

Polish government is under Soviet gun

by Konstantin George

Amid the hoopla around the imminent formation of a non-communist government in Poland, reported in the Western press as a "victory for freedom," some salient facts are being ignored.

First is that the Solidarnosc movement's decision to lead that government, was by no means a free choice, but the result of an ultimatum by Poland's President Wojciech Jaruzelski, backed by the Soviets with the implicit threat of a bloodbath.

Second is that the new Solidarnosc government is intended by those who forced its creation despite the great reluctance of Lech Walesa and other Solidarnosc leaders, to "take the rap" for new, bitter economic austerity measures which will worsen Poland's already catastrophic collapse.

On Friday, Aug. 12, Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Vadim Perfilyev announced that the Soviet Union is "deeply concerned" about "attempts to exploit the process of forming a government" with the aim of "destabilizing the situation" in Poland and harming Poland's "alliance obligations to the Warsaw Treaty Organization." Soviet ambassador to Poland Vladimir Brovnikov spent the day armtwisting the leaders of Poland's Peasant Party and Democratic Party, the two parties with which Solidarnosc were discussing forming a governing coalition without the Communists.

Polish Prime Minister-designate Czeslaw Kiszczak then resigned, paving the way for Solidarnosc to lead the government, which it had so far refused to do. On Aug. 15, with Soviet backing, President Jaruzelski had a statement read warning that unless talks began to form "an all-party government," Poland faced "dangerous instability."

It was not Jaruzelski's warning alone, but the tacit threat of a Soviet military move, that forced Solidarnosc leader Lech Walesa's hand. In an interview with Radio Warsaw, Aug. 15, speaking like a man with a gun to his head, he said, "We are not removing the [Communist] party from power. Those most important ministries, and here I'm speaking about the physical continuity [of the state], those should stay in the hands of the party. Because we don't want to take power. We only want to achieve a great reform which the party cannot achieve. We will not disrupt the European order, and not create threats for those allied to the Warsaw Pact."

The Soviets intend to have an invasion capability in place

should matters move out of their control. Soviet forces, ringing Poland from every side, will be on maneuvers in the three-week period between Sept. 15 and Oct. 7. On July 22, TASS reported that the official size of each maneuver had been scaled down, to 13,000 or fewer troops. This reduction has conveniently eliminated the need to allow mandatory Western observers at the maneuvers, under the Stockholm "Confidence-Building Measures" agreement. The exercises encompass:

- About 13,000 Soviet troops of the Western Group of Forces, based in East Germany, instead of the original plan for 25,000 troops, between Sept. 15 and Oct. 7.

- 13,000 Soviet troops of the Central Group of Forces, based in Czechoslovakia, instead of the original plan of 16,500 troops, in the late September-early October.

- Two sets of September maneuvers in the Baltic Military District, one of airborne troops, and one of combined army and airborne troops, each of 1,500 troops, instead of the original plan of 3,500 troops. These maneuvers will feature units of the 76th Guards Airborne Division, based at Kaunas, Lithuania, and will be held very close to the Polish border.

All these maneuvers are exclusively by Soviet forces, with no involvement by Warsaw Pact allies. Not reported by TASS, is the fact that annual Soviet maneuvers are held in late September and early October in the Belorussian and Carpathian Military Districts, also bordering Poland.

Economy worsens

The underlying economic woes, above all the food supply breakdown, have become so severe that even with Solidarnosc joining the government to take the political heat off the Communists, no guarantees exist that Poland won't go out of control by autumn. Meat disappeared from the state-controlled shops soon after Aug. 1. As confirmed by Radio Warsaw on Aug. 14, by the weekend of Aug. 12-13, meat had also vanished for the first time from the free market in one northeastern region, Olystzyn. Radio Warsaw also reported that in Lodz, a city of 850,000, rice, buckwheat kasha (Poland's main cereal staple), sugar, and flour could not be found in stores.

Reports are circulating that elderly food shoppers have died on food queues, and that queuers have stepped over their dead bodies, because they are fearful of otherwise losing their places on line, the *Financial Times* reported from Warsaw Aug. 17. By official figures, inflation is at an annual 236% rate, and will hit 315% by December.

But the Western bankers who backed U.S. President George Bush's refusal to undertake a fundamental international economic reform, and his consequent rejection of Lech Walesa's pleas for a \$10 billion development program for Poland, agree with Moscow: for the sake of social control, Poland must continue to suffer and starve, but under a "free" government.