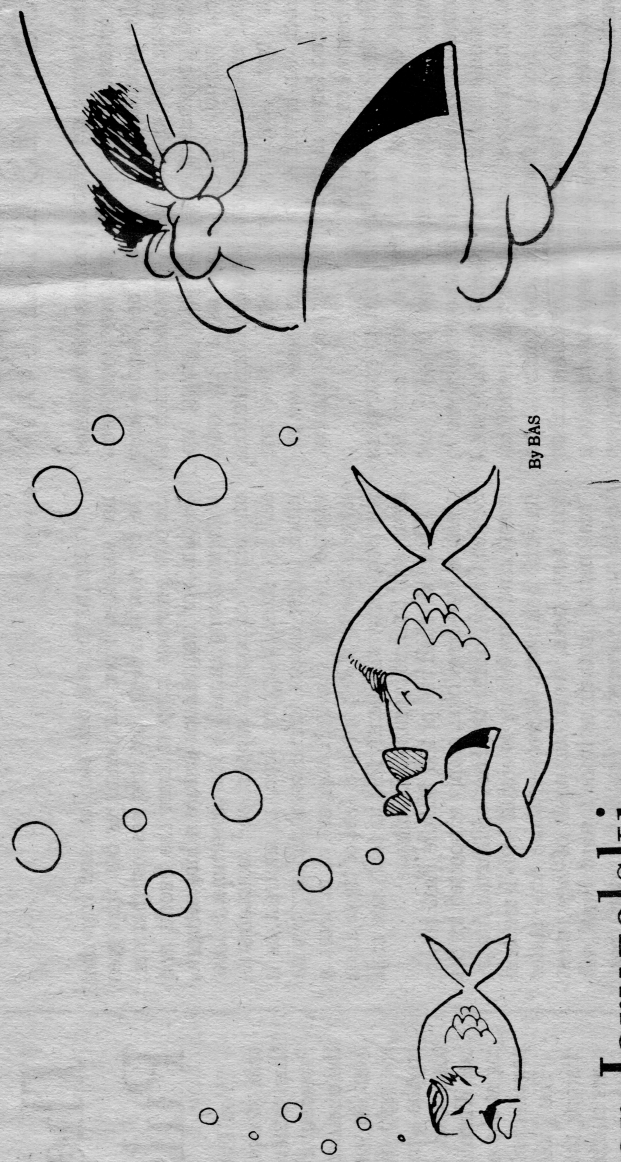


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Poland and the West



By BAS

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No Help for Jaruzelski

As a Pole, it is infinitely painful for me to watch as the free nations of Western Europe and even some Americans display such apparent readiness to believe the Kremlin's carefully orchestrated version of recent events in Poland.

According to this version:

- Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski's "last minute" decision to declare war against the Polish people was triggered by the excessive demands of Solidarity, which were threatening the country with chaos.

- Reports from Poland of deaths, beatings of arrested Solidarity members and inhuman conditions in the prison camps are largely lies.
- If the West does not support Jaruzelski's military regime, it could lead to a takeover by Poland's more ruthless hard-line Communists, or even Soviet invasion.

In contrast to the litany outlined above, there is now strong and growing evidence that the truth is this:

- Meticulous preparations for the military crackdown on Solidarity and imposition of martial law throughout the country began nine months ago, soon after Jaruzelski's appointment as prime minister, which gave him total command of the civilian and military apparatus of the state.

• Far from being a Polish patriot, Jaruzelski has a record of total loyalty to Moscow. In 1947 he was decorated and promoted for the thoroughness with which he liquidated the remains of Poland's non-communist partisans. After training at the Soviet Military Academy, he was appointed chief political commissar of the Polish army, a key position of trust in Moscow's eyes. His elevation to his present position of unprecedented power as head of the government, the Polish Communist party and the military would have been unthinkable without the Kremlin's full endorsement.

• The reports of mistreatment of Solidarity leaders and other Poles arrested in Jaruzelski's crackdown have not been exaggerated.

We hear that Solidarity "went too far." Aside from the questionable taste of prosperous Western democracies accusing Polish workers of going too far in seeking the bare rudiments of democracy, the facts show that Solidarity remained remarkably restrained in the face of repeated acts of duplicity by the Communist leaders it was dealing with.

There is now considerable evidence that the food shortages and other economic setbacks, blamed by the government and media on the activities of Solidarity, were both encouraged and manipulated by the government itself. As Zdzislaw Rurarz, the former Polish ambassador to Japan, testified after defecting to this country, the government's strategy in the period before the crackdown was "the worse, the better".

When Japan offered rice, Rurarz had difficulty persuading the Warsaw government to

accept it. West Germany had a similar experience when it offered powdered milk for infants. Butter shipped by the United States was at first "disqualified" by Polish customs on the grounds that the percentage of fat was insufficient for Polish regulations. As the lines for food grew longer, even the most available food supplies were held back—to reappear in relative abundance as soon as martial law was declared.

It can be argued that Poland's increasing problems developed because not Solidarity but the government itself chose to go on strike. By refusing to negotiate seriously, by raising difficulties over food shipments, by refusing to take the most obvious steps to improve food distribution and stem the deterioration in the economy, the Polish government deliberately abdicated its responsibilities and encouraged the malaise.

But Jaruzelski's victory is an uneasy one. He can force workers back to the factories, but he cannot force them to work more efficiently. He is finding, as the Nazi occupiers of Poland

found during World War II, that Polish workers can be surprisingly stubborn.

The West can either continue to prop up Jaruzelski with aid, or it can help the Polish workers in their passive resistance by refusing to assist Jaruzelski and by bringing increasing economic pressure on his regime.

Since 1956 the Soviet Union has reluctantly tolerated Polish unorthodoxy out of fear of a major confrontation with the Polish people. This fear is now being tested. Should it prove to have been groundless, the Soviet Union may well decide to turn back the clock not just to 1980, but to the rigid suppression of the early 1950s. It would be encouraged to adopt far tougher measures with its other East European client states.

This would upset the present military balance in Europe and raise defense questions for the West far greater than anything yet discussed in connection with the Polish crisis.

The writer is a national director of the Polish-American Congress.