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8 January 1980

East Europe Report

POLITICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

(FOUO 1/80)

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

BRIEFS

ROMANIAN TROOPS IN HUNGARY--A Romanian [military] unit took part in Hungary in some maneuvers involving 25,000 troops of the Warsaw Pact. It was the first time in 7 years that this has taken place. [Text] [Paris VALEURS ACTUELLES in French 3 Dec 79 p 31]

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HUNGARY

PARIS CORRESPONDENT INTERVIEWS HUNGARIANS ON POLITICS, ECONOMICS

Paris LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR in French 26 Nov 79 pp 62-63

/Report of interviews with Hungarians by correspondent Kathleen Evin: "Communism, Hungarian Style": Interviews in Budapest 10-14 Nov 1979/

/Excerpts/ These days all Budapest only discusses the celebrated open letter signed by about 200 intellectuals protesting the recent Prague trials. It is the first really significant development in 20 years. On being questioned the communist leaders choose irony, like Imre Miklos, the minister chairman of the State Office for Church Affairs: "Signing a petition is not illegal, nothing will happen to those who did it. That has happened to me...It was against the atomic bomb! But what purpose can it serve?" Talking about politics in Hungary shows bad taste.

Monday 12 November. There is no obvious surveillance of visiting foreigners. A first class image demands it: This, to revive an expression which has already been used a great deal, "the gayest attraction in the camp." At any rate, the handful of dissident intellectuals are kept under observation by the police. Dependent on the state for their job, their opportunities for travel abroad and their standard of living, their room for maneuver is limited. They are intellectuals officially scorned by the dictatorship of the victorious proletariat, but who are consulted sometimes indirectly without acknowledging it.

This is what is happening in the case of Sandor K, a former leader and well known economist, dismissed after 1956, but whom his "friends" and acquaintances in power today now visit prudently to ask about the consequences of their economic decisions. Thus Sandor has had to give a free consultation on the economic plan promulgated at the beginning of the year

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and revived in recent weeks. Called "our Barre plan" by French speaking Hungarians, it is based on a return to the "truth of prices," involving a sharp rise in consumer goods coupled with a drop in purchasing power, it foresees in the coming months a very active hunt for "lame ducks" in the industrial sector. Competitiveness and rationalization are the watchwords. Sandor gave his advice willingly: This rise in prices should have been effected even sooner. As for industrial rationalization, it is a necessity. Hungary could not ignore any longer the laws of the market." But what Sandor could not add, is that this indispensable reform should be accompanied, to succeed, by a sharp reduction of a bureaucracy which he harshly labels as "inflated, hidebound and neo-Stalinist." For him, as for the other opponents of the Kadar regime, there is a hope that this economic opening will be accompanied by social and political liberalization. But the "errors" of 1956 will not be repeated: They have learned how far not to go.

Tuesday 13 November. Conversations with the trade unions and the managers of the largest thermal electric power plant in Hungary, located on the banks of the Danube about 30 kilometers from Budapest. Before the conventional cup of coffee and the no less conventional glass of soda, the "worker leaders" condemn in the same breath, strikes in the western manner and absenteeism among Hungarian workers. Communist style "trade unionism" is difficult to judge by western standards. Provided for by the constitution, trade union organization is only one of the aspects of the all-powerful party.

Since summer, prices have increased 9 percent (electric power + 51 percent, automobiles + 20 percent, bread + 50 percent, meat + 30 percent) and the premiums granted in compensation have not prevented a drop in purchasing power of 2 to 3 percent. Some enterprises which are not considered very profitable will be closed and layoffs, disguised, thanks to reconversion ("a socialist unemployment," a technocrat will explain to us quietly), have been announced. "Not pleasant, but necessary," the trade unions will invariably reply. The Hungarian workers are actually not pleased with it at all. "We have western prices and oriental wages," they complain. But once again, they will get by: Sharp rises have already been recorded in the "parallel economy" sector, private production and unreported work, which is not included in the official statistics, but which is indispensable for the survival of the "legal economy," the collectivized sector. Workers, farmers and liberal professions all participate in this system which allows them at

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the worst to double their incomes and at the best...no limits for those who make up the new opulent and privileged bourgeoise, a big consumer of cars, household electric appliances, homes and luxurious clothes.

On the other hand, the intellectuals who have nothing interesting to sell are the first and most conspicuous victims of this Hungarian opening to the iron laws of the world market place. "We are the specialized workers of the mind": With his knees tucked up under his chin, breathing laboriously in an atmosphere full of cigarette smoke, Lazlo G. translates for me in a low voice, the courses of the "free university," which 150 of us, squeezed into 50 square meters are to attend this evening. Just as for the economy, the university has its parallel "illegal sector." This strange ceremony, which is very fashionable among dissident intellectuals in eastern Europe, takes place about once a week. Called the "flying university" in Poland and "free" here, it brings together a crowded, emotional young (between 20 and 30 years) audience who have generally finished their studies and not used them, through the force of events (they work in all professions except the one for which they were trained), and who come to sharpen their wits in contact with an education, which, although "illegal" is not necessarily subversive.

Thus Lazlo tells me the story of a professor who gave a series of five "free" lectures last year to a packed house. Now he was pleased to resume his course given officially and almost in the same words at the University of Budapest, with the difference being that at the University, he attracts classes ranging from five to six persons on good days. The "free university" is a way of protesting against the often censored and almost always useless education, since it only offers careers to "those who follow the party line." Thus it is a means of meeting, exchanging news, keeping warm and reading in the coffee grounds of Hungarian politics reasons for hope. Thus it is the place where the rare and discreet expressions of dissent start. That evening all those attending had signed the petition sent at the beginning of the month to Janos Kadar to protest against the Prague trials. What do the signers risk? "Almost nothing," Iouri R., one of the editors of the Budapest underground newspaper answers me. Prevented from exercising their profession, without any public means of expression, isolated from the masses, champing at the bit, the intellectuals do not really threaten the Hungarian government, which observes them cunningly: A red police car with its

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lights on was quite conspicuously parked astride the sidewalk, 50 centimeters from the entrance to the building where the "free university" was being held that evening.

Wednesday 14 November. On being interrogated on Hungarian television about the really competitive products which the country can offer its trade partners on the world market, the minister of foreign trade answers woefully: "salami, cabbage, apples and gooseliver. One understands better the urgency of this industrial rationalization which is unanimously accepted. But all similar efforts attempted in the past have met a complete lack of worker collaboration, when they were not brutally stopped by the Soviet "big brother," not very inclined to allow its satellites to make overtures to the West and make a profit there.

"The Hungarian government is in a delicate stage for there cannot be economic reform without social and political reform. It is because they sense this weakness that the Hungarian intellectuals are giving up the caution which they have observed since 1956." Gyorgy Conrad, 46 years of age, writer, professor of literature and sociologist returned to his country several months ago, after an itinerant exile of a number of years. Is it this detachment which gives him both a clearer and more optimistic view of the situation? According to him, Hungary could well be about to enter, as he says, an era of "more civilized" conflicts.

Unfortunately, the facts of the problem are not only of a domestic nature: "The military and international imperatives have priority. And the military situation always forces the countries of the East to restrain the process of liberalization. For us, disarmament is a question of life or death. If we want to be more independent of the Soviet Union, the Europe of the West will have to be more so of the United States."

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POLAND

'PANORAMA' SUMMARY OF 'DIP' REPORT NOTED

Milan PANORAMA in Italian 5 Nov 79 pp 89-97

[Article by Marlo Margiocco: "The Secrets of Warsaw"]

[Text] The leaders are isolated, the people are fed up, official data are all wrong. That is what 50 Polish leaders and intellectuals say in a classified report that has come into PANORAMA's possession.

There are some 200 typewritten pages bearing the work of some of the foremost names of the Polish intelligentsia. They are members of the communist party, the Polish United Workers' Party, and independents. They are Catholics and laypeople, economists and artists. Among the latter, it is said that there is a film director of international renown like Andrzej Wajda, recently elected president of the National Association of Filmmakers and the author of "L'uomo di marmo" [The Man of Marble], one of the most severe criticisms of the regime ever produced by Eastern cinematography.

These 50 critics, scarcely cloaked by an anonymity that is easy to penetrate, have prepared what one of them calls "an autopsy with the Polish state as the cadaver." It is an irreverent analysis, and PANORAMA has succeeded in obtaining a complete copy. It is titled "Report on the State of the Republic and the Ways of Saving It" and was presented in great secrecy in the form of a scarcely finished first draft last June to party chief Edward Gierek, Primate of Poland Cardinal Wyszynski, and Pope John Paul II when he came to visit Warsaw and Cracow.

Unprecedented

It is a document without precedent in the peoples' democracies (see the interview of Jacek Kuron on p 92), which everybody is talking about these days in the Western embassies in Warsaw, and which no one has yet read in its entirety (in mid-October the first copies appeared in "samizdat" [clandestine] form, i.e. published by the authors in Polish without authorization); however, a brief resume a dozen pages long was being passed around in diplomatic circles a few days ago by the West German intelligence service and aroused enormous interest.

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The authors of the document are in fact not dissidents but critics of the domestic system. They are not living on the edge of today's official Poland, like the leading dissenters Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik, and Jan Jozef Lipski, with whom they do, however, have frequent contacts; rather, they occupy positions of responsibility in various scientific and cultural institutions and in the government. In many cases they are memebers of the party and have direct contacts with the centers of power. Their political circle, DiP (Experience and the Future), met for the first time in Warsaw in November 1978 (also the only time it met because they had not been able to hold a plenary session up to that time). At the beginning it included such figures as Jerzy Beksiak, Gierek's economic advisor, and, especially, Mieczyslaw Rakowski, editor in chief of POLITYKA, the party weekly, a member of the Central Committee, a close friend of Gierek's, his close collaborator and a leader of a well-defined movement within the party that wants to achieve prudently a "Polish socialism" freer and more efficient than the imported Soviet model. Rakowski has left DiP since then, but many in Warsaw assured us that he still maintains close, though discreet ties with it.

Under the tepid sun of an exceptionally clear and mild October almost 12 years since the "Prague spring," is a "Warsaw spring" then in the making?

The question arises spontaneously upon reading the long DiP document. This is a group that out of a hundred members counts more than 30 party members. The differences between Czechoslovakia in 1967-68 and present-day Poland are many and profound, and the present international situation in Europe leaves less room for maneuver than then. Yet there are analogies: an untenable economic sitation, which required thorough changes in Prague then as it does now in Warsaw, where 20 percent of the government's income is paid out again in a complex mechanism of consumer price subsidies, which hold prices artificially low in order to keep from angering the populace, and where 40 percent of the profits from foreign trade go to pay installments on the enormous $17 billion contracted with the West in recent years. University students are champing at the bit. Rather obvious hints are coming from party leaders, who are letting it be known that the DiP document is only the tip of the iceberg floating in the still inscrutable waters of the Polish leadership.

The accusations contained in the Report are all the more severe because they come from men who have daily experience with the mechanisms of power.

The men of DiP affirm that the very premises of the new society installed in 1945 are the ones that have been betrayed. "The Polish nation was promised 34 years ago that all property would be collectivized: banks, factories, railways, agriculture, in a word the whole country. But it is a strange proprietor that cannot obtain from anyone a reliable account of his property... The Polish nation is in fact a proprietor who can never find out what his debts and assets are." So states one of the numerous analyses of the document, which was written by a small committee of half a dozen people under the guidance of a noted sociologist and party member, Stefan Bratkowski, on the basis of answers given by DiP members to a questionnaire on several fundamental issues,

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such as the country's present social, economic and cultural difficulties, the risk outlook in each sector, what kind of reforms should be set in motion, and what the various social groups should do to achieve them.

Isolated and discredited, the government no longer enjoys any confidence from the citizenry, according to the Report. The reserve of credit given the leaders first in 1956, when Gomulka took over a bankrupt social and economic situation, and again in 1970, when Gierek had to do the same in analogous circumstances, is exhausted. Also lacking are the social structures through which even a minimal consensus could take shape. "For the contemporary Pole," the Report states, "besides family and friends the Polish nation exists only in a derivative sense, with its history and its present situation. The nation is perceived as being a federation of families. And all that exists or ought to exist between families and the nation, all intermediary institutions, such as political, union, and governmental administrative organizations in the various sectors, evoke no sense of participation. This is indicated by a single word: 'them.'"

Collective Psychosis

The systematic manipulation of news by the government, which controls all the means of information has not only contributed especially to erasing any trust the governed may have had in the government, say the men of DiP, but it has also created a collective psychosis of information. "Have there been many fires in the capital recently? 'Then,' say the people who are putting increasing trust in the primordial grapevine, 'the struggle for power between 'them' has come down to that.' Is there an announcement, as there is every year, of compulsory military service? 'Then,' the people say, for they are deprived of any credible reference point, 'the mobilization is to send our boys to fight against the Chinese in Vietnam.'" Everything is based on an absolute lack of trust, everything is fictitious, appearance. The answers to the questionnaire vary in length between 7 and 70 pages and are numbered in the order they were given to the editors; answer number 32 gives a glimpse of a Kafkaesque situation: "We have then seeming planning and seeming achievement of the plan and even a seeming overachievement of the objectives seemingly set,... seeming modernization and progress, the semblance of discussions, elections and voting, seeming government, seeming socialism,... seeming freedom of choice, dedications of factories to cries of joy and seemingly ultimate and seemingly functioning social infrastructures, seeming action against the symptoms of physical illness to the seeming satisfaction of the citizens, and seeming freedom of opinion and justice. The interplay of appearances has become so widespread that no one, not even the highest authorities, knows what the real truth is."

Harsh Picture

The Report continues to paint its harsh picture in the same manner. Information is lacking, it states, or if there is any, it is completely unreliable, not only in strictly political matters, where the citizenry never knows what is happening in the palaces of power, but also in sectors where information is vital, in economics, for example: "In this country no one knows how many machine tools there are, how many hectares we have under cultivation, how much construction machinery is available,... how much coal has been mined, or how many typewriters there are."

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How about the party? According to the Report, it is a microcosm where all the dysfunctions are found that exist in the society as a whole, even though in the eyes of non-members it might look like a mysterious ivory tower. Being a member of it is a necessary though not sufficient condition for having a career. It is not in fact a well-organized structure in which everybody plays his part but a power structure controlled by a few groups, little Mafias, plain and simple. Only the obedient, the Report states, have a career and obtain the privileges that are, among other things, the basis for the gulf that now separates the legal country from the real country. "They" have in fact different houses, different automobiles, different clothing, different businesses, and different vacations from the rest of the population. There are even different hospitals (and perfectly functioning ones), which are overcrowded, a picture unfortunately true even in some Western countries, of which Italy is one: "people are dying in the corridors because there are not enough beds."

Complete uninterest in society, total irresponsibility, apathy, and alcoholism are the answer of a large mass of Poles to this state of affairs. "Alcoholism is very often the reaction to frustration," the Report states, quoting word for word and with great bitterness a wise saying of Engels' of more than a century ago concerning capitalist society and its evils.

The government is trying to temporize and plug the gaps one by one as best it can under the philosophy of "getting its rear end out of the fire," which, the Report affirms, seems to represent the only management principle that the ruling class has had for the last five years. They are ready to pay exorbitant wages, for example, to the workers of the 150 most important firms because they are good workers and do not strike or protest; they supply them with meat in company stores, but on the outside, meat at the political price (70 zlotys as opposed to 300-500 zlotys on the free market) cannot be found. They are always chasing new credits so they can pull through another few months.

Can this go on? "Sooner or later the explosion will come... And it is really not important to ask what event will set it off," the Report coldly affirms, adding that this time "the pacification of the country will have to be done with the help of foreign forces." The "mute, dark, omnipresent image of the USSR, which creates a feeling of impotence" is very present in the mind of every Pole, say the men of DiP.

A Drastic Reduction

The Report asserts that the only thing that could stem the rage of the people would be a new climate of trust brought about by courageous decisions breaking cleanly with the past among government and governed. A series of economic reforms in the name of efficiency. A drastic reduction in unjustified privileges. An economic housecleaning that would call for great sacrifices and that is proposed to the Polish people by a leadership that enjoys the trust of the people.

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So far the leadership has not answered the appeal made in the DiP Report. In the Central Committee, where some copies of the document were circulated recently, there was talk about "counterrevolutionary action" and "diagnoses that are not mistaken but naive." Gierek, the key man in the situation, who many think may be the only one who can still speak to the country and ask for trust, provided he has new men around him, is not saying anything.

Everything May Be Changed

Jacek Kuron, leader of the Polish dissent, did not take part in writing the DiP Report. PANORAMA asked him to give an initial evaluation of it.

[Question] What do you think is the political value and impact of this document?

[Answer] I must say first of all that I think some analyses, especially in the area of economics, are a little naive. When it comes to conclusions, the document ways essentially what everybody with any sense is saying in Poland today: either thorough changes are made, or the country explodes.

Having said this, though, I must say that the appearance of the DiP Report is of enormous political significance and value. All things being equal, it will have for Poland today the same effect as Nikita Khrushchev's speech to the 20th Congress had for Russia and the neighboring countries in 1956. A liberation, in a word, a breaking point, and a point of no return. Until this thesis appeared, anyone who talked about a crisis was automatically classified as a dissident. The leaders and the people somehow linked to the power structure were saying that everything was fine. Now, no: 50 Poles and more, many of whom are in some way connected with the leadership structure, have spoken, and spoken clearly. The Report is a text that will have to be dealt with. It can give a voice to the insecure and the indecisive, a security to think as they dared not think. From now on, either the authorities are right or the people, like DiP, are right when they make a dispassionate and disenchanted diagnosis of our troubles.

[Question] But the Report remains an isolated case.

[Answer] Not at all. Recently two party leaders, though they are not at the top of the pyramid, expressed criticisms similar to those of DiP. They lost their jobs, of course. But that shows that DiP's criticisms are not isolated inside the structure.

[Question] But what practical effect can the Report have on the next party congress, for example?

[Answer] I don't expect much from the congress itself except for further mummification of power. Even if Gierek becomes president of the Republic, there will be a new party leader, and even the prime minister can be changed. But this won't change the situation of the country. On the other hand, the Report may have a profound influence on middle management, and the least obtuse

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and dishonest party and production technocrats. There are some. If they become aware of it, they may exert such pressure on the leadership that they will force it to make reforms. The Report may be just the little push to set it in motion.

[Question] But don't you think that in Poland there is a little too much hope placed in little things, in sparks that are supposed to touch off radical changes but that never catch and explode?

[Answer] Oh no. There is a terrible fear of these little things and these sparks because people know very well from experience that they can appear at any moment.

The Opposition Groups

In the complicated panorama of the "opposition" in Poland, which in recent years has been equalled in the East only by the goulash communism of Janos Kadar's Hungary, a distinction must be made between dissidents, Catholics, and true opposition groups.

The dissent that rejects the system is represented primarily by men like Lipski, Kuron, and Michnik and is of Marxist, lay, and sometimes Catholic extraction. Its origins are in the student revolts of the second half of the 1960's. Since June 1976 (labor revolt in Ursus and Radom) it has grown in size and prestige and has emerged in two distinct movements: KOR (Workers' Defense Committee) and now the Committee for Social Self-Defense [KSS], and ROPCiO (Movement for the Defense of Civil Rights), with more nationalist and Catholic influence. In the same area are purely student organizations like the SKS (Student Solidarity Committee). In the TKN (Society for Academic Studies, also known as the "flying university") members of various extractions come together.

The Catholics are linked with a respected church that identifies itself with the defense of national independence, and they have a long history of resistance to the regime in Poland, which goes back to the immediate postwar period. Since 1956, through various vicissitudes and despite government attempts at infiltration and boycotts, the Catholics have built up their structure in four intellectual clubs (Warsaw, Cracow, Torun, and Wroclaw), three journals, and a federation in which all these and other groups take part: the ZNAK movement

There is, finally, the true opposition, of which DiP, a pluralistic society for analysis and discussion, is the most visible example. The members of the oppositon are ready to accept the system, though in a reformed version; they also have an advantage with respect to the others: direct channels to the centers of power.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS

1. p 89. The Pope with Polish leader Gierek; both are in possession of the secret "Report."

2. p 92. Polish dissident Jacek Kuron.

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