

CIACO NID 81 [REDACTED]

July 13, 1981

SPECIAL ANALYSIS

POLAND: A Different Party Congress

[REDACTED]

The ninth party congress opening tomorrow promises to be a freewheeling and somewhat unpredictable affair. Nonetheless, it seems likely to reaffirm the party's commitment to the moderate reformist course that it has followed since last September. [REDACTED]

The congress will be inward looking, with most attention being directed to personnel and party organizational matters. Discussion of social and economic problems will be secondary in the minds of many. [REDACTED]

The leadership views the congress as a means of rallying party unity, improving the party's credibility, and beginning a shift of attention from internal party issues to Poland's economic and political problems. The party rank and file sees the convocation largely as the opportunity to secure "guarantees" of democratization in the party that would prevent the concentration and abuse of power they consider responsible for Poland's current problems. [REDACTED]

The search for such "guarantees" will involve personnel changes and institutional innovations. While the leadership is prepared to accommodate these pressures for change, it also wants to prevent too much diffusion of power and too many limitations on the prerogatives of the Politburo and Secretariat. [REDACTED]

The rank and file have already been responsible for extensive personnel changes at the lower levels. Their delegates to the congress will now change the composition of the Central Committee drastically, replacing more than 80 percent of the current members. [REDACTED]

Party chief Kania seems likely to be returned as party leader. Moscow's letter to the Polish party in

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early June criticizing his leadership prompted many party members to rally behind him despite the criticism of his "passive" leadership. [REDACTED]

Kania's political position seems strong--at least for the near term--and his chances of reelection are enhanced by the fact that the first secretary is slated to be selected on the first day of the congress. Moreover, the strongest other potential candidates for the job are close associates of Kania who probably would be reluctant to run against him. His election is not absolutely assured, however, because the rules provide for the entire congress to choose the first secretary by secret ballot from a list of three nominees. [REDACTED]

There will be important changes in the Politburo. A few of the hardliners will be removed, but Kania is likely to make a strenuous effort to retain some on the body. The new Politburo probably will be enlarged and become more uniformly moderate. [REDACTED]

Institutional Changes and Democratic Procedures

The congress will approve statutory changes intended to circumscribe the power of the party's central executive bodies and make the leadership more responsive to the congress and the Central Committee. Some possible changes include:

- Limiting the first secretary to two terms, a total of 10 years.
- Prohibiting top party officials from holding high-level government or certain party positions.
- Creating a new body, perhaps termed a presidium, to act as the Central Committee's watchdog over the Politburo.
- Enhancing the rights and privileges of lower level party organizations. [REDACTED]

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Not all of the proposed changes are likely to be adopted, but implementation of some of them will set the Polish party further apart from its Soviet and East European counterparts. [REDACTED]

The deliberations at the congress will be more open and less manipulated by the central leadership than any congress in Polish history. The central leadership presumably will be able to take advantage of the intricate procedures and of the fact that 90 percent of the delegates have not previously attended a congress. [REDACTED]

Many delegates, however, are believed to be well educated and highly articulate. Twenty percent are members of Solidarity. [REDACTED]

Some delegates have received explicit instructions from their local organizations. Although most delegates probably support reform in general, their position on specific proposals may not become known until the votes are counted. [REDACTED]

Efforts by the leadership to manipulate the delegates will be impeded by the fact that the elections for the new party executive bodies will be by secret ballot in which the provincial delegations will play a key role in nominating candidates. [REDACTED]

The Soviet Perspective

Kania's efforts to influence preparations for the congress appear to have reduced Soviet fear of an outright victory by "counterrevolutionary" elements. Moscow realizes that there will be extensive personnel changes but apparently expects the leadership of the party to remain in moderate hands. [REDACTED]

The Soviets remain apprehensive, however, about the uncertainties attending the congress, particularly regarding institutional changes. They may seek to influence its proceedings in the direction of moderation and try to help retain conservatives on the Politburo. [REDACTED]

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Moscow will make its views known in the speeches of its envoy and perhaps in a formal message to the conclave. It will have to move carefully, however, to avoid provoking a backlash of anti-Soviet sentiment among the delegates. [REDACTED]

Outlook

Whatever the outcome of the congress, the party will subsequently have to turn its attention to coping with Poland's catastrophic economic situation and to establishing a workable relationship with Solidarity. A rejuvenated, more democratic party may have a better chance of finding solutions to these problems than did its predecessor. [REDACTED]

Nevertheless, the greater diffusion of power within the party may inhibit its ability to meet this challenge, and the increased "democratization" still will not prove to the Polish people that the party is either capable or legitimate. Furthermore, Soviet pressure on the Poles to restrict reforms will complicate the party's efforts to reach an accommodation with Polish society. [REDACTED]