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January 16, 1981

POLAND

Members of Solidarity are planning strikes today in Warsaw and other cities to protest various actions of the regime. Party leaders, who have criticized the union for seeking a "trial of strength," probably want a compromise but must avoid appearing to capitulate.

Talks between Warsaw's mayor and Solidarity leaders reportedly broke down last night, and municipal transportation workers apparently will stage a four-hour work stoppage this morning to protest the regime's decision not to pay workers who stayed off the job last Saturday. Factory workers in Poznan and Legnica also plan strikes for the same reason, and there may be a transportation strike in Krakow.

Workers at an aircraft plant in Mielec also plan a strike of indefinite duration to protest the government's refusal to recognize the independent farmers' union and the use of police to break up two sit-in demonstrations earlier this week. The sit-in demonstration in Rzeszow continued yesterday.

Workers in Olsztyn yesterday staged a one-hour warning strike after the government failed to meet their union's demands to fire a local member of the parliament and publish some statements by the union.

Each of the planned job actions is relatively minor in itself, and Solidarity and the regime might be able to reach a compromise on the diverse issues. The strikes, however, may make it difficult for the regime to negotiate. Warsaw cannot appear to give in totally to Solidarity--if for no other reason than that the Soviets and other East European critics would take a dim view of another capitulation.

Party leaders have already stepped up attacks against Solidarity, charging that the union has violated the Gdansk agreement, exceeded its legal role, and violated its own statutes. A Politburo member asserted on Wednesday that the union had fostered an "irresponsible escalation of social tensions" by calling for laborers to stay away from work last Saturday. He also said that Solidarity was striving to sow "unrest, chaos, and tensions."

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Another Politburo member said that the regime still "respected" Solidarity and is open to negotiations, but he added that the "process of renewal" is endangered by "anarchistic action." According to Western press reports, party leader Kania said the regime could not give in on the Saturday work issue and accused "some people" of resorting to "blackmail." Kania also said that there is no room in Poland for a duality of power. [REDACTED]

Coal Production Drops

The regime seems to be using the coal industry as an example of how much output will suffer if all Saturdays are work-free. In an agreement separate from the one signed in Gdansk last year, the regime approved a five-day workweek for coal miners. Officials are now claiming that if all miners take advantage of their right to a free Saturday and do not voluntarily report to work, coal production for the year will be only 150 million tons. The regime claims that, with Saturday work, output would rise to 190 million tons. Even this figure, however, is 6 percent below the level of 1979. [REDACTED]

After a recovery in October, a sharp drop in coal production occurred in November. Polish officials claim that the decrease in output adversely affected power production and industrial activity, especially in the metallurgical sector. [REDACTED]

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Discussions will not be easy. Both sides have hardened their position in the past week. The Gdansk chapter is also one of the most militant, and last Saturday's work boycott was particularly effective in Gdansk.

If the government can reach agreement with the Gdansk chapter, such an accord could serve as a pattern for settlements elsewhere. A spokesman for Solidarity's National Coordinating Commission announced that the Commission will meet on Tuesday to discuss the issue. Union leader Walesa is scheduled to return from Rome on Monday.

Warsaw's cancellation of the visas of at least three Western correspondents yesterday seems a symbolic move by the regime. Several of the correspondents had been scheduled to leave in the next few days. In at least one case, the authorities reportedly raised no objections to a newsman being replaced if there were no publicity about his forced early departure.

The regime may hope that such actions, which have been taken before, help keep Western newsmen off balance and help meet concerns of conservatives in Poland and Warsaw's allies about the heavy Western media presence in Poland.

Although the regime clearly does not like heavy, and what it considers "biased," reporting of Polish events, it does not want to be too harsh for fear of damaging relations with the West.

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Poor Start in 1981 Crop Season

Prospects for Poland's 1981 winter grain harvest--which normally accounts for about 60 percent of the country's yearly grain output--are poor. Poland is now facing a serious food shortage as a result of poor grain harvests in 1979 and 1980 and last year's sharply reduced output of fodder crops--potatoes, sugar beets, and hay.

Excessively wet field conditions this fall delayed, and in some cases precluded, the sowing of winter grains, especially in eastern Poland. According to press reports, fall-sown grains occupy an area of only 4.4 million hectares, 12 percent below plan and the smallest area sown since 1975.

the condition of the crops before winter dormancy began was the worst in five years. In addition, some winterkill already has occurred because of insufficient snow cover to protect plants from severe temperatures in mid-November and early December. In recent weeks, temperatures have moderated, and a protective snow cover now blankets most of the country.

It is still too early to assess fully the impact of these developments on total grain production in 1981. The shortfall in sown area could be offset by increased plantings of spring grains, but poor weather conditions next spring and summer would lead to another bad harvest and force the Poles to buy large amounts of grain abroad. This, in turn, would further exacerbate their financial problems.