

Poland moves toward winter explosion

by Konstantin George

The Polish crisis is moving inexorably toward a December explosion of food marches, protests, and riots on a national scale, far surpassing the bloody December 1970 riots in the port of Gdansk which toppled the Gomulka regime. The December crisis could assume the proportions of an open revolt by a hungry, freezing, increasingly desperate people, and could lead the Warsaw puppet regime to summon the Red Army to "restore order."

In short, we are on the edge of a strategic crisis on the continent of Europe, developing in the middle of the U.S. post-election transition period.

The first phase got under way with the Oct. 31 announcement by Polish Prime Minister Mieczslaw Rakowski that the industrial home base of the opposition Solidarity labor union and its leader, Lech Walesa, the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, would be closed. The government move, in accordance with directives from both Moscow and the International Monetary Fund, touched off a round of protests in Gdansk, including brief wildcat strikes. Though these strikes ended on Nov. 9 after only 24 hours, they are a harbinger of things to come, and of the radicalization of the Polish opposition.

On Nov. 9, Walesa warned that an irreversible and dangerous radicalization of Solidarity is unavoidable if the government refuses to revoke its decision to close the shipyard, as well as scores of other large industrial enterprises. Declared Walesa, "The time could come when I lose my influence on the impatient workers and could no longer intervene to end strikes. Then, Walesa will no longer be of any use."

Behind the coming explosion is a rapidly worsening supply situation affecting food, non-food basic necessities, and heating fuel. Meat has been unavailable for months. Now that British Prime Minister Thatcher has departed from Poland, fruit and vegetables have disappeared, and dairy products are disappearing.

Canned food products are also vanishing from the shelves. One day, Radio Warsaw's domestic service reports that vinegar is no longer available; the next day, the same report is issued concerning mustard. And so it has gone, day by day through the month of November.

The Moscow-IMF vise

Moscow and the Warsaw puppet regime have a powerful ally in their plot to crush the Polish opposition—the International Monetary Fund and the Western financial circles behind it. Rakowski's Oct. 31 announcement was worked out during his visit to Moscow Oct. 20-21. An IMF team was in Poland during the period Oct. 20-Nov. 3. This time frame encompassed Rakowski's Moscow visit, Polish leader Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski's Oct. 21 threat to employ violence against strikes and demonstrations—"my hand will not tremble if I have to use violence"—and Rakowski's announcement of the closing of the Lenin Shipyard.

According to well-placed sources, the IMF delegation "endorsed" the Rakowski program to shut down "loss-making" enterprises, making this a prime condition for a long-sought standby credit. The IMF also demanded that Rakowski begin by closing down the Nowa Huta Steelworks, outside the city of Krakow. Nowa Huta, which led the first 1988 strike wave during April-May, is the other bastion of Solidarity.

All Western credit to Poland is now blocked until Poland comes to terms with the IMF. Thus, the IMF, using financial blackmail, has joined Moscow as twin enforcer of the plot to smash the opposition.

Poland's credit situation is desperate. This year, Poland has received no new loans from any Western sources, and will receive nothing until the IMF is satisfied. Currently, about three-quarters of Poland's exports to the West, and more than 50% of all foreign exchange earned, go to meet debt service payments.

There is another dimension to this looting vise. Soviet looting of Poland's economy has created the rationale for the IMF to demand industrial shutdowns. For example, the Lenin Shipyard is a perennial "loss-making enterprise," because, as admitted in the Polish magazine *Polityka* in the first week of November, it must sell the ships it builds "at prices far below production costs." *Polityka* forgot to mention that the sole buyer of these ships is the Soviet Union, and the scandalously low prices are dictated by the Soviet Union.

Winter reality

It is this looting of Poland's economy that is now bringing that country to its greatest crisis since the war. By December, with no food, no basic non-food necessities, and no fuel to heat freezing cold homes, the Polish winter will not deter, but more likely provoke, a spontaneous and unpredictable explosion.

The explosion is assured because, even if it wanted to, the Polish government cannot remedy the supply situation. During September and October, as part of its "buy time" strategy against the opposition, featuring the promise of "roundtable" talks with Walesa, the Warsaw regime used up its last foreign exchange reserves and whatever consumer goods stockpiles existed, to create a temporary upturn in the

consumer supply situation. That marginal, artificial improvement was sustained through the Nov. 2-4 Thatcher visit. The bubble has now burst, and with it the Polish regime's ability to alleviate the worst winter supply situation since the first, desperate postwar years. As November runs its course, every item that vanishes from the store shelves will remain unavailable throughout the winter. There are no longer any reserves.

Also during November, the meager stocks of heating fuel will have been largely consumed, thus adding to the grim food picture the specter of freezing apartments in the bitter cold Polish winter.

Thus, by December, intelligence sources anticipate food marches, protests, riots, and plundering by desperately hungry families.

Polish women and housewives, says sources, will be in the forefront of these demonstrations. Any move by the regime to violently suppress such women's marches, would be sufficient to bring the entire country into full revolt.

Moscow prepares invasion plans

Moscow has been preparing for the eventuality of invading Poland to save its puppets, "restore order," and keep Poland a captive nation. At the end of September, following the huge "Autumn '88" Soviet-Warsaw Pact maneuvers in the Ukraine and Moldavia, the Soviet ground and air forces stationed in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Belorussian Military District—ringing Poland—staged simultaneous large-scale maneuvers.

Soviet military contingency plans have been worked out by a team led by Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, now directing the Western High Command, under which the Western Theater of War is subsumed. The last Soviet public reference to Ogarkov occurred in the Oct. 13 edition of the military paper, *Krasnaya Zvezda*. Ogarkov was mentioned as present as an active officer at the Oct. 12 Moscow ceremonies on the 45th anniversary of the Russian-created Polish armed forces. (The Soviets had butchered the Polish officer corps at Katyn in 1943.)

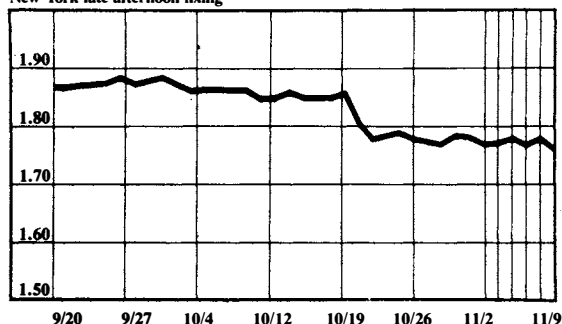
Once the December crisis hits with full force, the threat of a Soviet military intervention will become acute. The Polish regime knows it cannot handle an actual revolt, and would issue a call for "brotherly socialist assistance" from Russia. Soviet military preparations for an invasion have been completed, and Moscow would require at most 48 hours' notice to commence an invasion from two directions; marching west from the Western U.S.S.R. Military Districts and the Baltic, and marching east from the Soviet forces stationed in East Germany, joining the Soviet forces based in western Poland.

The first major strategic test for President-elect George Bush will thus probably occur even before his Jan. 20 inauguration, confronting him with the fact that he is morally responsible for the fate of 40 million Poles and the continent of Europe.

Currency Rates

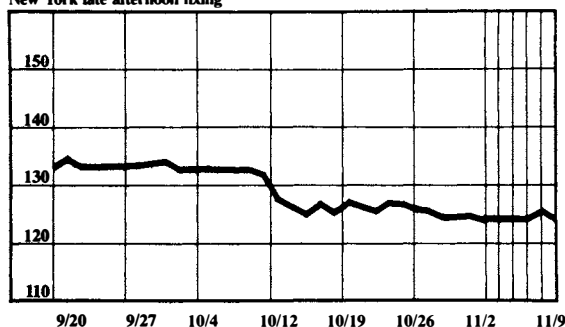
The dollar in deutschmarks

New York late afternoon fixing



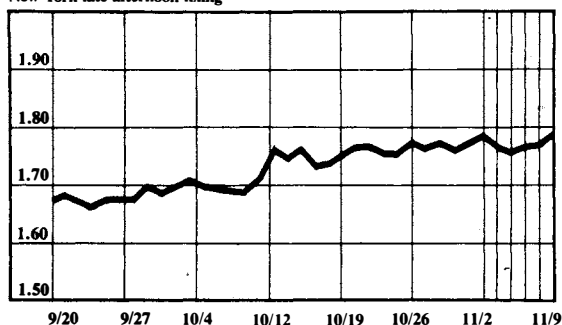
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

