



Polish president Wojciech Jaruzelski and Solidarity leader Lech Walesa: both try to look the other way after the recent elections.

Poles try to steer the roller coaster

By Franek Michalski

LIKE A ROLLER COASTER, THE NEW POLISH electoral process started off with a minimum of momentum and then quickly picked up speed until it was giddily careening down the untested track of political pluralism.

Solidarity's complete victory and the Communist Party's utter humiliation in June's parliamentary elections led first to a constitutional crisis in which no credible candidate would accept nomination for president and now to Western European-style wrangling over the composition of the government.

The first crisis was resolved by an agreement between Solidarity and the party to let the diffident Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski hang onto the presidency, with its sweeping veto power over the legislature. But Solidarity, dominating the legislature politically if not numerically, is shying away from accepting ministerial posts in a Communist-led government in which it would share the onus for Poland's grim economic problems. Rather, Solidarity leader Lech Walesa says he is looking forward to the day when Solidarity will form its own government. As *In These Times* went to press, Gen. Jaruzelski warned that Poland's Communist neighbors—particularly the USSR, East Germany and Czechoslovakia—would look "askance" at a Solidarity regime.

It's a good time to recap the results and ask about the immediate future. Has the roller coaster arrived back on the terra firma, or is it merely poised on a high for a moment before plummeting again into the realm of the political unknown?

Election recap: During the round-table negotiations leading up to elections, the Solidarity side agreed to electoral participation as a concession to the government in return for legalizing Solidarity. The "deal" was made necessary, both sides agreed, by the severity of the economic crisis. If society at large, and the working class in particular, were to tighten their belts, a consensus would have to be hammered out at the national level.

But the deal came at a very high cost. Many objected to the undemocratic balloting

formula by which the ruling communists, officially known as the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), were guaranteed a 65 percent majority in the Sejm (lower house). Secondly, workers were reluctant to accept Solidarity leader Lech Walesa's appeal for a strike moratorium until after the elections. It began to look as if the Solidarity leadership was becoming a "transmission belt," relaying tough orders from the government to an unruly working class.

Moreover, the undemocratic nature of representation within Solidarity led to internal dissension. The Citizens Committee of the Chairman of Solidarity, which selected the movement's electoral slate, consisted in the main of Warsaw intellectuals and veteran opposition activists. There are still very few

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workers from the 1980 upheaval (Zbigniew Bujak from Warsaw and Wladyslaw Frasyniuk from Wroclaw being the chief exceptions) and fewer still from the 1988 strike leadership.

A generation gap became painfully evident. The Citizens' Committee, almost all of whom are over 40, seems increasingly out of touch with young workers and students. Worse, this division fits the government's often-repeated distinction between constructive opposition, willing to collaborate for the national good, and extremist elements bent on confrontation.

The boycott coalition: The "unconstructive" opposition is an unlikely coalition united only by their rejection of the Citizens' Committee's gradualist program. The Working Group of Solidarity want to counteract Walesa's "dictatorial methods" by convening a Solidarity national congress to discuss grievances and elect new leaders. Fighting Solidarity, a group strong in the industrial city of Wroclaw, has been pressing for radical, anti-Soviet tactics since martial law days. The ultranationalist Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) has challenged Solidarity's "workerist" tint since 1980. Its banners have appeared often at

boycott rallies, although individual KPN candidates did run for office. The Independent Students' Association, which has not yet been granted the legal status promised it at the round table in March, has mobilized campus protests and raucous demonstrations.

Leftist groups have also appeared. The Polish Socialist Party (PPS), disbanded after World War II, has re-emerged. Most of its followers support the Citizens' Committee. However, a youth-led split-off, PPS-RD (PPS-Democratic Revolution), rejects "sham" electoral politics and calls for direct action in favor of worker self-management. A Polish Green party has formed, along with dozens of ecology clubs and ad hoc groups protesting nuclear power plants, polluting industries, and, lately, the suspected dumping of foreign toxic wastes on Polish soil agreed to by the government for hard currency payments.

Not least, there are the youth culture anarchist groupings. Freedom and Peace (WiP), the oldest of the post-martial law youth movements, has spawned several offshoots, each with its own style. These include an intellectual journal called *Future Times* in Warsaw, the alternative culture/pacifist/punk rock magazine *A Capella* in Gdansk and Catholic-oriented groupings in Gorzow and Krakow. The yippie-like Orange Alternative sponsors street happenings, including an electoral campaign for their leader, "Major" Fydrych (see accompanying story). He appeared at rallies in boxer shorts carrying signs reading, "I am sensitive to your problems" and "Beat your tanks into Volgas [the Soviet car]."

Walesa's response: In dozens of personal appearances in factories, universities, churches and press interviews, Lech Walesa has defended the policies of the Citizens' Committee against its critics. It would of course be better, he argues, to start with a fully democratic Solidarity. But martial law savaged the organization—many elected officials left the country or became inactive, while many new people joined the ranks to do good work without the benefit of being elected at the National Congress in 1981.

We are faced with a historic task, Walesa insists: the transition from 40 years of single-party rule to a pluralist form of democracy. This can only be accomplished through unity in the ranks and respect for the repressive power still in the hands of the government and its international allies. Yes, Solidarity's candidates had been chosen in a top-down fashion. But how else could it have been done? Solidarity's job is to put good people in the assembly and to encourage local action. In many cities and towns local leadership has not yet had time to develop. Should Solidarity's critics have been included on the electoral slate? How? Many of them have nothing more of a program than personal bitterness and a few catchy slogans.

"I expect people to trust me," Walesa said in a recent interview for Solidarity's weekly newspaper. "Haven't I earned such trust in the last 20 years? This does not mean dictatorship, but it does mean following a specific plan of action, which demands discipline."

"Today we need to practice self-limiting democracy," he said, "to assure full democracy in the future. Therefore, we entered the elections as a bloc with candidates approved by Solidarity."

The National Assembly elections on June 4 and 18 were not a competition among individual candidates running on the merits of their political views. Instead they amounted to a three-way plebiscite, a choice between the Solidarity Citizens' Committee, the Communists of the PZPR, or a boycott of both. (There were exceptions. Some Solidarity voters supported selected PZPR candidates, such as Tadeusz Fiszbach, the Gdansk party chief who helped Solidarity in 1980. And in a few districts the Citizens' Committee nominee was challenged by someone from the Working Group, KPN, or a church association.)

The results showed overwhelming support for Walesa's leadership: Solidarity Citizens' Committee candidates won 99 out of 100 seats in the senate and all 161 seats allotted to non-government candidates in the Sejm.

By contrast, the PZPR's candidates were routed. Only two out of 35 names on the "national list," composed of top politburo members and regional party chiefs running unopposed, received the required 50 percent of valid votes to be confirmed to the Sejm. Inexplicably, the voting procedures customary in Soviet-style elections (crossing off names from a list of approved candidates) were not revised. This made "negative voting" possible: by crossing off every name a voter chose "none of the above."

This negative preference canceled out the built-in 65 percent majority for the party, making Jaruzelski's election to the presidency virtually impossible. Solidarity helped reinstate the party's majority by agreeing to the running of another "national list," which was confirmed in poorly attended balloting. The irony of negative voting was still apparent on the opening day of the assembly, when the prime minister and his Cabinet had to sit in the visitors' gallery because all of them had been beaten by "none of the above."

Strange bedfellows: The "unconstructive" opposition, along with many ordinary voters, were outraged at Solidarity for helping Jaruzelski get elected. "Jaruzelski must go" and "Soviets out!" appeared on banners in a wave of demonstrations in late June in Opole, Wroclaw, Krakow, Katowice, Gdansk and Poznan. At the demonstration in Krakow the Soviet consulate was pelted with small

change, "in case they need the train fare!"

Solidarity's spokesman, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, warned that pushing for the presidency while the party controlled the army, security forces, courts and economic apparatus raised the specter of Allende's Chile.

Solidarity's lopsided parliamentary victory does not indicate unqualified unanimity in the population at large. The Solidarity daily paper *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Election Gazette) published a district-by-district analysis of the results as if senate seats had

been assigned proportionally as in Italy or Israel rather than winner-take-all systems of the U.S. According to *Gazeta's* estimates, the Citizens' Committee would have received 71 seats (for 64 percent of valid votes), the government-PZPR coalition 19 (approximately 17 percent) and independent candidates not from the Citizens' Committee some 10 seats (9 percent). The remaining 10 percent of valid votes were "negative."

This way of assessing the results, added to the fact that 38 percent of the electorate

did not go to the polls, reveals divisions in society concealed by the yes/no or boycott formula of the electoral process.

The PZPR appears rent by internal divisions of its own. One high party official, Leszek Miller, has proposed that the PZPR disband to form two new parties separating the hard-line reactionaries from the reformers. While this extreme proposal has been officially rejected, the party clearly wants to shed its Leninist image in favor of a social-democratic one.

The Solidarity leadership's involvement in parliamentary maneuvering (not to mention the wooing of foreign dignitaries from rich Western countries) has turned attention away from the grass-roots organizing of a social movement. Or rather, it has sharpened the division between Solidarity's leadership and its constituents, who have increasingly turned to strikes and street protests to express their grievances.

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By Lawrence O'Connor

WROCLAW, POLAND

WALDEMAR "MAJOR" FYDRYCH STANDS on a makeshift stage in downtown Wroclaw on an overcast June afternoon just days before the country's first contested parliamentary elections in more than four decades. He's dressed in tennis shoes, army camouflage fatigues and a bright orange undershirt. Before him is a motley crowd of perhaps 500 people that has gathered on Ulica Swidnicka, Wroclaw's central shopping area and the city's traditional site for street theater, demonstrations and illicit political rallies. Behind him fly banners announcing his candidacy for both the senate and the presidency. It is one of the more bizarre political campaigns in Poland.

Weaving their merry way through the mass of chuckling university students, bewildered middle-aged couples and inebriated street people are a handful of Fydrych's comrades in arms, strange-looking individuals wearing orange and polka-dotted elf caps. One of them holds a placard bearing a photo of Fydrych and his campaign slogan: "An Orange Major or a Red General? Take it easy and think."

With his odd military attire and thick, dark brown beard, Fydrych strikes an observer as a mildly psychedelic caricature of Fidel Castro.

For the past few hours he has held forth on a variety of topics: the roots of Poland's economic crisis, the pollution of its culture and art by forces within and without its borders, the absurdity of its politicians, the "surrealistic" nature of its day-to-day life. He plays cat and mouse with the crowd, toying mischievously with their emotions.

His promise to solve the housing shortage by sending Russian soldiers packing and turning their barracks into apartments for Poles draws wild cheers. And his denunciation of president and party leader Gen. Jaruzelski—the Red General—as a pitiful "creature" without the decency to "commit hari-kari" draws appreciative laughter. And so does his toast to another well-known party leader, delivered as a rhyming Polish couplet: "Long live Stalin, whose lips are sweeter than raspberries." But angry boos meet his denigration of Solidarity leader Lech Walesa's role as savior of the Polish people.

Out of orbit: Fydrych takes it all in—the boos, the laughter, the cheers—with the easy equanimity and faintly mocking smile of a court jester.

Waldemar Maria Fydrych was born on April 8, 1953, or, as he will gleefully point out, three days after the death of Joseph Stalin. Like the famed Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, Fydrych came into the world in the medieval town of Torun. And, like Copernicus, the 36-year-old Fydrych has introduced a rather unique way of looking at his universe. In Fydrych's case it's a concept he calls socialist surrealism.

Poland's 'Oranges' tend to the sour and the pithy

Although by some accounts a fairly sophisticated art historian, Fydrych is best known as the commandant of a ragtag army of Polish non-conformists called "The Orange Alternative," whose members dress in the long, pointed caps of *Krasnala* (the fairyland dwarfs of Polish literature) and stage satirical "happenings" on the streets of Wroclaw and other Polish cities.

While nominally apolitical, the happenings—multimedia events employing elements of street theater, mime, music, avant-garde sculpture and graffiti—are parodies of socialist icons and revolutionary rhetoric or of the dismal economic realities of Poland.

In the process of tweaking the nose of the party establishment, Fydrych has garnered numerous awards from, among others, Solidarity, Polish film director Andrzej Wajda and the overseas Polish language press.

More importantly, he has become a hero of sorts for the younger generation. As one young Solidarity campaign worker in Warsaw puts it: "It used to be that young people could only hate and be afraid. After the happenings, it's a different environment. Now I can show that I'm stronger than the police because I can laugh at them."

The self-proclaimed major organized the Oranges on the campus of the University of Wroclaw in August 1980, just prior to the temporary legalization of Solidarity. Over the next 16 months he staged a number of small happenings.

With the imposition of martial law in December 1981, the Orange Alternative was forced underground. It turned to painting cartoon dwarfs on the walls and fences of Wroclaw, often in places where Polish security forces had just painted over Solidarity slogans.

The group resurfaced in October 1986 with the "Day of Revolution," a mock celebration of the anniversary of the Russian Revolution of 1917. One of the first opposition groups to openly defy government bans on demonstrations, the Oranges were joined on Swidnicka Street by several thousand students. As members of the "Red Army," participants came dressed in red costumes, waving banners and shouting revolutionary slogans.

By Western standards the happening would seem harmless enough, but local security forces in Wroclaw were not amused. As riot police began sweeping down Swidnicka Street, they were intercepted by what looked like two large floats made of bed sheets. In fact, they were the *Aurora* and the *Potemkin*, the famed rebel ships of the czar's fleet that had joined the revolution.

Without their knowledge, the police had been written into the script, cast as the loyalist White Army. The authorities eventu-

ally dispersed the happening, reportedly beating and arresting hundreds of participants.

Paper chase: Dozens of other happenings followed in Wroclaw, Warsaw and other cities. The levels of police brutality varied, but not the level of absurdity.

On Jan. 10, 1987, the Oranges staged their immortal "Toilet Paper Happening." In honor of the critical shortage of that very basic household commodity, the major handed free sheets of paper to everyone attending. The police, who were called in once more to put down the insurrection, began searching everyone's bags. Those found with toilet paper were arrested.

Those old enough to remember the hippie movement might be tempted to write off happenings as a relic of the '60s, like love beads and LSD. But within the context of daily life in Poland of the '80s—where people stand hours in line for basic food items and where there are 30-year waiting lists for apartments, where workers earning an average of \$20 a month joke that "the government pretends to pay us and we pretend to work," where psychologists link falling life expectancy rates to a generalized "psychopolitical" depression—the mad activities of the Orange Alternative seem somehow more relevant.

But for the Oranges, who think of the movement more in cultural terms than political ones, happenings are also a very definite art form embodying the Fydrych concept of "socialist surrealism."

The term is a play on Stalin's "social realism," the artistic and literary style he ordained to glorify the proletariat. Given the disparity between the noble rhetoric of Marxist-Leninism and the actual, nightmarish political and economic situation in Poland, the idea of any sort of social "realism" is to Fydrych and his followers an utter fantasy.

Rather than react to absurdities of Polish life in a traditional fashion like more conventional opposition groups, however, the Oranges accept the rules and imagery of the Marxist-Leninist game at face value. But they reserve the right to follow them through to what they see as their inevitably ridiculous conclusions.

The purpose of a happening, Fydrych says, is basically to "free up the psyche," while humor "helps to eliminate much of the psychological garbage that is a basic result of the system."

In March 1988 Fydrych was arrested while handing out free tampons at a happening. At his approximately 20 previous arrests Fydrych had usually been taken to the police station, interrogated, fined and released. This time he was given a three-month jail

sentence.

Some 6,000 or more people turned out for the Orange's annual celebration of spring several weeks later to protest the Major's sentencing. When a mannequin of Gen. Jaruzelski was brought out, riot police are said to have brutally broken up the demonstration with tear gas and clubs.

According to Miroslaw Peczak, a University of Warsaw cultural sociologist specializing in counterculture activities, it was the authorities' most violent reaction to date. It was also, Peczak says, a turning point for the movement.

Cop out: Shortly after the demonstration, Fydrych's sentence was overturned by another court. The police changed their tactics. While still attending happenings, they became, for the most part, passive observers. Peczak says the change was disastrous for Orange Alternative's happenings. "The police must react. Without a police reaction it was all for nothing."

The June elections in Poland seemed to offer a way out of the Orange Alternative's crisis. According to the rules, a candidate needed only 3,000 signatures to get his name on the ballot for either house of the parliament.

Less than an hour before the deadline in May, the Major still lacked several hundred signatures. With his penchant for humor, it seems that a lot of people had trouble believing he was serious about running for the senate. Several dozen supporters scurried around Wroclaw in the final minutes, eventually collecting almost 500 more signatures than needed.

As expected, the Major's campaign was out of the ordinary. He announced early on that if elected to the senate he would attend the inauguration wearing a Roman toga and laurel wreath and be borne on a litter carried by members of the Orange Alternative.

Fydrych also made it clear to voters from the beginning that he didn't actually want to be a senator but would be using his senate seat as a stepping stone to the presidency. He also suggested that Jaruzelski would need somewhere to go when the Major replaced him as head of state.

As such, he did his best to mold his campaign into a personal duel with Gen. Jaruzelski, "the captain of the sinking ship," in Fydrych's words. He sent a letter to the general advising him that he should start clearing out his desk.

Fydrych conceded that it was difficult translating the surrealism of the Orange Alternative movement into a political platform. Many voters insisted on looking at his campaign through the lens of realism.

When the election was over, Waldemar "Major" Fydrych received 1.5 percent of the votes. Undaunted, Fydrych remains convinced of his eventual election to the presidency. And that, he claims, will be "the greatest happening in the world."

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