Soviet Action 'Last Resort'

By Nina Savin
Staff Reporter

A specialist in Soviet affairs at Wake Forest University says that Soviet leaders are not likely to order an invasion of Poland and appear to be taking labor unrest there calmly.

Victor Kamendrowsky, an instructor of Russian history, said in an interview with the Journal that the Soviet leaders are likely to tolerate liberalism and experimentation in Polish labor policies. The Soviet Union would order an invasion, he said, only if it believed that the Communist party's control of the Polish government was in jeopardy.

"Invasion would only be a last resort if the Communist party appeared to be losing control, and the Soviets could find no alternative," he said.

Kamendrowsky said that the Soviet Union also recognizes that an invasion of Poland might have international repercussions that would make the cost of the operation outweigh the benefits.

Kamendrowsky said that the greatest threat to the Polish nation comes from the economy.

"The labor movement there is walking a tightrope," he said, "because strikes could cause the Polish economy to collapse, and the Polish government to collapse. The Soviets will then move in and put in a real puppet government."

The Polish government has recently asked the United States government for economic aid. Kamendrowsky said that he believes the Poles should receive the aid as it might help the present government to weather the labor unrest.

"Sending money to Poland may not be seen by the Soviet Union as a hostile act," he said. "They're willing to close their eyes as long as they know that Poland is secure in the Warsaw Pact."

He also said that American military intervention in Poland would be "out of the question."

Last Friday, Jerry Ozdowski, a prominent Roman Catholic who is not a member of the Communist party, was named deputy premier for family and social affairs in the Polish parliament. He is the first practicing Catholic to hold a deputy premiership in Poland since the Communists took power there after World War II.

Kamendrowsky said that Ozdowski's appointment is probably not being received in the Soviet Union as a threat. He said that Ozdowski would have no governmental power and could be used by the communist leadership to placate workers who are threatening to strike.

He said that Ozdowski's appointment was not as drastic as the event which led to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. That year, the Communist Czech government was preparing to allow non-Communist political parties to exist, which prompted the Soviet Union to invade the country with troops and tanks.

The situation in Poland now is much different, Kamendrowsky said, because the Polish Communist government has never expressed any intention of allowing members of independent political parties to participate in the government, and the striking workers have never demanded such participation.

Ozdowski is not a member of an independent political party, but is affiliated with the Catholic church.

"The Soviets have long tolerated the existence of the Catholic church in Poland," Kamendrowsky said. "They could do nothing to destroy it and the harder they tried, the stronger the church became."