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USSR-POLAND: Moscow and the Kania Regime

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The Soviets fully supported Polish First Secretary Kania's replacement of former party chief Gierek on 5 September and have subsequently demonstrated that their backing remains firm. Moscow, however, remains deeply concerned about the trend of events in Poland. Both the Polish and Soviet parties are determined to limit the concessions granted the workers, but friction could arise over the extent of and timetable for the limitations. Although the Soviets realize that the Kania regime cannot act precipitously in putting a cap on the liberalization process, they will keep considerable pressure on Warsaw to bring the process under control soon.

Soviet media treatment of Gierek before and after the Baltic strikes and reports from numerous senior Soviet and East European officials indicate that the Kremlin was displeased with his handling of the situation. [REDACTED] following the Baltic settlements Moscow spread the word among the Polish leaders [REDACTED] that Gierek had to be replaced. It cited Kania, party secretary Olszowski, and Deputy Prime Minister Jagielski as acceptable candidates, leaving the specific choice up to the Poles. [REDACTED]

Whatever the USSR's exact role in the Polish leadership change, it quickly endorsed Kania. [REDACTED] stated in early September that the Soviet leaders regard Kania highly and are confident in his abilities. [REDACTED]

In his first speech as party chief, Kania thanked President Brezhnev personally for the "understanding" the Soviet leader showed for the Polish party during the strikes and the "confidence" he expressed in the party's ability to resolve the crisis. Kania also [REDACTED] that he had a "very long, cordial talk" with Brezhnev on 6 September, a few hours after assuming power, in which the Soviet party chief pledged full support for "our leadership." [REDACTED]

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Soviet media treatment of Kania has been extensive and quite favorable. The Soviets portray him as a dynamic leader, intent on shoring up the party's shaken power and waging a battle against "antisocialist elements" in Poland. The dominant theme of Soviet coverage is that the situation is returning to normal.

The Soviets also have been quick to offer economic support. Although the amount of aid from the agreement signed in Moscow between the Soviets and a Polish delegation led by Jagielski in mid-September is less than the \$690 million announced, it will provide some measure of economic relief to Poland. It also is important for its symbolism--Moscow being first off the mark to assist its troubled ally.

Worries Remain

The Soviets continue to be concerned about trends in Poland. The increasing activity of the proponents of free trade unions and the first rumblings of disquiet by students, journalists, and professionals probably signal to the Soviets that the party may face even more serious challenges in the near future.

The terms of the settlement in August remain unpalatable to the Soviets. Moscow's failure thus far to inform the Soviet population of those terms reflects its sensitivity to the impact the precedents of free trade unions and the right to strike could have at home.

[REDACTED] the Soviets agreed to the concessions to the strikers only as a tactical move to end the immediate crisis and give the Polish party time for maneuver.

[REDACTED] the USSR does not consider the Baltic settlements binding, [REDACTED] Moscow expects the Kania regime to "dismantle the illegal workers' organizations" once tensions ease. The article in *Pravda* last week invoking quotes from Lenin to condemn the idea of free trade unions reflects Moscow's uncompromising stand on this issue.

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The Soviet press continues to pound away at "anti-socialist elements" it claims are taking advantage of the labor unrest. Press articles have now applied the "anti-socialist" label to strike leader Lech Walesa and, by implication, to all the strikers.

Moscow also has stepped up its attacks on Western "meddling" in Poland and has advised other Communist parties to do the same. The four authoritative "Petrov" articles in *Pravda* this month were largely devoted to accusing the West of attempting to push Poland "off the socialist path and to reshape the postwar map of Europe." The primary aim of these commentaries is to isolate and discredit the free trade union leadership, but they also lay an ideological groundwork for any future Soviet intervention.

[REDACTED]

At a minimum, such activity suggests that Moscow is taking some preparatory military measures in the event that a show or actual use of force may become necessary at some point in the crisis.

Keeping the Heat On

Soviet anxieties over developments in Poland limit Kania's leeway in trying to restore social order and the party's power. Moscow will continue to scrutinize his every move, be suspicious of experimentation, and be quick to react to any signs that the liberalization movement is gaining even more momentum. The Soviets, however, realize that the situation is still too volatile for an immediate attempt to roll back the concessions.

At the moment, the Soviets have no reason to doubt the Kania regime's willingness to interpret restrictively the concessions to the strikers. They probably are also encouraged by the Polish party's historical record of renegeing on compromises made to the population under pressure.

Moscow is thus likely to give Kania some time to produce results. How long "some" turns out to be will depend upon the Soviet leaders' perceptions of the direction and potency of the liberalization movement.

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