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RADIO FREE EUROPE *French*

SAB Background Report/176
 (Eastern Europe)
 14 June 1981

STILL SHARPER EASTERN CRITICISM OF POLAND

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Summary: Moscow's East European loyalists have again increased the tone of their commentary on Poland, and Romania has also addressed itself to the issue. Pressure on the PZNP, preparing their own populations for any eventuality, as well as immobilizing them from the "Polish virus" are the apparent reasons. This paper is one in a series on the reactions of Poland's neighbors to the situation there.

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Sharp and extensive commentary on Polish affairs continued in the Eastern media over the weekend of June 12-13, following the publication on June 12 in the Soviet, Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Czechoslovak presses of the CPSU CC's strongly worded letter to its Polish counterpart, and the appearance in the MCP daily *Rabotnicheskaya Pravda* of a highly critical editorial on Poland. *Neue Deutschland* printed the Soviet document on June 13. The thrust of all this attention is to emphasize that Poland's allies are not convinced that the PZNP is getting its house in order and that their impatience is growing, and the two-fold purpose is apparently first to exert pressure on the Polish leadership to take a harder line and secondly to prepare their own populations for any eventuality. Even the Romanian daily, *Scinteia*, which has generally avoided the issue, on June 14 carried a lengthy article on Poland.

The Romanian treatment of Polish affairs probably, in fact, deserves to be discussed first since Bucharest has rarely produced such explicit, lengthy commentary on the topic. Just as Ceausescu's own policies for Romania are characterized by a dichotomy between an independent-minded foreign policy and orthodox domestic rule, his attitude toward Poland has demonstrated both the conviction that the Poles can and must solve their problems themselves, without interference, and unmistakable concern for the fate of socialism in a strategically important socialist country. Ceausescu's interest in Poland is directly linked, moreover, to his concerns for Romania: his room to maneuver in foreign relations would be reduced if the international political climate were to heat up further over Polish events, while his domestic policies have created a series of Polish-type grievances among the population, which must certainly prompt him to hope that the "Polish virus" is exterminated before it spreads to Romania. Both strains of thought were evident in his remarks on Poland at a press conference in Vienna on June 12, (1) at which he claimed that the

Soviets' letter to the Poles was Moscow's own work and that other parties had not been consulted. It should be noted that Scintala alone of the Warsaw Pact party dailies did not carry the text of that document on June 12 or 13.

The paper did, however, carry a long, almost half-page article on Poland on June 14, ostensibly in reply to readers' questions, a device it has used previously in dealing with this touchy subject. (2) The latest, unsigned piece provides evidence of official Romania's preoccupations of thought on Poland. It begins by stating that Romania has no desire to interfere in Poland's affairs, quotes Kania, Jaruzelski, or other official Polish sources when criticizing developments in that country, and repeatedly expresses the conviction that the PMP has the resources to put its own house in order both explicit references to the Polish party and statements of confidence in it have been lacking in such recent Soviet and loyalist commentary on Poland.

The concern for the fate of socialism is also present in the Scintala article. The essential point is that Poland's problems can only be solved through hard work, and that this can be accomplished only if the party reasserts itself in its leading role, for which the forthcoming congress provides a golden opportunity, but only if "the best Communists, devoted militants," serve as delegates. The unions and press (3) must return to their principal role of "mobilizing" the population to carry out the party's programs, which, in turn, must be clearly set down. In an interesting twist Scintala noted that the Romanian party had solved the problem of popular, democratic participation in public life, a statement one suspects is made not as an example to the Poles but to tell the Romanian workers that Polish grievances do not apply to them.

In short, Scintala recommends to Warsaw precisely what Ceausescu practices in Romania, namely, communist orthodoxy, and as a solution to any problems suggests basically more of the same.

June 14 also saw the publication in the Hungarian party daily, Magyarhíradók, of an article on Poland. This piece is notable for its sharpness, since the tone, if not the ideological position, of most Hungarian reporting on the Polish events has generally been milder than that of the USSR and other loyalists. Magyarhíradók quotes approvingly from the Soviet letter (which it had published on June 13), and stresses that not only the economic but especially the political situation in Poland has reached a crucial juncture. As the river congress approaches, the "antisocialist elements are concentrating their attacks" and, "ignoring all words of warning, are pushing the country toward an abyss. . . . The media provide free forums for views alienating the regime" and "endless discussion is paralyzing the struggle

(1) As reported by Western news agencies.

(2) Scintala, 28 August 1980. See Patrick Moore, "Warsaw Pact Press: August 28" in August 1980. The Struggle in Poland (Smith: Radio Free Europe Research, 1980), pp. 244-270.

(3) At his Vienna press conference Ceausescu himself singled out the Polish press as needing to be held on a shorter leash.

against the hostile forces" who are in league with the imperialists and whose political appetite has been whetted by continued concessions. In short, what is happening in Poland "is not the road toward correcting errors and the renewal of socialism." The message is clear: the situation is critical and the Polish party is not on the right course.

In addition to this rather novel commentary from Bucharest and Budapest, the more persistently hard-line trio of Moscow, East Berlin, and Prague have been vocal. Soviet television (4) showed an interview with a Polish party official who described the CPSU's letter as "close to our hearts," while East Germany's Neues Deutschland on June 11, in a report on the PWP CC plenum, quoted mainly Polish hard-liners at length but only summarized Kania's remarks. (5) The coverage also included Gorbachev's call for Kania to be replaced.

Disapproval of the Polish leadership's handling of its affairs came through especially strongly in the Czechoslovak media as well. On June 11 Radio Praga carried a sharp editorial criticizing Warsaw for making concessions to "counterrevolution" which, as Czechoslovakia learned in 1968, must be dealt with firmly. The paper recalled Poland's strategic importance, repeated the assertion that it could "squat on" Czechoslovakia, and expressed the fear that the hostile forces were preparing for an assault on the party at the forthcoming congress in order to "turn it into an organization of a social-democratic type." Radio Prague that same evening (6) carried a similar piece which also noted "the rapid spread of religious fanaticism, together with chauvinist intolerance and hysterical anti-Soviet attitudes" in Poland. Just as official East Germany has used traditional negative German images of Poles (i.e., anarchistic and lazy) to help immunize the GDR population against the "Polish virus," Prague has often recalled such negative Czech associations with Poles for the same purpose.

Finally, on June 18 Bulgaria's Sobornichesko Delo published an article declaring that Solidarity had become, in effect, an oppositional political movement, a charge that has long figured in the East German and Czechoslovak media.

In short, the "corpses" of Poland's allies continue, with Bucharest adding its voice and Budapest raising the level of its own.

(4) 14 June 1981, as reported by AP.

(5) The Polish leader was, at least, referred to by his title, which Neues Deutschland on June 11 left out.