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THE POLISH PRESIDENCY

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SUMMARY: THOSE WHO DESIGNED THE PRESIDENCY AT THE ROUNDTABLE (Poland) INTENDED TO CREATE A NEW FOCUS FOR THE NATIONAL IDENTITY; A SYMBOL OF SOMETHING OTHER AND BROADER THAN BOTH THE FAILED LEFT AND THE VICTORIOUS RIGHT. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE CONFLICTING ASSESSMENTS OF JARUZELSKI'S ORIGINAL INTENTIONS IN THE OFFICE, HE IS NO LONGER ABLE TO CREATE AN "ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT" PREPARED TO STEP IN WHEN MAZOWIECKI'S FAILS. INDEED, THE PRESIDENCY IS NEITHER AN EFFECTIVE POLICY MAKER NOR POLITICAL ACTOR IN THE IMMEDIATE SENSE. THE PRESIDENT'S POWERS ARE POLITICAL "NUCLEAR WEAPONS" THAT CAN BE USED ONLY FOR MASS DESTRUCTION AND SELF-ANNIHILATION. THE PRESIDENT IS APPARENTLY NOT CAPABLE OF OPPOSING OR GUIDING THE GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT, OR IS UNWILLING TO DO SO. NOW THAT THE PRESIDENT'S POLITICAL BASE HAS DISAPPEARED, HE HAS TRANSCENDED HIS FORMER PARTISANSHIP, PERHAPS ONLY BY NECESSITY. EVEN HIS "STATE SECRETARY" DRAWN FROM WALESA'S OWN INNER CIRCLE ADMITS THAT JARUZELSKI HAS MADE PROGRESS TOWARD REPRESENTING THE NATION RATHER THAN A POLITICAL FACTION. IRONICALLY, JARUZELSKI'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL WEAKNESSES ENHANCE THE PRESIDENT'S IMPORTANT STABILIZING FUNCTIONS, AVOIDING THE CONFLICTS THAT WOULD COME FROM YET ANOTHER POWER CENTER IN WARSAW. WALESA IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING A CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT, INFLUENCED BY AMBITIOUS ADVISERS, AND JARUZELSKI HIMSELF ADMITS THAT HE PROBABLY WON'T SERVE HIS FULL TERM. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IN CHICAGO LAST WEEK THAT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD NEXT SPRING, AND THAT IT IS PLANNED THAT THE FREELY-ELECTED PARLIAMENT WILL THEN RATIFY A NEW CONSTITUTION ON MAY 3, 1991, THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE 1791 CONSTITUTION. ONE CAN ASSUME THAT A CHANGE IN THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT MIGHT ALSO OCCUR IN THE COURSE OF THESE PROCEEDINGS AND THAT A WALESA PRESIDENCY, WHICH WOULD PROFOUNDLY ALTER POLAND'S POLITICAL DYNAMICS, MAY BE DELAYED UNTIL SOMETIME NEXT YEAR. END SUMMARY.

THE POLISH PRESIDENCY HAS EVOLVED INTO AN INSTITUTION CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT THAN WHAT HAD BEEN INTENDED BY ITS DESIGNERS. IT IS AN ADAPTATION FORCED BY THE POLISH REVOLUTION. AT THE SAME TIME, THE INCUMBANT, PRESIDENT WOJCEICH JARUZELSKI, ALSO HAS ASSUMED A NEW AND VASTLY DIFFERENT ROLE IN RESPONSE TO FORCES LARGELY BEYOND HIS CONTROL. BOTH THE INSTITUTION AND THE INCUMBANT ARE WEAKER THAN THEY WERE, BECAUSE OF THE COLLAPSE OF THE POLITICAL BASE

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THAT HAD CREATED ONE AND SUPPORTED THE OTHER. BUT FROM THIS WEAKNESS, A NEW STRENGTH HAS EMERGED WITH WHICH THE PRESIDENCY HAS COME TO SERVE INTERESTS BROADER THAN THOSE OF THE PARTY THAT CREATED IT. THE OFFICE AND THE MAN HAVE CHANGED TOGETHER, AND TOGETHER, THEY ARE UNIQUELY ABLE TO PROVIDE CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR THIS PHASE OF THE POLISH TRANSFORMATION.

MANY CLAIM THAT JARUZELSKI'S OCCUPATION OF THE PRESIDENCY HAS BECOME AN HISTORICAL FLUKE, IMPOSED BY POLITICAL EXIGENCIES THAT HAVE SINCE VANISHED. FEW POLES HAVE MUCH LOVE FOR THE MAN; HIS FORMER PRISONERS ONLY TOLERATE HIM; MANY OF HIS FORMER COMMUNIST COLLEAGUES WOULD LIKE TO LYNCH HIM. MANY SEE JARUZELSKI AS A POLITICAL RELIC IN A WORLD WHERE VACLAV HAVEL BECOMES PRESIDENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND HANS MODROW CALMLY PRESIDES OVER THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE EAST GERMAN STATE. BUT POLAND HAS NEVER BEEN ABLE TO MAKE A CLEAN BREAK WITH ITS PAST, ANACHRONISTIC OR NOT. IT IS SOMEHOW APT THAT THE POLITICALLY ISOLATED JARUZELSKI FINDS A NEW RESONANCE IN THE EUROPEAN DRAMA AT THIS VERY MOMENT; THAT THE RUSSIAN-TRAINED GENERAL CAN ASSUME A NEW AUTHORITY JUST WHEN "YALTA" AND "ODER-NEISSE" ARE ON EVERY POLE'S LIPS. JARUZELSKI IS NOT JUST THE PRESIDENT, A FUNCTIONARY OF STILL VAGUELY UNDERSTOOD CHARACTERISTICS AND POWERS; HE IS THE POLITICAL PERSONIFICATION OF POLAND'S PAST, IN A COUNTRY WHERE THE PAST, PARTICULARLY WHEN IN CONTACT WITH THE "GERMAN QUESTION," IS A POTENT FORCE INDEED. IN THAT ROLE, HE CONSCIOUSLY IDENTIFIES HIMSELF AS A MODERN DAY PILSUDSKI, ANOTHER LEADER WHOSE SERVICES TO THE NATION WERE INSEPARABLE FROM HIS MILITARY PERSONA AND THE PERCEIVED FOREIGN THREATS OF HIS TIME. THE MANNER IN WHICH JARUZELSKI HAS ADAPTED HIMSELF AND HIS OFFICE TO THE NEW POLISH REALITY DESERVES SOME CAREFUL ATTENTION.

THE OFFICE

THE PRESIDENCY, AS IT WAS CREATED AT THE ROUNDTABLE IN 1989, WAS TO PERFORM THREE FUNCTIONS. FIRST, IT WAS TO BE AN INSTITUTIONAL BALANCE FOR THE NEW, FREELY-ELECTED SENATE SUCCESSFULLY FORCED ON THE REGIME'S NEGOTIATORS BY SOLIDARITY. ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT FORESEEN HOW DISASTEROUS A FREE ELECTION -- A PLEBISCITE ON SOCIALIST RULE -- WOULD BE FOR THE REGIME, IT WAS NEVERTHELESS KNOWN THAT THE NEW LEGISLATIVE BODY WOULD POSE NEW CHALLENGES TO THE OLD SYSTEM. A STRONG PRESIDENCY, DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR GENERAL JARUZELSKI, WAS TO COUNTER THAT INFLUENCE. IT WAS ASSUMED THAT THE PRESIDENT, WITH VETO POWERS AND THE ABILITY TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT, COULD CHANNEL PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITY TO KEEP IT WITHIN ACCEPTABLE LIMITS. IT WAS WIDELY ALLEGED AT THE TIME THAT THE OFFICE WAS BEING CONSTRUCTED ON THE FRENCH

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MODEL, WITH A STRONG PRESIDENT PROVIDING ESSENTIAL GUIDANCE TO BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT. SECOND, THE PRESIDENT WAS TO PROVIDE CRITICAL REASSURANCE FOR THE COMMUNIST PARTY, THENON-SOLIDARITY ELEMENTS IN THE GENERAL POPULATION, POLAND'S SOCIALIST NEIGHBORS, AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE SOVIET UNION. AGAIN, THE INSTITUTION WAS MEANT FROM THE BEGINNING TO BE OCCUPIED BY GENERAL JARUZELSKI, WHO WAS KNOWN TO ENJOY A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PRESIDENT GORBACHEV, A RELATIONSHIP BASED ON CONFIDENCE, RELIABILITY, AND MUTUAL AGREEMENT ON REFORMIST DIRECTIONS.

THE THIRD ESSENTIAL FUNCTION FOR THE PRESIDENCY WAS ITS SYMBOLIC ROLE. JUST BEFORE THE PZPR WAS DISSOLVED AND HE ABANDONED POLITICAL LIFE, PZPR POLITBURO MEMBER JANUSZ REYKOWSKI EXPLAINED TO US THIS ASPECT OF THE PRESIDENCY AS HE SAW IT WHEN HE CO-CHAIRLED THE ROUNDTABLE'S POLITICAL COMMITTEE WHERE THE OFFICE WAS DESIGNED. EVEN THEN, HE CLAIMED, BACK IN MARCH OF 1989, IT WAS RECOGNIZED THAT THE PARTY HAD FAILED TO BECOME IDENTIFIED WITH THE NATION AND THAT ITS ROLE AS THE POLITICAL FOCUS OF THE NATION WOULD DISAPPEAR. (IT WAS NOT ANTICIPATED, HOWEVER, THAT THE PARTY ITSELF WOULD DISAPPEAR.) THE PARTY, THEN IN POWER, COULD NEITHER ANTICIPATE NOR TOLERATE THAT SOLIDARITY WOULD BECOME THE FOCUS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY. THEY FOUND IT NECESSARY TO CONSTRUCT A NEW FOCUS HOPEFULLY PART OF, BUT MORE THAN, THE THEN EXISTING POLITICAL PARTIES. REYKOWSKI CLAIMED THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS MEANT TO SERVE THIS FUNCTION; A SYMBOL OF THE NATION'S POLITICAL IDENTITY AND A FOCUS FOR PATRIOTIC AND NATIONALIST FEELINGS.

IMPORTANTLY, REYKOWSKI DID NOT EMPHASIZE THE PRESIDENT'S ROLE, OR HIS IMPACT UPON POLISH POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, IN TERMS OF HIS OBJECTIVE POWERS. HE CLAIMED THAT THE CONSIDERABLE POWERS WERE GIVEN TO THE PRESIDENT TO REASSURE, ABOVE ALL, POLAND'S ALLIES, ALL OF WHOM AT THAT TIME WERE STILL COMMUNIST AND STILL EYEING POLISH DEVELOPMENTS WITH GREAT ANXIETY. IT WAS NOT ANTICIPATED, REYKOWSKI ARGUED, THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD FIND IT NECESSARY, OR PERHAPS EVEN POSSIBLE, TO ACTUALLY USE THOSE CONSIDERABLE POWERS. EVEN THEN, THE COMMUNISTS AT THE ROUNDTABLE KNEW THAT A SECOND MARTIAL LAW WOULD BE INCONCEIVABLE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE CONCEPTION OF A PRESIDENT CAPABLE OF BROAD POLITICAL LEADERSHIP -- EXTENDING BEYOND SYMBOLIC FUNCTIONS -- REMAINED. THE DESIGNERS ALLEGEDLY FAVORED THE "FRENCH MODEL" AT THE ROUNDTABLE AND GAVE UP ON IT ONLY SLOWLY AND RELUCTANTLY AS THE REVOLUTION BROUGHT ABOUT THE COLLAPSE OF ALL THE COMMUNISTS' PLANS.

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THE INCUMBENT

IF THERE WAS EVER REASON TO GIVE CREDIBILITY TO THE ALLEGED "FRENCH MODEL," IT WAS SURELY REINFORCED BY THE ANXIOUS RUMORMONGERING THAT FIRST SURROUNDED JARUZELSKI'S OFFICE AS IT PUT ITS STAFF TOGETHER. REPORTS THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS ASSEMBLING SEVERAL HUNDRED PROFESSIONAL STAFFERS LED MANY OBSERVERS AND WESTERN ANALYSTS TO ASSUME THAT HE WAS PREPARING NOTHING LESS THAN AN ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT. THIS GOVERNMENT WAS NOT ONLY TO OBSERVE IN DETAIL AND INFLUENCE DIRECTLY THE FUNCTIONING OF MAZOWIECKI'S GOVERNMENT, BUT IT WAS TO PREPARE TO STEP IN WHEN MAZOWIECKI'S FAILED. WITH THIS EVENTUALITY IN MIND, THE PRESIDENT'S STAFF, DRAWN LARGELY FROM THE MILITARY AND THE PARTY FAITHFUL, ALLEGEDLY WAS TO BE DIVIDED INTO UNITS ROUGHLY COMPARABLE TO GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES.

WE HAVE TWO DIFFERENT INSIDE VIEWS OF WHETHER THIS WAS A TRUE PICTURE OF THE PRESIDENT'S INTENTIONS, OR CAPABILITIES. THE FIRST COMES FROM PIOTR NOWINA-KONOPKA, THE FORMER SPOKESMAN FOR LECH WALESZA, WHO WAS BROUGHT IN BY JARUZELSKI AS ONE OF THE THREE "MINISTERS OF STATE." NOWINA-KONOPKA IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTACTS WITH THE PARLIAMENT AND POLITICAL PARTIES. HE ASSURED US SEVERAL WEEKS AFTER ASSUMING HIS NEW JOB THAT HE SAW VIRTUALLY NO EVIDENCE THAT THE OFFICE WAS LARGER THAN THE PRESIDENT'S OVERT DUTIES WOULD REQUIRE, OR THAT THE OFFICE'S STRUCTURE IMPLIED SOME GRADUOSE, BUT SECRET, POLITICAL DESIGN. HE ADMITTED THAT THERE WERE "SOME DOZENS" OF STAFF MEMBERS, BUT EXPLAINED THAT ALL BUT "ABOUT 20" WERE BUREAUCRATS OR TECHNICIANS BENEATH THE POLITICAL OR POLICY-MAKING LEVEL. PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE STATE THAT THE TOTAL NUMBER TO BE EMPLOYED BY THE CHANCELLERY IS 226, "NOT INCLUDING AUXILIARY STAFF." THERE ARE REPORTS THAT IN THIS LATTER, ILL-DEFINED CATEGORY THERE ARE AS MANY AS 300 EMPLOYEES, PRESUMABLY ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT. NOWINA-KONOPKA ARGUED THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL DUTIES, AS OUTLINED BY THE CHANCELLERY BREAKDOWN AND CONFIRMED BY HIS OWN EXPERIENCE, CERTAINLY REQUIRE ALL OF THE STAFF PROVIDED, WITHOUT RAISING THE SPECTER OF AN "ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT." OF THOSE SEVERAL SECTIONS THAT FOLLOW AND ADVISE THE PRESIDENT ON PARLIAMENTARY AND GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITY, NOWINA-KONOPKA ASSERTED THAT THERE WAS LITTLE OR NO APPARENT EFFORT TO INFLUENCE THAT ACTIVITY OR LOBBY FOR ALTERNATIVE POLICIES CREATED BY THE PRESIDENT'S STAFF. INDEED, THERE WERE NO ALTERNATIVE POLICIES EITHER PREPARED OR ADVOCATED. IN THIS MOST IMMEDIATE POLITICAL SENSE, PRESIDENT JARUZELSKI'S ROLE AS A POLITICAL ACTOR HAD BECOME GREATLY LIMITED.

THE PRESIDENT'S ALLEGEDLY GREAT POWERS, DESIGNED INTO THE OFFICE, HAVE BECOME SOMETHING OF AN ILLUSION. IT IS TRUE THAT HE HAS ACCESS TO THE POLITICAL EQUIVALENT OF "NUCLEAR WEAPONS,"

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IN REYKOWSKI'S PHRASE -- DISSOLVE THE PARLIAMENT, DECLARE MARTIAL LAW -- BUT TO USE THEM WOULD BE TO ASSURE POLITICAL ANNIHILATION FOR BOTH HIMSELF AND POLAND'S POLITICAL EXPERIMENT. THE PRESIDENT'S ABILITY TO GUIDE THE DAY-TO-DAY POLITICAL LIFE OF THE COUNTRY, TO INFLUENCE IN AN EFFECTIVE WAY THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS, OR TO INHIBIT THE GRADUAL DISMANTLING OF THE SOCIALIST SYSTEM, HAS BECOME ALMOST NON-EXISTENT. CONCERNING THE MORE MUNDANE, "NON-NUCLEAR" POLITICAL WEAPONS THEORETICALLY AT THE PRESIDENT'S DISPOSAL, E.G., HIS LEGISLATIVE VETO POWERS, SEJM MARSHAL MIKOLAJ KOZAKIEWICZ TELLS US THAT THEY ALSO HAVE REMAINED UNUSED. HE CLAIMED THAT ONLY ON ONE OCCASION -- CONCERNING A RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT PROCEDURAL ISSUE BETWEEN THE SEJM AND THE SENATE -- DID A MEASURE GO TO THE PRESIDENT'S DESK WITH THE EXPECTATION, INDEED THE UNSPOKEN DESIRE ON THE PART OF THE SENATE, THAT THE PRESIDENT VETO THE MEASURE. KOZAKIEWICZ SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT MADE EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS TO AVOID TAKING SUCH A STEP AND IN FACT RETURNED IT TO THE SPEAKER'S OFFICE WITH A WRITTEN REQUEST THAT IT BE RECONSIDERED BY BOTH HOUSES IN AN EFFORT TO FIND ANOTHER SOLUTION. KOZAKIEWICZ EXPLAINED THAT JARUZELSKI IS FAR FROM EAGER TO THREATEN HIS COMFORTABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PARLIAMENT AND HAS NO WISH TO USE ANY OF HIS LEGISLATIVE POWERS TO CREATE A MORE ADVERSARIAL OR CONTENTIOUS RELATIONSHIP.

IN OTHER WAYS AS WELL, JARUZELSKI HAS ALTERED THE OFFICE TO SUIT HIS CONCEPTION OF ITS FUNCTION IN THE NEW POLAND. NOWINA-KONOPKA, A MAN WITH FIRM SOLIDARITY CREDENTIALS, IS QUICK TO ARGUE THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN ACTING ON HIS DECLARED INTENTION TO BECOME "PRESIDENT OF ALL THE PEOPLE, NOT JUST ONE PARTY." (INDEED, HE IS NOW A MEMBER OF NO PARTY.) SPEAKING BEFORE THE PZPR'S FINAL DEMISE, NOWINA-KONOPKA CLAIMED THAT JARUZELSKI HAD GONE FAR IN DEPOLITICIZING HIS OFFICE, FOCUSING, IN OTHER WORDS, ON THE SYMBOLISM OF THE OFFICE AS ORIGINALLY DESIGNED BY REYKOWSKI AND HIS FELLOWS. IT WAS TRUE, OF COURSE, THAT JARUZELSKI'S OFFICE INCLUDED MANY OFFICIALS FROM THE PZPR STRUCTURES, BECAUSE THEY WERE KNOWN AND TRUSTED BY THE PRESIDENT AS PROFESSIONAL POLITICAL WORKERS BUT, ASIDE FROM STATE SECRETARY JOZEF CZYREK, THERE WERE NO PZPR LEADERSHIP FIGURES IN THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE. IN NOWINA-KONOPKA'S VIEW, JARUZELSKI PROVIDED SIGNIFICANT INDICATIONS THAT HE HAD BECOME GENUINELY COMMITTED TO POLAND'S DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT AND HIS PLACE IN IT, NO MATTER HOW HE MAY HAVE VIEWED PLURALISM AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE PAST. NOWINA-KONOPKA EMPHASIZED, AS OTHERS HAVE DONE BEFORE HIM, THAT THE MOST POWERFUL FORCE MOTIVATING JARUZELSKI IS THE JUDGMENT OF HISTORY. THE PRESIDENT'S HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IS PROFOUND AND HE IS PERHAPS THE LAST MAN TO PULL FUTILELY AGAINST THE RIPTIDE OF THIS HISTORIC MOMENT.

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE DYNAMICS INSIDE THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE AND THE WAY IN WHICH THE INSTITUTION HAS BEEN ADAPTED BY JARUZELSKI TO SUIT THE NEW CONDITIONS, COMES FROM THE ARMS CONTROL EXPERT

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WHO SERVED BRIEFLY IN CZYREK'S FOREIGN POLICY WING OF THE RETINUE. ANDRZEJ KARKOSZKA, AN EXPERT AT THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (PISM) AND ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL AUTHORS OF THE 1989 "JARUZELSKI PLAN" FOR CONVENTIONAL ARMS CONTROL IN EUROPE, WAS DRAWN INTO THE PRESIDENTIAL STAFF BY CZYREK WITH PROMISES THAT HE WOULD WORK IN HIS FIELD DIRECTLY FOR THE PRESIDENT. KARKOSZKA LEFT SEVERAL MONTHS LATER DISGUSTED WITH BOTH THE ALLEGED AMATEURISHNESS OF THE OFFICE IN GENERAL AND THE APPARENT ABSENCE OF GENUINE POLICY FORMATION EXPERTISE OR EVEN INTENTION.

KARKOSZKA TOLD US THAT IN FACT IT HAD BEEN THE PLAN OF PRESIDENT JARUZELSKI AND HIS CHIEF ADVISERS, PARTICULARLY CZYREK, TO CREATE THE "UNDERGROUND GOVERNMENT" SO WIDELY FEARED IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE INSTITUTION. HE CLAIMED THAT ALTERNATIVE "MINISTRIES" WERE TO BE SET UP AND THAT A SERIOUS POLICY ESTABLISHMENT WITH DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE PARLIAMENT AND THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD BE CONSTRUCTED. HOWEVER, THE RAPID REVISION OF THE POST-ROUNDTABLE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT, THE ELECTION OF MAZOWIECKI AS PRIME MINISTER, AND THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE PZPR-LED MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT SENT THE PRESIDENT'S PLANNED ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT CRASHING DOWN EVEN BEFORE THE FOUNDATIONS WERE LAID. NOW THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PZPR BASE ITSELF HAS COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED, KARKOSZKA POINTED OUT, THE PRESIDENT'S INTENTIONS AND ABILITIES HAD TO BE ENTIRELY REASSESSED.

IS JARUZELSKI THE BEST MAN FOR THE JOB?

WHETHER OR NOT JARUZELSKI'S ORIGINAL INTENTION WAS TO MOUNT AN "ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT," IN THE VIEW OF BOTH INSIDERS, HE NOW HAS NEITHER THE WILL NOR THE ABILITY TO ACCOMPLISH IT. THE PRESIDENT CANNOT USE HIS REAL POWERS WITHOUT CATASTROPHIC DESTRUCTION OF THIS DELICATE EXPERIMENT. IT WOULD SURELY MEAN HIS OWN DEMISE AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, A VASTLY NEGATIVE JUDGMENT OF HISTORY. THE PRESIDENT DOES NOT HAVE THE POLICY MACHINERY OR EFFECTIVE POLITICAL MECHANISMS TO CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT'S WORK, EVEN IF HE WANTED TO WHICH, HE REPEATEDLY CLAIMS, HE DOES NOT. THE PRESIDENT DID NOT HAVE THE ABILITY TO GUIDE OR EVEN GREATLY AFFECT LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY WHEN A NEAR MAJORITY OF THE SEJM WAS EITHER COMMUNIST OR "COALITION PARTNERS. NOW, HIS ABILITY TO INFLUENCE PARLIAMENT IS EVEN LESS. THIS PARLIAMENT COULD ALMOST CERTAINLY OVERRIDE ANY PRESIDENTIAL VETO WITH EASE. WITH ALL THESE APPARENT LIABILITIES, WHO ELSE WOULD WANT THE JOB?

THE CLEAREST ANSWER AT THE MOMENT IS LECH WALESZA. SINCE THE INSTITUTION OF THE PRESIDENCY WAS CREATED, WALFSA HAS BEEN CONSIDERED AN ALTERNATIVE -- AND FOR MANY, THE PREFERRED --

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CANDIDATE. HE HAS REPEATEDLY SAID HE WOULD NOT SEEK THE JOB, BUT WOULD ACCEPT IT "IF THE NATION REQUIRES IT." OTHERS IN HIS INNER CIRCLE NOW SPEAK OPENLY AND OFTEN ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY; "TYGODNIK SOLIDARNOSC" HAS PUBLISHED SEVERAL ARTICLES PUSHING WALESA'S CANDIDACY; ITS EDITOR SENATOR JAROSLAW KACZYNSKI, IS MANEUVERING OPENLY TO PRESS FOR NEW PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS TO FINALIZE THE COMMUNIST PURGE AND PAVE THE WAY FOR A WALESA PRESIDENCY. OTHER NEWSPAPERS HAVE TAKEN UP THE PUBLIC DEBATE. AND LATELY, EVEN JARUZELSKI HIMSELF HAS COMMENTED OPENLY -- MOST RECENTLY IN HIS MARCH 7 INTERVIEW WITH "DIE WELT" -- THAT HE PROBABLY WILL NOT SERVE HIS FULL TERM. EXTRAPOLATING FROM PRIME MINISTER MAZOWIECKI'S REMARKS IN THE U.S. LAST WEEK, WE CAN ASSUME THAT HE EXPECTS AN ORDERLY CHANGE IN THE PRESIDENCY NEXT SPRING. HE SAID THAT NEW PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WILL BE A YEAR FROM NOW AND THAT A NEW POLISH CONSTITUTION WILL BE READY BY THE MAY 3, 1991 ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1791 CONSTITUTION. IT IS LIKELY THAT JARUZELSKI EXPECTS TO RESIGN VOLUNTARILY SOMETIME DURING THAT PROCESS, ALTHOUGH THE EXACT SEQUENCE REMAINS UNCLEAR.

IN THE MEANTIME, JARUZELSKI'S ANSWER TO THE MANEUVERINGS OF HIS ASSUMED COMPETITOR IS, AS HE TELLS VISITORS AND AS HE TOLD "DIE WELT" ON MARCH 7, THAT "BEING A SOLDIER, I HAVE A FIRM PRINCIPLE: TWO FRONTS SHOULD NOT BE OPENED AT THE SAME TIME." THE MAIN POLISH BATTLE AT THE MOMENT IS WITH ECONOMIC ADVERSITY AND THE PAIN OF ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING. JARUZELSKI KNOWS THAT HIS REMOVAL AS PRESIDENT WOULD OPEN A NEW FRONT LEADING TO NEW CONFLICTS AND PAINFUL WOUNDS. EVEN WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY GONE, JARUZELSKI STILL PROVIDES CONSIDERABLE REASSURANCE TO THE LEFT, THE ARMY, AND TO MOSCOW. BUT PERHAPS MORE PERSUASIVE EVEN FOR MANY OF SOLIDARITY'S DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONARIES, JARUZELSKI KNOWS THAT A NEW BATTLE-FRONT MEANS CONFLICT AMONG THE NEW RULERS THEMSELVES.

IF WALESA WERE TO BECOME PRESIDENT, THE POLITICAL DYNAMIC IN WARSAW WOULD BE PROFOUNDLY DIFFERENT. JARUZELSKI UNIFORMLY AND CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTS THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, PARTLY OUT OF THE INABILITY TO OPPOSE IT, BUT MOSTLY FROM CONVICTION THAT THE PRESENT COURSE IS CORRECT. "THERE IS NO OTHER WAY," HE HAS OFTEN SAID. PRESIDENT WALESA WOULD NOT BE LIMITED BY SUCH IMPOTENCE. THE LIMITATIONS ON JARUZELSKI'S POWERS DESCRIBED ABOVE WOULD NO LONGER APPLY. PRESIDENT WALESA WOULD BE FAR MORE CAPABLE OF CREATING POLICY, GUIDING THE GOVERNMENT -- PERHAPS EVEN BY FORCE IF NECESSARY -- OR INFLUENCING PARLIAMENT. THERE WOULD BE ANOTHER POWER CENTER IN WARSAW AND THE CENTRIFUGAL FORCES WITHIN THE OKP AND BETWEEN IT AND THE GOVERNMENT WOULD GROW. WALESA AS A POLITICAL WARRIOR IN THE PRESIDENCY, NOT AS A NATIONAL SYMBOL, WOULD REMOVE FROM THE OFFICE ONE OF ITS KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS, ONE WHICH WAS MEANT TO TRANSCEND POLITICS AND STABILIZE A VERY UNSTABLE ENVIRONMENT. WITH DUE ATTENTION TO THE PROFOUND IRONY, IT SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED THAT THE GREATLY

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UNPOPULAR JARUZELSKI IS, AS PRESIDENT, A FAR MORE STABILIZING AND UNIFYING FORCE AT THIS STAGE THAN THE VASTLY MORE POPULAR PRESIDENT WALESZA WOULD BE. ACCORDING TO THE ROUNDTABLE'S ORIGINAL DESIGN, THE PRESIDENT HAS BECOME A SYMBOL OF STABILITY, GRADUAL REVOLUTION, RECONCILIATION, THE VICTORS' MAGNANIMITY, AND THE ADAPTABILITY OF THE VANQUISHED LEFT. NOW, IN THE NEW CONTEXT OF A PERCEIVED GERMAN THREAT, JARUZELSKI IS ALSO A POWERFUL LINK TO THE SUDDENLY LEGITIMATE "FRIENDSHIP" OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE GUARANTEES OF TERRITORIAL SECURITY THAT RELATIONSHIP ALLEGEDLY PROVIDES. IN THIS WAY, AND IN HIS UNIFORM, GENERAL JARUZELSKI COULD BE AT EXACTLY THIS MOMENT ONE OF THE NATION'S MOST POWERFUL REPRESENTATIVES. THAT IS WHY THE PRIME MINISTER BROUGHT HIM TO PARIS EARLIER THIS MONTH TO PRESS THE FRENCH FOR SUPPORT ON THE GERMAN QUESTION. IF THIS VIEW IS ACCURATE AND HISTORY COMES TO SEE JARUZELSKI'S CONTRIBUTION AS PRESIDENT IN A SIMILAR WAY, HE WILL GO INTO RETIREMENT PERHAPS EARLY NEXT YEAR AS A VERY CONTENTED MAN.

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