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POLAND'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT: PUTTING PIECES TOGETHER

SUMMARY

P.A. Sub - Registry File N° 19-10-a (Poland)

POLAND'S RELATIVE CALM IN RECENT WEEKS HAS OFFERED A BREATHING SPACE FOR A SHAKE-DOWN OF THE NEW WALESIA PRESIDENCY AND A SORTING OUT OF THE FLEDGLING POLITICAL PARTIES. THE NATION'S KEY CHALLENGE REMAINS HOW TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR AN ONGOING PAINFUL ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION. THE PRESIDENT AND HIS TEAM MUST DISCOVER AND USE THE LEVERS OF CONSTITUTIONAL, POLITICAL POWER NOW OPEN TO THEM. THE NASCENT PARTIES MUST DEFINE THEMSELVES AND PREPARE TO DEVELOP BROAD ELECTORATES. SOLIDARITY MUST REDEFINE ITS ROLE: HOW MUCH WILL IT SUPPORT "ITS" PRESIDENT AND HOW MUCH WILL IT DEFEND THE IMMEDIATE MATERIAL INTERESTS OF ITS WORKER CONSTITUENTS. THE OUTCOME OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS EXPECTED (THOUGH NOT CERTAIN) THIS SPRING WILL PROVIDE THE NEXT DEFINING EVENT IN THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE. THE QUESTION IS HOW A VIABLE PRO-REFORM POLITICAL COALITION CAN BE BUILT TO CARRY POLAND THROUGH ITS NEXT STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT. END SUMMARY.

LANDSCAPE BEFORE THE BATTLE

POLAND IS PASSING THROUGH A TEMPORARY INTERELECTION LULL, WITH DOMESTIC POLITICAL LIFE PERHAPS THE QUIETEST IT HAS BEEN SINCE LECH WALESIA MADE HIS PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRATIONS PUBLIC IN APRIL 1990. THE LONG AND INTENSIVE CAMPAIGN WHICH ENSUED LEFT BOTH THE PUBLIC AND POLITICAL ACTORS GLAD FOR A REST. UNDER THE SURFACE THERE IS FERMENT, AND THE EMERGING POLITICAL PARTIES ARE CONSIDERING TACTICAL AND SUBSTANTIVE NEXT STEPS. THE COUNTRY'S CORE ISSUE, HOWEVER, REMAINS THE SAME: HOW TO SUSTAIN POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR ESSENTIAL BUT PAINFUL ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION.

WHILE SOME SCENARIOS SUGGEST THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ECONOMIC UPTURN IN THE LATTER HALF OF THIS YEAR, THIS IS NOT/NOT CERTAIN. IN ANY EVENT, NO ONE CAN PROMISE MUCH GOOD ECONOMIC NEWS FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN THE NEAR FUTURE. DISCONTENT OVER LACK OF PERCEPTIBLE PROGRESS IS REAL AND MANY BELIEVE IT IS GROWING. THE ONLY WAY FOR POLAND'S LEADERS TO ADDRESS THIS FACTOR IS TO TRY TO COPE POLITICALLY RPT POLITICALLY TO HEAD OFF OR CHANNEL DISCONTENT. VIRTUALLY ALL OF POLAND'S MAJOR POLITICAL ACTORS -- PRESIDENT WALESIA, THE GOVERNMENT OF PRIME MINISTER BIELECKI, THE NASCENT PARTIES, SOLIDARITY, AND THE CURRENT PARLIAMENT -- HAVE

DEMONSTRATED A COMMITMENT TO THE SAME ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE: ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION TO A MARKET SYSTEM AT A PRICE SOCIETY IS PREPARED TO PAY. BUT THESE VARIOUS FORCES DO NOT AGREE ON WHAT THAT PRICE IS, OR WHAT ROAD POLAND SHOULD TAKE TO GET TO ITS GOAL, OR HOW QUICKLY.

ACCORDING TO THE MOST RECENT PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS, THE LEADERSHIPS OF THE GOVERNING AND OPPOSITION PARTIES FACE A PERSISTENT FALLING OFF OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR NEARLY ALL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND DECLINING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE GENERALLY. MOREOVER, THE FLEDGLING POLITICAL PARTIES HERE HAVE NOT/NOT ATTRACTED MASS ELECTORATES. ACCORDING TO A POLL PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 12, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SOLIDARITY ITSELF, NO POLITICAL INSTITUTION HAS ATTRACTED AN ELECTORAL FOLLOWING OF MORE THAN NINE PERCENT. 6. IN SHORT, THE POLITICAL SCENE HAS NOT CRYSTALLIZED; THE PROBLEMS ARE IMMENSE. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE POLITICAL PLAYERS ARE AWARE OF THE CHALLENGE AND CASTING ABOUT FOR POLITICAL STRATEGIES TO COPE WITH IT. THE POLISH POLITICAL CLASSES ARE DEALING WITH THE REAL ISSUES THAT MUST BE FACED IF POLAND -- LIKE THE OTHER EMERGING DEMOCRACIES OF CENTRAL EUROPE -- IS TO SUCCEED.

THE PRESIDENT AND HIS TEAM

THE MOVE TO THE BELWEDER PALACE JUST TWO MONTHS AGO PLACED WALESZA AND HIS IMMEDIATE TEAM IN A NEW SITUATION. THE PRESIDENCY'S POWERS REMAIN UNDEFINED AND THERE IS NEITHER A PRECEDENT NOR CLEAR CONSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM FOR SORTING THEM OUT. DESPITE WALESZA'S PROMISES TO MOVE FAST AND VISIBLY ONCE ELECTED, HE AND HIS CLOSE ADVISERS HAVE SPENT TIME DETERMINING AND DEFINING PREROGATIVES AND AREAS OF AUTHORITY. THOSE WHO HAVE OBSERVED A NEW ADMINISTRATION ASSUME POWER IN WASHINGTON WILL FEEL AT HOME. WE HAVE SEEN A FEW PRESIDENTIAL GAFFES, AND MAY SEE MORE DURING THE SHAKE-DOWN PERIOD.

SOME HAVE SUGGESTED THE PRESIDENT AND HIS STAFF, UNDER CENTRUM LEADER JAROSLAW KACZYNSKI, THREATEN TO OVERSHADOW THE CABINET. IN FACT, THE FOCUS OF POWER AT THE TOP IS COMPLEX. THE PRESIDENTIAL STAFF IS ITSELF DIVIDED BETWEEN ROUGHLY THREE ELEMENTS:

- KACZYNSKI'S LARGE APPARATUS, MOSTLY CENTRUM LEADERS;
- A SEPARATE, SMALLER APPARATUS HEADED BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY JACEK MERKEL, WHO IS NOT/NOT A MEMBER OF CENTRUM; AND
- WALESZA'S SMALL IMMEDIATE STAFF, WORKING OUT OF THE BELWEDER AND COMPOSED LARGELY OF HIS FORMER GDANSK AIDES. IT IS NOT GENERALLY COMPOSED OF CENTRUM ACTIVISTS. (ARKADIUSZ RYBICKI, WALESZA'S PERSONAL STAFF AIDE, IS GENERALLY REGARDED AS POLITICALLY CLOSE TO THE GDANSK (FREE-MARKET) LIBERALS AND IS PERSONALLY CLOSE WITH MANY PEOPLE FROM THE MAZOWIECKI CAMP.)

FOREIGN POLICY PROVIDES ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE AMBIGUOUS INTRA-GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE. THE CHIEF FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR ON

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WALESA'S STAFF IS SENATOR JANUSZ ZIOLKOWSKI, WHO REPORTS TO CHIEF-OF-STAFF KACZYNSKI. ZIOLKOWSKI IS A LONG-TIME FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE OF FOREIGN MINISTER KRZYSZTOF SKUBISZEWSKI, BUT WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY SKUBISZEWSKI'S SENIOR DEPUTY THAT THE TWO HAVE ALREADY CLASHED ON POLICY AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY.

MOREOVER, POLAND'S NEWLY-ESTABLISHED NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL -- WITH POWERS STILL UNDEFINED -- IS BEING RUN BY WALESA'S FORMER CAMPAIGN MANAGER, JACEK MERKEL, WHO REPORTS DIRECTLY TO WALESA. AND THE PICTURE COULD GROW MORE COMPLICATED: A SENIOR PRESIDENTIAL AIDE TOLD US THAT SENATOR BOGDAN LIS, WHO RAN SOLIDARITY'S INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT, MIGHT BE NAMED A SPECIAL FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATOR WORKING INSIDE THE BELWEDER, ANSWERING DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT WALESA.

"WALESA'S" GOVERNMENT

THE BIELECKI CABINET WAS NAMED AS A GOVERNMENT OF EXPERTS COMMITTED TO CONTINUING THE BALCEROWICZ ECONOMIC PLAN "WITH CORRECTIONS" AND FM SKUBISZEWSKI'S FOREIGN POLICY. THE BEST SUMMARY OF THE IDEAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BELWEDER AND THE BIELECKI CABINET WAS MADE TO US RECENTLY BY A KEY CENTRUM LEADER: WE PROVIDE THE POLITICAL TACTICS AND COVER; THEY PROVIDE THE POLICIES; WE ALL GET THROUGH THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. BUT CAUGHT BETWEEN THE POLITICAL INTERESTS OF THE PRESIDENCY AND SOCIAL FRUSTRATIONS, THE CABINET'S POSITION SEEMED TO MANY SOMEWHERE BETWEEN TENUOUS AND HOPELESS.

MANY HAVE SPECULATED THAT WALESA, IN NEED OF AN ATTENTION-GETTING (OR DISTRACTING) GESTURE TO KEEP A DISSATISFIED PUBLIC ON BOARD WITH REFORMS, MIGHT AT SOME POINT SWEEP AWAY THE BIELECKI GOVERNMENT. A LONGTIME SOLIDARITY ACTIVIST WHO KNOWS WALESA WELL CALMLY TOLD US THAT "SOMEDAY HE'LL DISMISS US ALL WITH A GRAND WAVE OF HIS HAND." BUT IN AUGUST 1989 MANY PEOPLE WERE PREDICTING A SIMILAR FUTURE FOR PRIME MINISTER TADEUSZ MAZOWIECKI'S GOVERNMENT, WHICH IN FACT LASTED MORE THAN 15 MONTHS, SO IT IS FAR TOO SOON TO WRITE THE BIELECKI GOVERNMENT'S OBITUARY.

THE PARTIES

WALESA HAS SOUGHT TO PLACE HIMSELF ABOVE PARTIES, BUT THE RESILIENCE OF POLAND'S DEMOCRACY WILL DEPEND, MOST OBSERVERS AGREE, ON THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF RUGGED PARTIES, AND THESE ARE IN THEIR INFANCY. THE MOST PROMINENT ARE CENTRUM AND MAZOWIECKI'S DEMOCRATIC UNION (UNIA DEMOKRATYCZNA, OR "UD"), IN UNEASY COALITION WITH THE PRO-MAZOWIECKI ROAD. HAVING BEEN SHOCKED BY THE STRONG SHOWING OF BIZARRE MAVERICK PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE STAN TYMINSKI IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE, THE LEADERS OF THESE AND OTHER SMALL PROTO-PARTIES ARE AGAIN THINKING HARD ABOUT HOW TO CAPTURE PUBLIC SUPPORT.

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CENTRUM

THOUGH CENTRUM SPEARHEADED WALESZA'S SUCCESSFUL DRIVE FOR THE PRESIDENCY, IT DID NOT RECEIVE A MANDATE TO FORM THE FIRST CABINET. THIS IS NOT NECESSARILY A BAD THING FOR CENTRUM, BECAUSE INSTEAD OF ANSWERING FOR THE HARD CHOICES IMPOSED NOW BY THE BIELECKI GOVERNMENT AND THE BALCEROWICZ PLAN, IT CAN THINK WHAT POLICIES MIGHT BE MOST EFFECTIVE FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD.

EVIDENCE OF CENTRUM'S INTENTION TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM THE "OLD/NEW" BIELECKI GOVERNMENT WAS JAROSLAW KACZYNSKI'S INTERVIEW IN THE JANUARY 26 "ZYCIE WARSZAWY." AFTER PASTING THE MAZOWIECKI GOVERNMENT FOR "INCREDIBLE INDOLENCE," KACZYNSKI NOTED THAT THE BIELECKI GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TO COPE WITH AN APPALLING SITUATION, AND HE COULD ONLY HOPE FOR THE BEST. BIELECKI IS A LEADER OF THE SMALL FREE-MARKET LIBERAL KLD (LIBERAL-DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS), A CONSTITUENT OF THE CENTRUM ALLIANCE. BUT THE BIELECKI GOVERNMENT WAS NOT, KACZYNSKI WENT ON, THE "BREAKTHROUGH GOVERNMENT" HE HAD CALLED FOR AND NEITHER HE NOR CENTRUM WOULD TAKE POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY IF IT FAILED.

IT WILL TAKE AGILE POSITIONING FOR CENTRUM TO ESTABLISH AN IDENTITY APART FROM THAT OF A GOVERNMENT BY A CENTRUM MEMBER. A SENIOR CENTRUM OFFICIAL TOLD US "CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY" IS "MAYBE" THE LABEL THAT MOST NEARLY FITS, "BUT WE WANT TO BE A PRAGMATIC PARTY," HE SAID. IN A FEBRUARY 12 LUNCH, SOURCE REVEALED TO US HOW THIS PRAGMATISM WOULD WORK IN THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: PROVINCE BY PROVINCE, CENTRUM WOULD FORGE ELECTORAL ALLIANCES WITH THOSE WILLING TO WORK WITH IT -- CITIZENS COMMITTEES, LOCAL AND REGIONAL SOLIDARITY CHAPTERS, LOCAL PARTIES. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, ONE OF CENTRUM'S LONG-TERM RESPONSIBILITIES WAS TO FORGE A "RESPONSIBLE, TOLERANT POLISH NATIONALISM, PUSHING AWAY NATIONALISM MIXED UP WITH ANTI-SEMITISM OR EXTREME CLERICALISM."

ON ECONOMIC POLICY, OTHER CENTRUM LEADERS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THE PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE BALCEROWICZ PROGRAM, BUT WILL CONSISTENTLY PRESS FOR MORE "CORRECTIONS" THAN THE GOVERNMENT IS WILLING TO ACCEPT AT A GIVEN MOMENT. CENTRUM, THEY ARGUE, WANTS TO POSITION ITSELF BETWEEN A RIGOROUS ECONOMIC POLICY IN THE CABINET AND SOCIAL DEMANDS. 19. WALESZA IS NOT A MEMBER OF CENTRUM, BUT IT IS LIKELY CENTRUM WILL FORM THE CORE OF THE BELWEDER'S EFFORT TO BUILD A PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION COALITION, WITH A LOOSE MANDATE TO SUPPORT REFORMS.

THE MAZOWIECKI CAMP

MEETING FEBRUARY 11 WITH THE AMBASSADOR, A SENIOR UNIA DEMOKRATYCZNA (UD) LEADER SEEMED IN BETTER SPIRITS PERSONALLY AND MORE HOPEFUL ABOUT HIS GROUP. THE UD WAS TRYING TO PUT TOGETHER THE PIECES OF HIS ELECTORAL COALITION: ROAD, THE FREE-MARKET FPD (FORUM OF THE DEMOCRATIC RIGHT) AND INDEPENDENTS. THE TROUBLE WAS

UD'S IDENTITY PROBLEM: IT WAS AN OPPOSITION SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THAT GOVERNMENT WAS CONTINUING THE ECONOMIC REFORMS UD HAD ESTABLISHED WHILE IN POWER. MEANWHILE, THE GOVERNMENT PARTY, CENTRUM, WAS MAKING CAPITAL SEEMING TO CRITICIZE ITS OWN GOVERNMENT.

THAT VIEW SUMS UP NEATLY THE OPPOSITION'S PROGRAMMATIC DILEMMA: WHAT IS IT AND FOR WHAT DOES IT STAND? ADD TO THIS AN ORGANIZATIONAL DILEMMA: IS UD A COALITION OF ROAD, FPD AND OTHERS? IS IT A UNITED PARTY? SOMETHING IN BETWEEN? MAZOWIECKI IS PREPARING FOR AN APRIL UNITY CONGRESS, AND THE DEBATE WITHIN HIS CAMP IS HEATING UP.

UD'S LARGEST CONSTITUENT ELEMENT, ROAD, IS ITSELF DIVIDED OVER JUST THESE QUESTIONS, AS THE PARTY'S FIRST NATIONAL CONGRESS SHOWED. TWO MAIN ALTERNATIVES ARE CURRENTLY COMPETING FOR SUPPORT.

"SOCIAL DEMOCRACY"

SOME ARGUE THAT THE PARTY NEEDS TO REJECT MAZOWIECKI'S LEADERSHIP (A "LOSER") AND ADOPT BOTH A SEPARATE IDENTITY AND AN EXPLICIT SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC ORIENTATION. ROAD, CURRENTLY AN ELITE, MUST APPEAL TO A MASS ELECTORATE, AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN THE WESTERN EUROPEAN SENSE OFFERS THE PARTY ITS BEST DRAW. THIS WILL ALSO CAPTURE PART OF THE TYMINSKI ELECTORATE, WHICH KEENLY FEELS THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC HARD TIMES. SOCIAL DEMOCRACY COULD ALSO HELP FIGHT OR AMELIORATE ANTI- REFORM POLICIES WHICH SOLIDARITY MIGHT PROPOSE IN THE NAME OF PROTECTING WORKERS. ROAD, ACCORDING TO THIS VIEW, MUST BE HONEST WITH ITSELF AND WITH VOTERS. THE BALCEROWICZ PLAN WAS A LIABILITY; WHY HIDE OUR CRITICISM OF IT? BESIDES, SOURCE STRESSED, ROAD IS A LEFT-OF-CENTER GROUPING, AND NO ONE IS FOOLED BY PRETENDING OTHERWISE. SOURCE AND THOSE WHO JOINED HIM IN FORMING THE "ROAD CLUB" WERE IN A MINORITY AT THE PARTY'S CONGRESS, BUT THEY SEEMED CONFIDENT, COMBATIVE, AND READY TO PLUNGE INTO THE FRAY.

"THE CAMP OF DEMOCRACY"

A LEADING EXPONENT OF THE OTHER MAIN LINE OF THINKING IN ROAD IS LIKEWISE READY TO GO. SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, HE TOLD US ON FEBRUARY 9, IS A POLITICAL DEAD END IN PRESENT DAY POLAND. EVEN THE LABELS "LEFT" AND "RIGHT" DISTORT THE PICTURE. THE POLITICAL CHOICE IS BETWEEN THOSE WHO SUPPORT DEMOCRACY AND CAPITALISM -- "THE CAMP OF DEMOCRACY" -- AND THOSE PREPARED TO SHORTCUT DEMOCRACY AND RESORT TO ECONOMIC POPULISM -- "POLISH PERONISM." THE ELECTORATE FOR THE FIRST OPTION SHOULD NOT BE SPLIT, SOURCE INSISTED, BUT INSTEAD BROUGHT TOGETHER UNDER A SINGLE BANNER OF THE MAZOWIECKI-LED UD UNITING ROAD, THE FPD AND OTHERS.

FURTHERMORE, SOURCE ARGUED, ROAD IS MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN SOLIDARITY TO MUCH OF THE TYMINSKI ELECTORATE. THOSE PEOPLE, HE ASSERTED, HAVE A POSITIVE, ALBEIT UNSOPHISTICATED, VIEW OF

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CAPITALISM AND THE WEST. THEY WANT TO SEE THINGS CHANGED AND IMPROVED; THEY ARE NOT/NOT A CONSTITUENCY FOR BACKWARD-LOOKING SOLUTIONS, WHICH SOURCE CONTENDED CENTRUM REPRESENTS.

THEREFORE, SOURCE CONCLUDED, EVEN THOUGH ROAD IS NUMERICALLY SMALL, IT IS A WINNER. OTHER PARTIES WILL REMAIN SMALL, WHILE ROAD'S 5,000-ODD MEMBERS ARE ACTIVE AND COMMITTED, AND ITS ELECTORATE IS DEPENDABLE. MAZOWIECKI'S 18 PERCENT FIRST ROUND SHOWING WILL BE A STEADY BASE WHILE OTHER VOTERS STAY HOME FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

THE UD'S "DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES" THAT MAZOWIECKI GAVE THE AMBASSADOR REFLECTS KURON'S VIEW OF A CAMP OF DEMOCRACY. ITS THREE PRINCIPLES ARE: PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY, SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMICS, AND POLAND'S PARTICIPATION IN A UNITING EUROPE. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN, HOWEVER, WHETHER THIS PLATFORM CAN CONSTITUTE THE BASIS OF A WINNING CAMPAIGN.

PEASANTS

WHILE CENTRUM AND UD FORESEE PROMISING ELECTORAL FUTURES FOR THEMSELVES, THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY POLITICAL GROUPS WHICH WILL COMPETE IN THE NEXT ELECTIONS. GIVEN THE SIZEABLE PERCENTAGE OF THE POLISH POPULATION ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE, THE POLISH PEASANTS' PARTY (POLSKIE STRONNICTWO LUDOWE, OR PSL) COULD IN THEORY PLAY A POTENTIAL DECIDING ROLE IN ELECTIONS. AT PRESENT, HOWEVER, THE PEASANT MOVEMENT IS HAMPERED BY STRUCTURAL ANOMALIES (THE LARGEST OF THE SEVERAL PSL'S COMBINES LEADERSHIP FROM THE SOLIDARITY TRADITION AND AN APPARAT INHERITED FROM THE COMMUNIST-ALLY UNITED PEASANTS' PARTY) AND RIVEN BY PERSONAL CONFLICTS. THE MOVEMENT IS THEREFORE DIVIDED AND WEAKENED. BUT SOME OBSERVERS EXPECT THIS WILL CHANGE, AND THE PSL WILL BECOME A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL PLAYER.

OTHER PARTIES

ALL THE ABOVE-MENTIONED GROUPS COME FROM WITHIN WHAT MAY BE BROADLY DEFINED AS "SOLIDARITY." BUT THERE ARE ALSO POLITICAL GROUPS FROM OUTSIDE THAT TRADITION. A NUMBER OF MINISCULE, RIGHT-WING NATIONALIST PARTIES HAVE APPEARED OVER THE PAST YEAR. WE DO NOT/NOT EXPECT THESE GROUPS TO GROW, HOWEVER, BECAUSE PARTIES FROM WITHIN THE SOLIDARITY CAMP EXTEND SUFFICIENTLY FAR TO THE RIGHT TO ATTRACT ALL BUT A SMALL NUMBER OF EXTREMIST VOTERS.

THE SOLIDARITY CAMP ALSO INCLUDES A LEFT, WITHIN WHICH ONE MIGHT LOCATE BUJAK, THE "WORKING PEOPLE'S SOLIDARITY" GROUP HEADED BY SEJM DEPUTY RYSZARD BUGAJ AND SENATOR KAROL MODZELEWSKI, AND THE POLISH SOCIALIST PARTY HEADED BY SENATOR JAN JOZEF LIPSKI. THERE IS ALSO, HOWEVER, A LEFT WITH A COMMUNIST GENEALOGY. THE MAIN FORCES IN THIS CAMP ARE THE COMMUNIST-ERA OFFICIAL TRADE UNION OPZZ AND THE RUMP COMMUNIST SUCCESSOR PARTY, SOCIAL DEMOCRACY OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND (SDRP). THESE TWO GROUPS HAVE ALREADY

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DEMONSTRATED THEIR INTENTION TO EXPLOIT WORKER DISCONTENT OVER ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS FOR THEIR OWN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE; AS RECENTLY AS FEBRUARY 14, FAILED SDRP PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WLODZIMIERZ CIMOSZEWICZ ADDRESSED MINERS, TELLING THEM THAT "WE (THE SDRP) ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO ARE WITH YOU." WE DO NOT/NOT EXPECT THAT THE SDRP AND OPZZ COULD RIDE DISCONTENT TO POLITICAL SUCCESS, BUT THEY COULD NEVERTHELESS EMERGE AS POLITICAL FACTORS. ON FEBRUARY 15 THE OPZZ MANAGED TO ORGANIZE SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE TO MARCH ON THE PARLIAMENT IN PROTEST OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICIES, NOTABLY THE "POPIWEK".

SOLIDARITY

WHILE MANY REPEAT THAT SOLIDARITY IS A SHADOW OF ITS FORMAL SELF, THE UNION REMAINS A TWO AND ONE-HALF MILLION STRONG ORGANIZATION, AND IN THE LATEST SURVEY OF ELECTORAL POPULARITY OUTPOLLED BOTH ROAD AND CENTRUM BY ALMOST SEVEN TO ONE.

SOLIDARITY IS TORN BETWEEN ITS COMMITMENT TO ITS MEMBERS AND ITS SUPPORT FOR "ITS" PRESIDENT AND GOVERNMENT. THIS IS NOT ABSTRACT: MANY OF THE TRADE UNION'S STRONGHOLDS ARE IN THOSE VERY INDUSTRIES -- MINING, STEELMAKING, SHIPBUILDING -- LIKELY TO BE CUT DOWN UNDER ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING. AS THE CONFLICT OVER THE "POPIWEK" EXCESS WAGES TAX SHOWS, SOLIDARITY IS TRYING TO BE LOYAL TO BOTH THE LONG-TERM NATIONAL INTEREST AND SHORT-TERM WORKER VIEWS, BUT IT FACES NO-WIN CHOICES.

THE SOLIDARITY TRADE UNION IN THE SEJM COULD POSE A MAJOR CHALLENGE TO POST-SOLIDARITY POLITICAL PARTIES. CENTRUM AND ROAD ARE OF ONE MIND ON THIS POINT: THE TRADE UNION IN PARLIAMENT WOULD NOT/NOT BE GOOD FOR POLAND. IT WOULD RETARD THE GROWTH OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND SOLIDARITY DELEGATES WOULD INCREASINGLY STRIVE TO DEFEND THE SPECIAL INTERESTS OF THEIR WORKER CONSTITUENTS, AT THE EXPENSE OF ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING.

LOOKING AHEAD

THE CURRENT PERIOD OF RELATIVE POLITICAL CALM WILL COME TO AN END SOON. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE SPRING (OR POSSIBLY FALL), WILL BE SEEN AS A NEXT, DEFINING EVENT. THE POPE WILL VISIT JUNE 1-9; AS HIS PREVIOUS TRIPS TO POLAND HELPED MOVE THE COUNTRY IN A CONSTRUCTIVE DIRECTION, THIS NEXT VISIT COULD PROVE EQUALLY TIMELY.

ELECTIONS TO THE SEJM SHOULD ACCELERATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENUINE POLITICAL PARTIES AND CLARIFY THE CURRENTLY-BLURRED POLITICAL SPECTRUM. THAT IS WHAT IS NEEDED IF THE COUNTRY IS TO GRAPPLE WITH AND CHANNEL THE INEVITABLE SOCIAL IMPATIENCE THAT COMES WITH ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION. THE DANGER IS A PARLIAMENTARY RESULT THAT LEAVES THE SCENE MORE DIVIDED AND CONFUSED THAN EVER, PERHAPS LEADING TO A A DYSFUNCTIONAL POLITICAL MECHANISM. THE LEADERSHIPS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM ARE AWARE OF THE STAKES. THE PROBLEM IS SERIOUS; FORTUNATELY, POLAND'S TRACK RECORD AT OVERCOMING THE IMMUTABLE OBSTACLE THROUGH POLITICS HAS BEEN GOOD SO FAR THROUGH ITS DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION.