

German Delegation

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Reg. PA
M. Carson
M. Miller
R. Serbrichoff
M. Crozan.

R E S T R I C T E D

P. A. Sub - Registry
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(Poland).

Subject: The Situation in Poland;
the Changes in Political Culture.

1. The changes in the political atmosphere in the country which have occurred in the last few weeks and months are perhaps the most important development in Poland in the recent past. This manifests itself in a less distorted and more relaxed public political discussion, in the rapidly proceeding softening-up of traditional dogmas, and the conceding or toleration of new freedoms for the opposition for making public political statements, while political activities of the opposition are still subject to many restrictions. In view of the fact that even the Party's claim to leadership has become the subject of public debate - although in the sense of "critical sympathy" - there are hardly any taboo zones left. One of the spokesmen of the right-wing political camp recently entitled a programmatic article in his - now legalized - paper with the words "I am in favour of the Warsaw Pact but not of socialism". This formula marks the common denominator which is the minimum accepted by the censors.
2. The forms in which this changed atmosphere manifests itself are numerous. Any mention of the name of Walesa in a newspaper article would have been deleted by the censor only one year ago. In the meantime, the leader of the - still illegal - "Solidarity" figures prominently, with his photograph and name, on the front pages even of Party publications, and when he visited Paris recently, he was presented almost proudly as the main item during the evening news on television. The change which was also represented world-wide by the television debate between Walesa and Miodowicz can be observed every day in small steps. The Polish news agency PAP now reports with some reliability even on smaller demonstrations and strikes, and any self-respecting newspaper tries to get surprising interview partners or to write courageous articles on the "real" past or on what the future should look like. Almost every day,

talks with people who were formerly ostracized appear in the papers, from Solidarity spokesman Onyszkiewicz ("How did you get to be a leading member of the opposition?") to dismissed Central Committee members. The problem of information procurement is slowly giving way to that of information management.

3. Two new high points of this development deserve special mention: A short time ago, public cinemas showed - although in only a few performances - the film "Murder of a Priest" which was produced in France and the UK and which describes in great detail the persecution and assassination of Father Popieluszko by members of the Polish security services in 1984. The specially invited public in Warsaw included leading representatives of the opposition, such as J. Kuron and B. Geremek. The philosopher Szaniawsky, also a member of the opposition, said afterwards that this was "a film not about the priest, but a film about Poland". This means that the recent history of the régime is now also free to be publicly discussed.

The second event took place last week: for the first time in 20 years, Leszek Kolakowski, the world-famous philosopher and symbolic figure of the Polish opposition of the sixties, came back to Poland to start a series of lectures. One almost wonders how far this process will go.

Assessment

Opposition circles by now fear the danger that Walesa may be treated by the régime in the same way as Sakharov was treated by the Soviet Union and that the same role may be assigned to him. Any attempt to split the opposition by liberalization signals and especially to "integrate" Walesa, who is known for his liberal views, into the régime and its intentions would, indeed, be in line with a strategy presented by the present Prime Minister Rakovsky in a secret speech in 1987. Since he assumed his new office, the "climatic" conditions have visibly improved. This should be seen on the background of his concept to achieve an improvement of the situation in Poland as far as possible by economic and politicalatmospheric

progress while avoiding any real political concessions.

However, it would be a one-sided judgement of the situation if one would not realize that the changes in Poland also represent a substantive transformation which cannot be undone at will. The risks which the leadership is facing with its experiment are considerable: it is bound to cause irritation among the traditional power basis, while it creates expectations among the general population whose fulfilment cannot be regarded as certain at the present time.