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SITUATION REPORTS

POLAND

Negotiations between the government and strikers in Gdansk are deadlocked on the key issue of free trade unions, and posturing by the two sides appears to be taking them back toward confrontation.

Each side has tried to pressure the other into giving ground by setting deadlines. Strike leader Lech Walesa yesterday urged his fellow countrymen not to go on strike for "three or four days" for the good of the country and to allow the regime time to meet the strikers' demands. His statement--which apparently was not carried on state radio or television as had been rumored--seems a veiled threat that the strike leaders are prepared to call for a nationwide general strike if their demands are not met soon.

Some strike leaders may be ready to follow through on this threat. Although Walesa has previously said that a general strike would not aid the cause of the Gdansk strikers, he may not have the deciding voice.

In Warsaw, regime spokesman Miroslaw Wojciechowski made one of the government's sharpest attacks yet on the strike leaders, specifically labeling them "anti-socialist and extremist." He also said that the present situation is "very serious" and "cannot go on much longer."

Even so, the regime probably is not confident of its ability to use force, and it apparently is assessing the reliability of its armed forces.

Church Backing Off

The Church, meanwhile, appears to be backing away slightly from earlier statements by Cardinal Wyszynski in which he seemed to side with the regime's call for a quick return to work. A statement issued by an extraordinary meeting of the Episcopate's Main Council, broadcast

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yesterday on Vatican Radio, said that the dialogue between the strikers and government should find solutions acceptable to both sides.

Church accusations that the regime had broadcast only an "incomplete and unauthorized" version of Wyszynski's sermon on Tuesday soured the atmosphere of yesterday's negotiations in Gdansk. These actions by the Church appear to reflect its concern over popular criticism that the Church was too closely identifying itself with the regime and against the strikers.

Pressure on Gierek

The flurry of rumors in Warsaw that party first secretary Gierek would soon be ousted--rumors denied by the Polish News Service--suggests that there has been considerable pressure on Gierek to step down.

Gierek may, in fact, have come close to being forced out. A Polish Foreign Ministry official Wednesday evening flatly asserted that Gierek had been replaced by Stefan Olszowski at a central committee plenum earlier in the day. Although the evening news failed to announce the change, the Polish official stuck to his story.

The failure of the change to materialize could mean that the Polish party leadership concluded that Gierek's resignation without accompanying policy changes would not break the impasse in Gdansk. The removal of Gierek, moreover, would reduce the number of options available to the Polish regime. The Soviets also may have resisted Gierek's dismissal at this time.

If those pressuring for a clean sweep prevail, however, the most likely candidate to succeed Gierek appears to be Olszowski. He is reputed to be a good administrator who favors far-reaching reforms of Poland's inefficient economy and who apparently has some good connections in Moscow. Gierek himself indirectly boosted Olszowski's claim to be party leader during his speech on Sunday.

Olszowski is not, however, a new face in the Polish leadership and, as party secretary for the economy from 1976 to 1980, must carry some of the blame for Poland's

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current economic problems. The Polish leadership might decide that a totally new face--possibly one of the provincial party leaders--is needed if the party is to project successfully a new image. Pursuing this option would cause Moscow the most concern because the Soviet leaders presumably would not be as familiar with such an individual as they would like.

Comments of Soviet Officials

The highest ranking Soviet official to discuss Poland's problems with Westerners described the situation as "bad" but claimed that Moscow is not anxious.

[redacted] Soviet Ambassador Pyotr Abrasimov, Ambassador to Poland in the late 1950s, conveyed an impression of business as usual in Moscow. He asserted that the Soviet leaders viewed the events in Poland "calmly," pointing to President Brezhnev's current visit to the southwestern part of the Soviet Union as supporting evidence.

In contrast to Abrasimov's low-key demeanor, a ranking Soviet trade union official recently told [redacted] that the Polish strikers' demand for a "second trade union system" would be "totally unacceptable" in a socialist society. His remarks undoubtedly represent the prevailing, though still unpublicized, view in Moscow.

Romanian Reaction

The Romanian leadership yesterday betrayed its anxiety over the Polish crisis in an editorial in the party daily *Scinteia* that forcefully defended Poland's "inalienable right" to deal with its "internal problems" without "outside interference," but also asserted that "strikes" are not the way to solve economic difficulties. The statement appears to reflect Bucharest's concern that Moscow may eventually decide to intervene in Poland and lays the groundwork for Romania's refusal to participate in such an action. The editorial also seems an argument to Romanian workers, who are clearly unhappy about rising prices and shortages of food and other consumer goods, not to use strikes to press their grievances.

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