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POLAND: Church Criticism of Western Sanctions

Archbishop Glemp is concerned that Western economic sanctions will aggravate the volatile situation.

Meanwhile, the Polish ruling party is cautiously preparing to implement price increases.

The Church yesterday implicitly criticized foreign economic sanctions by agreeing in a communique issued after the meeting of the Church-State joint commission that such sanctions "hamper" the "process of renewal." The statement reflects the Archbishop's private pleas earlier this week for resumption of large-scale Western aid.

Glemp also stated that the Church's primary mission now is to prevent bloodshed. He fears that radical Solidarity activists will go underground and initiate violent resistance. Glemp evidently is annoyed at Solidarity chief Walesa for not heading off resistance by beginning negotiations with the regime.

In addition, Glemp apparently views Premier Jaruzelski as a moderate under siege from hardliners. He believes that differences within the regime are delaying formulation of necessary reform policies and thus increasing the chances of instability.

the Pope seems to share Glemp's view that sanctions help to make matters worse. Some Catholic intellectuals in Poland, however, have expressed strong approval of sanctions.

Comment: Glemp's pessimism and concern about the volatility of the situation are in line with recent comments of other Church officials. None of them, however, are predicting any imminent outbursts. They seem to be concerned that if current trends continue unchecked, a hungry populace might cause disturbances or give impetus to extremism.

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Glomp's view of Jaruzelski as a moderate may not be accepted throughout the Polish episcopate. One lay leader in Krakow has told [REDACTED] that Jaruzelski was the executor of Soviet will in Poland. Differences within the Church hierarchy may have been aired at the meeting of all the bishops yesterday in Warsaw. They did agree on a statement to be sent to Jaruzelski--the contents of which are not yet available.

[REDACTED]

The Archbishop also may exaggerate the possibility that hardliners have Jaruzelski on the run. The Premier is likely to retain his strong grip on the reins of power as long as concern over maintaining control is paramount and the party is in disarray.

[REDACTED]

There probably are considerable differences, nonetheless, over policy as hardliners and moderates in the leadership maneuver for political advantage. These differences are likely to grow because Jaruzelski has few concrete ideas about "reform" and because he is not a skilled political tactician.

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Amended Price Hikes

The martial law regime has amended its proposed price reforms to give full compensation to almost all consumers for price increases on meat, flour, and other rationed goods. It has also scaled back energy price hikes, which originally were scheduled to more than double. The authorities, however, are still proposing to implement the increases on 1 February.

Comment: Many in the government will favor going ahead with the price changes as soon as possible because they realize that the increases are necessary if the regime is to have any chance of stabilizing the market. Although the amended price reforms will absorb less excess purchasing power, the government probably believes that it must soften the financial blow to the populace and try to reduce consumer hostility.

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