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SPECIAL ANALYSES

POLAND: Implications of Change in Party Leadership

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The Polish Communist Party, by appointing Stanislaw Kania as its first secretary, abandoned the criteria it used to select its previous leaders and clearly demonstrated that it is on the defensive.

In 1956 and again in 1970, the party chose leaders who represented change, who enjoyed good reputations, and whose accession to power bought the party time to restore its unity and to work on Poland's problems. Kania is virtually unknown and will arouse suspicion that he is intent on preserving the party's role and on strictly defining the concessions granted to strikers because of his past party responsibilities for security affairs. Kania will enjoy no grace period, and there will be little toleration for anything that might be considered as foot-dragging on the implementation of strike agreements. Lines of confrontation between society and the party thus will be more quickly and sharply drawn than after previous changes in leadership.

Decline of Olszowski's Fortunes

The party had the chance to follow its previous habit by replacing party chief Gierek with Stefan Olszowski. Olszowski was restored to the Politburo two weeks ago and was rumored by many to be first in line to succeed Gierek. Like Gomulka and Gierek, he had the reputation of a man ready to make basic changes.

The reasons for Olszowski's failure are not clear. He may have made tactical mistakes since his return to the leadership, or his reputation as an advocate of change may have gotten in his way. Party officials may have been afraid of the mounting enthusiasm for free trade

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unions--not only among workers but also among students, farmers, and others--and preferred a man like Kania who could more clearly be counted on to try to contain such pressures.

Kania's Role

It seems likely that over the long term, and perhaps on some issues in the near future, Kania's leadership will become associated with increased discipline. Some party activists reportedly already believe that Kania will take a stronger line toward strengthening public order. In what could be the harbinger of a more stringent line, Radio Warsaw issued a tough warning yesterday that future strikes could jeopardize concessions others have won.

Despite Kania's hardline reputation, initially he will probably show considerable flexibility. The party leadership continues to be largely moderate and pragmatic. Kania undoubtedly also realizes that the party's weakened condition does not allow it to provide any confrontation with workers or the Church.

Kania showed signs of pragmatism and moderation in his first speech to the Central Committee on Friday. In a clear effort to reassure the populace that present policies would be continued, he promised to implement agreements concluded with strikers, reassure private farmers of their right to own land, and advocated a "consistent" continuation of the party's religious policy. He specifically pledged to allow the "new" trade unions to develop "in the way their organizers have declared," adding only the standard caveat that they be based on socialism. Kania said the major task ahead is to restore popular confidence in the party, but pointedly reminded his colleagues that a "sharp struggle" is necessary against antisocialist opponents.

Difficulties of Collective Leadership

The Politburo under Kania could face serious problems in reaching agreement, if only because Kania lacks the stature and experience of his predecessor, and will

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be more reliant on the collective judgment of his colleagues on sensitive economic and political problems. If Kania chooses to push some of his personal conservative views and does not take into account minority positions, he could create serious divisions.

Within the Politburo Kania may give the reins over economic policy to Olszowski. The two have reportedly worked closely together in the past, but it is not clear how their rivalry for the top position will affect their relationship. Kania will also have to contend with Katowice party leader Grudzien, now the only Politburo member who represents the interests of the country's most important industrial and mining region.

Economic Burdens

On the key issue of economic policy, Kania's hands are tied in many ways. He inherits an economy burdened by mounting external debt, severe imbalance between demand and supply, and endemic inefficiency. While a stringent austerity program is required, Kania probably cannot back down on recently negotiated concessions to workers on wages and other issues related to the standard of living. Certain measures have already been announced by the new government--price controls, wage increases for the lowest paid workers, and a five-day workweek--and others await formulation. In his first speech Kania also promised an "enormous effort" to improve market supplies.

Poland is likely to encounter even more resistance to its borrowing efforts in the West. Creditors will take a wait-and-see attitude as a result of recent strikes, the collapse of Poland's embryonic austerity program, and uncertainty about the new party leader and his policy. Their apprehension may be further intensified since Kania is virtually unknown in the West, in contrast to Gierek who enjoyed close personal ties with several key Western leaders, particularly French President Giscard and West German Chancellor Schmidt.

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Soviet Encouragement

Moscow has quickly and strongly endorsed Kania. The Soviets, openly concerned over the strikes and the concessions required to end them, are likely to be a bit less anxious with Kania, who has solid Marxist-Leninist credentials, at the helm. They will keep as much pressure on Kania, however, as they would have on Gierek to interpret those concessions restrictively.

Kania's replacement of Gierek could ease the way for increased Soviet economic aid. The Soviets may have been reluctant to grant new loans to a leader whose policies were proven bankrupt and who was forced to make concessions to the workers that from an ideological standpoint were anathema in Moscow. Press reports of a huge new Soviet credit to Warsaw proved to be erroneous.

Moscow can justify, both at home and with its East European allies, special economic assistance as aid to an incoming leadership set on a new course to solve the country's difficult economic problems. Such assistance may have been the topic of Prime Minister Pinkowski's meeting on Saturday with the Soviet Ambassador, in which, according to the Polish press, they discussed the development of Soviet-Polish economic cooperation.

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