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Developments in Poland

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(Blond)

A report of November 28 from the Danish embassy in Warsaw sums up a number of conversations which the ambassador has had recently with a number of Polish officials and others:

1. A Party Secretary outlined the serious problems of the Party: Very serious divergencies of view were persistent within the Central Committee. Although some progress had been made during the 6th Plenary, a number of unpleasant removals of persons, left over from the era of the former leadership, remained to be carried through, and there was no unanimity of views as concerns future policies. It would be of decisive importance for the future whether the Party succeeded in defining a line which could reconquer the confidence of the population. The Party Secretary expected a heated debate - and additional changes in the leadership - at the 7th Plenary of the Central Committee. He did not put names on the changes, but it appeared from what he said that he expected a purge of persons connected with the ideologically orthodox circles of the Gierk period.

Another major problem was the forthcoming Party Congress. Many believed that progress could not be obtained without the convening of such a congress, whereas others, including the interlocutor of the Danish ambassador himself, attached more importance to the need of preparing properly for the congress through a carefully worked out proposal from a united Politbureau and through prior discussions in depth in the local Party organizations. All this would take time, and the Party Secretary did not believe it feasible to convene the congress until the end of March, 1981.

Thinking aloud about the problems ahead, he said that co-operation within the Party between the leadership and the rank-and-file had to be invigorated and greater emphasis put on mutual communication. The existing crisis of confidence had taught this lesson. In the same vein, decisions now taken by the government apparatus would have to be delegated to the local institutions. Decentralization should apply not only to the economic functions of planning and management.

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The relationship with the new trade unions which the government had decided to accept in the spirit of Gdansk, had to be placed in a well-defined framework. This was not easy, since it constituted an entirely new area of problems for both parties. Furthermore, other segments of the population, academics, journalists, artists and - most important - the rural population came forward with demands for liberalization, too.

The present crisis had demonstrated that the weakest link in the economy of the country was the agricultural production. From old times a traditional community had existed within each individual village in Poland with a certain degree of self-administration. The peasants might become more active, if this system were reinvigorated. The Party Secretary did not conceal that the crisis has brought to light problems of substance and dimensions far beyond the imagination of the Party. There would be tremendous demands for thinking along new lines. Reforms were bound to come; but it was imperative, he said, that they take place within the framework of the system. In immediate continuation of this statement he referred to Mr. Kania's visit to Moscow which he characterized as a success. The visit had brought about understanding as well as assistance. This remark was made in such a way that our ambassador could not be left in doubt as to where the framework of the system is defined.

2. Our ambassador have had talks also with Henryk Kisiel, the chairman of the Planning Commission, and the Minister for foreign trade, Dr. Karski. Details of these conversations will be given in the Economic Committee. Suffice to say, here, that the picture they painted was one not of gloom, but of economic catastrophe.

3. In general, the conversations with Party officials, people in government and in the church leave the impression that optimism is moderate in Poland, if at all present. Although the sympathy of broad circles clearly is with the independent trade union movement and others, struggling for liberalization, the fear that the threshold of tolerance may be transgressed is widespread. Where this threshold lies is the question asked by everybody.

4. It should be added that some Poles are in fact thinking along lines entirely different from the ones outlined above. A number of persons, perhaps in particular among students and in younger intellectual circles, would not mind a transgression of the threshold of Soviet tolerance. These circles would consider an armed Soviet intervention to be the only means available to deal the system which ties Eastern Europe to an intolerable Soviet communism, an effective blow - in the longer time perspective perhaps a decisive blow. According to this line of arguing, a new military occupation of Poland

would weaken the Soviet Union politically and - in particular - economically to such an extent that the system would break down when confronted with the demands of the populations for tolerable living conditions. The crisis already at play in the Soviet Union would be multiplied and the rupture in economic and political relations with the West would do the rest. Although alarming, such prospects are not entirely foreign to the Polish way of reasoning. It certainly should be stressed, however, that this kind of argumentation is not widespread in Poland today.