

Polish Workers Face Repression

Fifth Estate Collective

In the last August 1976 *Fifth Estate* [#275, Polish Food Riots] we gave a sketchy report (all that was then available) of repression against striking workers centering in the Polish cities of Ursus and Radom. This major strike wave which swept Poland in June was the second in six years that resulted from arbitrary government raises in food prices.

Although we reported the burning of the Communist Party headquarters in Radom and the widespread work stoppages, it has only come to light recently to what extent pitched class warfare occurred during the June incident. The Committee in Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners reports that while the local party headquarters was ablaze in Radom on June 25, workers threw up barricades and fought police, resulting in seventy-five police injuries and the deaths of two workers.

In the industrial city of Plock 1,500 people demonstrated with red flags singing the International. Numerous other plants walked out in sympathy in different Polish cities including the Zeran Plant which makes Polski Fiats and employs 15,000 workers.

The demonstrations and walk-outs ended 24 hours later, three hours after the government rescinded the price raises. Two days later, however, the increases were re-imposed at about half the previous level.

After the government announcement, victory fires were lit in the streets with workers declaring a triumph. At this point the police intervened with bloody assaults, systematic beatings and tear gas. Subsequently, four hundred workers were interrogated in Radom and after a farce of a trial, six workers were sentenced to terms up to ten years in prison for "destroying socialist property." In Ursus, seven workers received three-to-five year terms.

About six hundred workers used the tractors they produced to derail the Poznan-Warsaw train line, while several hundred were held at the Radom plant, and 150 others at the Plock refinery. In several Polish cities the authorities have carried out massive arrests on the basis of photographs taken by the police, some of them from helicopters which circled the demonstrations.

One thousand more workers have been thrown out of the plants for three months during which time they cannot work. They will be allowed to return to work after that period only on the condition they accept a lower salary. In the "socialist" countries the government controls both the police and wage work, giving their repressive measure immense clout.

Polish authorities have denied the arrest of workers and demonstrators, stating that "only people who profited from the events to commit offenses against common law such as pillage, violence, sabotage of railways, etc." were tried. The public and foreign journalists were not admitted to the trials and the government stated that although the trials are public, "it is up to the (court) tribunal to decide who will or will not be allowed into the hall."

The government controlled official Polish press has been showered with organized expressions of support for its policy of repression and compulsory demonstrations have been organized to support the Party. On June 28 workers in Warsaw were ordered to leave the factory and assemble at a designated point. Upon arriving a roll call was taken, small flags and badges were distributed followed by a march to a near-by stadium where the lists of workers were again checked.

In speeches to the assembled workers, Party officials stressed order and discipline and, although planned to the last detail, the rallies elicited so little applause that the TV camera could get little of the footage they wanted.

In contrast, genuine expressions of solidarity with the Radom strikers, who had suffered the worst repression, spread throughout Poland. Szczecin workers found a train which was delivering timber to a furniture factory in Radom and wrote in enormous white letters on the sides of the carriage: "People of Radom, the population of Szczecin is with you!" Vehicles with Radom license plates were applauded in other towns and their drivers showered with gifts and questions.

The Committee in Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners is part of an international effort to free the class war victims of the repressive and bureaucratic Polish regime. The Committee has held forums in Toronto and is asking that protest letters be sent to the Polish Embassy, Washington DC demanding the release of all arrested strikers.

The Defense Committee may be reached at P.O. Box 130, Station M, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. They have published a brochure which contains much of the information printed here.

Wherever capital holds sway, the class struggle goes on unabated—even in totalitarian societies. Our support for these courageous men and women is essential.



Fifth Estate Collective
Polish Workers Face Repression

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/278-november-1976/polish-workers-face-repression>
Fifth Estate #278, November, 1976

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net