

Moscow nods to Polish dissidents

A Soviet faction is boosting the Polish Solidarity group and its program, Rachel Douglas reports.

Despite a chorus of squawks from Prague, Berlin and other quarters in Eastern Europe concerning the pernicious influence of "antisocialist" forces in and around the entourage of Polish trade union leader Lech Walesa and his union confederation "Solidarity," despite the assertion by a Czechoslovak newspaper that legalization of Solidarity was nothing less than the establishment of a home base for "legal opposition" to the socialist state, despite precipitously collapsing economic conditions that drain the unions' worker constituencies of their previous enthusiasm, and despite complaints from Polish government officials that Solidarity presents "excessive demands"—the authorities in Warsaw have not lifted a finger against Poland's new trade unions.

Solidarity is sailing smoothly because it has patrons not only in Warsaw but in Moscow.

Of course, the Solidarity organization is known to its friends and to its enemies for the money it gets from London and the advice it gets from Polish and West European Jesuits. Nor is Moscow ignorant of Solidarity's kinship with the very "solidarists" whose Russian-nationality adherents are regularly denounced as "clumps of emigré rabble," as General Seymon Tsvigun of the KGB, the Soviet intelligence agency, put it last March.

But a solidarist organization in Poland, legitimized to the degree of possessing independent bargaining power for use at any time, has its uses to the Polish faction that overthrew the country's leader Gierek last summer and to the Moscow patrons of that faction. The Russian faction that had no commitment to Gierek and disliked his ties to the continental West European heads of state, ties which Paris and Bonn considered vital to the advancement of Soviet bloc relations with the West, is an anglophile tendency lodged in many niches of the Soviet policy-making apparatus.

Not least of these is the KGB itself.

With legal registration by Poland's Supreme Court

on Nov. 10 on the union's terms, which eliminate any declaration of allegiance to the ruling communist party, Solidarity has been incorporated into the political structure of Poland.

On Nov. 14, Walesa had an audience with party First Secretary Stanislaw Kania, after which Kania called Solidarity "an important element of the socialist democracy in our country." Said Walesa, "Mr. Kania is a man you can talk to."

Evidently they intend to keep talking, and Kania has the nod from Moscow to do so. On Oct. 30, as Solidarity prepared to launch nationwide strikes if Warsaw did not dispatch government ministers to the union's headquarters in the coast city of Gdansk for discussion of the legalization issue, Kania and Prime Minister Jozef Pinkowski flew to Moscow and returned with clearance to negotiate as they saw fit.

On the rampage

Legalization did not settle down Solidarity. In the ensuing week, the union forced the resignation of a provincial official in southern Poland, the sixteenth of Poland's 49 provincial governors to lose his job during the crisis and the first to go on demand from Solidarity.

This happened in Czestochowa, where Solidarity officials called a "strike alert" to enforce their demand that Governor Miroslaw Wierzbicki step down. He did so, but the clash reflects continuing disputes within the ruling Polish United Workers Party.

The Czestochowa governor, according to French sources, was an associate of ousted party chief from Silesia Zdzislaw Grudzien, who in turn was close to Gierek. Although Gierek was deposed Sept. 5 and his closest colleagues have been purged from the highest echelons of power in Poland, it is believed that they retain some strength in the party Central Committee. Tadeusz Fiszbach, a Gierek opponent who heads the party in Gdansk, called recently for "purifying" the

committee of "retrograde members."

A Nov. 9 Polish Press Agency release for Polish sailors at sea indirectly suggested that remaining support for Gierek is more widespread. PPA editor K. Brucinski quoted an Oct. 15 letter from a reader, a party member, protesting that to oust Gierek (the writer was away at sea) would be to dismiss "the first Polish statesman of whom we did not need to be ashamed." The letter cited Gierek's excellent relations with Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany and French President Giscard d'Estaing as examples of Gierek's accomplishments in a decade of power.

"Down with the little party dogs who are trying to get at Gierek," concluded the writer, specifying that Politburo member Tadeusz Grabski, in particular, was "a dog." Brucinski dutifully refuted this sentiment, but that such a letter would be printed at all means the views it expressed are not the views of one isolated sea captain.

If the Moscow friends of Gierek's enemies keep their grip on policy, however, the Gierek machine men, the men who attempted to carry out a comprehensive industrialization program for Poland in the 1970s, will be picked off one by one, province by province.

Economy leaps to its death

In the meantime, the ruling coalition of former security chief Kania and economic decentralization specialist Stefan Olszowski is preparing for the presentation next month of "a broad economic reform." In this document, the true stripes of the Polish experiment will be visible: the shared commitment of Olszowski, of the Solidarity trade unions and their advisers, and of the radical agitators from the Workers Defense Committee (KOR) who catalyzed the politicization of strikes over price rises last summer.

Their common espoused goal is "small is beautiful" economics, a reversion of Polish industry to the condition of Poland's agriculture—fragmented and run by small local interests.

By the time Olszowski finishes putting his economic drafts into active policy form, the Polish economy may have reached a state of disintegration beyond what even they imagine. Each day the minister of another industry announces serious shortfalls in production.

As Polish authorities probed possible sources of new credit abroad, Poland's minister of mining said that production of coal, a major export, would be 11 or 12 million tons short of the 1980 target of 207 million tons. The brunt of the shortfall will be borne by coal exports, which will be 10 million tons under their planned level, depriving Poland of badly needed foreign exchange. Food exports have ground to a halt.

This week the Polish trade union Solidarity began a phased escalation of strikes against the national railway network with a two-hour walkout in Gdansk, Warsaw and Wroclaw.

According to the *London Times* of Nov. 24, no coal shipments have been moved from Gdansk in the past couple of weeks, meaning the projected shutdown of its exports has occurred and domestic deliveries are also curtailed.

In retaliation, reports the same source, desperate peasants deprived of coal deliveries are withholding their produce from the market and underplanting next year's crops to no more than what they themselves will consume.

Adding to economic pressures, State Department spokesman John Trattner made the announcement on Nov. 21 that the Carter administration has decided to defer its decision on a Polish government request for a \$3 billion aid package. This means, because of the magnitude of the loan involved, that the matter will not be taken up until after Jan. 20, when President-elect Ronald Reagan takes over the executive branch of government.

In a Nov. 25 editorial, the *Washington Post* outlined the approach the Reagan Administration should take. Poland should receive no aid until Warsaw has adopted a reform to "depoliticize, debureaucratize and decentralize economic decision-making to allow a greater hand to market forces. . . ."

The following day, the *Christian Science Monitor* seconded this "aid with conditions attached" approach, recommending that "some sort of consortium arrangement will need to be worked out" to oversee and monitor Polish credit-worthiness. And it will have to attach "the kind of changes often required by the International Monetary Fund in granting aid," the *Monitor* emphasized.

The prime minister told party activists in Lodz Nov. 11 that "it is indispensable to develop the export capacity of our economy," but his ministers are saying that it is impossible to do that if "social needs" and Solidarity demands are also met.

On November 19, the Polish government announced that industrial investment would be reduced by 15 percent in 1981, scrapping 60 out of 250 major construction projects either already under construction or on the drawing board. Among them are two electric power stations and other plants officially termed "necessary." Polish officials admit that unemployment will result from the industrial slowdown.

Poland is disintegrating step by step. Whether the outside controls over that decline hold firm, including the controls manned in Moscow, is another question.