

Chopping block for Polish industry

Already the 'consumer' spokesmen are taking over policy, Rachel Douglas reports.

The new leaders of Poland have moved swiftly to eliminate the remnants of former party chief Edward Gierek's heavy industry development policies and to dismantle the political machines that ran them. Following the purge of Gierek's closest allies from the ruling Polish United Workers Party (PUWP), officials responsible for East-West trade find their jobs in jeopardy as the list of "corruption cases" up for court action lengthens by the day.

Stefan Olszowski, the opponent of Gierek who holds the economic portfolio in the PUWP Central Committee under Stanislaw Kania's regime, confirmed the direction of Poland's new economic policy Sept. 21, in his first speech since settlement of the most serious Polish strikes in early September. Speaking at the town of Bromberg, Olszowski criticized the party's "arrogant, voluntarist system of action" under Gierek, by which he meant the attempt to boost Poland forward through the centralized development of heavy industry. One of the researchers detailing new economic policies for Olszowski wrote that Gierek's economic policy had been a bundle of "seven sins" which now had to be remedied by decentralization and reallocation of investments into the consumer sector.

The short term benefits of Olszowski's redirection of the Polish economy, for the consumer, will eventually be undercut by shrinkage of the industrial base—forcing Poland even more into import dependency.

Zdzislaw Grudzien, the party chief of the coal and steel district of Silesia and one of the remaining exponents of Gierek's policy in the top leadership, was removed from the Polish Politburo and his regional job last week. Now, the internal party reorganization is targeting individuals involved in East-West trade.

Yesterday State Prosecutor Lucjen Czubinski announced he would open proceedings against "economic criminals," including industrial enterprise officials who allegedly get kickbacks in their deals with Western firms. Their trials will see the executors of another part of Gierek's policy, import of machinery from Western European countries, in the dock.

For the first time in more than two months, Poland was reported to be free of any strikes in mid-September. But the labor scene could be swept by unrest again.

New unions chartered

Leaders of the new "free trade union" movement met in Gdansk Sept. 21 to draft the statutes of its national organization. The union will apply for formal registration later this week, in a Warsaw court. If it is refused, one union leader threatened, "recourse to a general strike" could not be excluded.

According to some reports, a militant wing of the unions is insisting that more concessions be granted immediately. Five local unions from scattered parts of Poland released a statement today accusing the regime of backsliding on promises for full media coverage of the independent unions' activities and warned of serious consequences for the nation if that trend were not reversed.

Kultura liaison talks about Poland

On Sept. 5 in Rome, EIR correspondents Umberto Pascali and Giuliana Sammartino interviewed Dominic Morawski, Vatican correspondent for the Polish émigré magazine Kultura. Based in Paris, Kultura has served for many years as the organ of the Polish opposition groups linked to Poles abroad.

Morawski sketches a picture of a controlled destabilization, stopped just in time to keep the Soviets from moving in militarily. His proposal for a "Marshall Plan" for Poland is a widely circulating plan to select investment priorities for Poland from the outside. It apparently aims to bring Poland into ever tighter dependency on its Western

creditors and out of the Soviet bloc, despite Morawski's plea for an "unpoliticized" attitude toward Poland.

Our interview took place before Edward Gierek was removed from the leadership of the ruling Polish United Workers' Party.

EIR: What is your assessment of the Polish situation now, and of the conduct of the West, particularly Western Europe, towards Poland during the crisis?

Morawski: Certainly the hottest phase of the fight between the authorities and the workers has ended, at least in its most incandescent form. But this does not mean that everything has ended. On the contrary, and I am sure of this, we are at the beginning of a very long and troubled process which involves the kernel of workers who obtained the first free trade union in the East bloc, the population in general with its various layers, and the Polish United Workers Party, which has to acquire again the credibility that has been destroyed—while at the same time managing the renewal process promised to the population.

I have heard a high official, a man very close to Gierek, saying, "Concerning the party—we are in an earthquake; concerning the country—we are in a revolution."

The most important thing to understand is that this process, which the leaders of the party themselves call a revolution, represents a moment full of upheavals and deep changes. It has, however, to proceed cautiously and gradually, particularly to avoid a Soviet intervention. But the party cannot manage this peaceful revolution without the approval of the population, and this will be the most difficult thing. In fact to build an alternative to all the mistakes made by the closed and monolithic party over 35 years, mistakes which the officials themselves recognize in their self-criticism, two things are needed: approval and credibility.

I think that the second strike wave will be the students' one, beginning at the opening of the academic year on Oct. 1. The students will demand an independent organization from the one called the Polish Socialist Union, which is an appendix of the party just as the official trade unions were for the workers' sector.

Concerning the behavior of Western Europe and the United States, which has been very cautious, we cannot say that it forced the Polish government to concede what the workers were demanding. It only allowed the party to begin negotiations in a relatively calm situation, in contrast to the one which would have existed given a Soviet kind of attitude.

In Poland, I have also heard comments of approval and acknowledgement of the way Western Europe and the United States behaved during the strikes. I repeat that the positions of Europe and the United States are important with respect to the U.S.S.R., more so than for

the Polish domestic situation itself. On the other hand, we have to remember that despite the cautiousness of the political initiatives in Europe regarding the strikes in Poland, the U.S.S.R. managed to launch a hard attack on Western Europe and the United States.

We could say that Western Europe learned something from past experience, namely the failure of its way of intervention in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. In the first instance, Europe tried to push the domestic revolt and in the second it supported too forcefully the so-called new course of Dubcek.

In Poland, the workers' demands have been accepted by the government essentially for two reasons. The first one is that the government realized it was isolated and discredited and that the time of truth had come when it was necessary to accept the workers' demands, including the hardest to accept, the free trade unions, but also to proceed to a restructuring of relations between the authorities and society.

The second reason has to do with international political relations. Gierek felt relatively safe from a Soviet intervention into Poland, because the consequence of that would have been the end of the *Ostpolitik**, which is so important to Moscow, and victories for Reagan in the United States and Strauss in the German elections.

After the Afghanistan invasion and also its problems in the Central Asian republics bordering on Iran, the U.S.S.R. looks with anxiety at the opening of the Madrid conference, the results of which could be heavily influenced by a Soviet intervention in Poland.

What Europe can do to continue the process of liberalization is to continue to have a political attitude of great caution, without trying to interfere politically in the Polish situation. On the other hand, and this is the most important thing, it can continue what may be called "the Schmidt Project," the policy of economic aid which Chancellor Schmidt began with the first loan to Poland, with [West German Foreign Minister] Genscher's trip to the United States, and with the loan being negotiated in London which seems to involve Japanese banks as well.

But on this point we have to be careful. The loans being made to Poland or the ones which will be made, given that country's bad economic conditions, could add up to money that cannot be paid back. Therefore it is very important to consider what some circles of the dissidents and also outside of Poland are calling a new Marshall Plan.

This would not be a new American Marshall Plan, but a plan by the European Economic Community. America should participate without having the role of protagonist, because that would mean a veto from Moscow and would be wished neither by the government nor by Polish society because it could be exploited by Carter for electoral purposes.

What does a new Marshall Plan for Poland mean?

Our economy not only needs loans which repay old debts and interest on those debts, which this year requires \$7 billion, but to have all of its productive capacity working. What happens instead in Poland is that the plants, even if reconstructed and modernized, work at only half capacity. Managerial mistakes are serious.

The circles in Poland about whom I spoke before are thinking of initiating a process of exchange of technical and scientific knowledge through the temporary exchange of qualified workers between Western Europe and Poland. What I have in mind is something similar. Here in Western Europe there is a skilled labor force, sometimes semi-employed or even unemployed. These people could be sent by various governments for a period of six months or one year to Poland, and paid by our government in *zlotys*, without the use of other currencies. This would really be a help for Poland.

But besides the bad operation of plants and bad management of various sectors of the Polish economy, I will tell you about the terrible situation of the transport system in Poland—something people do not talk about.

I know that this important sector of the economy is totally obsolete. For years, the infrastructure necessary for transport has not been rebuilt. Because everything depends on the railway and road system for transport, we have the following situation: there is double the lead on the Polish rail system than what those of France and West Germany combined carry, despite the fact that the Polish network is much less developed than the French and German ones. When the government speaks of disruptions caused by the strikers in the national distribution network, it does not mention that the real reason for such bottlenecks is the decay of the rail transport system.

A new Marshall Plan means a new policy of trade and cooperation, in which credits are not given without discrimination (because that way the credits could be used by the party to strengthen itself), but great latitude is given to visits and exchanges of experience in the labor world.

The Italian press reports that there has been a Comecon economic intervention for Poland, which provides raw materials aid. I think that this fact, even if it is positive, can be interpreted as the fear of the Soviet leadership that the West will conduct an aid policy towards Poland which is broader than mere credit—the exchange policy I have been speaking about.

I want to say that the basis for this policy of exchange is that this process is highly unpolitical. The ideological and political elements have to stay out of this process. We have no need of propaganda in Poland, even if it is well meant.

EIR: What role can the Catholic Church play for Poland?
Morawski: The role of the Church in this new upheaval in Poland was coherent with its role in 1956, 1970 and

1976. It looked to the general interest of the state and the nation. An important thing to emphasize is that the final statement of the Central Council of Polish Bishops on Aug. 27, 1980 spoke of “the responsibility” of the Church towards the state and the nation, referring for the first time not only to the nation but to the state. What does this mean? It means that the Church took into consideration the social conditions and the situation of the nation but also of the state and of the party governing it, and that the state was almost losing control over the nation—which could have meant a Soviet intervention in Poland.

The Church did everything possible to avoid a degeneration of the situation, knowing clearly the limits within which the party was moving. All the interventions made by the Church and its authorities were made with consideration of the future, the long-term consequences. The Church caused the opposition to moderate and protected it at the same time.

Today the press speaks (without knowing much) about a privileged relationship between Primate Wysinski and Gierek, but forgets that two years ago Gierek and the Central Committee of the PUWP recognized in their documents the national role of the Polish Church and asked the cooperation of the Church. The Church accepted its power without receiving the communication and information means it demanded in exchange.

Therefore, during the strikes, the Church tried to find a way out of the crisis which would be positive and useful not only for the immediate future, but also for the long term and also not only for Poland, but for the other Eastern European countries. The Church, including in its official documents before the Polish crisis, was always committed to solve the situation of Catholics in the “persecuted nations.”

It is therefore clear that in this instance of the revolt of the workers, the Church was actively interested in what everybody now sees as the beginning of the decolonization of the last empire in the world—Russia’s.

What the press attacked Cardinal Wysynski for is not true, namely that in his negotiations with the government he went over the head of the workers. Actually, he put himself over and beyond all parts, knowing well the total risks Poland was running.

The Church therefore recognized the maturity shown by the Polish working class, thanks also to its teaching, and is waiting for the developments to come in the internal fight within the PUWP. I think that the party cannot back out of its promise without a bloodbath in the country.

In any case, the party now has a debt to the Church. There will have to be a period of loyal cooperation between Church and government.

* D tente, called “Ostpolitik” in Europe after West Germany’s “East policy” of dialogue with the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe. ■