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DEMANDS FOR PARTY REFORM POINT TO A NEW PHASE IN POLAND'S POLITICS

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Summary: Mounting demands for internal reforms in the communist party have greatly affected the performance of Poland's political leadership. Those demands have been made by low level activists, who have set up a network of coordinating bodies to influence the policies of the party and foster changes in its organization. They are also frequently aired by rank and file members at numerous meetings and gatherings. Increasingly exposed to those pressures from below, the leadership has found itself on the defensive. Furthermore, its activity has also been affected by a growing insistence by various social groups, such as the peasants and the workers, on greater access to policy making. The recent official acceptance of an autonomous farmers' union and the growth in institutional importance of the Solidarity labor movement have emerged as crucial factors in the evolution of Poland's political life.

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"How do we resolve the current crisis effectively" and "how do we cope today with functions arising from the task of fulfilling the requirements of the party's leading role in the process of socialist construction?" These questions were asked by Poland's communist party First Secretary Stanislaw Kania at a recent meeting of a special party commission charged with preparing the forthcoming extraordinary congress.

Addressing the commission's members, who gathered in Warsaw on April 16, Kania suggested that in trying to find an answer to the first question one would have to "emphasize the need for rebuilding the party's internal cohesion, its power, its ability for effective action, and its authority." As for the problems implied in the second question, Kania stressed "the need for broad democracy in the operations of the party and its ideologically certain posture as well as for the party to be able to influence society." Admitting that coping with those problems would "require a gigantic effort from the party, measuring up to the magnitude of the current difficulties," he said that "this effort is the basis of our orientation, our line to overcome difficulties and to resolve the crisis by political means . . . only this orientation provides a guarantee that we can overcome the difficulties by ourselves." (1)

(1) Trybuna Ludu, 17 April 1981

One might be tempted to regard Kania's questions as purely rhetorical and his answers as nothing more than a political leader's renewed exhortations for the loyalty and obedience of his followers. After all, similar statements have frequently been made in the past by other communist officials as well as by Kania himself, reinforcing an established impression that they are merely a ritualistic routine.

By the same token, however, no one could deny that the party and its leadership have recently been exposed to mounting difficulties both in dealing with ferment within the organization and in maintaining even a modicum of authority in its relations with the population.

There is still little evidence that the leadership's efforts to quiet dissension among the rank and file against its policies and methods of operation have brought any measure of success. Indeed, there are indications that rebellious activists from below have developed new momentum in their attempts to affect the policies of the party, to bring about realignments in the composition of the organization's leading bodies, and to introduce lasting changes in the party's statutes.

The Torun Conference

A case in point was a major conference of the Polish communist party's rank and file members that took place on April 15 in Torun. Attended by some 750 delegates representing numerous basic party bodies from 14 of Poland's 49 voivodships, the conference served as a forum for a wide-ranging debate on the ways to improve the quality of political work within the organization, introduce greater democratization in its internal operations, and revise the concept of the party's role in public life in order to make it compatible with current social and political realities.

At first glance, it might be argued that the conference was not a novel or crucial event in current Polish politics. After all, it would probably be difficult to find a single day in the last few weeks on which some sort of party conference, meeting, gathering, or plenum did not take place somewhere in the country. At each of them, discussions have been held on the situation in the party and in the leadership; and almost all of them have been critical of the existing policies, structures, and methods of operation of the communist organization.

The majority of both domestic and foreign observers, however, seem to agree that the Torun meeting was indeed different from the other similar events and that it was unique and was a precedent in the party's history. Indeed, the conference organizers themselves were reported to have described the event as "a turning point and a major stage in the development of Poland's communist system." (2) Whatever the case may be, there is little doubt that the gathering marked a significant departure from the long established patterns of party activities.

(2) Reuter, 15 April 1981.

First of all, the conference was organized by the rank and file members themselves, without any previous approval or sanction from the party's organizational hierarchy. It is true that the proceedings were attended by some party officials, including at least three members of the Central Committee; but they were there as mere observers and not as participants. More important still, the conference marked the first national meeting of those local party activists who have concentrated their efforts in recent months on creating a network of cooperative links between basic organizational bodies in order to prepare their own positions on specific political issues in a manner independent of the established leadership. The Torun gathering could be regarded, therefore, as both symbolic of the ferment in the lower ranks of the party and an attempt to legitimize that ferment in the eyes of the leadership, as well as the population, by providing it with a semblance of an organizational identity.

Evidence of the ferment in the party has frequently been reported since September 1980, when both the agreements between the authorities and the workers and the changes in the party's leadership created the foundations for major changes in Poland's public life. (3) It was also then that the first attempts were made by numerous low-level activists, particularly in Torun and Gdansk but also in Wroclaw and even Warsaw, to expand cooperation and exchange information between their own party units on the current problems. While the national leadership remained preoccupied with the task of defining its position toward the emerging autonomous labor unions and the local party officialdom progressively lost its prerogatives of control over the rank and file members (largely as a result of widespread social criticism of their earlier performance), those "horizontal" links rapidly solidified and acquired political importance.

Initially, the main emphasis behind those activities was on finding immediate solutions to the problems of the party and on providing alternatives to its policies. In particular, a great deal of attention was paid by the local activists to the preparatory work of the next party congress. They suggested new ways of electing delegates to the congress and discussed the directions the party should pursue in its policies. Subsequently, the accent of the "horizontal" cooperation shifted toward efforts to ensure a permanent transformation of the party structures in a way that would preclude any return to former practices and past abuses of power. There is evidence that those concerns dominated the discussion at the Torun conference.

According to Western press reports, the participants in the meeting have decided to send a letter to the Central Committee, which is to hold a session during the second part of April, containing a resolution with several immediate demands. Those demands were said to have included calls for:

(3) For details, see J. B. de Weydenthal, "Ferment Continues in the Polish Party," RAD Background Report/65 (Poland), Radio Free Europe Research, 6 March 1981, and other papers cited therein.

1. changes in the composition of the leadership, particularly the Politburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee;
2. lifting censorship on the grassroots' initiatives;
3. a secret ballot to elect delegates to the party congress;
4. a two-stage party congress, with the first stage to elect a new leadership and the second to draft a new party program;
5. a letter to be sent by the Central Committee to other socialist countries describing the real state of affairs in the Polish party and in the country. (4)

Here it is necessary to note that none of the points of the resolution is actually new except for the demand to send an explanatory letter to other socialist countries. Demands for changes in the leadership, elimination of censorship, and free elections in the party have been made repeatedly at different party meetings and gatherings in all parts of the country in recent months. As for the call for "a two-stage congress," it was merely a repetition of a formal resolution prepared by the basic party body at the Wroclaw Economic Academy and read publicly during the recent session of the Central Committee by Wlodzimierz Trzebiatowski, a CC member and well-known scientist. (5)

The delegates to the Torun conference were therefore cautious not to present the party's leadership with immediate demands other than those presented earlier by numerous party bodies. Indeed, those demands have already been at least acknowledged by the party's officialdom, and some of their formulations have been included in official party documents. The new call for an explanatory letter seems indicative of the growing concern among local activists and rank and file members of the party about the continuing hostility of the media in other socialist countries, particularly in the Soviet Union, with regard to developments in Poland. Apparently, the participants in the Torun conference felt that the current party leadership had failed to provide adequate information on the matter to other communist parties.

Demands for Change

It is equally clear, however, that the significance of the conference is not limited merely to the decision to send a letter to the CC. Indeed, an underlying aspect of the entire gathering seems to have been the common desire -- "one may even say determination" -- of all the participants to prepare the ground for future, lasting changes in the way the party is organized and run. This was expressed in repeated criticism of the party's recent performance.

(4) UPI, AP, and Reuter, 16 April 1981; and John Darnton in The New York Times, 16 April 1981.

(5) Trybuna Ludu, 31 March 1981.

"We have lost trust in the party apparatus at every level," one delegate was reported to have said. "We must break the 36-year-old habits of inner party life very radically. The majority of party leaders should leave their positions: they, not the rank and file, are to blame for the current crisis." (6)

Many speakers called for the election of new people to the leadership, a clear sign of dissatisfaction with the performance of the current hierarchy. One delegate decried the present officialdom's lack of ability to rule: "people who should be elected should also be competent," he said, adding that "so far unfortunately, we have not had competent people." (7)

The main emphasis in the debate, however, was on the need to reform the party. The common theme in most of the speeches was the demand to institutionalize the "horizontal" links between basic party bodies in the statutes of the organization. (8) While this demand seems obvious, considering the nature of the gathering, there is little doubt that such a change would profoundly affect the operation of the communist organization, which has always relied on the Leninist principle of democratic centralism in its work. Democratic centralism is, of course, nothing more than an euphemistic expression for a situation in which all party officeholders are formally elected, while the work of the organization relies on the unquestioning subordination of lower party bodies to directions from the top.

That point was not lost on the Torun conferees. "They say if we evolve to democracy, we shall lose centralism," said one delegate complaining about the party leadership's continuing insistence on the need to maintain democratic centralism: "suddenly, there is all this talk about centralism; they will use it as a pretext to deny us democracy." (9)

There are some grounds for assuming that this drive toward democratizing the party has been prompted by the emergence and the expansion of democratic labor unions. Several delegates were reported to have mentioned Solidarity as an example of what should be done with the party. "The party has signed up on the side of the government, it should have signed up with Solidarity," one delegate remarked regretfully. (10) The unions were not formally represented at the conference, nor has there been any indication that the labor movement would take a direct position on the Torun meeting or its resolution.

Notwithstanding those demands and criticism, it appears that the conference was only a first step in the evolving movement of reform within the party. That much has been admitted by one of its organizers who stressed at a press conference that "we are trying to learn who we are, and that is why we are meeting." (11) He then

(6) UPI, 16 April 1981.

(7) AP, 15 April 1981.

(8) This aspect of the debates was also continued in a short report on the conference published in Trybuna Ludu, 16 April 1981.

(9) Darnton, op. cit.

(10) Ibid.

(11) AP, 15 April 1981.

went on to say that "we are not challenging communist ideology, but we are challenging the gap between theory and practice." This was further confirmed by one of the delegates who told the gathering that the reason for the emergence of the movement in his party unit was that "we are fighting for an idea." (12)

It is too early even to speculate whether the Torun conference will serve as a starting point for a larger movement of internal reform within the party. No one could doubt that there are many activists and members in the organization, without even counting its leaders and officials, who could be regarded as potentially opposed to either rapid or sweeping changes. Their opposition seems to reflect both apprehension about the possible loss of positions and privileges that they have enjoyed as long-standing members of the ruling party and a fear that any precipitous move toward reform could provoke adverse reactions from other groups, both within and outside the country.

At the same time, one must take into account the feelings of impatience displayed at countless party meetings by ordinary members, who have showed themselves increasingly determined to do something, almost anything, to improve the conditions of life in the country. Having come to associate the current conditions with the failures and mistakes of the political leadership, which is also the leadership of the party, they could provide sufficient support for future reformers to allow them to develop both their ideas and their movement so far that it would be impossible for the established power hierarchy to ignore. If this were to occur, such a development could become a major factor in the future evolution of the party, its relations with the population, and, not the least important, its relations with other communist parties in the neighboring countries.

Pressure from Local Party Bodies

Evidence of reformist pressures from below was fully exemplified at a special general meeting of the local party organization in the Gdansk shipyards on April 9 in the presence of PUWP First Secretary Stanislaw Kania. Kania was invited by local Gdansk activists to present the leadership's views on the current political situation in the party and the country. The meeting provided a forum for an almost 7-hour debate during which 27 speakers, representing separate party units from the Gdansk region as well as from the shipyards itself, aired their grievances and opinions on various political problems.

The central theme of the discussion was the situation in the party. Here the speakers appeared profoundly disturbed and openly critical. In particular, many speakers decried the gap, both political and organizational, between the rank-and-file and the party's authorities, such as the Central Committee and the Politburo. "There is a growing lack of confidence in the decisions and the composition of the Politburo," according to one speaker quoted by the Polish media. "We need to see the introduction of new comrades

[into the Politburo] who would carry a new way of thinking adequate to the complicated situation of the country." (13) Similar charges were made with respect to the Central Committee, with another speaker openly inquiring why some officials who had already been removed from their posts in the party still retained seats on the committee. He then asked rhetorically, "whom do they represent?"

Most speakers were critical of the Central Committee's last session, charging that the meeting's final resolution had failed to reflect both the discussion at that gathering and the expectations of the party. It was clear from their remarks that many party activists, at least those in Gdansk, had expected the Central Committee to make leadership changes. Since no changes had been adopted those activists felt deeply disappointed and used the meeting with Kania to demonstrate their feelings.

The recurring element in most of the speeches was an emphasis on the need to ensure that sweeping personnel changes would be implemented at the forthcoming extraordinary party congress, which should also outline new policies for the future development of the country. There was, however, additional criticism of the leadership's performance in the preparation of the congress. Specifically, some speakers complained that the recently formulated proposals to change the electoral instructions for choosing congress delegates, proposals presented in the Central Committee resolution, had not corresponded to the demands made by various local party bodies. The local demands were aimed at introducing secret and free elections within the party; the Central Committee adopted only provisional instructions for the election of delegates and failed to incorporate those changes into the party's statutes.

Another important theme behind the arguments made by the local Gdansk activists was a determined insistence on full and explicit acceptance of the recent changes in the country's institutional system. Particularly strong emphasis was given to the demand for a lasting definition of relations between Solidarity and the authorities. Critical of the official response to recent conflicts between the labor movement and the government, as exemplified by the Bydgoszcz incident, some speakers charged that attacks on Solidarity were not compatible "with the feelings of the rank and file members of the party." They were particularly indignant about frequent allegations made by some top party officials that "Solidarity's leadership is behind the counterrevolutionary trends" in the country. In this context, one speaker said that "a decisive majority of party members belong to Solidarity and [in the Gdansk shipyards] more than 90% of the workers are in Solidarity. . . . The current leadership of Solidarity enjoys great credibility [among the workers], and this was fully demonstrated during the recent warning strike." The warning strike took place on March 27 and paralyzed the operation of Poland's economy for several hours.

(13) Radio Warsaw, 9 April 1981; also Trybuna Ludu, 10 April 1981, and Slowo Powszechne, 10 April 1981.

More important still, some speakers, while asserting "the necessity to deal with Solidarity on the basis of full partnership, not only in words but in action as well," also called for the speedy recognition of Rural Solidarity, the nascent peasants' union. "Besides the legal aspect, which in our opinion is not the real problem, any obstacles to the registration of that union create doubts about the credibility of any promises [to support] the lasting existence of individual farmers," one speaker warned.

There was also some explicit criticism of the government. Some speakers were concerned about the government's failure to present a public assessment of the economic conditions in the country. Others inquired about the administrative principles behind the investment policy. Still others complained about the government's failure to inform the populace of its activity, charging that such practices only contributed to social dissatisfaction and possible conflicts.

This criticism was devoid of any personal attacks on the government's leader, Prime Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski. Indeed, he was praised for having succeeded in securing for himself "respect and support from society while working under excessive mental and physical stress and in very difficult economic and political conditions." Instead, the main problem was seen in the apparent institutional incompatibility between the government's task of governing and the party's leading role. Charging that the existing "relationship between the party and the government merely contributes toward complicating the issue of their mutual responsibilities and undermines both rationality and efficiency in governing the country," one speaker said that

the party must be an organization of the working masses but not one for making excess demands; it must concentrate its activity on the following functions: the programming and definition of the [directions for] socioeconomic development, the political control of already established tasks, control over the mechanisms already set in the areas of the economy and sociopolitical systems, and the verification of the Polish model of socialism.

He went on to declare that "to guarantee the separation of the party from direct management and from decision-making in specific problems, it is necessary through statutory measures to preclude any form of putting both party and state functions in the hands of the same people."

Leadership on the Defensive

Kania's response to those complaints and charges was cautious but also unyielding. He acknowledged the dissatisfaction of the local activists with the situation in the leadership, promising that "personnel matters within the Politburo will be taken up at the next meeting of the Central Committee"; this meeting was scheduled for the second part of April. He also pledged that the leadership

would "in accordance with your will, but also with our [the leadership's] understanding of the need, break down all obstacles to socialist renewal." Kania insisted, however, upon the immediate need to consolidate the entire party and its "harmonious" work, which "constitutes the foundation of the party's strength."

Kania also declared his support for the normalization of relations between the party and "all existing trade unions, particularly the Solidarity labor movement." He said that the party would continue its policy of making agreements with Solidarity, adding that the success of that policy "depends, in large measure, on the [actions of the] authorities, but also, to considerable degree, on Solidarity." In this context, Kania reiterated the often repeated complaints of the political leaders that "socialism had and still has numerous opponents." He then went on to assert that

If one were to take into consideration all the facts, the activities, and the statements [recently made] as well as all the attempts in different agreements to create a situation of dual authority, it would not be an exaggeration to talk about some signs of counterrevolutionary danger.

There was similar ambiguity in Kania's remarks about the agricultural situation. He did not rule out the possibility of official recognition of a peasant union; he simply ignored the issue. Instead, Kania assured his audience that the leadership "takes great care about the development of peasant self-government, about the development of agricultural circles, the cooperative [movement], and other rural organizations." While those remarks might have implied support for individual peasants, or at least some already established peasant organizations, Kania was quick to add that this support "should not negate, should not create obstacles, for the development of cooperative farms, which are being established now and will be developed in the future."

Finally, Kania was silent on the crucial issue of relations between the party and the government, particularly on the matter of their mutual institutional relations. Instead, he spoke at length about the economic difficulties facing the country, the need for hard and efficient work, and the apprehensions in other socialist countries created by the situation in Poland. Perhaps the closest reference to the problem of the party's role in public life could be found in Kania's statement on the nature of the renewal.

It was the party that led the country onto the road of socialist renewal. The main line of the renewal has been and will be marked by the development of socialist democracy and by the rebirth of the labor movement, by the modernization of management and the operations of the national economy, by the streamlining of government, by a return to the principles of justice, by the consequent adherence to moral standards in public life, and by the reintroduction of Leninist principles in the operations of the party as well as by the party's

exercising its leading role in a way that will reinforce the activity of all those forces that wish Poland well and that will consolidate the bond between the party and society.

Whether this vague and general statement will satisfy the workers and the local party activists is not certain. It is clear that a more specific definition of the leadership's intentions and plans is needed to fulfill public expectations and hopes. By the same token, it is also obvious that the very complexity of the current political situation in Poland and outside the country has made the task of outlining future programs exceedingly difficult for the leadership in general and for Kania in particular.

The Acceptance of the Peasants' Union

To make matters even more complicated, the leadership still appears unable to stem the continuing and growing social pressure for official recognition of new groups as full-fledged participants in the country's public life. The recently concluded agreement between the government and the labor union of individual farmers (to be known as Solidarity as are the workers' unions), in which the authorities pledged to register the union by May 10, is an important illustration of this situation.

The agreement was signed in Bydgoszcz on April 17, one day after Kania's statement at the congressional commission's meeting. It followed protracted efforts by the peasants to obtain official recognition for their right of self-organization, efforts that have been consistently supported by the workers' Solidarity and the Catholic Church but equally consistently opposed by the party leadership. It also marked the apparent end of a long process of protests by the farmers, who have held repeated strikes and demonstrations in recent months and have mounted an effective pressure campaign by lobbying among party and government officials as well as parliamentarians, journalists, and numerous public organizations. Indeed, the nationwide peasant union was already formed on March 8-9 during a congress in Poznan; the recent agreement with the government only provided the union with a legal foundation for its activities. (14)

In addition to the government's pledge to "create the legal foundation for registering the union by May 10," (15) the agreement included an official assurance that the union would be allowed to engage in open activity during the time preceding the registration, provided its activists with a right to participate in the preparation of new legislation on labor matters, and ensured that all other agreements between the authorities and the farmers would be fully respected by the state bodies. Furthermore, the government promised that those officials of the security bodies who had abused the civil rights of the peasants during earlier farmer protests against the authorities' refusal to recognize the union would "pay the legal consequences." This referred to the incident

(14) For details, see Polish Situation Report/5, RFER, 20 March 1981, Item 3.

(15) The text of the agreement was broadcast by Radio Warsaw, 17 April 1981.

in Bydgoszcz in March. In addition, the government formally assured the peasants that no punishment would be contemplated for those peasants who had taken part in earlier protests and undertook to make the agreement public through nationwide broadcasts and publication in newspapers.

When viewed from the perspective of recent months, the agreement marked a new and important step toward further modification of the institutional relationship between the authorities and society. If nothing else, it reinforced the already existing process of change in the way power has been traditionally exercised in postwar Poland. This process of change is likely to pave the way for a significant element of both institutional and political pluralization, when the country's Sejm adopts a formal law on labor unions and the activity of social organizations. The adoption of such a law can be expected within a few weeks of the Bydgoszcz agreement.

Further Institutionalization of Solidarity?

Another factor suggesting the apparent solidification of the trends toward change in Polish politics was the publication of the government's position on the forthcoming negotiations with Solidarity, the mass workers' organization. The document, publicly released on April 17, included a set of proposals for discussion with the labor representatives. Its main emphasis was on the need to involve the workers' movement in a common effort with the state administration "to fulfill the government's program of economic stabilization." (16) This effort was defined in terms of adopting concerted steps by the authorities and Solidarity to improve the market supply, streamline production, ensure public compliance with official policies, and restrict speculation on the black market as well as to secure greater availability of services (particularly in the area of health services), to intensify efforts at providing better housing, and to guarantee more efficient use of the available labor force. Underlying all those aspects of cooperative relations between the authorities and the labor movement was the government's appeal to the workers to refrain from further strikes and protests.

Moreover, the government formally pledged its willingness and even determination to adhere to the letter of the previous agreements with the workers' organization, and it accepted the need for mutual discussions on "institutional guarantees for lawful activities as well as for new proposals related to future legislative work" on those matters. The government also offered to accept some of Solidarity's demands for greater availability of media exposure for the unions, promising access to both radio and television.

Among other problems, the government deemed it both useful and important for both sides to negotiate a mutually acceptable form of international activity for Solidarity, presumably in a way that would be compatible with the main lines of official foreign policy. Finally, the government proposed to establish clear lines of organizational cooperation between local bodies of state administration and Solidarity's regional branches. Here one must recall that conflicts between local bodies of both the government and the unions have frequently been the focal points of earlier crises and conflicts affecting the mutual relations of those institutions.

(16) Ibid.

Admittedly, the government's document did not introduce any new elements for discussion with the unions. In essence, it was a formal reply to demands made earlier by the unions' leadership. Yet, its publication is clearly a departure from previous practices. It certainly has not escaped public attention that, while the government side appeared reluctant in the past to reveal its negotiating positions, presumably in hope of either gaining as much as possible from talks with the workers or defending its prerogatives, the authorities have now made their stand public. In doing that they appear to have striven to make two points. One was to project an image of openness and willingness to engage in a dialogue with the unions on the country's needs. The second was to restrict the scope of the negotiations to a publicly stated platform. Whether the government will be able to succeed on both points remains uncertain. In any case, however, publication of the official position on the forthcoming talks was a clear gesture of recognition of the unions as partners in a formal relationship. This in itself is a factor that would be hard for either of the sides or the public to forget.

This does not imply, however, that the government's recent steps to improve its relations with the population necessarily indicate its growing willingness to move forward in establishing cooperative postures toward society. There is little doubt that all those measures resulted largely from constant pressures from various social organizations and groups. If nothing else, the current developments in that area provide powerful testimony to the sustained efforts of the labor movement, efforts repeatedly supported by an overwhelming majority of the population.

Reforms in the Party?

In addition, there is also no doubt that the authorities' capacity to withstand those social pressures has been adversely affected by long existing and broadly spread ferment in the party itself. The concern over this has been indicated repeatedly through the activities and pronouncements of the party leaders. Now it seems that nothing short of some reform measures to regulate the operations of the party will neutralize that ferment.

The possibility of such reforms was plainly suggested during the discussion at the congress commission. Although there is still no detailed information on either the scope of those measures or the timing of their introduction, it is clear that changes are likely to take place in the party rules. Discussing those changes, CC secretary in charge of organizational matters Zdzislaw Kurowski implied that they were related to the problems of "internal democracy within the party, of providing a guarantee for the preservation of the Leninist principles of party work in all aspects of its activity and in all its bodies." (17)

More specifically, Kurowski suggested that new rules for the election of party officials would be adopted and said that efforts would be made to ensure "rotation" of officials holding important executive positions in the organization as well as to prevent putting state and party posts in the hands of one person. Kurowski made it clear that the main emphasis would be on ensuring that local,

(17) Trybuna Ludu, 17 April 1981.

particularly basic, organizations would have more voice in setting party policies. At the same time, however, he strongly defended the principle of democratic centralism, a statutory device that gives the power to higher bodies as the "fundamental principle in party life."

More interesting still were those demands that had been sent to the commission from the party grassroots groups for adoption in the statutes but, as Kurowski admitted, "were not included in the envisaged changes in the rules." Those demands, he said, "were related to [calls for] relinquishing the [principle of] the leading role of the party, democratic centralism, and those ideological principles of the party that are based on the scientific foundations of Marxism-Leninism as well as [the demands] for a change in the party's name."

Kurowski's statement, while ambiguous, was indicative of the existing pressures for change in the organization. Those pressures have been emanating from the local activists and basic party bodies; they are sure to affect the working and the operations, however, of the leadership itself. Indeed, there is a possibility that some of these problems and issues will be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the Central Committee to be held on April 29.

Besides the issue of the potential reform of party rules, the CC meeting could also take up the problem of possible changes in the composition of the party leadership. Such change has been openly demanded at numerous meetings of local party bodies. Its possibility was hinted at by Kania himself, who suggested at the last CC meeting on March 29 that "it might become appropriate to enlarge the [composition of] the Politburo at the next CC plenum." (18) Kania was responding to widespread demands for a purge of some Politburo members, particularly the two hard-line politicians, Stefan Olszowski and Tadeusz Grabski. There were subsequent rumors in Warsaw that the two men had managed to avoid being purged thanks to last minute support from other communist parties, particularly from the Soviet party. (19) Following the plenum, both Olszowski and Grabski were sent to represent the Polish leadership at the Czechoslovak and Bulgarian parties' congresses, respectively. This might have been a visible gesture of support for them on international communist forums. If it was intended to reinforce their positions at home, however, those expectations remained unfulfilled. Both men, and the orientation they purportedly represent, have been criticized repeatedly at numerous party meetings held recently throughout the country. It is possible, although not necessarily inevitable, that both Olszowski and Grabski, or at least one of them, will be removed from the party's leadership. In any case, there is considerable evidence that what is assumed to be a hard-line orientation in the party has failed to establish a significant foothold in the leadership, and, more important, it has only antagonized the rank and file.

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(18) Ibid., 31 March 1981.

(19) See J. B. de Weydenthal, "The Polish CC Plenum Reveals Divisions in the Leadership," RAD BR/109 (Poland), RFER, 23 April 1981.