

# RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

## EAST EUROPE

*This material was prepared for the use of the editors and policy staff of Radio Free Europe.*

●POLAND/25  
30 November 1971

### THE PUWP GUIDELINES AND THE PRECONGRESS DISCUSSION

Summary: On September 4, the 11th plenary session of the PUWP CC approved the Guidelines for the sixth party congress, which is to convene on December 6. The plenum thus eschewed the traditional form of pre-congress Theses in favor of a document that would ostensibly stimulate national discussion and subsequently serve as the basis for the long-range "action program" to be outlined at the congress.

The Guidelines are composed of four substantive sections, devoted to a brief review of earlier policy, the mechanism of "socialist democracy," the party's "leading role," and socioeconomic development. All but the latter are reviewed and discussed in this paper, as are various aspects of the pre-congress discussion to date. Although certain positive departures from past practice have emerged in the pre-congress campaign, the Guidelines are rather vague and unimpressive, and the debate has been subjected to a number of limitations. It is argued that the official motivation for the early convocation of the congress essentially consists of Gierek's intention to legitimize his rule and strengthen his personal position. The elaboration of a definitive "action program" may not occur at the congress, given the fact that numerous essential ingredients of it are still in the planning stage.

\* \* \*

The Polish People's Republic is a state where power is in the hands of the working people. . . .

From the Precongress  
Guidelines, September 1971.

At its 11th plenary session on September 4, the PUWP Central Committee resolved to convoke the sixth party congress on December 6; the congress will outline "a long-range program of tasks in the fields of Poland's social and economic development, of modernizing our socialist state, and of strengthening our party and its bonds with the working class and the working masses." (1) This program is based primarily on the Guidelines approved at the 11th plenum, which, in the words of party leader Edward Gierek, are to be "supplemented" in the precongress discussion and turned into "a general guideline for action" at the congress itself. (2) Entitled "For the Further Socialist Development of the Polish People's Republic," the Guidelines were drafted by a special party commission established in April. Gierek, who chaired the 94-member group, subsequently noted that "several thousand people worked on the document," including experts from party and nonparty circles alike. (3)

In presenting the document to the 11th CC plenum, Gierek asserted that "the traditional form of precongress Theses" had been abandoned in favor of the Guidelines because the former were "very often difficult for the party and public to understand" and "more in the nature of information about what was going to be done than something which encouraged people to think, discuss, and act." Toward this latter end, the Guidelines were envisioned to be not "a final program which should be distributed and popularized," but rather a set of goals and assumptions whose specifics, according to the party leader, "are open to any essential changes and corrections." This was said to be reflected in the document itself, i.e., in those sections where "alternative solutions to a number of very important problems" are suggested and the opinions of "the party and society" are solicited. With an obvious (and critical) glance to the

- 
1. See Gierek's speech to the plenum, Trybuna Ludu, 5 September 1971.
  2. In his speech at a national party conference on September 9. See Trybuna Ludu, 10 September 1971. The Guidelines were published in a special issue of Trybuna Ludu.
  3. In a meeting in Katowice; see Trybuna Robotnicza, 13 September 1971.

past, Gierek stressed that "our party action program . . . should always be the result of discussion," which constitutes "the main guarantee of the correctness and effectiveness of our policy."

In draft form, the Guidelines are divided into four sections, the first of which includes a brief introduction and a review of political and economic policies. The second part of the document, devoted to socioeconomic development in the 1971-1975 period, is by far the lengthiest.(4) The third and fourth sections deal less extensively with the issues of "socialist democracy" and the party's "leading role," respectively.

#### The Past in Brief

Given the political crises of 1956 and 1970-1971, any official review of the party's postwar role inevitably involves an exercise in verbal gymnastics. This is amply evident in the Guidelines, in their assessment of the entire period and especially of the course of events since the last party congress. On the former score, they claim: "never in the history of Poland have we had a period of such dynamic development in all fields of economic, social, cultural, and political life." Although this path has been "neither easy nor painless" nor free from "mistakes," "the general line of the party's policy has proved correct in the life of the nation. . . ." In particular, the party "has always had enough strength to introduce the necessary corrections in its methods of activity" and "has managed to revoke incorrect decisions, and to look for and find solutions more in line with the needs and possibilities of society."

The Guidelines' evaluation of the past five-year period (1966-1970) adheres closely to Gierek's programmatic statement to the eighth plenum in February.(5) Thus, the resolutions of the fifth party congress in November 1968 are seen as having "determined the correct general line for the further development of socialist construction in Poland, set goals in the basic sectors of life consistent with social needs . . . and set targets for working out a complex and internally consistent economic system." Such formulations clearly comprise part

---

4. This section of the Guidelines will be dealt with in a separate paper.

5. Published in Trybuna Ludu, 8 February 1971.

of the present leadership's effort to absolve the party as a whole (in this case, its supreme organ) of responsibility for the crisis in December 1970, which is attributed to the group surrounding former PUWP First Secretary Wladyslaw Gomulka. In effect, the party's "correct general line" was distorted, particularly as regards an improvement of living standards, and the elaboration of a "consistent economic system" was subverted as the result of "fragmentary solutions and insufficient clarification of the chief goal. . . ." It was this failure "to co-ordinate socioeconomic concepts with society's needs," as well as "stagnation in party policy," which led to the "growth of tension" and the "danger of social conflicts," culminating in "the tragic events of December 1970."

The "December events" themselves receive scant treatment in the Guidelines. They are viewed, in accordance with the findings of the eighth plenum, as the result of "errors in economic and social policy, which was based on subjectivism, distortion of Leninist principles, and the party and government leadership's isolation from the masses." That the PUWP was able "to see correctly the nature of the conflict, check its dangerous course, and restore the Leninist principles of the functioning of party and state authorities" is again interpreted as "proof of our party's political strength."

If the first part of the Guidelines was intended to promote confidence in the new leadership's "action program" by reference to the party's past "achievements," it fell somewhat short of the mark. Indeed, the strongest impression garnered from this section is that the party's forte over some 27 years has consisted of the ability to correct its own mistakes -- hardly a claim to political legitimacy. Moreover, the attempt to differentiate between the resolutions of the fifth congress and the policies of the Gomulka regime is less than successful. The former are said to have "determined the correct general line," yet a subsequent passage criticizes the lack of "a long-term concept of the country's socioeconomic development."

#### The Role of Government and "Socialist Democracy"

One of the most striking features of the Guidelines is the fact that the paragraphs devoted to the role of government are contained within the section on socioeconomic development. This, as well as the present predominance of economic experts at the highest levels in the central administration,(6)

---

6. As is seen in the fact that five of the six deputy premiers in the government are specialists in various economic spheres.



indicates that government officials will henceforth be primarily concerned with economic policies and their social repercussions. This is in fact stipulated in the Guidelines, which define the government's main functions as "the programing and planning of socioeconomic development, the creation of conditions for its pursuit, and the control of its implementation." Decisions are to be "adequately prepared," based on the discussion of alternatives and consultation with experts and "individual social groups." Ministries are not to concern themselves with "the direct running of economic organizations," but rather should "pay more attention than before to developmental programs." As for local governing bodies, the people's councils are to be invested with greater authority to facilitate their "main role as local officials responsible for the harmonious development of a given region. . . ."

The role and responsibilities of a myriad of organizations, as well as regime policy in such diverse spheres as culture, youth and education, and the mass media, are discussed in the third section of the Guidelines -- "For the Development of Socialist Democracy and the Development of Civic Consciousness -- For the Socialist Upbringing of Society." The broad framework of "socialist democracy" -- "a multiplicity of forms of participation of the working people and their organizations in ruling the country" -- is said to serve "the common interests of socialist construction and the overcoming of any conflicts which may emerge." After affirming that the party's "leading role, . . . in relation to the state conditions the socialist content of the sociopolitical system and the socialist direction of economic and sociocultural changes," the Guidelines pay brief lip-service to the PUWP's "alliance and co-operation" with the United Peasant Party and the Democratic Party as "the basis of the political system of our state."

The performance of the state apparatus is to be "improved" by the codification of existing legal and administrative regulations, "exacting responsibility from every link and every employee in respect of their concrete duties, and a permanent development of social control." As regards the latter concept, which is rather vaguely defined, such organizations as local people's councils, trade unions, and self-government bodies are to be strengthened. The "control function" of the Sejm is also to be increased, in line with the party's alleged effort to enhance parliamentary "authority." In the final analysis, however, "control over the state organs" will inevitably rest with the PUWP "through the activity of party members in the representative and executive bodies." Indeed, a juridical basis for the PUWP's "leading role" in society will

be provided in a new Constitution -- to replace that of 1952 -- which is to reflect "the development of the socioeconomic and political system of the Polish People's Republic. . . ." A draft of the new Constitution is to be presented for public discussion during the 1972 electoral campaign.

One of the few openly critical passages in the Guidelines is devoted to the trade-union movement. The trade unions should "continue to make a profound analysis of all the weaknesses in their activities, which have appeared particularly sharply in recent years." However, on the crucial question of the trade unions' "essential tasks," the document contains the same equivocation that characterized Gierek's speech to the eighth plenum -- the defense of worker interests and concern for productivity being accorded relatively equal weight. The Guidelines are even less definitive about workers' self-government. Although "a constant increase" of the latter's role is equated with "the development of socialist democracy" and "the strengthening of the role of the working class in the system of running the economy," the specifics of such an "increase" are not spelled out. Instead, it is merely asserted that the "reform of the system of planning and management" -- another sensitive subject not discussed in the Guidelines (7) -- will "open new roads and opportunities for workers' self-government."

Although the mass organization -- the Front of National Unity -- is dealt with in routine terms, this section of the Guidelines does contain several conciliatory nods to the Catholic Church in particular and to the faithful in general. The "quality of work and creative activities" of "citizen believers" are said to be "appreciated and recognized" by the party. Even more striking was the following statement:

The people's state creates through its policy the necessary conditions for the Catholic Church and other religious communities to meet the needs of believers and will continue to aim at a complete normalization of relations with the Catholic Church.

- 
7. See Harry Trend, "Economic Reform as discussed in the Guidelines for the Polish Congress," Polish Background Report/22, Radio Free Europe Research (EERA), 28 October 1971.

Such declarations in themselves are not novel -- they have been reiterated by the various members of the leadership since the changes of last December -- but their inclusion in this type of party document is unprecedented.

Considerable attention is focused on the problems of youth, certainly a warranted concern in view of the nation's demographic structure and, perhaps even more importantly, of the visible dissatisfaction and frustration harbored by this segment of society, which was violently manifested in March 1968 and December 1970. The "conditions" for the "all-round participation of youth in socialist construction" are said to include both socioeconomic factors -- such as more favorable employment possibilities, increased housing, and a rise in living standards -- and matters related to the training and education of youth. Particular stress is placed on improvements in the educational system, which "must mold the ideological attitude of youth. . . ." A similar role is envisioned for the youth organizations, especially insofar as they "undertake an effective struggle against ideological and moral tendencies unworthy of the younger generation of People's Poland." In addition, institutions of higher learning, as well as scientific centers, are to link their activities more closely with economic and production problems.

There is little in the section on culture that would offer encouragement to Poland's alienated intellectuals. Indeed, the emphasis accorded such technical details as a long-term "development program" and the "administration of cultural activity" is indicative of the technocratic mentality which is on the ascendancy in Warsaw. The value of the broad assertion that "the party will create conditions conducive to cultural creativity and artistic quests" is considerably diluted by the statement that artistic works with "a substance molding the awareness of society in the spirit of the humanistic ideas of socialism" will be given "special support."

Similar orthodoxy is to be found in the subsequent paragraphs devoted to the information media. The regime's frequent declarations regarding a "new look" in communications policies are not borne out in the Guidelines. The "primary task" of the press, radio, and television, as "instruments for the implementation of the party's program," is "to increase the effectiveness of ideological-educational and political influence on the shaping of socialist awareness. . . ." Subsequently, it is asserted that "the party will attach special importance to the . . . working out and improvement of a many-sided system of passing on to society prompt and factual information. . . ." The media are to play more of a role in exposing "negative facts and shortcomings in socioeconomic life," but only within "the field of criticism extended by the party." Moreover, the party and government are to utilize the media "to inform public opinion rapidly and comprehensively about their activity and



intentions" -- a statement that markedly contrasts with recent practice, e.g., reportage on the Gierek visit to the USSR and the 12th plenum.

#### The "Leading Role" of the PUWP

That this section of the Guidelines is the shortest of the four is not the result of any oversight, but rather of the fact that the PUWP's "leading role" is a recurrent theme throughout the document. Thus, the necessity "to raise to a higher level the leading role of the party in all fields" is viewed in the introduction as "an indispensable condition for the successful implementation of the program of the country's development." In the section on the government and representative bodies, it is asserted that the PUWP's role is to consist of party members "outlining political directions, stimulating their activity, and exercising control over the consistency of their activity." Given such earlier references, the final part of the Guidelines contains less a statement of official policy vis-à-vis the nation than of the manner in which the party rank and file should contribute to "the strengthening of the PUWP's role as the leading, programing, inspiring, and organizing force of our society." In this regard, "the consolidation of party forces" and the style and methods of party activity receive special consideration.

On the former score, the political qualifications of party members are particularly emphasized: "It is necessary to make up for the backlog and shortcomings in intraparty ideological-political work which have become apparent in recent years. . . ." Individual conversations with the rank and file -- such as were held in the summer months with approximately one half of the PUWP membership -- are to become "a permanent feature" of party life. An improvement in "the quality of party ranks" -- a prominent theme since the turn of the year -- is closely related to "a strengthening of the party's worker backbone," especially workers in large industrial enterprises. The role of party organizations in the latter is to be discussed at a special CC plenum.

The Guidelines also highlight the importance of party meetings as the "supreme authority of the basic or departmental party organization" and of PUWP "activists," whose selection and training should be of "particular concern." Similarly, the basic party cells are viewed as "a crucial link in the implementation of party policy," one which "should be a model of socialist human relations." Party organizations at all levels are to "ensure organizational conditions for the promotion of able and self-sacrificing people," including nonparty members. On the more sensitive issue of the rotation of cadres, one demand



of the workers in December that has received short shrift in the media in recent months, the Guidelines are extremely inconclusive:

The stability of personnel which is fulfilling its tasks and the planned, rational movement of personnel, matching the developmental requirements of individual fields, should be guaranteed.

The section devoted to "the style and methods of party activities" is a reproduction of the eighth plenum decisions. In particular, the formulation on "democratic centralism" is a carbon copy of Gierek's statement to the February CC session: "more discussion and consideration before the resolution is adopted and more discipline in its implementation." Party decisions are to be preceded by consultations with "the working class" or relevant "social circles" and "constructive and businesslike discussion among party members and nonparty citizens." Party members should make "broad use of the statutory right to criticism," which should "form a barrier against deformations in party life, against its losing touch with reality."

As an important element of "intraparty democracy," the "openness of party life and the standard and efficiency of a two-way flow of information" are to be encouraged. Similarly, the CC is to be regularly informed on the work of the Politburo, the secretariat, and the government. It is also stressed once again that these bodies should make "greater use of the press, radio, and television both for passing quick and accurate information to the public about their intentions and activities and for intensifying general ideological upbringing and propaganda work."

#### Foreign Relations

Unlike the traditional pregress Theses, the Guidelines contain no separate section devoted to "the international situation" or to Poland's foreign policy. The latter subject is very briefly and selectively dealt with in the introductory part of the document:

The internationalistic policy of our party, its unity with fraternal communist parties, mainly with the CPSU, and its solidarity with all forces of progress and national liberation opposing the policy of imperialism in the contemporary world are the basis of the active and peaceful foreign policy of our state. . . .

Asserting that Poland will remain a reliable partner in the Warsaw Pact and Comecon, the Guidelines declare: "We will counteract all centrifugal tendencies in the socialist camp and in the international workers' movement, which, proceeding from the positions of a

rightist or ultraleftist revisionism, turn against the socialist community." Although particular stress is placed on the alliance with the USSR -- the main basis for "the favorable existence and inviolability of the nation's achievements" -- the appeal to Polish patriotism is less "internationally" oriented:

Concern for the dignity of the nation and responsibility for its fate and for the development of a sovereign Poland, for the strength and affluence of the state, form the living contents of contemporary patriotism.

The nation's foreign economic relations are also discussed in the lengthy section on socioeconomic development. The document refers to the "new possibilities" offered by the complex program for Comecon integration. As regards the "strengthening of co-operation" with individual Comecon members, only the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany are specifically mentioned. The Guidelines also postulate the growth of economic trade and co-operation with "the capitalist countries both in Europe and overseas" and with "the developing countries."

In commenting on the Guidelines, the noted correspondent Ryszard Wojna pointed out that "little space has been apportioned to matters of foreign policy." (8) In his view, as well as that of another well-known journalist, Mieczyslaw Rakowski, the editor-in-chief of Polityka, (9) this does not mean that less interest or importance is attached to such issues. Rather, the case is advanced that Poland's international position and ability to assert its interests abroad will in large measure depend on its internal strength, especially in the economic sphere. This is a telling argument that was more explicitly stated in the frank press discussion on "Poland's New Concerns" during the summer months of 1970. (10)

In Wojna's opinion, the Guidelines thus demonstrate that "foreign policy is subordinated to internal policy." Moreover, the former is not used "as a screen covering the contradictions in internal policy, nor as an inferior substitute for purposes serving the principal mobilization of the nation's energy" -- an obvious reference to the Gomulka's regime's past reliance on the German "bogy." While many might disagree with Wojna's second explanation for the emphasis on domestic affairs in the Guidelines,

(8) Zycie Warszawy, 19-20 September 1971.

(9) Polityka, 9 October 1971.

(10) See Michael Costello, "The Poles Look at Their Country and at Themselves," Polish BR/14, RFER (EERA), 16 September 1970.

i.e., "there is no need to persuade the present Polish society of the correctness of the foreign policy program of People's Poland," few would disagree with the statement's clear implication that considerable persuasion will be required to overcome popular skepticism regarding the PUWP's internal programs.

#### The Development of the Discussion

The concluding note to the Guidelines stated that the document had been submitted to "all party members and all citizens . . . with the profound conviction that it will stimulate a broad, keen, and frank discussion" and asserted that "any thought and any initiative represents a precious national asset." As was to be expected, the official press hailed the Guidelines and the appeal for a national discussion as symptomatic of the "new style" of the leadership and its commitment to the "cogoverning" of the country. (11) Even such a liberal spokesman as the Catholic newspaper Tygodnik Powszechny spoke of "an event without precedent in postwar Poland. . . . The PUWP has decided to engage in a debate with the nation -- the entire nation -- on the most important elements of the emerging program for the further development of the country." (12)

The "debate" was initiated on September 9 at a national conference in Warsaw of district and local party first secretaries. Addressing this important gathering of the PUWP "aktif," Gierek stressed that the "main task" in preparing for the congress would be to "thoroughly acquaint our entire party, our entire society with the Guidelines," which "set out the key directions for socioeconomic development." This was reiterated in an authoritative article by Politburo member and CC Secretary Jan Szydlak that was published initially in the agitprop publication Zagadnienia i Materialy (13) and subsequently in the provincial press. On September 10, the mobilization of the cadres continued as Politburo member and CC Secretary Edward Babiuch met in Warsaw with the organizational secretaries of voivodship party committees and major industrial establishments.

Shortly thereafter, the precongress discussion began in earnest. Although PUWP meetings provided the principal forum, nonparty members participated in conferences within factories and numerous social organizations. The Guidelines were also discussed by members of the Democratic Party and the United Peasant Party. In addition, various aspects of the document have been subjected to almost daily press comment. An examination of the latter, as well as of

---

(11) See, for example, Trybuna Ludu, 6 September 1971 and Zycie Warszawy, 7 September 1971.

(12) 26 September 1971.

(13) 22 September 1971.



reports about the plethora of meetings, clearly indicates that socioeconomic issues have dominated the discussion to date. In mid-November, Babiuch presented an interim appraisal of the pre-congress campaign, (14) noting that the vast majority of "proposals and demands" concerned economic matters either "of immediate interest to the participants" or of more general concern, e.g., employment and wage policies. After devoting considerable attention to such issues, he then stated:

Of course, there are other proposals we are also especially interested in: we attach equal importance to proposals and observations on further improving the system of socialist democracy, to how the party operates in practice, and the performance of the state and economic administration at all levels.

Babiuch's statement, as well as other assessments, (15) viewed "the broad militant participation of all sections of the people" in the discussion as an expression of "full confidence in the PUWP's leading role" and of "support for the new party and government leadership." In a major address in Katowice on November 2, Gierek himself asserted that the Guidelines "have met with universal approval among the party and the community." (16) Such assertions notwithstanding, there have been several indications that "participation" has not been so "broad," nor "approval" so "universal" as the leadership has been wont to claim. Thus, in the Katowice speech, Gierek indicated that he had been "authorized by the Politburo to appeal personally to over 1,000 representatives of the working class, farmers, outstanding scientists, creators of culture, social and economic activists, party members, and nonparty people to present their views directly to the Central Committee on problems stipulated in the congress Guidelines." That such an appeal was made almost two months after the 11th plenum and only one month before the congress would seem to suggest that considerable numbers of influential "activists" have not taken part in the discussion, or that their views have not filtered up to the leadership. The latter possibility appears remote in view of Babiuch's reference to the simplification of "procedures by which proposals and demands reach the Central Committee."

As regards "broad popular participation," a recent public opinion poll conducted by the polling center of the Polish State Radio and Television Networks offered little to substantiate the claims of the leadership. (17) Indeed, 64 per cent of those queried

(14) Trybuna Ludu, 16 November 1971.

(15) See, for example, PAP's review of the pre-congress discussion, 14 October 1971.

(16) Trybuna Ludu, 3 November 1971.

(17) The results of the poll were announced by Radio Warsaw on November 14.

had not read the Guidelines, while a further 14 per cent had merely "glanced at them." Furthermore, 47 per cent of the sample had not yet participated in the pregress discussion; the remaining percentage (53) was composed primarily of those who had informally talked about the Guidelines with friends or relatives (40 per cent), only 13 per cent having taken part in discussions at meetings. The report optimistically noted that the former percentage (47) would decrease "as the congress approaches"; however, two days later, Babiuch noted that "the discussion in plants, countries, towns, and municipal districts are over."

Perhaps of even greater importance is the fact that those taking part in the discussion have by no means been unanimous in their opinions. Not only have major differences surfaced over various alternatives presented in the Guidelines (especially regarding socioeconomic policy); there has also been criticism of the document itself, of both substantive matters and of the general framework. For example, Zygie Literackie, in dealing with the question of guarantees that "the healing process . . . will not become shallow on a certain day," bluntly referred to some of its readers' reactions to the Guidelines:

One may detect their "lukewarmness," their restraint, shown in critical formulations on the subject of what went wrong in the past. Others may point to the "mixed treatment given affairs": a detailed attention to certain points and a rather "global" approach to others. (13)

In a little publicized meeting with editors-in-chief on September 27 (19), Gierak spoke on this latter point and, in particular, revealed that the pregress document had not been received with "universal support":

In the Guidelines, we were unable to elucidate everything at length. Therefore, we understand the impatience of some comrades, who would like to know how specific problems, concerning their respective regions, or those concerning sections of the national economy, which have a bearing on the standard of living and welfare of the nation, are going to be solved.

---

(18) 10 October 1971.

(19) The full text of Gierak's speech was published only in the November issue of Prasa Polska, the monthly publication of the Journalists' Union.

The party leader then stated that "many of those questions will be answered at the congress," while "others" will only be discussed afterward, since "there are matters which have to be realized over a period of many years. . . ."

The utilization of a "global approach" in the Guidelines is most evident in those sections dealing with the role of the party and "socialist democracy" -- sections in which "alternatives" are for the most part conspicuously absent -- and in the document's failure, in Tygodnik Powszechny's words, to accord sufficient emphasis to "the general economic strategy." This latter point is closely connected with the work of the special commission for the Modernization of the System of the Functioning of the Economy and the State. The Guidelines, avoiding any reference to the Commission's findings to date, merely stated that "the basic directions of the reform" would be worked out "in the next few months" and submitted to the congress for approval. In an article in Zycie Warszawy, Jerzy Redlich queried if it would not be "a good idea" to submit "this analytical material prepared by the commission . . . for discussion within the scope of the pregress debates." (20) Good idea or not, this suggestion, as well as others regarding the publication of details on the progress of various special committees, (21) has not been followed up. That the issue has been a subject of concern to some of the participants in the various pregress meetings was disclosed by Babiuch in his aforementioned appraisal of the discussion:

Sometimes, too, fears are expressed whether we will succeed in sufficiently speeding up and effectively transforming the managerial system. . . . This is a serious problem and we are approaching it with the greatest concern. . . . For some months now, groups of experts and working commissions set up by the Politburo have been working on modernizing the system of the functioning of the economy and the state. The materials are promising. As we have promised, we will submit some of the conclusions and proposals stemming from them to the sixth congress (emphasis supplied).

As for the general tenor of the discussion itself, numerous press and radio accounts of the pregress meetings have alluded in general terms to "frank" and "critical" comments. On occasion, such comments, primarily on local or regional issues, have been reported by the central media and cited as an indication of the

---

(20) 15 September 1971.

(21) For example, Glos Pracy's (October 12) proposal that the draft of the new labor code be published.



constructive nature of the discussion. However, Babiuch revealed that some of the participants have strayed outside the framework of the Guidelines. Thus, after asserting that the discussion was "devoid of demagoguery" and marked by "sober realism," he criticized "a tendency to view everything through rose-colored glasses without being aware of difficulties and shortcomings . . . [and] without taking into consideration our real possibilities." Although no details were mentioned, the terminology and context of the statement indicated that that "tendency" concerned economic policy, particularly the wage issue.

#### Some General Remarks on the Guidelines and the Discussion

In its initial commentary on the Guidelines, Zycie Warszawy termed the post-December 1970 "transformations" a guarantee that "the national discussion will be open, frank, and effective. The limits of the discussion are determined only by concern for the good of the Polish Republic and for the leading role of the PUPP, which at the present historical moment is the guarantor of this good." (22) These determinants could hardly be defined as minor, and, indeed, the leadership's interpretation of them has not contributed to an "open, frank, and effective discussion." Just as the first section of the Guidelines blandly states that "the general line of the party's policy has proved correct," so too did Gierek assert in his speech to the CC plenum that "the draft Guidelines contain the correct analysis of the socioeconomic, political, ideological, and organizational problems of the present phase of socialist construction in our country and the tasks arising from them for our party." In light of this statement, his subsequent reference to the possibility of "changing" or "correcting" various aspects of the document sounds strikingly superfluous.

The true "limits of discussion" were outlined in Szydlak's article in Zagadnienia i Materialy. Ostensibly singling out the most important of "the wealth of problems" dealt with in the Guidelines, he listed three broad discussion topics: socioeconomic policies; improvements in "the mechanism of socialist democracy," the planning system, the management of the national economy, and the operation of the state; and the strengthening of the party's "leading role." Of even greater significance was Szydlak's directive on what was to be avoided in the pre-congress debate -- "a tendency to settle accounts with the past," which would only "distract the attention of society from the basic premises of the discussion, i.e., from the need to define the tasks that we face today and shall face in the future." Thus, he called upon the party cadre "to counteract any showdown tendencies," asserting

(22) 7 September 1971.

that "nothing can be achieved by delving into the past, no problem can be settled, the life of the nation will not be made easier or more prosperous." Szydlak failed to mention that any "delving into the past" would also reveal the bankruptcy of PUWP policies. It is this element that is responsible for the "lukewarmness" of the Guidelines "on the subject of what went wrong in the past," and also for the fact that many aspects of earlier policy -- the study of which is indispensable for the preparation of an effective reform, as was argued by Redlich -- have been generally ignored in the pre-congress discussion.

The negative effect of these limitations on the debate pales, however, in comparison with the shortcomings of the Guidelines themselves. On several scores, the Guidelines are unique. For one thing, they are less a political document than the previous Theses.(23) Not only is far greater attention devoted to socioeconomic issues; the Guidelines are not imbued with the same ideological fervor characteristic of earlier pre-congress draft programs. For example, the term "revisionism" appears just once in the text -- and then only in reference to its "international" manifestations. Other departures from the past include the appearance of certain "alternatives," the references to the Church and to the role of "believers" and nonparty people, and the obvious attempt to engage society in a cathartic -- albeit controlled -- discussion.

These innovations were dictated primarily by the course of events in December 1970 and since. However, as has been true on other occasions, the Gierek leadership has made a virtue of necessity and hailed both the format of the Guidelines and the pre-congress discussion as indicative of the "new style." Be that claim as it may, the Guidelines hardly constitute an impressive presentation of the party's "action program." The document bears all the marks of hasty preparation, being poorly written and co-ordinated; many important issues are dealt with in repetitious and at times contradictory fashion in different sections. On substantive grounds, the Guidelines are merely a rehash of the Politburo and the Gierek reports to the eighth CC plenum in February and of other major pronouncements. As such, they constitute a lengthy collection of rather superficial policy aims and intentions, without suggesting how these are to be achieved or implemented. As was noted by Zygie Literackie, there are considerable differences in the emphasis accorded various issues, but, in the final analysis, the Guidelines contain neither a general strategy

---

(23) For a review of the fifth congress Theses, see "Theses of the PUWP CC for the Fifth Party Congress -- A Summary and Analysis." Polish BR/24, REFER (EERA), 7 August 1968.

nor specific solutions to individual problems. The essence of reform is generally lost amidst both vaguely defined objectives and such homilies as the stipulation that decisions are to be "adequately prepared." Simplistic as the latter statement may sound at this "stage" of communist rule in Poland, there are few who would disagree with it or with other passages of this type. Similarly, many of the goals articulated in the document can be supported by Poles of all persuasions. However, such considerations are no substitute for the major weakness of the Guidelines: the failure to provide a clear outline of a concrete program for the realization of these goals. Nor is there any commitment to the sort of structural and institutional reform that Poland so badly needs.

Disappointing as these fundamental shortcomings in the pre-congress document are, they should not be interpreted as a conclusive sign that the Gierek leadership lacks either a program or the commitment to reform. This remains to be seen, and the chances are that the answer may not be forthcoming until long after the sixth congress. Indeed, there are several indications that the motivation behind the leadership's decision to convoke the congress nearly a year before the statutory date (November 1972) lies, not in the stated necessity to approve "a long-range program of socioeconomic development," but in Gierek's intention to fully legitimize his rule and to continue -- and if possible complete -- the consolidation of his personal position. In recent months, there has been a marked increase in references to the obstructionist tactics of the middle level apparat, many of whom have adopted a "wait-and-see" attitude toward the process of "renewal." In his blunt speech to the dignitaries of the press in late September, Gierek asserted that many of the party's "middle links" have been unwilling or unable to "keep pace in sufficient degree with what is happening 'on the bottom' and what is going on 'at the top'." Relatedly, some of the cadres were accused of not being "in accord with what we are now doing," of having become "easy-going," or of "waiting for us to grow tired." With these people, the first secretary stated, the party "will have to part company." If a confrontation with this entrenched group of party functionaries is in store, Gierek must clearly strengthen his own hand, and this is the obvious rationale for the congress. It may well be that the vague nature of the Guidelines was purposely designed in order not to provoke such elements in the party or to provide them with a rallying point for opposition before the sixth congress.

Such tactical considerations are closely interwoven with the actual progress registered by the various commissions that have been established in the past year to examine policy and programs in almost every sphere of socioeconomic and political life. Indeed, in most instances, the work of these special bodies will not be



completed before December 6. The importance of these studies for any "long-range program" is obvious; they include such crucial areas as reform in the economic and educational systems and the new Constitution. A new labor code and revitalized trade union law are in process of preparation. So also are a number of other programs, such as for the information media and even in the foreign policy field. A special CC plenum on youth affairs, which was to be held prior to December, has now been postponed. Given these considerations, it is difficult to conceive that a definitive "action program" will be approved at the fifth congress. Indeed, from this perspective, the pre-congress discussion would appear in part to be somewhat premature and superficial. The opinions that have been expressed may be of considerable use to the committees of experts, but it is unlikely that they will be of decisive importance in the deliberations of the congress, except insofar as they are cited by the leadership as a general expression of confidence in the Gierk regime and the "renewal" process.

In retrospect, the party has sought to utilize the pre-congress debate as somewhat of a safety-value mechanism. The public discussion, although confined within certain limits, has clearly demonstrated, not only the need for this type of mechanism, but also, more importantly, a pervasive desire for renovation and positive change. That such feelings weren't even more strongly registered is partially attributable to the experience of the past. As Tygodnik Powszechny noted: "It is impossible to evoke public opinion on an emergency basis, although it is possible and necessary to create conditions for its free development and expression." As is attested to by the restrictions placed on the debate, these "conditions" do not yet exist, but even in its limited "dialogue" with the population, the leadership has set a precedent that may have far-reaching implications.

Michael Costello