
THE CONTINUING CRISIS



• February, and those horripilations on Capitol Hill induced by the President's budget have now spread to both sides of the aisle, leaving many of the distinguished gentlemen reaching for their jars of Afro Sheen. The Republicans screech that this \$91.5 billion deficit is lewd and irresponsible—not only are ankle and calf exposed but also fleshy thigh and the first foothills of a steatopygic buttock. These Republicans are a chaste and tedious lot. They would end a recession with a tax increase.

• Turn instead to the loyal cronies of the Honorable Tip. Here is drama. They oppose spending cuts, but they also utter imprecations against the deficit. They favor money jingling in the pockets of the lowly American, but they also favor raising taxes. They scowl at inflation, but inflationary policies are their solution. For sheer transparent demagoguery, for mountebankery that wheezes and sneers and grabs at old ladies' purses, give me the party of Boss O'Neill any day.

• This past month the Democrats beheld the President's weight-reduction program for their milch-cow state, and they prophesied starvation in the streets and general strike. Then they brought forth a scholarly disquisition containing the shocking revelation that under the Reagan budget the poor will lose more federal monies than the rich. Is this just? Is it wise? Apparently the ideal welfare state would succor the rich as generously as the poor. Yet as the February farces continued to glow in absurdity, the Great Communicator remained mum, surrounded by assistant presidents who apparently find the economic stoneheads on Capitol Hill very persuasive in their gibbering: Raise taxes to end recession, allow entitlements to grow whether the economy grows or not, step on a crack and you break your mother's back.

• Amnesty International, Inc. will not be scotched as it bravely struggles against tyranny Left and Right. Last month it began a worldwide campaign to save those 924 felons

that its agents have detected in America's death rows. Nor did it reserve its reproaches for the Colossus of the North. It also reported that the Rev. Khomeini's sacred executors have passed the 4,000-mark, surpassing the Shah's boys by as much as ten to one. In other church news, our Bombay correspondent reports that an Indian woman had her lips slashed and her husband was blinded when Muslim pietists got wind that the couple had been making covert runs to a nearby cinema. In the small Bavarian town of Neutraubling, a post office team equipped with sophisticated electronic devices continues to lay traps for a ghost named "Chopper." The ghost has been haranguing a local dentist, Dr. Kurt Bachseitz, from the dentist's washbasin and declaring his undying love for Dr. Bachseitz's comely 17-year-old assistant, a Lutheran. Mother Madalyn Murray O'Hair has been denied permission to hold an atheistic service in Arlington National Cemetery for the late Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, a Civil War infidel whose soul is in desperate shape, requiring her inane orisons and possibly even holy water. Finally, from Simsbury, Connecticut comes word that the Rev. Ella-Jean Streeter, 62, and her "housemate," Miss Evelyn H. Faford, have been found dead in adjoining twin beds at their home in an affluent Hartford suburb. The pioneering Presbyterian clergywoman shot Miss Faford in the head upon learning of Miss Faford's plans to move. Then the Rev. Streeter turned the gun on herself so that they could be "together forever." The suicide-murder is another first for the crusading feminist, though, alas, it will probably be her last. She will be missed.

• "Is Harvey Milk the gay Elvis?" That is the question now being asked in San Francisco about that city's slain supervisor. The *San Francisco Examiner's* columnist Mr. Bill Mandel raised it in a poignant column on February 19 after Mr. Mandel had toured a display of Milk memorabilia called simply "The Life and Times of

Harvey Milk." The display included Mr. Milk's ponytail, shed by him after his 1973 election defeat, his sixth-grade graduation certificate, a note from the Rev. Jim Jones and all the faithful of People's Temple, an amyl nitrate inhaler, and that interesting bag that he used for carrying his personal sex paraphernalia to homosexual bath houses. According to Mr. Mandel, "the Milk memorabilia put me in mind of European cathedrals' reliquaries, shrines to long dead saints." Yet the deeper questions that trouble us about this unique individual remain unanswered, in particular: Was his name really Milk?

• The *New Haven Register* reports that Bernardine Dohrn successfully finished teaching her law course at Quinnipiac College. Miss Dohrn is the former fugitive who ebulliently reported the murder of Sharon Tate to her radical colleagues by saying, "Dig it, first they killed those pigs, then they ate dinner in the same room with them, then they even shoved a fork into a victim's stomach." Her course in Quinnipiac's adult degree program was called "Women and the Law." She remains an advanced outpost of the caring society. On February 16, the Hon. Harrison A. Williams, the son of a New Jersey coffin maker who rose to become one of the Senate's most prolific authors of reform legislation, was sentenced for personally practicing much of the public wisdom of liberal politics, namely: bribery and conspiracy. On February 27, Mr. Wayne Williams (no relation) was convicted of two of the so-called Atlanta murders. No sooner had he been sentenced to two consecutive life terms than a "non-profit" organization headed by Deputy Sheriff T. H. Connally began merchandising a Wayne Williams T-shirt—a new low in American low taste, that.

• Italian *polizia* succeeded in springing Brigadier General James L. Dozier from a Red Brigades People's Prison where the general was forced to listen to rock music until he developed a ringing in his ears similar to the Rev. Ayatollah Ruhol-

lah Khomeini's. General Motors reported its smallest profit in recent years, and the other American automobile makers reported no profit at all—yet the American Left remains gloomy. Actually, corporate profits were down in almost every industry, yet still, the Left is in the mulligrubs. Why no rejoicing? What gives? For decades the left-wingers have been sputtering over corporate profits. Now is their time to celebrate.

• Mr. Mikhail A. Suslov, the Soviet chief ideologist, died of natural causes, and back in the United States Mr. John LaRoche, Mr. Al Capone's barber, celebrated his 102nd birthday by blowing out his birthday cake's candles with a hair dryer. From Sao Paulo, Brazil comes word that the remains of Mr. Adam Weller have been found deep in the Brazilian rain forest. Apparently Mr. Weller chained himself to a tree marked for cutting by a logging concern and was unable to free himself once it became evident that the loggers had set out in a different direction.

• In this nation of laws the courts are not to be thwarted. They continue their debauches in good times and in bad. In Oakland, California, Municipal Court Judge James S. White released a convicted police killer without bail after the killer, Robert Earl Simmons, was arrested as he attempted to pull a concealed gun on police. Several hours later, he was arrested again when another gun was found in his car, but again he was released, this time at the insistence of local activist lawyer, Miss Beth Meador, who testified that Mr. Simmons is a "nonviolent person." Yet even the courts are suffering from The New Sobriety. In San Francisco, Superior Court Judge Richard P. Figone barred San Francisco policeman George LaBrash's claim to an \$18,000 disability payment. Officer LaBrash suffered a stroke almost two years ago, which he attributes to the curse of King Tut, the Egyptian king whose body Mr. LaBrash was guarding. Surely a progressive society would grant him that claim. —RET



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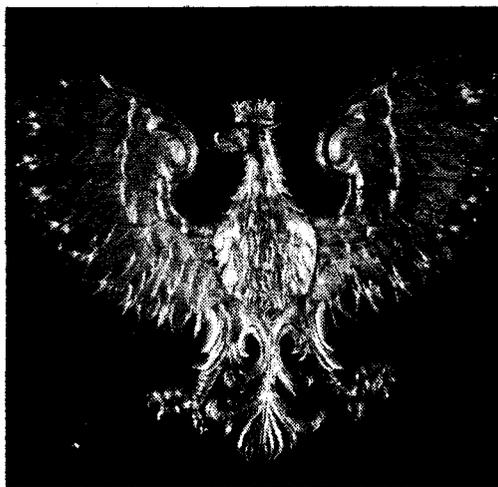
THE POLISH EXAMPLE

Communism's ongoing war against humanity.

"Communism," Leszek Kolakowski has written, "would be such a splendid idea if only there were no people." This bitter observation is particularly appropriate in the case of Kolakowski's native Poland, a Communist country where, a 1980 poll informs us, about two percent of the population would vote Communist in a free election. Since somewhere between five and ten percent of adult Poles are Communist Party members, these figures suggest that even most Communists would prefer some other form of political arrangement. And no wonder. Communism has been a more thoroughgoing failure in Poland than in any other East European country, and the human costs of maintaining a system in which few prosper and no one believes have been awesome. A brief survey of Communism's Polish victims would include the following: (a) those killed by the Red Army during and immediately after World War II (in the hundreds of thousands, mainly veterans of the anti-Nazi underground); (b) those shipped off to Soviet labor camps during and after the war (again estimated in the hundreds of thousands); (c) those killed by Poland's own Communist-controlled security forces in the immediate postwar period; (d) those jailed on political charges during the 37 years of Communist rule; (e) those workers killed during the protests of 1956 and 1970; (f) the thousands upon thousands who have been denied jobs, promotions, university admissions, the right to publish, exhibit paintings, perform on stage—in other words, all those whose

aspirations have been thwarted for no reason other than their political "unreliability"; and, finally, (g) the parents, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, and children of the above.*

To this already substantial list we must now add all those who have been killed, interned, imprisoned, or who have lost jobs on political grounds since the imposition of martial law on December 13. The victims of



what one Solidarity member has described as "an occupation by our own army" number upwards of 50,000, with the most recent developments suggesting that there are many more to come. This is because, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, General Jaruzelski has fallen well short of his primary initial objectives: the total destruction of Solidarity and the "normalization" of Polish society through resigned acceptance of the martial law government.

Over the long term, of course, the economy poses the greatest challenge to the new regime (which will probably turn out to be not that much different from the

*Not every relative of Communism's victims qualifies as a victim himself. To take the most prominent current example, the father of General Jaruzelski is reported to have been executed by the Soviets during World War II; the son's career seems not to have suffered.

old one), and here Jaruzelski's initial moves point to the truth of a Solidarity leader's comment that "Communism is unreformable." Indeed, the regime has reached back into the Stalinist past in a crude effort to wring more productivity out of the work force. One of the first decrees issued by the ruling military council called for compulsory labor conscription for all unemployed males aged 18 to 45. Thousands of workers, and not merely a handful of shirkers, may be caught up in what can be called, with only slight exaggeration, a form of slave labor.

One reason for labor conscription's potentially widespread application is that the regime has decided to close down many of the most unprofitable enterprises, in the process casting aside the fiction of full employment as a basic right under Communism. More to the point, labor conscription is a useful weapon to wield against Solidarity sympathizers. Throughout Polish society, a procedure known as "ideological verification" is currently underway, meaning that pro-Solidarity workers are being fired or forced to sign humiliating statements of loyalty to the regime as a condition of employment. † Journalistic and academic institutions have been especially hard hit by the ideological minesweep; the staffs of some newspapers have been decimated by the dismissal of the politically "unreliable." Industrial workers are also subject to the verification process. In some cases, entire factories have been shut down to give military and party officials an opportunity to conduct a thorough investigation of workers' backgrounds. The entire work force is then rehired on the basis of perceived political loyalty.

†One such declaration of loyalty reads: "Taking into account the fact that, in the course of recent months, many of the executive organs of the free trade union Solidarity have openly spoken out against the constitutional organs of the government and the administration, attempting from a counter-revolutionary standpoint to overthrow the socialist state, I hereby declare my renouncement of my membership in that union."

Arch Puddington is Executive Director of the League for Industrial Democracy and editor of Workers Under Communism, a new journal. This article is based in part on material provided by the Committee in Support of Solidarity, an organization established to disseminate information about developments in Poland and organize support for political prisoners there. Interested readers can reach the Committee at 275 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10001.