

Munich, 21 February 1962, Research and Evaluation Note (Stern).
In a speech to the XVI Plenum of the Polish Council of Trade Unions, Vice-Premier Piotr Jaroszewicz announced on February 14 that stringent governmental measures would be taken to prevent transgressions of the wage fund in socialized industry, according to "Zycie Warszawy" of February 15.

Factory managers paid out 700 million zloty in excess of the 1961 plan for the wage fund, according to official statistics.

Trade Unions will be required to join with the government in controlling wage fund discipline, and a resolution to that effect was proposed at the recent TU Plenum.

In his speech Jaroszewicz warned that "we want to punish transgressions of the wage fund much more drastically and justly. We want to punish the entire factory management more severely for exceeding the wage fund, by depriving them of premiums ... and other funds". He said that disciplinary commissions would be formed in the ministries which, along with Trade Union and "self-government" groups, would police "financial discipline" in the factories.

It would seem extremely doubtful that the Trade Unions, represented in "self-government" groups, could be expected willingly to deny work premiums from themselves. The "self-government" groups have never afforded the unions a real voice in the management of factories, and it is unlikely that trade unions will now raise their voice in an effort to limit the paychecks of their own members.

The Vice-Premier also indicated that the government was not satisfied that premiums paid out for increased productivity were justified by increased effort on the part of the workers:

"We are no longer able to agree to a disproportionate growth of wages, with mechanical payment according to the rise in productivity, without asking in what that productivity actually consists, what are its real elements."

Contradiction

An examination of the communique of the Central Statistical Office, published early this month, would indicate that Jaroszewicz's complaints have little foundation in fact. While it is true that the wage fund was exceeded in 1961, the Vice-Premier failed to provide a full explanation of why this came about.

The statistical communique notes that "many more people were taken into industry than was anticipated by the plan". It is an inevitable fact that "more people" require a larger wage fund, and considering that large numbers of young people are now coming of working age (and/or coming from the villages), it would behoove the regime to reckon on "more people" entering industry each year. Secondly, the factory manager must often depend solely on additional labor to increase production, for the good reason that the quality of his raw materials is not increasing.

While Jaroszewicz has his doubts about the genuineness of increasing worker productivity, the statistical communique notes that "the value of total production per employee rose by 7.4 per cent and per industrial worker by 7.9 per cent" in 1961. Average real wages, on the other hand, increased by only three per cent. The national income increased by 38.5 billion zloty, of which 11 billion were paid out in wages.

Another regime criticism of a rising wage fund is that it will tend to disrupt the internal market, since the additional money would be spent on food alone. This year's increased wages brought about a 10 per cent increase in retail sales as against the 5.3 per cent increase stipulated in the plan. Somehow the market was not disturbed. The additional purchasing power found its primary outlet in consumer goods which the regime had been trying to get off the shelves for years.

Wage Freeze

It is apparent that the official policy of virtually freezing wages, introduced some two years ago, will remain. Under this policy worker productivity is to increase, while wages do not, so that more funds can be channeled into investments. In 1961, however, factory managers found that the only way in which they could get more production from their workers was to offer them material incentives, i.e. more pay. In some shops in which these incentives were not forthcoming, work stopped.

The 1961 plan was over-fulfilled. Whether or not this year's plan will meet with the same degree of success may in large measure depend on the wage fund keeping step with increasing worker productivity.

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