

MUNICH, January 30 (Research and Evaluation -- Sterner)  
-- Rumors of strikes and work stoppages in various areas of Poland have been reaching the West during recent weeks. While the reports are unofficial, they are persistent -- and the behavior of certain top Party leaders would suggest that the rumors have some foundation in fact.

Polish citizens traveling in the West have reported that strikes, or at least work stoppages, have recently taken place in factories located in Poznan, in Radom and in Elblag. Not since 1960, a year of considerable labor unrest, has such a series of labor incidents been reported.

Though regime news media have not chosen to confirm any of the alleged strike reports, it is interesting to note that First Party Secretary Wladyslaw Gomulka, Vice-Premier Zenon Nowak, and Minister of Mining and Power, Franciszek Waniolka, all saw fit to visit the "Zamech" turbine plant at Elblag some two weeks after its alleged two-day "work stoppage". Gomulka et al. were reported to be in the "Zamech" plant on December 14 ("Glos Wybrzeza", December 15), and unofficial sources claim that work was stopped there toward the end of November.

The reasons for the "Zamech" strike are said to be two-fold. First, a production chief was to have fired a number of workers without warning, and secondly, workers apparently lost bonuses because they failed to meet production goals through no fault of their own. Allegedly they were forced into idleness because the materials they work with were not delivered to the plant on time. A third possible reason for workers' discontent at "Zamech" was reported in "Zycie Gospodarcze", an economic weekly, last August 13. According to the newspaper, a shortage of engineers and technicians at this plant forces many men to work a dozen hours daily without days off. Although there are many engineers available for hire and though it would cost relatively little to put them on the payroll, giant production losses (estimated by "Zycie Gospodarcze" to the value of hundreds of millions of zloty annually) are the result of a regulation which arbitrarily limits the wage fund for technical employees. Thus it may be that over-worked technicians as well as manual laborers threw down the gauntlet to the factory management.

A sit-down strike in the tannery enterprises in Radom has been reported to have taken place shortly before Christmas. While "warning strikes (lasting a few minutes)" are admissible gestures of worker discontent under existing trade union regulations, the workers in Radom are said to have sat idly in their shops for two entire days, with their wives bringing in food at mealtimes. The causes for grievance were listed as 1) new norms which caused wages to fall by 20 to 25 per cent in November and December, 2) no export bonus for 1961, 3) a denial of vacation time around Christmas, etc.

The "Centra" electric battery factory in Poznan is said to have struck on January 3 for seven hours as a protest against reduced salaries as a result of the introduction of new production norms.

A two-hour work stoppage in an engine construction department of the "Cegielski" factory in Poznan on January 4 was allegedly prompted by a default of premium payments on the part of the management. The workers were apparently promised a bonus for their work on a marine engine and never received it.

These recent reports of strikes recall the, both official and unofficial, accounts of labor unrest during the whole of 1960. At that time strikes were reported in Poznan, Warsaw, Chorzow, Lodz, Kedzierzyn, Gdansk, Gdynia, Zolow, and