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## East European Reactions to the Polish December

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It is appropriate to stress at this point that obligations under the international covenants on human rights are to be fulfilled by the states signatory to these covenants. They alone can raise the question of the failure to abide by these or other provisions of the covenants by a participating state. The order established by the covenants should be observed in the process. Meanwhile, these standards of international law are glaringly violated by Western countries, first of all, the United States, which are not parties either to the covenants on human rights, or to the overwhelming majority of other multilateral conventions on rights of man.

The West-launched anti-Polish 'propaganda aggression,' as General Jaruzelski called it, constitutes interference in Poland's domestic affairs, and is an obvious violation of universally recognized standards of international law, including those reaffirmed by the Final Act. The discriminatory measures announced against Poland by the US, and some of its allies, are against international law. This is overt blackmail and pressure, an attempt to shaken loose the peaceful structure of state-to-state relations.<sup>5</sup>

#### NOTES

1. *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Final Act*, Cmnd. 6198, London, 1975; Soviet text in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, 2 August 1975
2. *Ibid.*
3. These Covenants are reprinted in Ian Brownlie, ed., *Basic Documents on Human Rights*, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1981, pp. 118-45.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 129-30.
5. This article is supplied by courtesy of Novosti Press Agency.

## EAST EUROPE'S REACTIONS TO THE POLISH DECEMBER

STEPHEN BOWERS

The imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981 was a depressing though instructive event. The apparent death of the wideranging reform movement set in motion by the actions of the Solidarity movement seemed, like the crushing of the 'Prague Spring', to signify that the prospects for the peaceful pluralist evolution of Communist Eastern Europe remained unpromising. Official reactions to the 'Polish December' throughout the region confirmed that grim prognosis. Relatively independent foreign policies and limited, 'liberal' economic reforms might find friendly receptions among some of the regional party leaderships from time to time, but Solidarity's demands were perceived as pressing well beyond the limits of accepted diversity.

An examination of Eastern Europe's official response to the Polish crisis is worthwhile for several reasons. First, it reveals the dominant party attitudes on non-party reform movements and how to deal with them. The extent to which the various parties viewed Solidarity as a threat to socialism is strong evidence that general domestic reforms of this nature are not likely to gain official acceptance in Eastern Europe in the near future. The largely favourable evaluations of the regime's state of emergency indicates that the Polish methods might be applied in other nations in the unlikely event that they faced a similar crisis. Secondly, such an examination is useful because it helps us gauge the degree of unity within Eastern Europe on one issue. Obviously, there is not total or absolute unanimity, but there is, as this study shows, at least a general consensus. Thirdly a look at the response of individual countries enables one to determine the impact of national considerations — historical or contemporary — on policies relative to an important regional issue. Finally, this examination provides a useful contrast with the divided Western reactions to the Polish crisis. While the West agonized over a proper response, Eastern Europe, as we will see, formulated a relatively concerted one which included a diversity of supportive statements as well as an important material relief effort.

#### PERCEPTIONS OF THE THREAT TO POLISH SOCIALISM

The primary focus of this study is on the reactions of the active 'Bloc' states — East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. Their views on the nature of the threat to Polish

statement on 15 December which noted the legitimate concern of the Romanians for the 'baleful evolution of the activity of anti-socialist forces' in Poland. The result of this activity was great 'disorder in economic life', chaos in social and political affairs, and serious danger to Poland's 'progress, freedom, and independence'. In a more detailed analysis on 26 December, *Scinteia* explained that Poland's problems stemmed from four factors: economic shortcomings, social failings, bad weather, and lastly, 'extremists'.

While not part of the 'Bloc', Yugoslavia's view of these events is interesting because it provides an independent while still communist perspective. The Yugoslav leadership flatly rejected the notion that the Polish conflict was one in which the counterrevolutionaries were on one side and the revolutionaries on the other. Rather, they depicted the situation as a struggle between the 'Polish working class...and the statist, bureaucratic, and centralist monopoly.' The Yugoslav leadership also suggested that the Soviet Union was responsible for many of the negative developments in Poland since 1945 and faulted the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) for rejecting Solidarity's call for a national plebiscite on the country's government. The plebiscite, they insisted, was a 'chance for the party to restore the trust of the working class.'<sup>6</sup>

#### EVALUATIONS OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

The 'Bloc' consensus is somewhat less complete in terms of the various estimates of the necessity and success of the Polish state of emergency. Yet, they all agreed that some decisive action was required and none joined in supporting the charges of the renegade Yugoslavs that the martial law order was in reality a 'state of war'.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, all of the 'Bloc' members consistently refuted suggestions by the Italian Communist Party that Jaruzelski's government had seriously erred in imposing a state of emergency.

The norm, therefore, was support for martial law, but the enthusiasm with which support was given varied. The greatest restraint, once again, was exercised by the Stalinist Romanians who agreed that martial law was necessary because the Polish people had 'run out of patience', but softened their support for the measure by suggesting that a 'strengthening of the active participation of the working class' would be required before a restoration of national unity was possible. This assertion appeared in several Romanian publications and must be taken as at least an implied criticism of the actions associated with the Polish state of emergency. It is, however, a very limited one and not nearly as fundamental as, for example, the Yugoslav insistence that the 'democratic path' was the appropriate one for Poland.

The Hungarian response was also fairly restrained in its evaluations of martial law. The Hungarian leadership maintained that martial law was necessary but cautioned that the 'road leading to calm is still a long one.' The party daily observed that the state of emergency had, however, 'created the prerequisites for a gradual restoration of the economy, for reforms, and ensuring public order and strengthening the state.'<sup>8</sup> Politburo member Sandor Gaspar, who is also Secretary General of the Hungarian National Trade Union Council, nevertheless indicated an official deviation from the hardline posture of Hungary's neighbours. Speaking to a national television audience, Gaspar identified what many in the Hungarian leadership see as one of the main lessons of Poland when he explained that the

...Socialist countries' trade union movement does not have an appropriate jurisdiction....If it operates only according to instructions..., if its task is merely implementing a given policy,...this leads to social conflicts...This is borne out by the events in Poland.<sup>9</sup>

The other Soviet partners in Eastern Europe emphasized not only the necessity of December crackdown but also that Jaruzelski's actions had quickly brought the intended results. The Czechs, East Germans, and Bulgarians stressed that martial law was greeted with complete calm and understanding by the Poles. Bratislava *Pravda* offered the picture of a Poland in which

...People are lining up in a disciplined way for bread, milk, meat, and other foodstuffs. The supplies of basic foodstuffs are incomparably better than prior to the imposition of the state of emergency on 13 December 1981.<sup>10</sup>

A supporting element in this theme was the proposition that the indignation of the Polish people was directed not against those who imposed severe military rule but rather against the leadership of Solidarity. Accordingly, the residents of Czechoslovakia, the GDR, and Bulgaria learned that the 'great majority' of the Poles responded with 'outrage' upon hearing of the misdeeds of Solidarity activists. They were told that the 'masks are falling' as Solidarity's 'secret documents' were uncovered and that even Solidarity members were 'shocked' at the discovery of what their 'bosses' had been preparing for the nation. Because of such disclosures, East European readers were informed, the Solidarity leaders had lost political support in Poland 'rapidly' in the days after December.

Militant hardliner commentators devoted considerable time to supporting the most severe actions taken to suppress dissident

elements in Poland. The Czechs and East Germans were most effusive in praising the efforts of the PUWP to 'cleanse itself' of those who had presumably betrayed it in the final critical months before December. Arrests of the 'ringleaders of counterrevolution' were reported as an encouraging sign that the Polish situation was returning to normal. With the rising number of detentions, the Czechs and East Germans insisted with greater confidence that Poland's public life was 'easing'. Yet, even in the face of such optimistic accounts, words of caution and a call for vigilance were extended. The need for caution and vigilance was explained in an editorial in Bratislava *Pravda* on 16 January 1982 which insisted that the 'enemies of socialist renewal...are not lowering their weapons.' Passive resistance by stubborn Solidarity supporters and even bombings were the evidence cited in support of this admonition. The Wujek mine incident in mid-December 1981 and other efforts by Solidarity to maintain an 'atmosphere of tension' served, in the Czech view, as justification for the warning that 'it is impossible to conduct a discussion with the inveterate enemies of socialism'. These East European observations parallel those of Leonid Zamyatin, head of the International Information Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, who insisted on Moscow's 'Studio-9' television show on 27 February 1982 that the Polish counterrevolution had been 'stopped, but it has not been eradicated.'

#### ANSWERING THE WEST

Thus, in the view of most East European authorities, a new danger emerged following the imposition of martial law: an intensified but desperate Western campaign to save the Polish counterrevolution. The Western powers, according to official media, responded with bitterness and frustration upon seeing their subversive plans thwarted. The leadership of Eastern Europe explained that the Western response to martial law was not motivated by any real concern for the Polish people but rather by a desire to return to the 'cold war'. The Czech diatribes were the most abusive and started with the proposition that the Western powers had wanted a 'reactionary, anti-Soviet Poland' ever since the Yalta conference. The American reaction to the latest frustration of that desire was presented as nothing less than a 'frontal reactionary offensive' against all progressive forces. In fact, what President Reagan wanted to gain out of the Polish difficulties was held to be a restoration of the 'privileged position of power for American imperialism'. Reagan, they charged, wanted to reverse the 'defeats and failures' of the era of detente by returning to the policies of confrontation. On

16 January 1982, *Rude Pravo* accused the United States and its NATO allies of setting the stage for a dangerous confrontation by moving troop exercise areas closer to the borders of the Warsaw Pact nations. The East Germans supplemented these charges with their denunciation of a 'virulent anti-Polish campaign' being mounted in West Germany, while Bulgaria accused the United States of dictating to its allies and transforming Western Europe into a 'satellite of American political thought'.<sup>11</sup> When the lack of Western unity became apparent, East European official statements gleefully noted increasing resistance to U S pressures for sanctions against the martial law regime in Poland and against the Soviet Union. By February 1982, reports frequently commented on the 'isolation' of the United States and the refusal of Western Europe to join a new 'cold war'.

With the introduction of specific proposals for sanctions against the USSR and Poland, even the relatively moderate Romanians joined the chorus of critics of the West. Prior to this time, the Romanians had limited themselves to a general call for non-interference, presumably applicable to East and West alike. Nevertheless, their criticisms were restrained and much less sweeping than those of their neighbours. For example, *Scinteia* ignored suggestions about the American appetite for confrontation and simply commented that sanctions 'do not help' the process of normalization but simply raise 'fresh obstacles' to a resolution of the crisis. The most pointed criticism by the Romanians was the accusation that the United States was guilty of hypocrisy for supporting Latin American regimes like Chile while professing moral outrage at the establishment of a military dictatorship in Poland.

#### THE EAST EUROPEAN RELIEF MISSION FOR POLAND

Contributions to the international debate over the Polish problem, however satisfying they might have been to the political position of the Jaruzelski government, by themselves did little to relieve Polish suffering. Recognizing this, Poland's neighbours joined in a relief mission for their embattled ally. This effort is especially noteworthy because it came at a time when the Western nations found themselves seriously divided over specific steps to be taken in response to the Polish crisis.

The East German effort was the best organized and most productive contribution to this campaign. With very thorough media orchestration, the East German programme made precise ideological and political points while also alleviating Polish hardships. A special account for the Polish relief fund was set up at the East Berlin

savings bank and potential contributors were reminded that 'donations confirm an internationalist affinity.'<sup>12</sup> Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania made similar if less elaborate contributions of food and clothing to the support of the Polish population.

The East European relief programme went beyond simple charity as could be seen from the series of trade protocols signed in January and February 1982. On this matter, unanimity has appeared to be the rule as Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary all signed similar trade agreements with Poland in a three week period. During the same time, the GDR was negotiating for such an agreement and even the non-'Bloc' League of Communists of Yugoslavia held discussions with the PUWP on ways of improving cooperation between the two organizations on a broad range of issues. During the week of 25 January 1982, the CMEA Commission for Cooperation in Planning held a series of talks between representatives of the ten member states for the purpose of developing a multilateral assistance programme to help Poland overcome its economic difficulties. The Commission's closing statement emphasized that such a programme was vital because of the policies being pursued by the United States and some of the NATO governments vis-a-vis Eastern Europe.

#### THE MEANING OF EASTERN EUROPE'S REACTIONS TO THE CRISIS

On balance, Eastern Europe's reactions to the Polish crisis have been fully supportive of the positions taken by the Jaruzelski government. The consensus which emerged in the period after the crackdown on Solidarity was a consistent if uneven one. The most obvious conclusion from an examination of official responses during this time is that Czechoslovakia and East Germany exhibited the most intensely dogmatic attitudes within the region. Different circumstances compelled both regimes to adopt policies characterized by an extreme hostility toward the Polish reformers and their Western sympathizers. Some observers have suggested that the traditional Prussian view of the Poles as 'rabble' is one factor explaining the GDR's policy. The insecurity from which East Germany has suffered as a consequence of its 'front-line, divided nation' status is certainly another. The prospect of geographical isolation as a result of a Polish 'heresy', however remote it might be, must have been distressing to East Berlin. The GDR's unannounced state of emergency in January 1982 was a graphic illustration of the depth of the nation's concern.

The Czech reaction can be explained by at least two considerations. The first is official concern about a Polish 'contagion'

that might have rekindled some of the spirit of 1968. Ironically, it is those who did not remember the 'Prague Spring appear' to have been most sympathetic towards the Poles. Older Czechs knew of the brutal lessons of the Czech normalization and may have felt, if anything, a certain satisfaction that the Poles apparently did not succeed where they had failed. A second factor is Czech resentment of Polish participation in the 1968 invasion and the Polish occupation of Northern Moravia in 1938-39. Therefore, most Czechs have little reason to sympathize with Polish reformers, and the hardline position serves the needs of the Czech 'normalizers' in power and at the same time is compatible with much popular sentiment.

Bulgaria's traditional pro-Russian attitudes and the leadership's consistently doctrinaire inclinations support its inclusion among the most enthusiastic supporters of martial law. However, its distance from Poland and the absence of any strong liberal-reformist periods of rule reduce the intensity and attention that the authorities devoted to rhetoric about the Polish crisis. Hungary also remained among the hardliners on the Polish events although its support was sometimes inconsistent. The Hungarian departures from orthodoxy were most apparent in discussions of the role of the trade unions in socialist states. The bitter experiences of 1956 and the country's successful but painful rebuilding of labour relationships must have inspired a genuine concern for the prospects of a reform movement that did not seem to recognize its limitations.

Of the member states of the 'Bloc', only Romania demonstrated any consistent inclination toward moderation in its assessments of Polish events. Romania's frank and balanced assessment of Polish problems — and the placing of 'extremists' no more than fourth in order of importance — indicates at least some willingness to defy the dominant line. However, at best, the Romanian stance demonstrated only a limited independence; on the most fundamental questions, the Romanians generally supported the positions of their allies.

Thus, the conclusion that must be drawn from an examination of East European responses to the Polish crisis is that orthodoxy prevails throughout the Warsaw Pact region. Pluralism is an operative factor but its impact does not extend to a defiance of what is supposed to be the proper relationship between the ruling party and other political institutions. Social, cultural, and economic diversity is present but does not point in the direction of major independent reform movements. The consistently critical perceptions of Solidarity's impact on Polish socialism reveals a clear understanding by the party leaderships of the need for the authorities to retain control of any significant social or political

endeavours. Their evaluations of the necessity for and progress of the state of emergency shows a general agreement on the required and acceptable methods of retaining or regaining control over domestic developments. In addition, the exceptional unity of the response to Western proposals for sanctions demonstrates the limits of diversity in international affairs when the party's methods of domestic control are at issue.

Finally, the concerted relief programme serves to further the conception that the Warsaw Treaty Organization states constitute a cohesive community bound by 'an international class affinity' and exhibiting an active concern for the trials and difficulties of all member-states.

## FOOTNOTES

1. *Zemedske Noviny*, 7 January 1982, p. 2.
2. *Scinteia*, 15 December 1981, p. 2.
3. *Rude Pravo*, 13 January 1982, p. 6.
4. *Neues Deutschland*, 23 December 1981, p. 1.
5. *Nepszabadsag*, 16 December 1981, p. 2.
6. *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report: Eastern Europe*, 21 December 1981, pp. 1, 3.
7. *Politika*, 16 December 1981, p. 2.
8. *Nepszabadsag*, 9 January 1982, p. 10.
9. *Nepszava*, 7 February 1982, p. 3.
10. *Bratislava Pravda*, 4 January 1982, p. 5.
11. *ADN*, 6 January 1982 and *Rabotnicesko Delo*, 26 December 1981, p. 2.
12. *Neues Deutschland*, 5 January 1982, p. 2.

## MYTH AND REALITY IN RECENT SOVIET FICTION

MARY SETON-WATSON

Soviet 'official' fiction of the last ten to fifteen years is of interest for several reasons unrelated to its literary value. For Soviet citizens, it is a very useful barometer by which to measure the internal political climate and on which to base conjectures about likely trends for the immediate future. And for foreigners interested in the Soviet Union, it can provide startling insights into the mental outlook as well as the physical circumstances of ordinary Soviet citizens. The 'official' fiction is however largely ignored by Western students of the USSR. Partly this is because so many good books by Russian emigre writers have appeared in English in recent years (particularly the satirical works of Voinovich and Zinoviev) that these uncensored authors are felt to have a monopoly of the truth about their native land. Partly it is because many Soviet novels and stories are long-winded, with stereotyped characters and predictable plots: English publishers are not interested in having them translated, and few English students of Russian are prepared to devote time to reading them. Yet even the dullest of these recent novels often contains scenes apparently taken straight from Soviet daily life. Some of the scenes describe life as it really is, with accuracy and in detail; in other books the real-life scenes are prettified, and show life as the authors would like it to be. Both the reality and the myth convey much about the quality of Soviet existence.

(i)

An example of stark reality is a recent story by Yuri Nagibin about that comparatively new Soviet phenomenon, the hit-and-run private car-driver. Two professional couples, a Leningrad architect and a Moscow scientist with their wives, are driving back to Moscow from holiday along a main road. Suddenly an old man on a moped shoots out of a side-road in front of them:

'Olga, sitting in the back seat of the car, saw the old man knocked down as though it was happening on the television screen, not in real life... Somehow she got out of the car, and was sick by the roadside... The first voice she heard was her own, hysterically demanding that they take the old man to a hospital. Someone trod painfully on her foot, but she went on shouting about the hospital, until Igor seized her by the elbow and dragged her back to the car. She resisted him, continuing to shout, while he hissed "Shut up, you fool!", his eyes white with fury. Suddenly she gave up and allowed herself to be bundled back into the hateful car, where she burst into