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POLAND: Proposed Price Increases Postponed

The government has postponed implementation of sharp price increases because it fears public reaction. Archbishop Glemp again has criticized martial law practices, and the regime has denied the statement by its Ambassador to the UK that martial law may end in two or three weeks.

The authorities announced over the weekend that they will "amend" their proposed 200- to 400-percent price rises on consumer items. The statement said the changes would be presented to the public "as soon as possible." [redacted] learned last Thursday that the period for public discussion already had been extended to the end of the month.

An official claims that Premier Jaruzelski will keep most of the detainees in custody until after the new prices go into effect in order to prevent organized resistance to the increases.

Comment: The regime appears to be as indecisive about its future economic policies as about its political course. It clearly does not feel secure enough to implement the steep increases officially proposed on 31 December.

The government certainly recognizes that continued detention of Solidarity activists could heighten the vehemence of the public's reaction to the increases. The regime is also aware that in pre-Solidarity days the population reacted spontaneously and violently to price increases that were far more moderate than those now under discussion.

Glemp Speaks Out Again

Archbishop Glemp yesterday restated his public criticism of martial law. He accused the authorities of continuing arrests, not releasing the detainees, and maintaining its campaign of extracting loyalty oaths. Glemp said that these actions increase the hostility of the people.

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Comment: Glemp's criticism is probably intended to influence the political and economic program that Jaruzelski is slated to unveil to parliament next Monday. Polish bishops will meet this week, and they, too, may make a strong statement warning the government leaders that they cannot expect cooperation from the Church if they continue their harsh practices. Such pressure could stiffen the resolve of regime conservatives, who see the Church as their enemy.

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