

News from Senator

BOB DOLE

(R - Kansas)

2213 Dirksen Building, Washington, D.C. 20510



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, AUGUST 25, 1980

CONTACT: BILL KATS
(202) 224 6521

POLISH UNREST HOLDS PROMISE FOR HELSINKI PROGRESS

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.) said today that the Polish workers' uprising presents promising signs for change during upcoming Helsinki meetings in Madrid.

"The reaction of the authorities to the general strike in Poland, the aim of which seems to be a free trade union movement to represent the people, makes clear how false the Eastern bloc's commitment to the Helsinki Accords really is," Dole said.

"The demands of the workers are reasonable requests, supposedly guaranteed by the articles of the Helsinki agreement.

"It still seems to be the consensus, even after this latest example of Soviet imperialism following on the Afghanistan invasion, that proceeding with the Madrid follow-up conference on the Helsinki Accords will be meaningful. One of the principal objections I had to this meeting was its long-run potential for undermining progress in human rights. The Soviets, on the defensive, will be obdurate and polemical. Our European cosigners are growing restive after five years of little progress in the sphere of mutual cooperation and security which Helsinki addresses additionally to the basic human rights. Without progress in that area, the commitment and diplomatic pressure for improvement on human rights issues may wane.

"The outlook for Poland is uncertain in the present crisis. Changes in the government have already occurred and economic reforms seem assured. Yet, there was a thaw in Czechoslovakia before invasion and repression destroyed the threat to communism. The latitude of the current regime to make meaningful reforms is circumscribed by the geopolitical realities that originated in World War II when the Iron Curtain rang down. Poland cannot stand against a Soviet invasion any more than Czechoslovakia or Hungary could. But, this peaceful uprising has shown conclusively that the Communist way of life is a failure, and that the human spirit is not dead in Poland.

"In a statement given on the Senate floor, Dole, a member of the Helsinki Commission, said, "Poland is the lesson for our less than stalwart allies in the rest of the world, who have continuously shirked their own defense commitment and now stand dismayed at the U.S. decline. Poland lost its freedom in 1939. But it has been fashionable in recent years to think of Poland as an autonomous nation whose form of government happened to be Communist. The present crisis belies that fatuity. Recently, the Polish leader, Communist Party Secretary Edward Gierek, went on national television to address the people of Poland and the striking workers seeking to expand individual liberties. In a veiled reference to the Soviet Union, he warned the dissidents that Poland would only be allowed to remain 'independent' if the Communist system remained intact.

"In the United States, there has been concern that parts of Europe and other areas might be 'Finlandized' by the growing preponderance of Soviet strength and influence. We forget that Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and the other nations of Eastern Europe were once as sovereign as those in the West, and that they present a much harsher example than Finland of what it means to be weaker than your enemies."