

MUNICH, February 13, 1962, (Research and Evaluation -- Sterner) -- A two-day congress of collective farmers was concluded in Warsaw over the weekend. The talks proceeded in apparently unspectacular fashion, and, on the basis of Radio Warsaw reports, no forced, nation-wide collectivization drive would seem imminent.

The last such congress, the second, took place in May 1956, i.e. before Gomulka's return to power, when Polish collectives numbered some 10,000. Shortly after Gomulka had established himself as First Party Secretary in the fall of 1956, Polish collective farm totals dropped drastically to below 2,000. Gomulka has continued to de-emphasize the collectivization program throughout his tenure to the present day, and therefore this type of farm has comprised (in area) only one per cent of Poland's agricultural effort over the past five years.

While Gomulka has repeatedly stressed on many speaking occasions that the Party's ideological aim is an eventually collectivized countryside, he has thus far been content to watch the steady rise of Polish agricultural output by capitalist methods, and to avoid the open clash with the peasantry inevitably engendered by a campaign of forced collectivization. It is here that Khrushchev has been granting Gomulka a considerable concession in allowing him to go his "Polish way" in the countryside. All other satellites have been by now virtually collectivized. A Soviet CC Secretary, P. Demishev, recently gave his public endorsement to Gomulka's policy for the countryside: "We...found out that the agricultural policy of your Party is bringing in good results.. It is obvious that your Party attaches a great importance to the development of agriculture... We share your joy in the achievements of your agriculture."

Party Criticism of the Collectives

In an informal address between sessions of the recent congress, Gomulka warned the collective farm delegates:

"The further development of the existing common farms and the cooperative production (collective) movement depends above all on the collective farmers themselves, on their exploitation of production results."

In an official address, Politburo member for agricultural questions, Edward Ochab, amplified the remarks of the First Party

Secretary. He said that the collective movement was being held back because too many of the existing collectives were undersized in terms of the land and number of families involved, and therefore not developing at a rate which would encourage new members to join. Many collectives are still using old-fashioned farming methods and are slow to introduce mechanization. According to Ochab, "there are also cooperatives which isolate themselves and do not accept new members. Such cooperatives have no prospects for development."

Quoting further remarks allegedly made by Gomulka in his informal address, but which were not broadcast over Warsaw Radio, Hansjakob Stehle of the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" (February 15) says the Party leader criticized the collectives for falling behind the production achieved by individual peasants "except for grain". "We have indeed a group of collectives of high standing, which can be exemplary, but the majority has not yet produced results which could encourage the whole village toward a collective economy."

New Statutes for Collectives

Antoni Pasko, Chairman of the National Council of Collective Farms, stated at the congress that "to improve the situation in common farming, the urgent need has arisen of putting the statutes in order. He added that "statute principles have been elaborated for the two fundamental forms of production cooperatives most suitable for our conditions".

"The first statute form provides for a common carrying out of crop production and leaves livestock in the individual possession of the peasants. The second statute form provides for common farming of crops and animals, while preserving on the farmer's private plot two head of cattle and a number of other animals fixed by the statute.

The size of the private plots under both forms should not exceed 0.6 ha."

Thus the peculiarities of "Polish conditions" continue to be held valid. Poland makes provision for two rather flimsy collective types (and for precious few farms of either type), while the four orthodox "stages" are not mentioned.

The stipulation that private plots are not to exceed 0.6 ha does not much alter the present state of affairs -- most private plots currently run to approximately half a hectare.

Conclusion

Though the situation with regard to collectivization in Poland seems to have remained unchanged with the coming and going of last week's Third Congress of Collective Farmers, the

possibility of a serious reintroduce collectivisation sometime in the future, is not to be entirely discounted.

In Ochab's address to the congress, he repeated the Party assurance that collectivization would come by degrees, "on the basis of the peasants' own conviction". If the Party genuinely believes that the peasantry will gradually drift into collectives of their own accord, i.e. when convinced of the superiority of collective farming, it will most certainly be disappointed. What is more likely is that the peasantry, after being conditioned for a few more years in the loosely cooperative Agricultural Circles, will be declared to be "in accord" with the will of the Party.

Whether a renewed attempt to collectivize would succeed is problematic, if not doubtful. The Polish peasantry has been relatively free for some years, probably will remain so for some years to come. They know what it was like before they were free, and they know that the rest of Eastern Europe is not free. Their resistance to a regime collectivization push at any time in the future is bound to be prodigious.

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