

Poland Tries To Manage Austerity With 'Moral' Mobilization

For the year of 1978, the Polish government and Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) leadership is betting on the weather and hoping their hope that this year will not mark the fifth in a string of consecutive bad seasons, which have cut Poland's already inefficient agricultural production and helped perpetuate the food supply country.

Grain purchases were chiefly why Poland's imports grew twice as fast last year as the 2.7 percent planned. Exports, meanwhile, were not able to achieve the desired 13-15 percent increase — they grew 11.4 percent — due to "the prolonged slump and increasing protectionism on world capitalist markets," as PUWP leader Edward Gierek put it last month.

These two concerns, agriculture and foreign trade, figured prominently at a special PUWP conference on economic affairs, held the second week of January and announced by Gierek as the occasion "to establish the tasks for the next three years." The conference, however, took no dramatic decisions. It confirmed the policies under which the current five-year plan of Poland, in its first two years (1976 and 1977) has had to be steadily revised downwards (see *National Income* graph).

In seeking to keep plan implementation on track, Gierek and his colleagues are forcing themselves to adopt serious economies, which could catalyze the very supply irregularities and shortages they are trying to avoid. Mid-February saw reports of mandatory shut-downs at some of the biggest factories in Poland, because fuel-use quotas had been exceeded. This was not a good start for an economy where last year's production targets were missed in electric power, cement, agricultural machinery, and fertilizer industries.

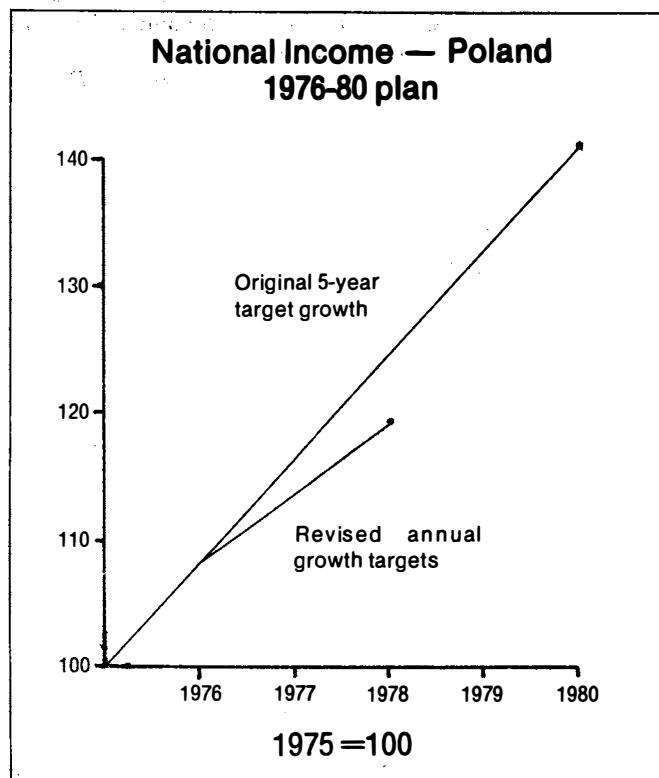
Gierek's policy is one of merely *managing* Poland's mounting difficulties. Poland's foreign debt and chronic shortages, including food shortages, are the two explosives Gierek's current policy, known as the "economic maneuver," is intended to defuse. The maneuver calls for shifting resources into production for the consumer and for export, at the expense of heavy industry investment. It is a medium-term containment effort, whose longer-term effects of reducing basic industry expansion would be crippling.

During the maneuver, under way for over a year,

"enormous subsidies", in Gierek's words, are being continued for food prices. These subsidies will cost nearly *one-sixth* of total national budgetary expenditures in 1978! The "problem of prices", Gierek reported, "will be solved by us gradually," avoiding by all means any sudden hike. (In 1976, the announcement of an impending price rise was followed by riots in several cities until the hike was withdrawn.)

"Moral" Mobilization

Unable to strike decisively at the agriculture and foreign trade problems — nearly impossible for Poland in the absence of international economic expansion — Warsaw is trying to substitute a national mobilization for productivity. Gierek defined it in his report to the January conference where he urged not only the "thrifty use of resources" and "rational management of fuels, power and raw materials," but also "civic co-responsibility", "social discipline", and dependency of



work hour reductions on "productivity and labor discipline." In the spirit of these demands, Gierk dedicated his report in part to "the moral and political unity of the nation."

According to some reports from Warsaw, the emphasis on individual initiative has tipped the balance in a long-brewing PUWP dispute over steps to decentralize economic planning. The dispute had broken into the open in late 1977, when Mieczyslaw Rakowski, editor of the weekly *Polityka*, came under fire in the press for advocating decentralization. Rakowski and his magazine are known to be strongly influenced by foreign social-democrats with an interest in "liberalization" of Eastern European economies and to serve as a self-appointed, but officially sanctioned, voice of popular moods. In the past two months, however, attacks on Rakowski ceased and he has been heard in calls to "work harder."

Even more striking was the sudden prominence granted Professor Jan Szczepanski, associates with London's notorious labor control and brainwashing laboratory, the Tavistock Institute. Szczepanski, not a member of the PUWP but recently promoted to a place on the prestigious State Council, was given space in the PUWP daily *Trybuna Ludu* to hold forth on the need to promote individual responsibility by stressing to the citizen that the *only* level on which he can take responsibility is the local place of work (see excerpts).

Szczepanski's line is not yet official policy across the board. But Gierk told the PUWP conference that implant "conferences of workers' self-government" should be directed chiefly to combat "waste of labor and materials" and "low quality". By charging workers' organizations with the management of austerity, Poland is following a path which proved perilous in "self-managing" Yugoslavia: the worker's petty localism is encouraged. In place of heightened responsibility, this route will deepen demoralization.

- Rachel Berthoff

A 'British' Prescription For Poland

Dr. Jan Szczepanski, an official in the Polish Academy of Sciences with responsibilities in the social sciences, was interviewed in the Polish party daily Trybuna Ludu Jan. 23. Szczepanski has been an associate of London's Tavistock Institute, through its publication Human Relations, for many years.

Let us leave the great problems of largescale management to those whose task it is to solve them. Let us return to the question of what every worker can do to improve things on the individual scale....Seeing or hearing of cases of thoughtless waste, people ask: What is it and who is it that can prevent Citizen "N" from doing his job honestly and reliably....We have more than enough people able to create a constructive force of pressure to eliminate shoddy production, bad management, the losses in production....

On the whole, everyone in our country is calling for implementation of the principles of socialism. Everyone is agreed that reliable work is the first of these principles, but far from everyone is ready to be the first to implement it.

I often talk with foreigners visiting our country — I am speaking of those who are sympathetic to us and who are forced to judge our country with the help of a few observations made during their brief visits. They keep asking me: Why do we refuse to be a prosperous society? Why are some people so quick to damage their new apartments? Why do they refuse to live in orderly housing settlements? Why do they agree to live in badly organized settlements that make them nervous and exhaust their energies, which could be used for something positive?

I have written often on these subjects, and among the letters in response I have found those whose authors accused me of slandering our nation and asked me who I was, despite the fact that I was writing in Polish. Well, my view is that to love Poland is to be persevering in the fight for high morality work standards.