

The Polish KOR dissidents: Made in Great Britain

by Rachel Douglas

Until his detention by Polish authorities on Aug. 20, the chief source of information to Western journalists on the strikes in Poland had been Jacek Kuron, leader of the "Committee for Workers' Defense" (KOR). Kuron was presiding over a rumors-and-news room in his Warsaw apartment, while his KOR associates in the Baltic coast city of Gdansk stayed with striking shipyard workers—agitating and apparently writing those of the strikers' demands with "political" content. With his arrest, the U.S. State Department broke its silence on the Polish crisis to champion Jacek Kuron's "human rights."

What are the beliefs and career of Jacek Kuron?

Kuron's fame began in 1964, when he co-authored an open letter to Polish Communist Party members on the need for revolution in Poland against the party regime, published by Trotskyite groups under the title "A Revolutionary Socialist Manifesto."

Framed in appeals for more worker say in running the Polish economy, Kuron's central thesis was that the policy of high growth rates for heavy industry should be avoided and, where it existed, should be abolished. We quote Kuron's 1964 argument for a "consumerist" policy:

Production . . . cannot be an end in itself. It is always production for consumption; because it is conscious activity motivated by human need, and consumption of the goods reproduces the need. The private, subjective aim of the ruling class . . . may contradict the social aim of production. This occurs in the capitalist system as well as in the bureaucratic one in accordance with the inherent tendency of all ruling classes to promote the growth of production while restricting distribution, and hence consumption, according to class lines. . . .

The contradiction between the class goal of production and the needs of consumption in the [bureaucratic] system emerges in the planning stage. . . . Typically, the plans set the rate of investment as high as possible and consequently the share of consumption in the national income as low as possible. Much more rapid growth is projected in Sector A (means of production) therefore than in Sector B (consumer goods). The disproportion in-

creases as the plan is implemented. . . . The state planners typically try to save the situation at the expense of the consumers. . . . The bureaucracy considers consumption a necessary evil.

In fact, as any competent economist knows, the best policy in the East or the West is one which optimizes the high-technology development of heavy industry, the only basis for maintaining a rise in consumption levels.

No wonder West Europeans, who are aware of Kuron's thinking, would prefer the Gierek regime.

KOR's origin

The KOR was founded by Kuron and his associates in 1976, for the immediate purpose of gaining mileage from the arrest of several dozen people for tearing up train tracks and destroying buildings during disorders that followed a food price rise that summer. Almost all the potential defendants of the KOR (Committee for Workers' Defense) were released within a few months, but the institution remained in existence. Kuron's branch is the Committee for Social Self-Defense.

In the wake of the 1976 riots, the KOR began to seek recruits among workers, especially in cities which were crucial in earlier Polish crises. A 1979 "Charter of Workers' Rights," prepared in part by KOR members, bore 14 signatures from Gdansk, the scene of rioting in 1970 which brought down the regime. Gdansk is the keystone of the current strikes, more than any other city. One signature was that of Lech Walesa, now the head of the "Inter-factory Strike Committee" that is keeping the Gdansk walkout alive.

KOR member Alexander Smolar appeared at an Aug. 26 press conference in Paris side by side with Edmund Baluka, who had been a strike leader in Szczecin during the December 1970 riots and is now president of the "Permanent Liaison Committee of Free Trade Unions in Eastern Europe." Smolar traced the growth of the "free trade union" demands to the KOR's first efforts four years ago.

The KOR is the latest vehicle for an old Polish grouping, which was shaped and is directed from Great Britain.

Leszek Kolakowski. One of Jacek Kuron's mentors and his defender in the 1960s, Kolakowski is a resident fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford University. He was an activist during the turmoil that put into power Wladyslaw Gomulka, whose term at the top (1956-1970) saw lasting damage done to the Polish economy. In 1968, Kolakowski helped lead a New Left student movement in Polish universities—at the same time that his Western counterparts were wreaking havoc in France and elsewhere—and was expelled from Poland.

In Great Britain, Kolakowski contributed to the *Index on Censorship*, published by the Fund for Free Expression. Among the fund's backers is Evelyn de Rothschild, whose London *Economist* has forecast a development of events in Poland strikingly similar to Kolakowski's.

Adam Michnik. A protégé of Kolakowski from his student days in the 1960s, Michnik became the whiz kid of Polish intellectual dissent. His public correspondence and contacts with leftists and liberal writers in France and West Germany created a KOR liaison with West European academic circles whose other causes include mobilizing defense of Baader-Meinhof terrorists.

Edward Lipinski. At the age of 88, Lipinski joined Kuron's KOR in 1976. His own Open Letter to party chief Gierek, espousing essentially the same line as KOR, was published in April 1976 by the émigré Polish Socialist Party, of which Lipinski was a member in Poland before the war, in its London-based paper, *Robotnik*. Later that year, Lipinski toured the United States to raise funds for the KOR.

The KOR is small, and many Polish workers eye it with suspicion. But its role goes beyond the attempt to stir up support on the shop floor. The KOR aims to create elbow room for an entrenched British-policy faction in Poland, a more serious capability for promoting low-growth economics and political instability.

In a London *Sunday Times* guest column printed Aug. 17, Kolakowski argued not so much for the accession to power of his KOR, but for reform initiated "from above." The London *Economist*, in July, prescribed the same, in an anticipatory editorial calling on the Poles to liberalize and "burrow away the ground" beneath the ruling party structure without going so far as to elicit Soviet intervention.

Currently, the KOR is boosting a movement called DiP (the letters stand for "Experience and the Future"). The DiP's reports, according to Western students of Poland with whom DiP participants have been in contact, grew out of a 1976 commission on the economy headed by none other than Stefan Olszowski, the party official who has now returned to a powerful post in the Politburo. The report that began with Olszowski's study commission was eventually published clandestinely.

This year, DiP coordinators in Warsaw solicited opinions on reform options for Poland, which they published in a June 1980 document called "How To Get Out of It." They claimed 51 party members contributed to the survey.

The DiP's program outline echoes the KOR, although its recommendations are cast in vaguer language. The first of its principles on shaping the economy, according to published reports, is "a shift away from central control of the economy and toward autonomy of regional and smaller units." Decentralization is a watchword for downgrading heavy industry.

There is a public lobby for similar policies, which is backed by some of the people who have now assumed top leadership positions after the Aug. 24 shakeup in Warsaw. It includes Mieczyslaw Rakowski, the editor of the weekly paper *Polityka*, who has just been promoted to the post of Central Committee Secretary of the ruling Polish United Workers Party. From time to time, including during this summer's crisis, Rakowski sends advance copies of his *Polityka* articles on reform to London newspapers for prior publication.

Members of this faction in Poland fraternize with the British political and academic circles shaping their policy. One avenue is the Anglo-Polish Round Table, which meets every 18 months. At its November 1979 session, at least one PUWP Central Committee member was present, among other party members.

The chairman of the Round Table on the Polish side is sociologist Jan Szczepanski, whose prestige in Poland is one of the most remarkable cases ever of a nation treating an enemy as a hero. Jan Szczepanski is a member of the board of the London Tavistock Institute's periodical *Human Relations*. Tavistock is the laboratory for advanced British intelligence methods of social control and psychological warfare. Szczepanski is the head of the Polish Academy of Social Sciences.

The coordinators of the DiP project announced that there were members of Catholic organizations among their questionnaire respondents. While the Church has its own interests in Poland, different from those of the dissidents, there is one Catholic order which is intimately involved with the British destabilization efforts: the Jesuits.

The Anglo-Polish Round Table meeting was not the only event in November 1979 relevant to today's crisis. Washington-based Jesuit Michael Novak, who specializes in profiling ethnic groups, paid Poland a visit that month. Novak reportedly says that his contacts were anticipating the kind of unrest that would occur.

Add to this prescience the report from labor sources that Jesuits control much of the Church-sponsored travel between Poland and the Vatican, and the fingerprints of that evil order on Poland begin to be discerned.