

December 30, 1981

SPECIAL ANALYSIS

USSR: Potential for Unrest Related to Poland

[REDACTED]

The Soviet Leadership was eager to bring an end to the liberalization process in Poland partly because of apprehension about repercussions in the USSR. The Soviet population's acceptance of authority is too strong and its sympathy for the Poles too weak, however, to give grounds for expecting the current repression in Poland to create serious problems of internal control for the Soviet leadership. There has been an increase in sporadic labor unrest over the last several years, but most of it was prompted by domestic conditions.

Despite the appearance of some Soviet dissident documents expressing support for Polish workers since August 1980, there has been no general spread of dissent or major attempts to coordinate activities with dissidents elsewhere in Eastern Europe, as happened after the Helsinki Final Act was signed in 1975. Soviet dissidents also are less likely to stage demonstrations over an "internal solution" to the Polish crisis, in which the Soviet regime is not militarily involved, than they were over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Soviet intellectuals, who are interested more in human rights than economic issues, probably would be more inclined than workers to protest the current repression in Poland. A student demonstration, possibly related to the developments in Poland, has already taken place.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Approved for Release
Date AUG 1999

374A
~~374B~~

December 30, 1981

The Soviet working class does not, however, have a strong tradition of activism, and disaffected workers have not formed alliances with Soviet intellectual dissidents. Most leaders of the small unofficial trade unions that sprang up in the late 1970s are now in prison. [REDACTED]

Western Soviet Republics

The historical ties between the western republics and Eastern Europe, the population's greater access to information from Poland, the strength of the Catholic Church, and resentment of Russian rule make the Baltic and Ukrainian states more sensitive than the rest of the Soviet Union to events in Poland. [REDACTED]

Estonia has experienced the most unrest in recent months. Several large student demonstrations and labor strikes took place in the fall of 1980 in the republic's two major cities. Subsequently, Soviet authorities reportedly urged Finnish television to cut back on coverage of events in Poland. [REDACTED]

Leaflets circulated last fall in several Estonian cities called for a general strike on 1 December, but it never took place. Although the activity apparently was caused mainly by consumer and nationalist grievances, the Polish example evidently was a contributing influence. [REDACTED]

Lithuania is overwhelmingly Catholic, and its capital has a substantial Polish minority, but there has been no evidence of recent disturbances, perhaps because the government has been more attentive to local sensitivities there than in Estonia. [REDACTED]

There have been rumors of scattered Polish-related disturbances in the predominantly Catholic western Ukraine since August 1980, but historical animosity between the Ukrainians and the Poles reduces the likelihood of sympathetic protest activity in much of the region. There apparently was an increase in dissident activity in the area during the "Prague Spring" of 1968. [REDACTED]

CIACO NID 81 [REDACTED]

December 30, 1981

Outlook

Soviet citizens are primarily concerned about the economic slowdown and the accompanying dearth of consumer goods. At the beginning of the liberalization process in Poland, some Soviets, dissatisfied with the ineffectiveness of their own government's economic policies, professed admiration of the Polish workers for demanding improved living and working conditions. [REDACTED]

As the Polish reform movement progressed, however, this sympathy for the Poles was reduced by a growing perception that the USSR was helping to pay for liberalization in Poland, satisfying the demands of Polish workers at the expense of Soviet consumers. Many Soviets are disdainful of the "anarchic" Poles, believing they lack discipline, and they may now feel that martial law is long overdue. [REDACTED]