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I.

One week after the end of the strikes, relations between the Polish leadership and the still outlawed trade union opposition still hang in the balance. Prior to the planned "round table" talks between the leadership, the church and the opposition, both sides are trying to improve their positions. In this process, the image presented by the domestic political forces in the country is becoming less clear: developments are not only influenced by the three most important centres of strength - the leadership, the opposition and the church - but there are also conflicts within these camps, as is shown by the remarkable demand from OPZZ, the official trade union, that the government should resign, or by the criticism of Walesa from within the opposition. The forms to be assumed by the "division of power" which is now under discussion are still unclear, particularly on the government side. What is certain after the memorable meeting between Walesa and General Kiszczak, the Minister of the Interior, in the presence of Suffragan Bishop Dabrowsky and PRON Secretary General Ciosek on 31 August 1988 (the eighth anniversary of the Gdansk agreements of 1980) is that a return to the situation before 15 August 1988 will only be possible at the cost of a violent escalation of the conflict.

II.

1. The termination of the strikes which were not only caused by economic but especially by political motives was a result of the efforts of the moderate forces on both sides which wanted to avoid a political escalation of the conflict and thus further damage to the national economy. A condition for this - and at the same time the most important result of the weeks of strikes - was the leadership's readiness to resume the talks with "Solidarity" which had been the object of strict government measures only a short time before. These contacts had been broken off in 1981. At its eighth Central Committee Plenum on 27 and 28 August 1988, the Party leadership confirmed its readiness for a policy of opening towards society by advocating

- the formation of a "pro-reform coalition of all those who wish to participate in re-structuring";
- the setting-up of a "Council for National Reconciliation" for the preparation of the next Sejm elections (form of the elections, election platform, composition of the second Chamber).

The turn in the Polish leadership's position towards a dialogue with the opposition is, on the one hand, a result of the fact that the pro-reform forces within the Polish leadership (Rakovsky, Baka) have gained the upper hand under the impression of the

strikes. They understand that the former strategy pursued by the leadership - i.e. to wear out "Solidarity" by a mixture of repression and intimidation - has failed and that a psychological change in Poland and a success of the policy of economic reforms will not be possible without the support of the social forces. In making its offer of a dialogue, the government also hopes, of course, that "Solidarity" can be integrated into the existing structures (such as OPZZ) so that it has to assume part of the responsibility for the country's difficulties. On the other hand, such tactics do not appear very promising at the present time. The offer of a dialogue made by the government places it under considerable pressure to act and to obtain results (Walesa: "Last chance"); if they are not achieved this time, a renewed escalation of the conflict might ensue.

2. Although Walesa cannot count on the undivided support of the "radical" forces in his camp - as the considerable opposition among the strikers against his policy of compromise has shown - he remains the figure of political leadership and integration within the otherwise disunited Polish opposition. By succeeding in terminating the strikes after the leadership's offer of a dialogue, he also emerged as an element of moderation and stability in Poland. Not least with an eye on his critics within the opposition, however, Walesa also made it clear that a resumption of the strikes is possible if the talks with the government should end in failure.

3. The "round-table talks" which are to take place in the course of the next two weeks if present plans are implemented will mainly deal with the following three questions:

- the problem of trade union pluralism;
- the reform of the election law in the direction of increased political participation;
- the economic reform.

The most important problem in the eyes of "Solidarity" is that of trade union pluralism on which all further political reforms must in its view be built. By calling attention to the paralyzing effect of trade union pluralism in the enterprises, the government has ruled out the re-admission of "Solidarity" in its old form but has signalled its readiness to "meet it half way" (Jaruzelsky). The official trade union OPZZ which is now vehemently criticizing the government in an effort to gain a profile of its own as distinct from "Solidarity" but which has very little real power has also rejected the trade union pluralism which "Solidarity" has in mind. As far as political pluralism is concerned, the discussion within the leadership has already made more progress in some fields (such as the plan to create a second Chamber of the Sejm in the form of a Senate with seats for the opposition). Whether the "round-table talks" will reach a lasting compromise between the leadership and the opposition depends, however, also on the extent to which the moderate forces in the two camps will succeed in getting their way against the more radical or conservative forces.

The church and the groups close to it have had and still have a decisive mediating role to play. The church has adopted a clear position towards the problems underlying the conflict (declara-

tion of the Assembly of Bishops in Chestchau on 24 and 25 August 1988) but has, on the whole, shown restraint. The main mediator between the strikers and the Polish government has so far been Professor Stelmakhovsky, the chairman of the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia in Warsaw. Generally speaking, the policy of "détente" between state and church introduced by Jaruzelsky and Glemp has once again proved to be an important element of stability on the Polish domestic political scene.

4. Irrespective of the further development of the political contacts between the government and the opposition, domestic political developments will essentially depend on the country's economic situation. While the main driving force behind the latest strikes was of a political nature, the desperate economic situation of the country - and thus of each individual citizen - has considerably strengthened the latent protest potential. Up to now, the "second phase of the economic reform policy" which was proclaimed at the end of last year has not led to any noticeable improvement of the general economic situation. Accordingly, the government of Prime Minister Messner has had to concede - in an almost self-critical manner - serious errors of economic policy. Two possible consequences of the country's difficult economic situation have so far emerged:

- a government reshuffle which is to enhance the credibility of the reform policy: Central Committee Secretary Bake, Sejm Marshal Malinovsky and, more recently, Agriculture Minister Zieba have been mentioned as possible successors to the unpopular and unimpressive Messner. It is not clear whether the persistent rumours about Jaruzelsky's departure from the office of Party chief and his assumption of the newly-created office of State President correspond to his real intentions. Rakovsky, who is being mentioned as his possible successor, is likely to have a much lower standing in the Party, among the population and within the opposition than the General, who is not liked but respected.
- Continuation of the economic reform: in this context, the Council of Ministers adopted a series of short-term measures which aim, among other things, at the consumer goods sector which is of such great importance for the popular mood. Moreover, the Politbureau has demanded the drawing-up of a consolidation plan for the Polish economy for the years 1989/1990. This plan is also to contribute to a revision of the investment programmes in favour of improved supplies of consumer goods. On the whole, however, no fundamental change of the present economic reform policy is in sight; at best, one might speak of a shift of accent and of an acceleration of its implementation.
- Inclusion of all relevant social forces in overall responsibility for the economy within the framework of a "concerted action" (Central Committee Secretary Bake spoke in this context of the Austrian model of "social partnership" as a possible approach).

III.

Poland has entered a new, decisive phase of its development. Recent events have again underlined that Poland is spearheading

the process of reforms in Eastern Europe, but at the cost of a degree of instability which is a serious burden for the country and its economy. The decisive question for the coming months will be whether the moderate forces in the opposing camps will be able to find a modus vivendi which stabilizes Poland politically, thus making possible an economic revival. Walesa pointed the way towards this aim at least "atmospherically" by calling for a "compromise of what is possible". The political framework conditions for this are better now than they were in 1981. A Polish variety of "pluralism" also appears to be acceptable to the pragmatic and flexible policy of the Soviet Union towards Eastern Europe. Up to now, at any rate, the Soviet Government has largely refrained from placing a negative assessment on developments in Poland, and high-ranking Party representatives even described the re-admission of "Solidarity" as a possibility and as a "matter for the Poles".