AFTERMATH OF POZNAN

The Central Committee of the Polish Workers (Communist) party has issued to the world an astonishing confession. There has been no significant increase in living standards these past six years, it is now admitted. Justified demands and grievances of the working people were treated in callous fashion, it is acknowledged. It is granted that non-Communist parties exercise great authority among many of Poland's people. The underlying theme of the statement is in effect a justification of the brave Poznan workers, though this declaration is issued by the heads of the party which ordered that the demonstrators there be shot down in cold blood.

The concessions announced in this statement will certainly be welcome to the hard-pressed people of Poland. Increased wages, assurances against future speed-ups, improvement in industrial safety and hygiene and efforts to end injustices from which workers have suffered are all promised. Perhaps most interesting, though still unclear as to its practical significance, is the promise that the Polish Communists will end their day-to-day management of the government and confine their activities to "political inspiration."

How much reality there will be to these promises remains to be seen. Certainly any serious effort to improve Poland's miserable standard of living will require a radical departure from the all-out emphasis on heavy industry and armament which has marked Poland's post-war economic development. One can question whether the Poles will be allowed to make any such departure now that they are bound into the integrated economic planning of the Soviet bloc. But the fact that the promises have had to be made is itself symptomatic of the pressure Poland's Communist leaders are under from their people after a decade of exploitation and misery. Both the confession and the promises are clearly the fruits of Poznan. The dead there, it is now clear, did not die in vain though their real objective, a free and prosperous Poland, is still far away.