimate card which had remained for the Party to play. The generals who now came to the top of the Politburo (disguised as the Military Council but in fact containing in its midst the civilian members of the Politburo, such as the hardliner Olszowski) are, strictly speaking, not real military people but - the Party's envoys to the Army. General Jaruzelski, for example, started his military career (after being trained in the Soviet Union) as a political officer of the special security forces that fought against Polish national resistance during 1945-1947 and exterminated in the process of this fight more than 200,000 Poles opposing the imposition of Communist rule over Poland. By 1956, aged only 33, he was promoted to the rank of general and in 1960 was the head of the Political Directorate of the Polish Army - a body which, strictly speaking, is not military, since it is directly run by and accountable to the Central Committee of the Party, which thus is able to supervise the Army from within down to even the smallest detachment. Hence, Jaruzelski made his career as a typical Party apparatchik dispatched to perform his Party

functions within the Army. Jaruzelski's first deputy, General Siwicki, had been trained together with Jaruzelski in the Soviet Union and followed a career very similar to that of Jaruzelski. He also quickly made the rank of general and soon occupied the crucial position of the Chief of the Army's General Staff. One should not forget that it was General Siwicki whom the Party (and General Jaruzelski, who had been appointed Minister of Defence in 1968, exactly when the troubles in Poland started) entrusted to lead the two Polish divisions that, along with Soviet troops, were sent to Czechoslovakia to crush the 'Prague Spring' in August 1968.

One should also note that the conscript army, the main Polish military force, has not as yet been involved in the operations enforcing the martial law. Moreover, the new 'military' authorities, before starting these operations, made sure that the conscript army was safely locked up in the barracks. They have only used the special security and police forces (the ZOMO), altogether about 350,000 strong, dispatching them from one region to another to suppress any possible resistance by Solidarity. That they partly succeeded in this enterprise, despite their modest numbers, was due to the fact that the members of Solidarity were completely taken by surprise by the sudden turn of events. It is characteristic that Western people now returning from Poland say that they do not see many troops or tanks on the streets (except for Gdansk and other trouble-centres) and that 'travelling is almost impossible as far as official permission is concerned, but travelling without permission is as easy as travelling in England - the check-ups are very, very lax' (from an interview with a Cambridge printer on the BBC radio programme 'The World this Weekend').

One also should not forget the fact that Jaruzelski, long before the introduction of martial law, was not simply an army general and Minister of Defence. He was already the Secretary-General of the Party (and, hence, the Chairman of the all-powerful Politburo) and Prime Minister, i.e. he had the totality of power in his hands. To attain such a position without Moscow's approval (or, moreover, suggestion) is plainly impossible.

There is little doubt too that the whole "military" operation started on 13 December, 1980, was carefully planned during the whole period of Jaruzelski's occupation of the highest offices in the country (if not before) and not only in Warsaw but also in Moscow, which explains the numerous trips the Soviet Marshal Kulikov, the Chief Commander of Warsaw Pact forces, was making to Warsaw during the last months before 'military' rule.

And finally, if Poland had been an independent country, one could have envisaged the possibility of a military coup against the rule of the Party. Such an event could take place in the Soviet Union if some discontented generals staged a plot and could effectively get rid beforehand of the system of rigid Party control over the Army by means of the Chief Political Directorate and KGB agencies. Such an Army-Party confrontation in the Soviet Union, a country independent of any outside power, would be played out between two self-sufficient entities. In Poland, which in fact is a Soviet dependency, the situation is entirely different, since its Army is not a self-sufficient entity but an element of the united armed forces of the Warsaw Pact run by Soviet generals, who are thus the supremos over the whole Polish military establishment and Jaruzelski himself. Hence, the Party and the Army of the Soviet Union are in full control of the Party and, to no lesser extent, of the Army of Poland. Therefore any genuine rebellion of the Polish Army would have to be directed in the first place against its superior foreign authority, not against the Polish people, who in this event would wholeheartedly support their Army and join with it in this liberatory (though desperate and, most likely, self-destructive) venture.

I do not exclude that this could still happen in the event of Soviet intervention, if, of course, the main forces of the Polish Army, now confined to their barracks, were able to break out and join the people in their resistance to the invaders. This, however, would mean the end of Jaruzelski and his military establishment, and their replacement by genuine military people (colonels rather than generals). One should not overlook, however, the difficulty of realizing such a plan. The main problem here is that each

"separate" army unit the Polish Army) within the united forces of the Warsaw Pact has at its disposal only three days' combat supply of ammunition, the rest being controlled and supplied exclusively by the Soviet commanders of the Warsaw Pact forces themselves.

FL: How would you weigh up the influence of the Church in helping to bring about the current events; more specifically, the part played by the Pope?

SHTROMAS: The situation would probably not have come as far as it has if it had not been for the Polish Pope, his visit to Poland and the great impetus that this visit gave to the Poles. The very self-assurance the Poles acquired by seeing the most important post in the world, to them, being filled by their own man, who so clearly shared their quest for independence and freedom, was a tremendous boost. Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, the Archbishop of Krakow, was elected Pope in October 1978 and visited Poland in June 1979, a year before the first strikes. His triumphal visit greatly encouraged the Poles to press the authorities to satisfy their demands and, despite the harsh experience of reprisals against strikers in 1956 (Poznan), 1970 and 1976, risk striking again.

The Pope's role remains crucial in the development of current events. One should make no bones but clearly see that the Pope is in fact the Chief Commander of all Poles and they will certainly heed whatever he suggests or tells them. The Pope did not say a word in support of Jaruzelski and martial law; he did not even call on the Poles to obey the authorities. On the contrary, he outrightly condemned them and explicitly asked them to remove the restrictions of martial law and release all the detainees. Moreover, he expressed his full solidarity with Solidarity and, as we know, Solidarity is calling for the continuation of passive resistance to the authorities. This attitude of the Pope clearly indicates that in the long run all Jaruzelski's efforts to "normalize" Poland are bound to fail. The only thing which could bring that about is Soviet intervention accomplished either directly or by East-European proxy.

Also, something else occurred in Poland that has not yet occurred in the Soviet Union or

in any other communist country. As I have already said, in 1968 the troubles were mainly organised and perpetrated by the members of the intelligentsia, intellectuals and students. The anti-semitic card played by the Party was then accepted by the workers and thus deprived the intellectuals of larger popular support, in spite of the fact that their quest was made on behalf of and in the genuine interests of all Poles. By 1970, however, the workers found themselves fooled by the Party and rioted. When they were shot at by order of the by now 'purely Polish' Communist Party the remaining faith the workers had in the ability of the Poles to run a communist government in Polish interests went the same way. So when the troubles began in 1976 the intellectuals and the workers had learnt their lessons, and united forces. This unity was clearly expressed in the intelligentsia's immediate reaction to the workers' suppression in 1976 by creation of the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR) and the workers' full acceptance of help offered by this Committee. It must be remembered that Gierek, in his early years, had taken rather a liberal pose in allowing a good deal of the intelligentsia's dissident activity to go unpunished, which gave it some extra impetus.

The 1968 pledge to have Polish communism had led to greater freedom being given to the Catholic Church. The eloquent expression of this was the victory of the then Archbishop of Krakow, Karol Cardinal Wojtyla (the present Pope), in gaining, after a long struggle, the right to build the first new church since the advent of communist rule, in Nova Huta. The Church, thus strengthened, had also become a 'party' to the people's intelligentsia alliance of 1976. It was this tripartite unity of the workers, the Church and the intelligentsia formed in 1976 that made the events of 1980 possible.

FL: What of the peasants?

SHTROMAS: They played an active part supporting Solidarity, but they can never be really crucial. They are a very inefficient power as they are spread throughout the countryside, and tend to remain unorganised. However, when the tri-partite alliance had emerged they actively supported it. This was

natural since the peasants had many of their own specific grievances. Despite the fact that 80% of the land has since 1956 been in private hands, the peasants in the private sector have been deliberately neglected, denied access to meaningful credit, and faced with enormous bureaucratic obstacles when wanting to purchase agricultural machinery or other industrial products, etc., while huge resources have been wasted by the authorities on the inefficient state farms. In this way the regime tried to force upon the peasants the 'voluntary' acceptance of collective farms but achieved only the complete alienation of the peasants from officialdom.

FL: So it was four forces coming together that explains the length of time it has taken the Party to act?

SHTROMAS: Yes, by 1980 they were really moulded into a single structure, which wasn't the case before, when the Party could isolate them from one another and thus weaken the opposition to the point of total ineffectiveness by simply applying the old maxim of divide-and-rule.

FL: This, then, also explains the Russian reluctance to intervene directly in the situation.

SHTROMAS: The Russians are always very reluctant to intervene, preferring to see any crisis resolved by local means. They will directly intervene, as a very last resort, only at the point of no return; for example, when a particular Communist government in disobedience of the USSR pushes reforms so far as to demonstrate to the peoples of the whole Empire that Soviet-style socialism is reversible. To accept such reforms would be unthinkable for the Soviets, as it would lead directly to the same demands being put forward simultaneously in the USSR and elsewhere in the Soviet bloc, which would inevitably produce the breakdown of the whole Communist system in the Soviet-controlled part of the world. In 1968 in Czechoslovakia, the Soviets, being most reluctant to intervene directly, constantly tried to persuade Dubcek to water down his proposed reforms, but when they saw that nothing was being done despite the promises, they were left with no choice but direct

intervention. Hence, one cause for Soviet intervention is a conflict between the metropolitan and colonial governments when the latter is unwilling or unable to follow the directives of the former. (This was the cause of Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.) By intervening, the Soviets ended the disobedience (or ineffectiveness) of the government in question and then replaced it by a trustworthy and obedient government, assuring its effective performance by active presence of their military force.

Another cause for Soviet intervention could be the disintegration of an obedient pro-Soviet government under attack from the people of the country. The Soviets would then have to intervene to restore their power and suppress the people. This is what is likely to happen in Poland.

FL: So in Poland now, the situation is quite different from that in Czechoslovakia in 1968?

SHTROMAS: Yes, it is different. In Czechoslovakia it was a dispute between the Soviet and Czechoslovak governments which had to be resolved by intervention. The working class and the masses of people were not so much involved, for reasons which it would take too long to explain. In Poland, on the contrary, the confrontation is not between the two governments, Polish and Soviet, but between the union of these two governments and the Polish people, who have managed to get themselves organised so well that this presents a mortal threat to both these regimes. Because of that the dangers for the Soviets, if they finally decide to intervene in Poland directly, are much greater than they were in the case of Czechoslovakia. They will certainly face the active resistance of the whole Polish population and will have a much more daunting task striving for "normalization" of that country than they did in Czechoslovakia. The greatest risk, however, is that the troops under the Soviet command will consist of soldiers and officers dreaming about Polish reforms for their own countries and no one knows how obedient they will be when ordered to put down the Poles. The Communists must be well aware of this great risk, since they must have learned from Lenin

how easy it is 'to transform an imperialist war into a civil one.'

But the risks are always great, as one never knows what the reaction within the Soviet Union to such drastic moves will be. The situation of power within the Soviet Union is very ambivalent, and very precarious. The problem is that the gerontocratic 'promotees of Stalin' who now hold power within the Soviet Union do not allow anyone who is a bit younger or of a different background to come into any real decision-making body. They know only too well how dissatisfied, indeed frustrated, everybody is with their rigidity fear of change and inefficiency; especially the technocrats (already in the second echelons of power), who are watching over them and will use each mistake or defeat to oust them and assume power for themselves. So the Soviet gerontocrats are very careful and will try their utmost not to risk anything. They are not adventurous, which is what makes the Soviet Union so different from Hitler's Germany. Therefore, intervention is the last thing they will use.

I would say the Soviet leadership has probably even developed a plan to keep the Soviet troops out, rather using them as a support for the intervention of other Warsaw Pact troops. There are well-founded rumours that very many Soviet officers are wearing Polish uniforms and are already acting as the main guardians of the martial law. Moreover, the Soviets already have two armed divisions inside Poland. So when, and if, they intervene they will try their utmost to do it by proxy and in a slow and surreptitious way.

FL: There is some talk that Jaruzelski may turn out to be a second Pilsudski.

SHTROMAS: Not really; if anyone it will be Walesa. By introducing martial law and spilling Polish blood, Jaruzelski has committed political suicide. He has lost any chance to be credible with the Poles again. Initially (before martial law) he had some credibility, due to the Polish nationalist belief that the army is still primarily a Polish force. But they are now learning, again the hard way, that it is not enough to be just Polish. They learnt it in 1968-1970 about the

Polish communists; now they are learning it about the Polish communist military people. Today the Poles are not so stupid and naive as to believe that Jaruzelski's actions were done without Moscow being behind them. They know pretty well that they had been planned for at least six months and with Soviet connivance. They have no doubt that Jaruzelski is a mere instrument of the bosses from Moscow.

FL: So you're saying that because he shot Poles he cannot now be redeemed?

SHTROMAS: Yes, he is finished. There are now only two possibilities. The Polish masses may either unwillingly concede the victory to Jaruzelski or otherwise face Soviet intervention in whatever form. The former possibility is a very unlikely one. Of course one could argue that the Poles might rationally decide that it is better to have Jaruzelski than the Russians and accept him as the lesser evil. I am afraid, however, that this is an argument of purely academic value. In reality things look very different, especially if one looks more closely at the recent declarations of the Pope and Archbishop Glemp and pays due attention to the insistent (and persistent) calls of the now clandestine Solidarity to continue with passive resistance to Jaruzelski's regime. The Polish crisis has not yet been solved; in fact it is only now beginning to develop. The people who think that Jaruzelski has managed to destroy Polish freedom and now sits firmly in the saddle will very soon find out how wrong they were.

Then there is the other possibility - Soviet intervention. That it would succeed is, for reasons explained before, not at all a foregone conclusion. It could even precipitate the breakdown of 'real socialism' in the Soviet Union itself. But if it succeeded in putting the Poles down and forcing them to accept the realities of power, what would be the Soviets' real gain? They would certainly win another respite before a new similar crisis emerged somewhere - a respite maybe for twelve years or so (until now such critical situations have come about with an astonishing regularity every 12 years - 1956, 1968, 1980) but no longer than that. Sooner or later the Soviet regime will fall, whatever the efforts to keep it going.

FL: So what in your opinion will happen in Poland next?

SHTROMAS: Since the Church, Walesa, and others who carry in Poland real authority are in fact calling for further confrontation, this is what is going to happen. The battle is far from over. Jaruzelski counted on a sudden and immediate destruction of Solidarity. He thought that if he detained and otherwise put out of circulation several thousand of Solidarity's leading activists along with the intellectual trouble-makers (there are different figures as far as the number of detainees is concerned; the authorities claim that there are not much more than 5,000 of them; objective Western sources put that number at 15,000 and Solidarity talks about 50,000), the organisational structure of Solidarity would be broken and the people would have (though unwillingly) to unite around his regime, the sole uniting force of society remaining on the scene. But this didn't happen and he must now think about the perpetuation of the regime of martial law, because without it it will be impossible to force people to work and maintain a semblance of order in the country at large. But his resources are so limited that any long term settlement under martial law won't work. The resources will also be insufficient to prevent people from gradually and surreptitiously reestablishing the organisational caucus of Solidarity again.

I am sure that during the next few months a new clandestine structure of Solidarity will emerge and there will be more confrontation, this time with no prospects for negotiating and arranging a new agreement along the lines of August 1980 left since the remnants of credibility of all sections of the Party have been destroyed by their latest military actions. The question is whether the Soviets, in view of all this, will intervene.

This is not a simple question. There are no firm guarantees that the intervention will be a success, and the Soviets are extremely reluctant to take any risks. They are also afraid of the repercussions, on their grip on power, of the inevitably ensuring international isolation of the USSR, and of the necessity of introducing a much tougher domestic policy line. After all, this can

provoke a rebellion of the middle-range bureaucrats in the Soviet apparatus. This is what happened in Czechoslovakia in 1968 when President Novotny and his fellow party leaders tried to reintroduce with insufficient power resources a tough, old-style Stalinist response to any criticism or suggestions of 'within-system' change. This rebellion ousted Novotny with his conservative team and marked the ascendancy of Dubcek and his moderate-liberal team committed to democratization and reform. But because Czechoslovakia was part of the Empire, the Soviets stepped in and prevented real change. But there is presumably no one to step in if the same thing happens in Moscow. (Or, perhaps, the Americans could do it for the sake of securing the *status quo* and stability of the present world order?!).

Hence, in my view, 1982 will be a very significant year, maybe even a decisive one. The Polish crisis will have to be resolved during this year one way or another. It may result in the collapse of the Soviet system, which would open new challenging vistas for the creation of a more peaceful and harmonious world. It may also mark another Soviet victory, which would no doubt produce a much more tense situation in the entire world for a number of years. This is a very tragic and desperate prospect indeed. But like so many other extreme situations it could suddenly crack and be replaced by an era of evolving freedom and peace. We should just wait and see what is going to happen 'next to the next'. Any definite prophecy here will be inevitably wrong.

FL: How effective do you believe any Polish resistance could be to a harsh and explicitly Soviet-backed crackdown?

SHTROMAS: You must first remember that, as I mentioned before, the conscript army is confined to its barracks, and that some regular soldiers, even from the special security forces, have been disobeying orders to shoot. It is difficult to see no resistance from the Poles, even to the Soviets. It also does seem that the Poles are rather more likely to call the Soviet bluff and to get them to intervene if they dare than to concede Jaruzelski's attempts of restoring the pre-August 1980 situation.

The Libertarian Alliance is an independent, non-party group, with a shared desire to work for a free society.

Only then will we see what the real results of the events started in Poland in August 1980 are going to be. Being an optimist (and considering pessimism to be nothing else but an excuse for inactivity) I would like to believe that 1982 will be the year of Polish victory and thus of liberation of all nations (e.g. the Russians) suffering under the Soviet Communist yoke and also of all mankind from the fears of international tension, the dangers of a world war and the threat of enslavement by the Soviets.

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