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### INSTITUTIONAL PLURALISM TAKES DEEPER ROOTS IN POLAND

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Summary: Poland's Sejm has passed a law providing legal grounds for the formal registration of a new labor union, the Independent and Self-Governing Labor Union of Individual Farmers, or Rural Solidarity. Negotiations have continued between the government and the Solidarity trade unions on specific measures ensuring the maintenance of cooperative relations between the two sides. Those two series of developments suggest the possibility of a still further institutionalization of certain pluralistic elements in Poland's public life. No clear opposition has emerged from the party's leadership, while opponents of those pluralistic trends appear to be losing their influence in the country's politics.

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Ever since the emergence in August 1980 of a workers' organization that was both capable and determined to face the authorities in defense of proletarian interests, the dominant issue in the country's public life has been the growth of a spontaneous movement of self-assertion and self-organization. This movement has affected the activities of various social groups and institutions, providing foundations for repeated demands for greater autonomy of their structures and operations. More important still, this development has produced considerable changes in the political system in the direction of greater participation by society in the exercise of power.

Those changes have not been easy to achieve. They have come about through repeated conflicts, negotiations, and compromises. There is still considerable evidence that the changes have not been accepted by everyone and remain controversial in many sectors of the institutional and political establishment. Efforts are still being made to present the newly emerged organizations and forces as a basically temporary phenomenon reflecting the exigencies of the current situation rather than a permanent evolution of political life. Yet one cannot escape the impression that at least some aspects of these developments have already become more

durable. While the Polish system cannot be defined as pluralistic, no one would deny the emergence of a social and institutional framework that could provide a solid basis for a possible evolution toward pluralism. The events of recent days have fully confirmed that assessment.

### Sejm Actions

On May 6 the Sejm approved a law that provided legal grounds for the official registration of Rural Solidarity, the Independent and Self-Governing Labor Union of Individual Farmers. The union was set up several weeks ago and has recently operated without any overt hinderance from the authorities. The passage of the law, which should be followed shortly by registration through court action, has formally legitimized the situation.

On the same day, the Sejm also adopted a separate law providing for registration, in the same manner as that to be followed by Rural Solidarity, of the officially supported and sponsored Agricultural Circles and Union of Circles and Agricultural Organizations. This action has created a situation in which the organizational evolution in the agricultural sector matches that in the industrial sector. Just as the interests of the workers are represented by the spontaneously organized Solidarity unions as well as the officially supported branch unions and semiofficially maintained "autonomous unions," so those of the peasants will be defended by Rural Solidarity and the agricultural circles. Until now there has been little cooperation between various industrial unions; one might speculate that the relations between various agricultural unions are likely to develop in a way similar to the industrial example.

The Sejm also adopted a law permitting the registration of various "federations, confederations, consultative commissions, and associations of trade unions set up by labor unions of employees." This law could create a basis for greater cooperation between separate labor organizations in the future, but the legislators have made it clear that all those legal acts have only a "provisional character." The final resolution of the institutional aspects of the existing labor movement must eventually be achieved through "a general law on labor unions" to be adopted in the future. (1)

### Talks with Solidarity

Another development suggesting the evolution toward a certain institutionalization of pluralistic elements in Poland's public life has been a series of continuing negotiations between the government and Solidarity on specific measures ensuring the maintenance of cooperative relations between the two sides. Those negotiations have been going on since the end of April; they were initiated by Solidarity following its demands to clarify the understandings reached in the agreement of March 30. (2)

(1) Radio Warsaw, 6 May 1981.

(2) See J. B. de Weydenthal, "Government and Unions Reach Agreement But Problems Remain," RAD Background Report/111 (Poland), Radio Free Europe Research, 23 April 1981.

Perhaps the most important result of those talks so far was a preliminary agreement, reached by the working commissions of the two sides on May 6, with respect to Solidarity's access to the mass media. According to the available reports, the government accepted the labor organization's demands for airing its own programs on the television and radio networks. Those programs will be prepared in Solidarity's own studio and they will be subjected to regular control by the censor's office. There was no agreement, however, over the crucial problem of final editorial control of the content of the programs. The government reportedly insisted that such control should be exercised by the management of the networks, that is, by the state body. Solidarity responded that the statutory rules of the network should be changed and appeared determined to have the final say on the content. (3) Both sides agreed that further negotiations should be continued and that their results should be presented to a meeting between representatives of both the government and the Solidarity leadership.

#### Leadership Change in the Peasant Party

In still another development, the leadership of the United Peasant Party, a political organization closely allied with the communist party, underwent a sudden and major shakeup. This occurred at a special meeting of the party's Supreme Committee on May 7. During the meeting the entire presidium of the committee submitted their resignations as a result of numerous "demands" of local units "calling for changes in the Peasant Party's leadership and withholding confidence in the [party's] presidium and the secretariat." (4) More specifically, those demands reflected the Peasant Party's dissatisfaction with the leadership's "stand [on the] independent farmers' trade union movement." The Peasant Party's leadership was strongly opposed to the formation and the legalization of the new farmers' union. In particular, this opposition was characteristic of the activities of the party's chairman, Stanislaw Gucwa, who, as the Speaker of the Sejm, was one of the most vocal and persistent critics of the autonomous peasant movement but was finally forced to preside over the Sejm's session during which the existence of the union was legalized. Needless to say, this development made it impossible for Gucwa to maintain even a semblance of authority within his own party.

Gucwa was replaced by Stefan Ignar, a veteran activist of the Peasant Party and a deputy prime minister during the 1960s. Whether Ignar's election as the top leader will lead to a consolidation of the organization and find full acceptance among the rank and file members remains uncertain. He occupied the same position from 1956 to 1962, years marked by a process of gradual decline in the party's effectiveness as a political group representing the interests of the peasants. That experience might not have been lost on other party members and could hardly be forgotten by the peasants themselves.

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(3) Radio Warsaw, 6 May 1981.

(4) As quoted from a PAP report by UPI and AP, 7 May 1981.



There has been no reaction to this or the other developments from the communist party leadership. First Secretary Stanislaw Kania, who had also opposed the formation of Rural Solidarity during the early months of 1981, did not take part in the Sejm's session. Instead, he traveled to Plock, a city near Warsaw, and attended a party meeting there. In his address to local party activists, Kania reiterated that "the party, despite the many problems and well-known difficulties, remains the recipient of social hopes for change and improvement of the situation in the country." (5) Assuring his listeners that the party was "interested in creating mutual cooperation between the authorities and society," Kania said that the forthcoming extraordinary congress of the party "would confirm the line of socialist renewal." He then went on to note that there was "no alternative to that line . . . from the point of view of national interests and those of socialist-construction."

So it seems that the current process of change in Poland is likely to continue, frustrating the hopes for its end among its domestic opponents and provoking new worries among at least some of Poland's Warsaw Pact allies. Reports have recently appeared in Poland about new Soviet military activity in the southeastern part of the country. Those activities were first revealed in an internal publication of the Solidarity labor unions and have subsequently been confirmed by an official Polish journal representing the political branch of the Polish armed forces. The journal Zolnierz Wolnosci said on May 6 that "routine training exercises" had recently been undertaken by Soviet troops in Poland. (6) Those exercises were said to have involved Soviet communications units. Their presumed purpose was perhaps to expand and streamline the Soviet military communications network in the country.

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(5) Radio Warsaw, 6 May 1981.

(6) As quoted by UPI, 6 May 1981.