

Martial Law in Poland

General Wojciech Jaruzelski, Poland's last Communist ruler, wanted history to judge him kindly. He worked hard in the latter years of his life to explain and rehabilitate himself after his imposition of martial law and brutal repression of the free trade union Solidarity in 1981 had made him the most hated man in Poland - and, for a time, an international pariah. And while many Poles eventually accepted his argument that martial law was the lesser of two evils (the alternative being a Soviet invasion), for others he remained forever a Soviet puppet, a traitor and a criminal. His personality was an enigma; his poker-faced demeanour and his trademark dark glasses only added to his sphinx-like looks. In the end, his life was a story of an intelligent and highly ambitious man - and more specifically, a Pole - operating between the terrible millstones of 20th-century history: Nazism and Stalinism, patriotism and Soviet domination, Communism and demands for freedom.

His first taste of that history came at the age of 16, in 1939, when he and his father, whose only crime was being a member of Poland's lesser nobility, were deported by the Russians from their large estate to hard labour camps in Siberia, where his grandfather, an anti-Russian guerrilla leader, had perished many years earlier. Educated by priests at an elite school in Warsaw, he found himself felling trees in waist-deep snow. His father didn't make it. The glare from the snow started an eye ailment which compelled him to wear dark glasses in bright light ever after. When the Hitler-Stalin alliance broke up, he joined a Polish army being raised by the Soviets and took part in the Soviet "liberation" of Poland from the Nazis. By then he had learned to speak fluent Russian and had become a convinced Communist. He volunteered and served in KGB units which were setting up Polish security forces to crush Polish nationalist resistance. Committed to a military career, he studied in Polish and Soviet military academies and gained the patronage of powerful Soviet generals, whose backing proved vital to his career. In 1947 he joined the Polish Communist party and thus set off on a fast rise to power, becoming a general at the age of 33 and defence minister at 45.

At the same time he was rising rapidly through the party ranks; at 48, he was elected to the main centre of power, the Politburo. From there, he and other party leaders watched the mounting discontent, until in 1980 it spilled over into mass stoppages, which compelled them - in a dramatic departure from Communist orthodoxy - to accept free trade unions and grant the legal right to strike. The various strike committees joined together in a new trade union which they called Solidarity. For 15 months, Solidarity's power and influence grew: it numbered 10 million members out of a population of some 36 million. Frustration over its failure to extract any reforms from the regime led to (then outrageous) demands for free elections and a referendum on Poland's alliance with the Soviet Union. The economy, for years a disaster area, had virtually collapsed.

Ex. 1 Find the words or expressions in the text which mean the following:

- 1) the most important person in a country: _____
- 2) the one mentioned last, closer to the end: _____
- 3) sb excluded from a group: _____
- 4) sb who is controlled: _____
- 5) a puzzle: _____
- 6) for example counts or barons: _____
- 7) a health condition: _____
- 8) an agreement: _____
- 9) support: _____
- 10) a politician responsible for the nation's security: _____
- 11) to fall apart: _____
- 12) to stop existing: _____

Ex. 2 Match the expressions from the two columns into logical collocations:

1.	the imposition	demeanour
2.	a free	through the party ranks
3.	the lesser	Communist
4.	a poker-faced	the resistance
5.	to operate	of two evils
6.	a hard	stoppages
7.	a convinced	of martial law
8.	to crush	between millstones
9.	to rise rapidly	labour camp
10.	mass	trade union

Ex. 3 Provide English equivalents of these expressions:

1) łagodnie kogoś ocenić	7) czyjeś wstawiennictwo
2) stłamszenie / stłumienie	8) istotny
3) zdrajca	9) rosnące niezadowolenie
4) przyczyniać się do czegoś	10) komitet strajkowy
5) zmusić kogoś do czegoś	11) absurdalne żądania
6) być czemuś oddanym	12) wyzwolenie

Grammar corner...

The higher your level, the more words you learn, and English has many words that look similar and can, therefore, confuse foreign learners, e.g. marital (related to marriage) and martial (related to fighting). Let's begin with those starting with the letter „a” and make sure you always get them right. Accept (to agree to receive sth) v. except (excluding). Affect (to change sth) v. effect (a result of sth). All together (all at once) v. altogether (completely). Appraise (to assess) v. Apprise (to inform). Aloud (not silently) v. allowed (permitted).

Ex. 4 Choose the best word for each sentence.

1. I'm very pleased to be accepted / excepted to your organization.
2. The new policy is likely to effect / affect most businesses in the region.
3. After initially approving the plans, they suddenly changed them all together / altogether.
4. I asked an expert to appraise / apprise the value of the painting I'd inherited.
5. Please read the fragment of the report aloud / allowed, so that everyone can hear it.

GLOSSARY	
a ruler	władca
latter	ostatni
a pariah	parias / wygnaniec
a puppet	kukiełka
an enigma	zagadka
nobility	szlachta
an ailment	przypadłość
an alliance	przymierze
backing	poparcie
a defence minister	minister obrony
to collapse	zawalić się
to break up	rozpaść się
the imposition of martial law	ogłoszenie stanu wojennego
a free trade union	wolny związek zawodowy
the lesser of two evils	mniejsze zło
a poker-faced demeanour	pokerowa twarz
to operate between two millstones	między młotem a kowadłem
a hard labour camp	obóz ciężkich robót
a convinced Communist	komunista z przekonania
to crush the resistance	złamać opór
to rise rapidly through the party ranks	szybko awansować w szeregach partii
mass stoppages	masowe przestoje
to judge sb kindly	łagodnie kogoś ocenić
repression	stłamszenie / stłumienie
a traitor	zdrajca
to add to sth	przyczynić się do czegoś
to compel sb to sth	zmusić kogoś do czegoś

to be committed to sth	być czemuś oddanym
the patronage of sb	czyjeś wstawiennictwo
vital	istotny
mounting discontent	rosnące niezadowolenie
a strike committee	komitet strajkowy
outrageous demands	absurdalne żądania
liberation	wyzwolenie
glare	odblask

ANSWER KEY:

Ex. 1

- 1) a ruler
- 2) latter
- 3) a pariah
- 4) a puppet
- 5) an enigma
- 6) nobility
- 7) an ailment
- 8) an alliance
- 9) backing
- 10) a defence minister
- 11) to collapse
- 12) to break up

Ex. 2

- 1) the imposition of martial law
- 2) a free trade union
- 3) the lesser of two evils
- 4) a poker-faced demeanour
- 5) to operate between two millstones
- 6) a hard labour camp
- 7) a convinced Communist
- 8) to crush the resistance
- 9) to rise rapidly through the party ranks
- 10) mass stoppages

Ex. 3

- 1) to judge sb kindly
- 2) repression
- 3) a traitor
- 4) to add to sth
- 5) to compel sb to sth
- 6) to be committed to sth
- 7) the patronage of sb
- 8) vital
- 9) mounting discontent
- 10) a strike committee
- 11) outrageous demands
- 12) liberation

Ex. 4

- 1) accepted
- 2) affect
- 3) altogether
- 4) appraise
- 5) aloud