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NSC BACKGROUND PAPER

12 October 1961

POLAND

- I. It is becoming increasingly difficult for Poland to maintain its special status in Eastern Europe.
- A. In the present international situation Warsaw's political ties with the Soviet Union and other Communist Bloc states tend to override more heavily than previously its desire to maintain at least the most profitable political and economic ties with the West.
- B. Poland's "raison d'etat" and its common ideology with the bloc have forced the Polish regime, in respect to the crisis over Berlin and Germany, to support completely the policies of the USSR in any way it can.
1. Since 1956, Khrushchev's relationship with Gomulka has changed from one of open distrust to one of mutual cooperation based on personal confidence. Today Gomulka seems to enjoy a special influence on Khrushchev, and has on occasion--as at the 15th session of the U.N. General Assembly--acted for the Soviet leader as a spokesman for Eastern Europe.
- C. The Polish government's studied efforts to maintain a business-as-usual attitude toward the West despite the crisis are indicative, however, of a desire to moderate any possibly serious effects on future relations with the West.

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1. Poles still cling to the Rapacki Plan, which calls for the neutralization of central Europe, as the best guarantee of their security and their continued existence as a national entity.

D. Polish wavering between soft and hard approaches to the problems of Berlin and Germany--both internally and internationally--may reflect both acquiescence to Soviet directives as well as the activities of hard-line forces in the regime who consistently have sought to diminish relations with the West. At the moment, barring a sharp and lengthy deterioration in the international situation, these forces have only small chances of success.

II. Although their opinions apparently are taken into account, the hard-line forces do not control the formulation of internal policies. They do, however, have a greater role in the implementation of the regime's policies than at any time since Gomulka's return to power.

A. Despite increases in censorship, intensification of controls on foreign travel, more aggressive moves against the Roman Catholic Church, and, a notable increase in the ubiquitous activities of the Secret Police, there still exists in Poland more personal freedoms and more observed guarantees of inviolability of person and property than in any other Communist country.

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1. Although the tightening of some control measures are commonly ascribed to the influence of hard-line elements within the regime, there is no evidence to suggest that party chief Gomulka is not in complete control.
2. Since 1957 his regime has increased its stability and has even been partially successful in its efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of both the party and government.

III. The Polish people now are economically better off than at any time since World War II; they have been asked in the interests of industrial development to wait until 1964 for any substantial further improvement in their living conditions, but the present levels apparently will be maintained.

A. Economy, however, is susceptible to outside pressures, especially with regard to its plans for growth.

1. Although the regime could dip into its reserves or alter its present or projected plans to make up for the loss of those basic commodities which it had previously received from the US through PL-480 agreements, it could not do so without some dislocation of its plans for immediate or long term economic growth in those areas affected by the loss.

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