

Reg.

N A T O C O N F I D E N T I A L

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To: Director of Private Office
cc: Acting Director, Economics Directorate
Secretary IMS
Chief SITCEN
From: ASG for Political Affairs
Subject: Poland
Reference: DPA(88)736

Summary

1. No change in the strike situation yet. But Walesa has offered to call off the action at Gdansk if the status of Solidarity is put on the discussion agenda. The authorities have said Walesa would be included in the talks as soon as he ended the strike.

Detail

2. The government and Solidarity seem to be jockeying for position as the prospects for talks increase. The authorities have threatened action, including instant dismissal, against all those strikers who have not returned to work by tomorrow morning (31st August). The secretary of the government's defence industry committee has referred to the importance of the Gdansk Northern shipyard and the Stalowa Wola steel mill and warned that strikes there could not be tolerated indefinitely.

3. On 29th August, Walesa reiterated his readiness to take part in talks and offered to lift the strike at the Lenin shipyard if the authorities agreed to discuss the status of Solidarity.

4. Today the authorities exchanged stick for carrot. Government spokesman Urban said that the "round-table" talks, first proposed by General Kiszczak on 26th August, would "automatically" be convened once Walesa had called off the strike at the Lenin shipyard. Walesa himself would be expected to take part in the talks. Urban added that Walesa's presence would indicate that he represented "a mass movement". This is the first time since 1982 that the Polish authorities have publicly conceded that Walesa represents anybody but himself.

5. Asked whether the status of Solidarity would be raised at the talks, Urban said there were no preconditions and that the agenda would be open. As far as the order and scope of the talks were concerned, Urban said these were also open to agreement by the participants in the discussions. General Kiszczak had been

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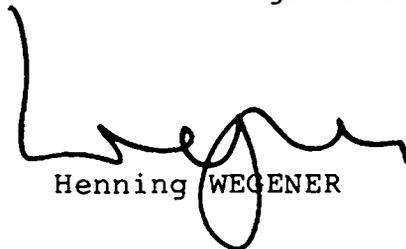
designated to lead the government team and representatives of the OPZZ (the official trade union organisation) would attend. However, Urban stressed, preliminary discussions would be held with the opposition (sic) to decide on the choice of other participants.

Comment and outlook

6. So far, Walesa has not been available to comment on this latest approach by the authorities. But they seem to have made him an offer which he will find difficult to refuse. Whether or not it agrees to meet Walesa's original precondition, ie that the status of Solidarity would be discussed, the government has publicly declared its readiness to talk to what it calls the opposition in Poland.

7. At today's meeting of the Political Committee (which took place before the events described in paras 4-5 above), most delegations seemed to anticipate that the authorities would in the end be realistic enough to engage in dialogue with the opposition: the main question being where they would have to draw the line. The Danes and Norwegians interpreted the Central Committee Plenum at the weekend as evidence that the Party wished to distance itself as far as possible from the government, which it blamed for the present unrest. It was significant that the Central Committee had not condemned the strikes. Most delegations agreed that Prime Minister Messner would be made the scape-goat and that he would probably be replaced by Baka, the Politburo member responsible for economic reform. But this would only happen in the course of due "parliamentary" process, i.e. at the next session of the Sejm in September, not as the result of Party diktat. The Danes thought that the new government might be much more broadly based politically, i.e. to include a greater percentage of Liberal Party and ZSL members than previously.

8. Some delegations were altogether less optimistic about the future: even if dialogue was still the flavour of the day in Poland, the present round of strikes will have tightened the resolve of anti-reformist elements in Eastern Europe. The French in particular doubted whether Jaruzelski possessed enough imagination and political will to reconstruct the government on the lines suggested by the Danes.


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