

PERMANENT DELEGATION OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS  
TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL

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REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN POLAND AND  
THE REACTIONS OF OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN  
COUNTRIES.

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## I Introduction

In accordance with the relevant mandate given by the Political Committee, the EPC Working group on Eastern Europe discussed the above topic at a meeting on 30 and 31 March 1981.

The short period of relative calm which followed General Jaruzelski's appointment as Prime Minister (while remaining Minister of Defence) has been followed by a new round of tension. A number of local conflicts, e.g. in Łódź and Radom, have led to strikes or strike alerts.

Events in Bydgoszcz appear to be of a different, more serious nature as, rightly or wrongly, strong emotions have been aroused nationwide, thereby bringing about a confrontation between the authorities and Solidarity at the highest level.

The measures taken against certain leading dissidents among Solidarity's advisers have also contributed to a worsening of the political climate. These measures were taken immediately after the return of the Polish leaders from Moscow, where, on 4 March, they had had a meeting with the Kremlin's leaders who apparently put them under severe pressure to put their house in order and to act decisively against the opposition.

Military exercises by W.P. countries have been taking place almost continuously since September last year. While generally of a routine nature, the possibility cannot be excluded that they have also served as a means of exerting pressure. This seems to be particularly the case with the large-scale manoeuvres in and around Poland since mid-March.

In spite of these numerous problems. Solidarity's leaders and the central authorities are continuing to try to maintain some form of dialogue in order to avoid an open confrontation with disastrous consequences for the Polish nation as a whole.

The very critical situation in which the Polish economy finds itself, especially with regard to the possible breakdown in the food supply, constitutes an element of instability in itself.

## II Government and Party

The appointment of a soldier to the highest position in the government is widely seen as the Poles' last chance to solve their problems without military intervention.

Initially, the composition of the new government (in which Mieczyslaw Rakowski, a personality with a liberal reputation, was appointed Deputy Prime Minister in charge of relations with the trade unions) led people to believe that, although the change of government would imply a more consistent and clear-cut attitude towards the independent trade union movement, the new regime would continue to strive for the settlement of conflicts through negotiations.

However, it soon became apparent that differences on tactics to deal with the situation persisted among the leadership: on the one hand conservatives who do not seem to fear open confrontation and on the other hand pragmatists/reformists like Mr. Kania who appear willing to give way, at least temporarily, in the face of popular opposition. The Kania line has prevailed so far.

A consistent policy is further complicated by the fact that the implementation of the decisions of central authority is often obstructed by middle-level party officials who, on the whole, stubbornly resist reform for fear of their positions. Local and regional authorities often seem to act on their own, thereby creating confusion as to the government's real intentions.

The continuing in-fighting between reformists and conservatives has made it difficult for the Party to take decisions on major issues. At the heart of the matter is the interpretation of the Leninist tenet of democratic centralism. Whereas the reformists tend to stress the democratic aspect, the conservatives, including certain top leaders, still stress the need for control from above.

The grass roots are increasingly pressing for reform and more democracy both within and outside the Party. They have flooded the special committee set up to prepare the PUWP's extraordinary congress with about 12,000 resolutions and 300 comprehensive projects for party reforms. Hardliners are likely to view as dangerous the gradual shift towards more grass-roots participation (at the expense of the apparatchiks) that is taking place in the composition of major party organs, the spread of "horizontalism" (i.e. the linking of party organisations at the same level), as well as the growing demand for secret elections to all party offices at every level of its operations.

Under these circumstances the conservatives in the party leadership (and, no doubt, the Soviet leaders, who are obviously extremely worried about the PUWP's continued state of disarray), would like the special party congress to be postponed until the Party has sorted itself out and re-established some measure of control. It is herefore the more remarkable that the 9th plenary session of the Central Committee has decided to hold the extraordinary party congress before 20 July, 1981, which represents a further step forward for the reformists.

The changes taking place within the PUWP's two "junior partners" in the Front of National Unity, i.e. the United Peasants Party and the Democratic Party are also significant. Whereas the PUWP and the "United Peasants" Party have suffered a loss of membership, in recent months the Democratic Party has seen an increase of 20%, undoubtedly as a result of the commitment to reform which was clearly expressed during its 12th congress in March. Only three of the 120 members of its Central Committee were re-elected and demands were put forward for constitutional and other legal changes aimed at strengthening the rule of the law.

The spontaneous emergence of new social organisations parallel to the existing official ones implies a loosening of control by the PUWP over Polish society. The successes gained by the workers were followed by those of the students who obtained an agreement from the Minister

for Higher Education, Mr Janusz Górski, giving them the right to organize themselves independently; the farmers are continuing to press for the recognition of their independent union; even the Polish Boy Scouts recently decided to leave the PUWP-dominated Federation of Socialist Unions of Polish Youth.

### III The economy

The analysis of Poland's economic situation contained in the working group's previous report (CPE MUL ETR 293 and 381) remains essentially valid .

A coherent long-term plan for improving the structure of the Polish economy is still lacking, in spite of the many proposals for economic reform that have been put forward.

The lack is largely due to the unresolved question of whether economic recovery should be stressed, which at present seems urgent, or whether priority should be given to social considerations, which has so far been the policy of the Kania regime.

Moreover, the shortage of reliable statistical data, which became apparent in the recent negotiations with Western creditors, is aggravating planning problems. In the meantime the country's economic and financial problems have become worse.

Recent statements by General Jaruzelski and other members of the government have underlined the fact that Poland's balance of payments and food supplies will be faced with a critical situation over the

next few months. Poland has asked for a 1.1. to 1.2 billion dollar credit to bridge the period until July and for suspension of interest payments on outstanding debts until then. The country's debts to Western countries have further increased.

Total Polish exports in the first two months of 1981 have fallen by 21/22%; exports to COMECON countries by 18% and exports to the West by as much as 26/27%.

### IV The independent trade union movement

When General Jaruzelski, the newly appointed Prime Minister, called in February for a 90-day moratorium on strikes, the reaction of

Solidarity's leaders was positive, although certain conditions were mentioned. Since then, however, they have been unable to prevent local Solidarity branches from calling strike alerts and organising strikes on several occasions.

Part of the blame undoubtedly rests with the local authorities, who have sometimes reacted to reform in a clumsy or hostile manner. The lack of institutionalised channels of communication between the unions and the authorities is another cause.

As for Solidarity itself, two major factors have contributed to the continuation of industrial unrest. The first is organisational; Solidarity began as a spontaneous mass movement, which has to still be transformed into a well-structured organisation. The union still lacks a clear concept of the role it should play in Polish society and, consequently, of its longer-term goals and the methods by which these goals can best be pursued. Initially Solidarity itself preferred a loose and decentralised structure in order to complicate any possible take-over of the organisation. However, this has led to inadequate coordination between its national leadership and local branches which, as events have shown, has made meaningful negotiations between the authorities and Solidarity at national level even more difficult.

It should also be borne in mind that a spontaneous mass movement like Solidarity inevitably becomes a channel for expressing old grievances and a vehicle for attacks on abuses by local authorities. Thus public opinion puts strong pressure on Solidarity to become its spokesman on various issues not directly related to trade union matters.

Moreover, local conditions often cause branch leaders to tend to favour a much more radical attitude than the national leadership, which is more aware of the situation of the country as a whole. Mr. Walesa's authority has been disputed several times, even to the extent that he has had to threaten to resign in order to prevent an open confrontation with the regime.

Attempts have been made to remedy the union's organisational problems. A National Coordinating Committee has been set up and in February it

issued a "decree" forbidding local branches to organise strikes without its previous consent, an exception being made for strikes in response to direct attacks by the authorities on Solidarity or its members (including its dissident advisers, such as the KSS/KOR leader Jacek Kuroń). Strike alerts are not covered by the decree. At its session on 25 February, the National Coordinating Committee discussed draft guidelines for trade union activities, which will eventually be submitted to Solidarity's first congress. Contacts with trade unions in Western Europe (e.g. in Italy, France, The United Kingdom and Sweden) have been established.

V The role of the Church

The Roman Catholic Church is continuing its efforts to play a moderating and stabilising role and it seems to have built up good working contacts with the authorities. The joint Commission of Church and State, which was recently revived, is discussing problems of a wider nature, such as censorship, in addition to matters pertaining purely to Church-State relations. After its session on 2 March the Commission called for "broad moral and practical support for the initiatives of the Polish leaders in order to enable the country to overcome its problems on its own". On 13 March, the Polish Episcopate called for a spirit of tolerance and appealed to all citizens and especially Solidarity to remain disciplined and calm when faced with attempts at provocation. On the other hand, the communiqué of 13 March contained a clear message to the authorities from the Bishops that Poland should not become a country of political prisoners. They also unequivocally expressed their support for the farmers' demand for independent trade unions and on 22 March, in response to the Bydgoszcz incident, Cardinal Wyszyński warned that the government should not countenance "irresponsible acts by the forces of public order".

VI The attitude of the Soviet Union

Since the beginning of the unrest in Poland a series of W.P. exercises has created uncertainty as to the possibility of military intervention.

The most recent of these, Soyuz '81, seems to have strengthened the organisational structures required for a possible intervention. Mr. Rakowski allegedly informed Solidarity's leadership that, in view of the tense situation in Poland, the manoeuvres would last longer than originally planned. The likelihood of a military intervention depends on developments which cannot be foreseen.

At any rate many comments to the effect that "the socialist community is indivisible" and that "its defence is the concern not only of each state but also of the whole socialist coalition", as stated in the communiqué of the 4 March summit and later repeated in the Soviet, Czechoslovak and the East German press, constitute a clear warning that the so-called Brezhnev doctrine may be invoked.

Moscow is also showing signs that its patience with Poland is wearing thin. The above communiqué indicated that the Soviet leaders want the Warsaw regime to take firm decisive action "to turn the course of events (according to a Polish source this phrase refers only to the economic sector). Since then the Soviet media have continued their attacks on "counter-revolutionary elements" and, increasingly, on Solidarity itself. Tass has even accused Solidarity of maintaining contacts with the CIA. Such comments may be regarded both as a means of exerting pressure and as a justification for subsequent intervention.

The fact that the references in the Soviet media to the existence of counter-revolutionary elements in an Eastern European country have not been accompanied by direct intervention is a remarkable phenomenon in itself and is an example of the extent to which the limit of Soviet tolerance has gradually shifted. On the other hand, the repeated references to statements by Lenin on the role of trade unions in a socialist society demonstrate that the Soviet leaders have not resigned themselves to the existence of independent trade unions in Poland.

VII Eastern European countries

The attitudes of most other Eastern European countries have not undergone substantial changes over the last two months. Although criticism from Czechoslovakia and the GDR of developments in Poland has by no means subsided, Gustav Husák and Erich Honecker did not mention Poland in their speeches to the Soviet Party Congress. This was probably connected in some way with the visits that Mr. Kania

had paid them shortly before. The Hungarian party leader, János Kádár, was the only Eastern European leader at the Congress to express his confidence in the Polish leaders. Even so, the Hungarian leaders are not apparently completely convinced that their country is immune from the Polish virus; not long after his return from Moscow Mr. Kádár publicly warned critics of his regime not to go too far. Moreover, the Hungarian media have stepped up their criticism of Solidarity somewhat in recent weeks. Although President Ceausescu again expressed during the CPSU Congress his insistence on national independence and non-intervention in general, this is not to say that Romania takes a favourable view of the situation in Poland. As Romania's economy is in as bad a state, if not worse, than that of Poland, industrial unrest could also break out in that country.

With some exceptions Bulgaria's reactions have remained rather low-key.