

# After five years under Jaruzelski, Poland is Russia's '16th republic'

by Tadeusz Rejtan

*Editor's Note: The following article was submitted to EIR from a Polish national who has traveled extensively inside Poland, both during the pre-1982 Solidarnosc era, and after General Jaruzelski's imposition of martial law. The author was recently in Poland for an extensive period, and his article—slightly edited for English language content—forms Part I of his observations, buttressed with statistics documenting the extent of the horror that has befallen the Polish nation in the past five years. Part I documents the overall devolution of the Polish economy under five years of Russian enforced "integration" with the Soviet economy. Part II will focus on life in Poland—the appalling collapse of health, sanitary, and environmental standards, and the profound negative psychological changes induced by rampant pessimism afflicting Polish society after five years as a colonial appendage of the Russian Empire.*

*The story is not a pleasant one, but knowing the truth of the enslavement of a nation is the first precondition for fashioning a strategy of liberation.*

—Konstantin George

The 10th Congress of Poland's ruling communist party, the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP), took place in Warsaw in the last days of June and the first days of July. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov, addressing the congress, declared that the Soviet Union and Poland were the "two largest states" in the Warsaw Pact, going on to proclaim a "special relationship" between the two Slavic nations. Gorbachov's declarations were solid proof that dictator Jaruzelski has earned unique recognition as Moscow's favorite governor-general in an Eastern European colony.

Gorbachov was not expending empty words in praising Jaruzelski. Under Jaruzelski's rule, beginning December 1981, Poland has been transformed from a nation enjoying at least limited sovereignty into—literally—an economic as well as political appendage of the Soviet Union. In the 1970s, about half of Poland's foreign trade was with the West, and no more than a quarter with the Soviet Union. Now, over half of Poland's foreign trade is with the Soviet Union alone. Poland's dependency on Russia for nearly every critical raw material is all but total. Under Jaruzelski, Poland has be-

come—economically—a "16th Republic" of the Soviet Union.

In the past, Russia invaded unruly satellites. Poland has met the same fate through slow strangulation. Let there be no mistake about it. If the Czechoslovakia 1968 method—a sudden foreign military intervention, the cynical proclamation of the "limited sovereignty" of socialist states (the "Brezhnev Doctrine")—seems more brutal than what was applied in Poland—the final effect on the Polish population has been much worse. Like all the Pétains in history, Jaruzelski may think that "someone had to do the dirty job" and that he represented a lesser evil compared with the bloodshed a direct Russian military intervention would have caused. One can spin endless "what ifs" on this question, but this is only an idle exercise.

Despite all the official claims, Poland is today in a worse state than before 1980. And laying the blame on the "errors" of his predecessor, the corrupt Gierek and his clique of bungling upstarts, on the strikes of the Solidarnosc period, on the U.S. economic sanctions, etc., is but a poor propaganda trick. Indeed, as Lech Walesa has many times pointed out, had the postulates put forward by Solidarnosc been accepted and implemented, the social and psychological preconditions for a mobilization of the nation would have been met, creating the groundwork for a solution of Poland's most dramatic economic problems.

## Physical survival of Poland endangered

The Polish regime, having stubbornly rejected any dialogue with Solidarnosc, bears full responsibility for the disaster characterizing the Polish economic situation—a disaster that physically endangers Poland's existence as a nation. Some facts and figures will illustrate how tragic the situation is.

Because of Soviet looting—the forced exporting of the bulk of industrial production at artificially low ruble prices to meet Soviet requirements, while being compelled to import Russian raw materials at inflated ruble prices—Poland is undergoing a process of devolution affecting its economy, its natural environment, the very life of its population: It faces an economic collapse, an ecological holocaust, and a regress of its people's health to 19th-century levels.

The dynamic of this process can be read in the figures for net investments in constant capital per capita: if 1977 = 100, then

1978 = 95.6

1979 = 80.1

1980 = 59.1

1981 = 44.4

1982 = 35.2

1983 = 38.3

1984 = 42.5

1985 = 44 (1985 figure is gross investment)

Although a slight improvement can be noted from 1983 on, it is clear that the rate of this "recovery" is slowing down. What is more, the discrepancy between planned and actual openings of new production facilities is widening: In 1984, 69.8% of the Five Year Plan targets were reached, in 1985 only 65.7%.

The result is a massive, dramatic decapitalization of industry. Poland's productive potential is not even maintained, it is rapidly deteriorating. Actual investment (taking depreciation into account) is actually negative: If in the mid-1970s, the average "wear factor" (depreciation) of machinery was 49%, it was above 60% in 1984.

Reflecting this tendency, in 1985 the GNP was 12% lower than in 1978, this figure reaching 18% for GNP per capita. After the collapse of 1981 (annual growth of GNP was negatively 12%) there has been an upward tendency. Only that, here again, the figures tend toward zero growth:

1983: +6%

1984: +5.6%

1985: +3%

All these are official figures, and the statistical offices of socialist countries have never been known for their pessimism. Reality is probably much worse than this already bleak picture.

### **Soviet built-in looting mechanism**

The future, as the Five Year Plan for 1986-90 admits, is no brighter. According to the most optimistic scenario (an average annual GNP growth of 4%), in 1990 the GNP per capita will reach its 1978 level. A more realistic assumption (average annual growth of 2 to 3%) results in a figure 8-10% lower than the 1978 one.

In a book published by the official central School of Planning and Statistics, entitled *At the Source of the Polish Crisis* (Warsaw 1985), Professors Herer and Sadowski write: "The good side of the different scenarios of the national economic and social plan for 1983-1990 . . . is the demonstration that . . . before 1990 our economy is incapable of providing for not only a significant improvement in the standard of living of the population and the satisfaction of the fundamental investment needs, but also of reducing the level of indebtedness [emphasis added]."

And indeed the foreign debt of Poland seems an unsolvable problem. Amounting to \$31.2 billion (not to mention

debt to the socialist sector—i.e., to Mother Russia—running into the billions of rubles), servicing it adds up to \$3 billion a year. But the trade surplus was no more than \$1.5 billion in 1983 and 1984, and down to \$1.1 billion in 1985. The foreign debt to exports ratio which was 2.9 in 1980, jumped to 4.7 in 1984, and reached 5 in 1985.

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One has to bear in mind that at least part of this debt was incurred as a result of one of the looting mechanisms the Soviet Union built into the Comecon, its Eastern European trade organization: Poland borrowed in the West in order to finance projects whose production was largely sold to Russia for rubles, which then could only be spent within the Comecon, mainly buying equipment from Russia too obsolete even for Russian industry. Poland is left with the debt, which it desperately tries to honor through the looting of its natural resources and population.

To quote Polish economist Ryszard Bugaj, writing in the Polish Catholic weekly, *Tygodnik Powszechny* (January 1986): "Even if in some branches, the pressure for potentially enforcing more efficient action does exist, it often collides with the material barriers arising from the disproportions that exist in the economy. Acquiring the simplest materials, the authorization to undertake even small investments, and often obtaining credits for them, can be an insurmountable problem."

The general obsolescence of the Polish economy is such that it has become largely unable to absorb and benefit from whatever technical innovation Polish R&D centers can produce. In the words of a Warsaw engineer, expressing his disgust to the author: "You cannot fit a turbo-charger to a horse-driven cart."

*Next week: Part II. What it means to the population to live under such conditions. The collapse of living standards, health standards, and sanitary conditions.*