

World & Nation

Critics prompt Polish government to hold labor talks

By NC News Service
After receiving strong criticism from the Polish bishops and Pope John Paul II, the Polish government has agreed to take part in broad-based talks to resolve two weeks of labor conflicts.

But after an emergency meeting of the Communist Party Central Committee, Polish authorities remained ambiguous as to whether they would agree to a major worker demand: legalization of the independent union, Solidarity.

Questions also remained as to whether Solidarity representatives would be allowed to join in the talks, and what effect the Communist decision would have on protesting workers. Sporadic strikes were still reported in Poland August 29, a day after the Communist Party decision.

The August 28 Communist meeting approved a resolution calling for discussions with social and political groups to resolve the current crisis. A Communist Party spokesman said the discussions would not include representatives of illegal groups. However, the party hedged on whether Solidarity founder Lech Walesa could participate. Solidarity was made illegal after the declaration of martial law in December

1981. The Communist meeting came after the Polish bishops backed the call for an independent union and the Polish-born pope criticized Poland's one-party rule.

The bishops also blamed the government for the labor unrest spawned by a series of strikes, mostly in mines and shipyards. Polish police used force to break strikes at many sites. Strikers are asking for higher wages, economic reforms and legal recognition for Solidarity.

The hierarchy, in an August 26 statement, asked the government to end "premeditated hypocrisy" and allow "union pluralism."

"It is time to put an end to the methods of terror and violence and listen to the responsible voices of all the citizens," they wrote in a 500-word statement. "The strikes are the symptoms of a disease which has been aggravated for years."

"It is necessary to seek ways to put into practice union pluralism," they added. "It is necessary to entrust questions of state to competent people."

The bishops issued their statement after a meeting at the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, Polish patroness. August 26 is celebrated in Poland as the feast day of the

patroness. On the same day, the pope, during a Mass at his summer villa of Castel Gandolfo, 15 miles south of Rome, asked for an end to elitist rule in Poland. "In a state, one group or one party cannot be sovereign at the expense of all the people and their rights," the pope said to Polish pilgrims attending the

Mass in honor of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Alluding to Poland's place in the Soviet bloc, the pope asked that his native land be allowed to solve its problems without outside interference. "As a society we wish to live by ourselves, manage our lives by ourselves, evolve and not regress on the road to social progress," he said.

Thousands retrace historic steps of civil rights march on capital city

By Laurie Hansen
Washington (NC) — An estimated 55,000 marchers retraced the steps of the historic 1963 March on Washington August 27 to rededicate themselves to achieving a dream fashioned by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Speakers, including Coretta Scott King, Democratic presidential nominee Gov. Michael S. Dukakis, the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson and Delores Huerta of the United Farm Workers, called on the nation to go after "deferred dreams" of racial and economic justice.

Marchers included sign-carrying members

of religious, labor and human rights groups, parents and children, blacks, whites, Hispanics and Asian-Americans. As did thousands 25 years ago, participants hiked from the Washington Monument to the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

Father Russell L. Dillard, pastor of St. Martin of Tours Parish in Washington, represented the Archdiocese of Washington in a prayer for "peace, freedom and equal opportunity" at the opening of the rally.

At the original March on Washington, which attracted about 250,000 people to the capital, Dr. King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, which is considered one of the great moments of the civil rights movement. He was assassinated in Memphis five years later.

"Abajo (con) la deportacion masiva" (Down with massive deportations), "No human is illegal" and "Our children also have a dream" were messages on signs carried by Hispanic marchers during the 1988 march. A multicolored dancing dragon, sponsored by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, entertained onlookers. T-shirts and posters urged voter registration.

Seventeen-year-old Ellis Peters, a member of St. Augustine Parish in Washington and the black youth ministry team of the Archdiocese of Washington, believes that a lot has been accomplished since the 1963 march. "There are more blacks interested in politics and integration into the power structures, and that's good," said Peters.

But his friend, Morina Jackson, 16, also a member of St. Augustine's and the youth ministry team, added, "People still see people for what color they are, not who they are."

Juan Perez, 37, a Catholic physician from El Salvador who lives in Washington, said he decided to march because many Salvadoran residents of Washington "are persecuted by the (U.S.) immigration service."

"We didn't choose to come here. We are refugees — here because of a war financed by the United States taking place in my country. We want to be able to walk here freely, without problems."

He compared Dr. King to slain Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, who was assassinated in 1980. "Like Martin Luther King, he was a great defender of human rights. He came to the defense of the poor," said Perez.

With the huge statue of President Abraham Lincoln looming behind him, Dukakis called on the marchers to insist the nation complete its "unfinished business," from the "shame of homelessness" in the United States to apartheid in South Africa.

"We must march not just until black children go to school with white children; we must march until all their schools are good schools," said Dukakis.

Mrs. King reminded the march participants that her husband's dream "was more than eloquent rhetoric."

She said in his dream for America "no one is discriminated against on account of race, religion, disability or sexual orientation. Individuals are judged by the quality of their character and contribution."

Rev. Jackson told the crowd that in the 25 years since the original march, "we have shed a lot of innocent blood, and we've gone from nigger to colored to negro to black to my brother."

He said there is still much work to be done. "Across our nation, there is too much access to guns and drugs and too little access to education, jobs and housing," he said.

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