

X/9-P -- POLAND'S NEW ATTITUDE TO COMECON

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Recent statements by Polish economic leaders indicate that Poland's attitude regarding the extent and degree of cooperation within Comecon has changed. The new Polish attitude can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The usefulness of complete specialization of production is questioned. The principle of concentrating on a few defined areas for specialization is being supported.
- 2) The principle of specialization according to the final product is abandoned and the necessity for international co-production is stressed (specialization in the production of sub-assemblies).
- 3) The downgrading of Comecon to a body which only recommends specialization of production in a given field, followed by binding bilateral agreements which carry out the recommendations.
- 4) The principle of there being a minimum of two producers for a given product within the Bloc, is advanced.
- 5) The importance of the purchase of Western licenses and the necessity for a fuller participation in the world division of labor is stressed.
- 6) It is clearly said that a more commercial approach should be applied to the problems of specialization and that the technical, quality and price characteristics should be subject to the test of Western markets.

These standpoints have been put forward in articles published almost simultaneously: one in the Warsaw popular daily Zycie Warszawy of March 12 and two in the March 13 issue of the economic weekly Zycie Gospodarcze. Both the Zycie Warszawy article and one in Zycie Gospodarcze were written by Artur Bodnar, Director of the Office for International Cooperation in the Planning Commission. The second Zycie Gospodarcze article was written by none less than deputy premier, Piotr Jaroszewicz, Poland's leading (and loquacious) Comecon delegate. The three articles may, therefore, be taken as authoritative.

Specialization

The most interesting of the statements made in the three articles pertain to the specialization of the production of the Comecon member countries. These contend that, when specializing in the production of a given product, the following considerations should be given priority:

- The introduction of the production of machines and installations which are not produced in the Comecon countries.

Is a summary of an article written by none less (PTO)
than deputy premier Piotr Jaroszewicz, Poland's chief Comecon
delegate, in the February 16 edition of the Soviet weekly Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta.

- The increase of the production of articles, the shortage of which has been disclosed during the process of coordinating plans. Hence the stress is put on specialization within the framework of an envisaged increase of production. Moreover, in an obvious effort to avoid specialization in the production of goods which consume much raw material (freight cars, ships, etc.) and which is, hence, not advantageous to Poland, the concept of specialization on the production of sub-assemblies, rather than of final products is stressed. Thus the concept of specialization through co-production is being put forward by the Poles. In this context, it is also noteworthy that the articles demand that specialization in given types of production should not be considered as being of indefinite duration. (It is stated that there is a difference of view between Poland and Hungary in this respect.)

Playing Down of Comecon

The view is now publicly put forward that Comecon is not the only forum for specialization negotiations. It is necessary to create conditions conducive to a broader trade in machines with Western countries and promoting a deeper participation in the world division of labor (This idea of a world division of labor has been previously propagated by the Rumanians).

Regarding the evaluation of the economic effects of specialization, this must remain the internal concern of the given country. The basis on which evaluations should be made should be international market prices.

The deliberate downplaying of Comecon is seen in the proposal that Comecon should not be anything more than a recommending body with binding decisions being made only through bilateral agreements. The need to strengthen the role of such agreements is clearly stressed and, in this context, attention is drawn to the relationships between selected member countries of Comecon, for example, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the GDR.

Basic Change

What these articles indicate is a basic change in Poland's attitude toward Comecon. She had always appeared to be one of the Comecon members urging a closer economic integration. Now, in pursuance of her own self-interest, she is evidently opting for a policy of "the looser, the better" with Comecon as a consulting and recommending body.

The volta²-face, as indicated in the articles by Bodnar and Jaroszewicz is little short of sensational, and is the latest example of national interest at work in Eastern Europe.

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Note: Translations of the articles by Bodnar and Jaroszewicz will shortly appear in the Polish Press Survey.

Note: For The two articles by Bodnar see Polish Press Survey (PPS) No 1578

For the summary of the Jaroszewicz article jpt/1515/66

see PPS NO 1979