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BRIEFS AND COMMENTS

USSR - EAST GERMANY - POLAND: Criticism of Settlement

Moscow, revealing its serious concern over the effects of the concessions granted to the Polish strikers, widened its criticism yesterday of both the strikers and, indirectly, the Gierek regime.

In a television news commentary last night, the Soviets criticized Gdansk strike leader Lech Walesa for the first time by labeling him a member of an "opposition group." Previous Soviet commentary--particularly the authoritative "A. Petrov" article in *Pravda* on Monday--had condemned "antisocialist" and "counterrevolutionary" elements trying to undermine Poland's socialist system but stopped short of specifically including the strike leaders in this category. By lumping Walesa with these "opposition groups," who are attempting to "destroy the link between the party and the working class," the Soviets appear to be questioning the validity of the new independent trade unions and, by implication, the judgment of the Polish leadership in accepting them.

The East Germans--almost certainly in collaboration with Moscow--went even further by carrying the Petrov article in their media yesterday in an edited version that was a direct attack on the Gierek regime for capitulating. The East German leaders have been appalled at Gierek's handling of the crisis and were no doubt eager to blast the Polish leader as well as to remind their own workers not to expect similar concessions.

Last week, East Germany became the first Warsaw Pact country to criticize the Gierek regime indirectly in its press by reprinting a sharp attack on the Polish leadership by US Communist Party chief Gus Hall. The following day Soviet media carried the same item.

Soviet and East German criticism of the strike leaders and the Gierek regime reflects the distaste in both capitals for the concessions made to the Polish strikers. The Soviets do not appear to be considering forcing the Polish leadership to revoke the settlement but are trying to ensure that the new trade unions are so restricted as to become powerless.

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