

Soviet moves in Poland hinge on economic policy

by Vivian Zoakos

The two-day Central Committee plenum of the Polish United Workers Party the first week in December demonstrated that Poland's current leaders are dead set on carrying out the same policies of economic and political decentralization and deindustrialization attempted in Czechoslovakia in 1968. At that time, such policies were a central causal element in the Soviet decision to advance militarily on Prague.

The point has been made forcefully from different standpoints at least twice over the past two weeks. On Dec. 4, Gaullist Michel Debré, former French foreign minister, warned in the pages of *Le Figaro* that a Soviet intervention into Poland would be caused primarily by the perceived dangers of economic disaster. Debré used this argument to motivate a strongly worded appeal to West European governments to take whatever steps would be necessary to provide Poland with substantive economic aid, including the lifting of any import curbs on Polish exports.

A week earlier, representatives of the traditional trade unions from every part of Poland met in Warsaw to make their first public stand on the Polish situation since August. Szyszka, chairman of the liaison commission of the trade unions, warned in his keynote statement that the traditional unions would never agree with the technocratic concept of decentralization which sees an alternative in lower productivity, in unemployment, and in the bankruptcy of some enterprises.

He warned that the policy of economic and political decentralization espoused by Solidarity and backed by the government is not a new one, identifying it as a mere rehash of classical anarchosyndicalism. He concluded, "Such concepts have never succeeded in laying the last-

ing foundations for a social order and social prosperity."

The results of the Polish Central Committee plenum confirmed the harsh accusation of Szyszka and the trade unions that the government had indeed adopted Solidarity's program of anarchosyndicalism.

Delivering the economic report at the plenum, Prime Minister Josef Pinkowski announced that a thorough review of the economic situation was being carried out by the government in preparation for launching a series of reforms. This will include a two- or three-year plan within the framework of the existing five-year plan in order to "restore balance and economic stability" in the country. Pinkowski identified the parameters of the new economic program:

- better use of the potential of small-scale industry and crafts;
- industrial decentralization including a "radical streamlining of organization at the central level. . . . We shall introduce next year a real decentralization of economic prerogatives in the system of local authorities and administration;"
- a freeze on implementation of a portion of investments, hitting particularly larger-scale heavy industry. "We propose a ban next year on beginning new industrial investments, apart from those specified by the Council of Ministers."

For his part, Polish party chief Stanislaw Kania in his speech to the plenum confirmed the charges of the traditional trade unions. In the face of sharply increased Soviet pressure, including military pressure, Kania delivered what on the surface might be construed as a tough speech attacking "anti-socialist elements linked to impe-

rialist circles" within the Solidarity structure. However, he was careful to limit these attacks to regional hotheads who are trying to foment strikes for their own "counter-revolutionary" purposes. For the national Solidarity leadership, Kania had nothing but praise, dubbing it a responsible group with whom the government could collaborate.

Walking a tightrope

With an eye to the East Kania tried simultaneously to convince Moscow that he is aware of the danger of the situation and has things under control, commented the British Broadcasting Corporation Dec. 1. Said Kania: "We understand well the internationalist anxiety and concern that the situation in Poland arouses in fraternal parties. We are grateful especially to our Soviet comrades for their understanding of the nature of our difficulties. We shall find a way out of the crisis."

To attempt a further consolidation of his position, Kania ousted from the Politburo four former associates of his predecessor, Edward Gierek. Gierek was toppled in September following the first wave of worker unrest. Gierek himself was formally dismissed from the Central Committee and the parliament in the course of the new plenum and an official declaration was issued accusing him of "creating an atmosphere of intrigue and sham democracy."

This latest slashing away of the Gierek faction within the Polish party has both an economic and political component. Gierek was known for his ambitious industrialization program, the opposite of the "small is beautiful" ring of the Kania government's economic policy.

Soviets escalate military preparedness

Gierek was also the central Eastern European figure working towards détente, particularly in collaboration with France and West Germany. He was toppled by Soviet factions hostile to his policy, in league with Poland's Jesuit-linked "solidarists" and British-linked liberal economic reformers (the "small-is-beautiful" ideologues). These forces are now gunning for an escalation of Poland's domestic unrest, chiefly to prevent any thawing of Soviet relations with the United States under the new Reagan administration.

The Soviet leadership remains deeply divided over how to respond to events in Poland. The consolidation of Kania's position at the plenum suggests that the Soviet faction which supports his pro-Solidarity course remains strong. Yet warnings published in the Soviet press this week comparing Polish developments to those preceding the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia indicate that pressure for military action is also growing within the Soviet leadership.

According to a Dec. 3 Reuters wire, Soviet troops

on the Polish border have been put on a level-six military alert, the highest level of alert in the Soviet armed forces. NATO sources, however, stated the same day that there was no sign Moscow had taken the actual decision to proceed with their tanks into Poland.

At the same time, East Germany is mobilizing its reservists. The Pentagon also reports that the Soviets are about to begin air combat exercises in the militarily restricted zone along the East German-Polish border. At minimum, these and similar Soviet military moves are functioning as a warning to the Kania regime and Solidarity to keep the situation within certain bounds of control, or else. There are as yet no indications, however, that the Kremlin has taken a decision to intervene militarily, despite scare stories appearing daily in the U.S. press. Characteristic of these was the Dec. 4 article by Victor Zorza appearing in the London *Guardian* and the *International Herald Tribune* announcing that the Soviet Politburo has already decided definitely to issue invasion orders. Only slightly less alarmist was the *Christian Science Monitor* coverage earlier this week citing unnamed Pentagon analysts claiming a Soviet invasion to be a "probability" which could take place within weeks. All this is in marked contrast to the West European press coverage, which has been notable for its lack of sensationalism or grim predictions when reporting on Poland.

The Moczar wild card

A wild card was thrown into the situation with the promotion to the Politburo of Gen. Mieczyslaw Moczar in the course of the Central Committee plenum. Moczar headed Poland's extremely powerful interior ministry during the 1960s before being ousted by Gierek. Enjoying a base among war veterans outside the party apparatus and a "Poland first" profile, Moczar has accumulated vast dossiers on party officials. "He is the one who knows where the skeletons are buried," one source commented.

Since Gierek's fall, to which he gave important impetus, Moczar has put himself forward as a defender of Poland's alliance with the Soviet Union and a relative hardliner vis-à-vis the Solidarity union. He would like to convince Moscow that he is the only one who can keep the situation under control while convincing the Poles that only he can prevent a Soviet invasion according to one source.

Whether Moscow has accepted this and is backing Moczar's present promotion has not yet been demonstrated. What is clear is that Moczar's rise is a threat to Kania's continued rule. Kania has removed "at least for the time being" the question marks surrounding his own political future, commented the BBC Dec. 2. But Moczar "is likely to survive many of the existing Politburo members in the event of another purge."