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Poland: Developments in Czechoslovakia are beginning to have an impact on the factional struggle in Poland.

Reform-minded provincial party leader Edward Gierek called for freedom to criticize without fear of reprisals, in a wide-ranging speech delivered on 15 August to some 2,500 party activists in Silesia. According to a Polish press service summary of the speech, Gierek rejected the view that such criticism strikes at the party itself and at its leadership. This statement is aimed directly at party boss Gomulka, who has used this argument in his attempts to impose orthodoxy on the rank and file.

Gierek's call echoes a major provision in the recently published draft of the Czechoslovak party's statutes that would ensure the right of party members to criticize policy and party functionaries without regard for their position. Gomulka's refusal to permit such criticism in Poland has been a major grievance of the Polish party's younger elements, many of whom look to Gierek for leadership.

Gierek, leader of Poland's key industrial province, is a major contender for power in the intra-party struggle which surfaced during the student disturbances last March. Like the hard-line, nationalistic, and anti-Semitic party secretary Moczar, Gierek is seeking to exploit the dissatisfaction of ambitious young party activists with the stagnant policies of Gomulka's old guard.

Both Moczar and Gierek champion change, but they remain rivals in the factional contest. Gierek's rejection of Moczar's reliance on chauvinism and coercion is clear from his statement that in seeking new approaches to old problems his party organization relies on "human consciousness" instead of "administrative"--or police--methods.

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Until now, Gierak has helped Gomulka in his efforts to thwart Moczar's ambitions, but his current speech projects a more independent image.

Gierak spoke to one of a series of local party meetings that will be held throughout the country prior to the party congress scheduled for 11 November. Until then, the factional contest will center on the selection of delegates to the conclave.

So far, Moscow's support has been clearly on the side of Gomulka and the status quo. There is no evidence that he has sought Soviet political or military help to buttress his domestic position. Nevertheless, he may welcome, with mixed feelings, the current presence in Poland of additional Soviet troops, which improves internal security and reduces the maneuverability of his challengers.

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