

members began demanding the democratisation of the PUWP. A million Party members joined Solidarity and raised the cry 'odnova' which means 'renewal'. Under pressure from the rank-and-file in the Party the established leaders began to fall. First Gierak was driven from office to be replaced by Kania. Kania acknowledged the need for reform but he did little to implement reform. The important question here is 'why not'? If Kania saw the need for reform why did he not use his official position as leader of the governing Party to implement the reform?

PRESSURE FROM BUREAUCRATS

The answer lies in the fact that Kania was not only under pressure from Solidarity and the rank-and-file in his own Party. He was also under pressure from the senior bureaucrats and technocrats in his government to resist reforms. These people feared that the reforms would mean they would lose their positions of privilege and power in Poland. These people had no support among the Polish people. But they did have the support of the Soviet Union which was strongly opposed to the democratisation of the Party and government in Poland. Kania thought that the Soviet Union might well use its military strength to smash the reform movement as it had done earlier in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. When the Soviet army began massive military manoeuvres right on Poland's borders it seemed as though they were about to invade Poland.

Kania's failure to act decisively led to his removal from office and replacement by Jaruzelski. Like Kania, Jaruzelski also claimed to support reform in Poland. But unlike Kania, Jaruzelski was a general in the army — and the army had very close ties with the Soviet Union.

DECLARES MARTIAL LAW

As the demands from the people reached new heights Jaruzelski acted. He claimed that the deterioration of the economy was so serious that strong government was now necessary. He claimed that Solidarity's increasingly political demands were making it impossible for the PUWP to rule. So in December 1981 he declared Martial Law in Poland.

Under Jaruzelski the Polish Army moved into the streets and took over the government of the country. In doing this the Army was supported by the technocrats in the PUWP and by the Soviet Union. But the Army was opposed by Solidarity and the democrats in the PUWP. Thus in order to succeed the Polish Army had to crush Solidarity. This it



Lech Walesa (front) at the last legal meeting of Solidarity

did by banning the organisation, by arresting thousands of its leaders and members, by smashing its meetings and demonstrations.

But unlike the Army, Solidarity is rooted in the working people of Poland. Though Solidarity can no longer function legally it continues to survive in the hearts of the working people. It continues to organise from underground and in exile. Since Martial Law was declared strikes, go-slows and mass cynicism have continued in Poland, depressing the economy even further. Faced with this working class resistance Jaruzelski has been forced to release many Solidarity leaders, including Lech Walesa. And recently Jaruzelski was forced to lift Martial Law.

But the democrats have by now been purged from the PUWP. The Party which now governs Poland again is run by the old established bureaucrats and technocrats. It is authoritarian and undemocratic. It has maintained the ban on Solidarity, continues to imprison Solidarity activists and to ban opposition meetings and demonstrations. In this the Party has the clear support of the Soviet Union and other Communist powers. (East Germany's leader, Honecker, recently paid a good-will visit to Poland).

But the Party also has some support from the Catholic Church which, though critical, is opposed to Solidarity's return. And the Party also has the support of the capitalist banks who want strong government in Poland in the hope that this will enable them to get their money back.

But for the workers of Poland there are only higher prices for food and other essentials and increased hardship. With no organisation to fight openly for them the workers have suffered a terrible blow. Their dream for a land of democracy and greater wealth has ended in tragedy. It has ended in authoritarian rule and increasing poverty. But their resistance continues. It continues because Poland's workers are the same as workers throughout the rest of the world. They dream the same dream. They dream of freedom, of democracy, full employment and rising living standards. And, like the workers in other parts of the world, the Polish workers have shown that they are prepared to struggle and suffer to make their dream become a reality. The struggle of the Polish workers stands as an inspiration to other workers in their struggle. And despite the terrible defeat they have suffered, we know that the Polish workers will not give up their struggle.

MAWU wins major battles in Natal

A NUMBER of major long-standing battles have been won by the Metal and Allied Workers Union in Natal.

For over two years workers at WB Camerons in Jacobs have been pushing for the recognition of MAWU at their factory.

In June this year things came to a head when the shop stewards put forward a demand for an R18 across-the-board increase.

ANGERED

This was the same demand that MAWU had put forward at the metal industry's industrial council but the 'sell-out' unions on the council agreed on far less.

Predictably, the company said they would look at the wage demand but refused to negotiate with the shop stewards until it had signed a recognition agreement with MAWU.

Angered at this response, workers staged two one-day work stoppages.

Branch secretary, Geoff Schreiner said the union had tried to resolve the matter.

'But it appears that with the help of Barlows head office, the company was prepared to sit out the strike', he said.

GO-SLOW

The workers then changed tactics by going on a go-slow which reduced production by as much as 50 percent in the major departments.

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'At least this way workers were able to ensure that they got paid while involved in industrial action,' Brother Schreiner said.

The go-slow was called off when the company agreed to negotiate an agreement and thereafter to discuss wages.

'Within three weeks we had completed a recognition agreement which just goes to show the initial bad faith of the company,' Brother Schreiner said.

However, wage negotiations did not go as smoothly, because the company was prepared to only offer a maximum increase of R4,05 a week — a long way off the workers' demand of R18.

BALLOT

MAWU declared a dispute with the company which was referred to mediation and at the same time held a strike ballot.

Three hundred and two workers voted in favour of the strike and there were 21 spoilt papers — none voted against.

As part of the dispute, the union had charged that the company should have provided it with reasonable information on the company's financial standing.

Eventually WB Camerons agreed to provide reasonable information during wage negotiations and agreed to pay a R4,50 per week increase backdated to July 1, a R1,35 increase from September 1 and a further

R4,50 increase from January 1.

This effectively brings the minimum wages to R90 a week — the MAWU minimum wage demand.

The union has also won this demand at Prestige SA in Pietermaritzburg where an R8,10 per week increase hiked the minimum wages up to R90.

MCKINNON

Another major victory was won at Pietermaritzburg factory, Mckinnon Chain.

Brother Schreiner said that during the past four years that the union had been active at the factory, the company had failed to keep to any agreement it had made with MAWU.

'They agreed to give us access — this was withdrawn.

'The company agreed to meet with shop stewards — they have not done this for months.

ENOUGH

'They agreed to give us stop orders but this was also withdrawn. Finally they agreed to negotiate a recognition agreement — one and a half years later we were still waiting for this,' he said.

At the middle of this year, the workers decided they had had enough and said it was clear that the company had no intention of recognising the union so a

dispute was declared.

Brother Schreiner said the Industrial Council had been notified and officials from the council had flown down from Johannesburg to urge Mckinnon Chain to settle the dispute.

SETTLED

In settlement negotiations, the company agreed to submit a draft recognition agreement within two weeks and that it would take all possible steps to conclude recognition talks before the end of November.

However, the union has said that should the company again appear to be avoiding recognising MAWU it would proceed straight to the Industrial Court.

Another Nampak firm free from closed shop

WORKERS at Nampak in Pietermaritzburg have won the right to be represented by the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union.

The Nampak factory is covered by the closed shop of the printing industry which forces workers to belong to TUCSA's SA Typographical Union.

But recently in a ballot held at the factory, workers voted in favour of resigning from the TUCSA union.

Meanwhile at Scottish Cables, where MAWU declared a dispute after the company refused to open wage talks at factory level, the company has agreed to push the Cable Manufacturers' Association to re-open negotiations with the union.

In turn, MAWU agreed not to push for factory level negotiations if talks were re-opened with the employers' association.

SIGNED

Following the example of the metal industry's main industrial council, the Cable Manufacturers earlier this year also signed a wage agreement with the 'sell out' unions in the face of fierce opposition from MAWU.

Now the factory has been given an exemption from the closed shop and workers are free to be members of the PWAU.

This is the fourth Nampak factory to be exempted from the closed shop since PWAU started organising at Nampak's packaging factories.

A PWAU organiser said the Nampak workers were 'thrilled at their well earned success'.