

X/9P -- PREPARATIONS FOR PARTY CONGRESS CONTINUE IN POLAND

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Munich, 19 June 1981 (RAD/Robinson)

Preparations for the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) Ninth (Extraordinary) Congress, scheduled for July 14, are continuing amid calls for public discipline, social peace, and political unity. Approximately 50% of the congressional delegates have been elected, and the Polish media report that a large-scale turnover has taken place in the leadership of lower level party bodies. This includes the replacement of 50% of the first secretaries and 40% of the executive committees of the primary party organizations, as well as of 75% of the leadership of village, town, and urban district committees. (1)

The last phase of the preparations -- the voivodship party conferences -- began at the end of May and will continue until shortly before the congress opens. Members of the Politburo and Secretariat, including First Secretary Stanislaw Kania, are attending these conferences and urging the assembled delegates to heed the strong criticism of the PUWP recently expressed in a letter from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) addressed to the PUWP Central Committee. Referring to this letter at a report-and-election conference in Plock Voivodship on June 15, Kania said that upon reading it, the party leadership "realized with all clarity that our country's credibility within the Warsaw Pact alliance had dropped, and this is something that must be treated most seriously." (2) Poland must not be a "weak link" within the socialist community, he said. What could be done to remedy this situation?

First of all, the normal functioning of all state bodies must be restored. We must cut short all attempts to paralyze their operations. We must firmly counteract all pressure aimed at forcing decisions upon them. We must also respond bluntly to the wave of hostile literature, statements, leaflets, and demonstrations, especially those with anti-Soviet tones. It must become clear to everybody that that which is anti-Soviet has essentially anti-Polish consequences.

Moreover, the party must grant all aid to Solidarity to free this large workers' organization from attempts to use its capacities as a destructive force acting against the socialist state. If this fails, then confrontation is unavoidable. A threat to socialism is tantamount to a threat to Poland's independence.

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(1) PAP in English, 15 June 1981.

(2) Ibid., 16 June 1981.

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Kania's speeches, despite their inevitable warnings and hard language, have been exercises in balancing off one set of demands against another. He has been careful, that is, to support and reaffirm the party's adherence to the policy of socialist renewal and to the need to implement in honest fashion the series of agreements signed by the Polish government with Solidarity and other social groups since August 1980. He has repeated, time and again, the leadership's intention to eliminate "deformations" in party and state life and to overcome existing difficulties by political methods alone. (3) With varying degrees of explicitness, he has attempted to reject and isolate what he regards as extremists on the left and the right, in an effort to claim the large center ground for himself, obviously hoping, in the process, to gain increasing support for his position and his person.

Kania's expressions of concern over social unrest, lack of cooperation with state authorities, absence of civil discipline, and incidents ostensibly indicative of hostility toward the Soviet Union have been reflected in a series of speeches and statements made by Lech Walesa, head of Solidarity's NCC. Walesa, who appears to have started a campaign of his own since returning from a conference of the International Labor Organization in Geneva, has been telling his audiences that the time for saber-rattling is past. The government, he says, should be given time to find solutions to the country's many problems. Although he insists that the social agreements signed by the government should be implemented, Walesa now stresses the need to re-examine these agreements with a view to resetting their priorities and the timetable for putting them into practice. Not everything can or need be done at once, he emphasizes.

During his latest series of public appearances Walesa has repeated several times that Solidarity is not, and does not want to be, a political party or to engage in politics. When asked to describe the union's most pressing tasks, he talks about the forthcoming union elections, about organizational improvements, and about greater concern for working conditions. Above all, however, he has appealed for social peace, for avoidance of provocation, and for the preservation of the labor movement's unity. In particular, he has condemned in very strong terms the recent wave of vandalism directed against Soviet war memorials in Poland. According to Kurier Polski of June 17, the Polish Ministry of the Interior has said that there have been 11 instances since April where Soviet war memorials have been defaced. In the last two cases, Walesa successfully appealed to Solidarity members to repair the damage (which mainly consisted of washing paint off) and voiced his suspicion that such vandalism represented a deliberate provocation on the part of the opponents of reform and the policy of renewal.

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(3) See, for example, his speech to the conference in the Pomeranian Military District (ibid., 18 June 1981.

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It is too early yet to determine what effect such appeals for moderation will have, especially on the course of the congressional preparatory conferences. There does seem to be a somewhat different, perhaps more sober, tone to the proceedings than was the case prior to the PUWP Central Committee plenum on June 9-10. This judgment, however, can only be made on the basis of Polish media reports, and the media -- owing to their spirit of outspokenness -- were singled out for particularly harsh criticism at the plenum and in the letter from the CPSU. As a result of this criticism, personnel changes and stricter party control were ordered by the plenum resolution. The first resignation -- that of Jozef Klasa, the CC's media chief -- has already been reported. (4)

Despite signs of a somewhat more subdued press, there are indications that not everything is proceeding as the more conservative elements in the leadership would like. AFP of June 18, for example, reported that the Chelm Voivodship Conference had rejected CC Secretary Jerzy Waszchuk as a delegate to the forthcoming party congress. According to AFP, only 8 of the 19 members of the current Politburo and Secretariat have thus far been elected as delegates, and all 8 are identified with the policy of socialist renewal. Similarly, although there have been several cases where incumbent voivodship first secretaries have been re-elected, the Slupsk Voivodship Conference voted out of office the entire previous voivodship committee secretariat. In addition, problems evidently cropped up at the Nowy Sacz conference, where Politburo member Kazimierz Barcikowski felt it necessary to criticize the delegates for not having "grasped the meaning of the . . . resolution of the 11th [Central Committee] plenum and the seriousness of the situation" in Poland. "Only naive persons could play down the importance of the letter from the CPSU Central Committee," he said. (5) Moreover, difficulties of a more general nature were referred to by a critical Radio Warsaw commentary on June 17. (6) The commentary attacked the party conferences now being held for not concentrating on the guidelines worked out by the central congress commission and dealing instead with other minor or secondary issues. The conferences seemed to be preoccupied with such matters as bringing past leaders to account, it said, and a theory was even being spread that the congress was necessary only so that new leaders could be chosen.

All of this strongly indicates that neither the letter from the CPSU, nor the 11th PUWP CC plenum has blunted the dissatisfaction of the party membership or the desire of members to bring about some basic changes in the way the party is run. The depth of such change, however, and the ultimate composition of the delegates to the congress are questions yet to be answered.

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- (4) In this connection, it should be noted that the Polish Journalists' Association has rejected the CC attack on the media. In a resolution adopted on June 17, the association said it was not the truth that would endanger socialism, but its distortion, and not public criticism, but the attempt to stifle it.
- (5) PAP in English, 16 June 1981.
- (6) 0700 hours.

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