

UK Delegation  
13 February 1989

*Res. PA*  
*R. Cannon*  
*R. Miller*  
*A. Serbriakoff*  
*R. Erozan*

POLAND: THE INTERNAL SCENE

SUMMARY

*2211/89*

1. THE SITUATION AS THE ROUND TABLE GETS UNDER WAY. PROGRESS ON TRADE UNION AND POLITICAL PLURALISM RESULTED FROM THE PARTY LEADERSHIP'S REALISATION THAT ECONOMIC REFORM IS NOT VIABLE WITHOUT POLITICAL CHANGE. THERE IS A PLACE FOR A MODERATE OPPOSITION WITHIN THE SYSTEM. SOLIDARITY NOW FACES THE DILEMMA OF HOW TO SEPARATE ITS UNION AND POLITICAL FUNCTIONS: THE PARTY THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO ADJUST ITS LEADING ROLE. BOTH SIDES AWARE POLITICAL REFORMS VULNERABLE TO ECONOMIC FAILURE. ROUND TABLE AGENDA ENORMOUS, UNCERTAINTIES ABOUND. NEXT FEW MONTHS COULD BE A DECISIVE PERIOD IN POST-WAR POLISH HISTORY.

PA. Res. Party  
19-10-89

DETAIL

2. IT IS NOT EASY TO ISOLATE THE PRECISE POINT AT WHICH THE AUTHORITIES DECIDED TO PIN THEIR COLOURS FIRMLY TO THE MAST OF POLITICAL AND TRADE UNION PLURALISM (AND IN PARTICULAR TO ENVISAGE THE RELEGALISATION OF SOLIDARITY). THE 10TH PLENUM MARKED THE FORMAL ADOPTION OF THE NEW LINE. THOUGH A GOOD DEAL OF CONSEQUENTIAL ACTION REMAINS TO BE DONE, NOT LEAST IN TERMS OF REDEFINING THE PARTY'S ROLE IN SOCIETY, THE PARTY LEADERSHIP'S PORTRAYAL OF THE PLENUM AS A RUBICON IS NOT FAR OFF THE MARK. IT IS HOWEVER INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT THE LEADERSHIP TOOK THE KEY STRATEGIC DECISIONS SOME TIME BEFORE. THIS WAS REFLECTED IN THE DIVISION OF THE PLENUM INTO TWO HALVES: THE FIRST DEVOTED TO A WHOLESALE REVAMPING OF THE POLITBURO AND SECRETARIAT TO ALLOW THE NEW REFORMIST LEADERSHIP TO PUSH THE NEW LINE THROUGH AT THE SECOND, WITH THE PERIOD IN BETWEEN BEING USED TO PERSUADE RECALCITRANTS AT ALL LEVELS TO GO ALONG WITH THE NEW POLICY.

*(Planned)*

3. THREE MAIN SETS OF FACTORS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN AT WORK ON A LEADERSHIP THAT WAS DIVIDED AND UNCERTAIN AS TO THE WAY AHEAD. FIRST, SOME OF THE POLITBURO (INCLUDING PERHAPS CZYREK AND KISZCZAK) WILL SEE THE BASIC DECISION AS HAVING BEEN TAKEN IN AUGUST/SEPTEMBER AT THE TIME OF THE FIRST WALESA/KISZCZAK TALKS: AND INTERPRET THE SUBSEQUENT RETREAT DURING THE EARLY WEEKS OF RAKOWSKI'S ADMINISTRATION AS TACTICAL TO ALLOW TIME TO WIN OVER OPPOSITION WITH THE PARTY WHEN THIS PROVED STRONGER THAN EXPECTED.

4. BUT A SECOND AND MORE IMPORTANT FACTOR IS PROBABLY THAT RAKOWSKI AND JARUZELSKI NOW ACCEPT THAT THE APPROACH OF RELYING ON ECONOMIC REFORM TO CONTAIN POLITICAL DISCONTENT IS UNWORKABLE. THEY HAVE COME TO RECOGNISE THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT, UNCERTAIN AT BEST, CAN VIRTUALLY BE WRITTEN OFF UNLESS THE REFORM IS IMPLEMENTED ON THE BROADEST POSSIBLE BASIS OF SUPPORT. THEY KNOW TOO THAT ANY RESULTS OF ECONOMIC REFORM WILL TAKE TIME TO FILTER THROUGH.

DECLASSIFIED - PUBLICLY DISCLOSED - PDN(2014)0007 - DÉCLASSIFIÉ - MIS EN LECTURE PUBLIQUE

5 THE THIRD MAJOR INGREDIENT HAS BEEN THE NEW PUBLIC PROMINENCE OF LECH WALESIA AND HIS COLLEAGUES. THIS HAS BEEN THE RESULT OF MONTHS OF PATIENT GRAFTING: EXPLOITATION OF OPENINGS AFFORDED BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT, THE TELEVISED DEBATE WITH MIDDOWICZ IN NOVEMBER AND WALESIA'S VISIT TO PARIS: THE MODERATE LINE ADOPTED IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS, AND CAREFUL AVOIDANCE OF ANY CHALLENGE TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER OR THE GOVERNMENT'S RIGHT TO GOVERN: AND THE CONNIVANCE OF THE AUTHORITIES, SINCE THE DEBATE, IN PUTTING THE MASS MEDIA AT WALESIA'S DISPOSAL. ONE EARLY MANIFESTATION OF THE EFFECT OF THIS FACTOR HAS BEEN THE CAREFUL DISTINCTION MADE BY THE POLISH LEADERSHIP BETWEEN THE NEW MODERATE SOLIDARITY AND THE MORE EXTREME ELEMENTS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE MOVEMENT.

6 THE REGIME'S ABILITY TO DICTATE THE AGENDA IS HOWEVER LIMITED. MUCH IS AT STAKE, POLITICALLY AND PERSONALLY, FOR THE LEADERSHIP. THEY HAVE STAKED OUT A POSITION WHICH LEAVES A MAJOR PART OF THE PARTY MEMBERSHIP HOSTILE AND UNCONVINCED. THEY HAVE ALSO PUT A LARGE QUESTIONMARK OVER THE FUTURE OF THE OFFICIAL TRADE UNION (OPZZ) , ONE OF THEIR OWN CREATIONS IN THE MARTIAL LAW ERA. FOR HIS PART, WALESIA HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED BY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS THOUGH HE HAS TO CONTEND WITH HIS OWN EXTREMISTS, THE UNPREDICTABLE RANKS OF UNAFFILIATED WORKERS AND THE YOUTH. ONE CONSEQUENCE IS THAT THE LEGALISATION OF SOLIDARITY, FOR SO LONG A STUMBLING BLOCK TO DIALOGUE, IS NOW TAKEN FOR GRANTED. THE OUTSTANDING QUESTION OF UNION PLURALISM HAS BEEN NARROWED DOWN TO HOW AND IN WHAT FORM ALL THIS WILL COME ABOUT. THE CHANCES THAT SOLIDARITY WILL ACHIEVE ITS GOAL OF PLURALISM AT THE FACTORY LEVEL ARE NOW HIGH.

7 THOUGH UNION PLURALISM WILL BE THE IMMEDIATE ISSUE, THE DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL PLURALISM COULD HAVE THE GREATER LONG TERM IMPLICATIONS. THIS WILL CRYSTALLISE AND MAY ADVANCE THE DEBATE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AND ELECTORAL REFORM AND ON FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION. THERE IS NO REAL PROSPECT THAT THE SEJM ELECTIONS (LIKELY TO BE BROUGHT FORWARD FROM AUTUMN) WILL BE FREE AND DEMOCRATIC IN THE WESTERN SENSE: 'NON-CONFRONTATIONAL ELECTIONS' IS THE LATEST OXYMORON TO SURFACE. CURRENT THINKING IS THAT THE AUTHORITIES AND OPPOSITION WILL AGREE IN ADVANCE TO A 60 (PARTY AND COALITION) : 30 (OPPOSITION) : 10 (INDEPENDENTS) DIVISION OF SEATS IN PARLIAMENT. BUT WITH THEIR FOOT IN THE DOOR THE OPPOSITION WILL BE BETTER PLACED TO PRESS FOR MORE NEXT TIME ROUND. THESE STEPS TOWARDS POLITICAL PLURALISM POSE FOR SOLIDARITY THE PROBLEM OF WHETHER (AND IF SO HOW) THEY SHOULD SEPARATE THEIR POLITICAL AND UNION ROLES. MUCH WILL DEPEND UPON WHETHER ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL GROUPINGS SUCH AS WALESIA'S CITIZENS' COUNCIL OR SOME OF THE NEW CLUBS AND ASSOCIATIONS CAN DEVELOP TO FILL THE ROLE OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION. CHANGES IN THE PROVISIONS AND PROCEDURES GOVERNING ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY COULD BE COMPLEMENTED AND UNDERPINNED BY STRUCTURAL CHANGES WHICH WOULD INTRODUCE SOME CHECKS AND BALANCES INTO THE SYSTEM. THE CREATION OF AN EXECUTIVE PRESIDENCY AND A SECOND CHAMBER, IN WHICH THE PZPR WOULD NOT HAVE AN AUTOMATIC MAJORITY, ARE THE FRONT RUNNERS HERE.

8 THE LIKELY OUTCOME OF THE ROUND TABLE'S DISCUSSIONS ON THE ECONOMY HAS SO FAR ATTRACTED LESS ATTENTION THAN POLITICAL AND TRADE UNION PLURALISM, BUT WILL BE NO LESS CRUCIAL. AT THE 10TH PLENUM THE LEADERSHIP PRESSED THE CASE FOR REFORM BY USING THE ARGUMENT THAT ULTIMATELY THE PARTY WOULD BE JUDGED BY RESULTS IN THE ECONOMY. AS RAKOWSKI TOLD REPRESENTATIVES OF POLISH INDUSTRY ON 2 FEBRUARY, "THE MOST SPLENDID IDEAS PROPAGATING EXCELLENT DEMOCRATIC ORDER CAN BE DISCREDITED... IF THE ECONOMY DOES NOT SHOW ITS EFFECTIVENESS". POOR RESULTS AND A FURTHER DECLINE IN LIVING STANDARDS WOULD STRENGTHEN THE HANDS OF REACTION. THE READINESS OF THE OPPOSITION TO ACCEPT A SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR TACKLING THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS HAS STEMMED IN PART FROM THEIR RECOGNITION THAT THESE ARE URGENT. A KEY NOTE OF WALESA'S PRONOUNCEMENTS HAS BEEN THE NEED TO PUT THE NATIONAL INTEREST ABOVE ALL ELSE. IT IS NOT CLEAR AT THIS STAGE HOW FAR RAKOWSKI'S STRATEGY WILL BE MODIFIED AT THE ROUND TABLE. BUT WHEREAS AT THE END OF LAST YEAR IT WAS THE FATE OF ECONOMIC REFORM WHICH WAS THREATENED BY THE ABSENCE OF PARALLEL MOVEMENT ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, THE RISK IS NOW THE REVERSE.

9 THE KEY ISSUE IN THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY REMAINS THE ROLE OF THE PZPR ITSELF. DEVELOPMENTS (ON BOTH THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FRONTS) HAVE ALREADY RUN WELL AHEAD OF THE ROUNDS SET BY THE PARTY STATUTES. THE RECENT IDEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE AND THE FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE OF DELEGATES (AND POSSIBLY A PARTY CONGRESS) ARE ATTEMPTS TO FIT PRESCRIPTION WITH REALITY. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF THE LEADING ROLE OF THE PARTY ARE RECOGNISED BY THE LEADERSHIP ITSELF AS UNAVOIDABLE. BUT IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT EVENTS WILL CONTINUE TO OUT-PACE THEORY.

10. THE AGENDA REMAINS ENORMOUS. ALL ASPECTS OF PUBLIC LIFE ARE IN THE MELTING POT. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF ENCOURAGING FACTORS: THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT (REPRESENTED BY THE SOVIET UNION); THE COHERENCE OF THE OPPOSITION, REFLECTED IN THE SIZE AND ENDURING STRENGTH OF SOLIDARITY (PERHAPS THE GREATEST DISTINGUISHING FEATURE BETWEEN POLAND AND HUNGARY); ITS SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY; THE STEADYING INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH, WHICH HAS PLAYED AND WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE BEHIND THE SCENES; THE CLEAR ENGAGEMENT OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. BUT THERE ARE ALSO UNCERTAINTIES: DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ECONOMY; THE POTENTIAL WILD CARDS REPRESENTED BY THE PARTY RANK-AND-FILE AND OPZZ AND BY THOSE ELEMENTS OF THE OPPOSITION WHO SEE WALESA AS HAVING SOLD OUT OR WHO LIE BEYOND HIS CONTROL; AND THE DIFFICULTY OF BREAKING THROUGH THE BARRIERS OF SUSPICION AND MAKING ENOUGH PROGRESS ON ENOUGH FRONTS WITHIN A TIME-FRAME ACCEPTABLE TO THE WIDER PUBLIC. MOREOVER, DESPITE CAREFUL PREPARATION FOR THE 10TH PLENUM, THE FRENETIC ACTIVITY OF THE AUTHORITIES GIVES TOO GREAT AN IMPRESSION OF INSTINCTIVE REACTIONS TO EXTERNAL STIMULI TO INSPIRE TOTAL CONFIDENCE THAT A CLEAR STRATEGY EXISTS.

11. WITH THOSE CAVEATS, POLAND IS LIKELY TO REMAIN AMONG THE LEADERS OF REFORM IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE NEXT FEW MONTHS SHOULD MARK A DECISIVE PERIOD IN THE POST-WAR HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY.