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5 February 1982

East Europe Report

POLITICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

(FOUO 2/82)



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EAST EUROPE REPORT
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POLAND

'THE TIMES' REPORTS ON WALESA'S 'STATE OF MIND'

PM171245 London THE TIMES in English 17 Dec 81 p 6

[Unattributed report: "The Strain on Lech Walesa"]

[Text] Mr Lech Walesa, the Solidarity leader, is said by Church sources who have seen him to be in good health and still held in isolation in a Government villa outside Warsaw, according to one of the messages reaching THE TIMES yesterday from its correspondent in Warsaw, Roger Boyes.

The Church sources said Mr Walesa had told the military he could not take any decisions without the rest of the Solidarity Praesidium.

There were conflicting accounts of Mr Walesa's state of mind. Solidarity officials were describing him as "psychologically strong." But Polish officials declared that he was "broken psychologically and weeping, but refusing to sign any documents." Mr Brian Mooney, Reuter correspondent, quoted sources saying that he was suffering greatly from the political and psychological pressure being brought to bear.

The sources said that Mr Walesa, taken to Warsaw from Gdansk to negotiate with Poland's new military rulers, was suffering greatly from the political and psychological pressures being brought to bear.

According to these sources, the Solidarity leader had conceded that his movement, which he had once boasted was "here to stay," was all but finished. There was no hard information about Mr Walesa's present whereabouts or whether he was formally under detention like the great majority of other union leaders.

Mr Eugeniusz Szleper, the Polish Ambassador in Lisbon, denied yesterday that Mr Walesa was under arrest. "But at the disposal of the authorities to participate in serious negotiations."

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Although Solidarity leaders would not be tried, the source went on, this did not apply to former political figures who would be tried for having led the country to ruin.

Polish diplomats in the West were saying that the detained Solidarity leaders could not be tried.

"They have been placed under house arrest," the source told the news agency, "in order to stop temporarily their activities which were directly leading to a clash."

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POLAND

UK CORRESPONDENT'S LETTER ON POLISH ARRESTS NOTED

PM181243 London THE TIMES in English 18 Dec 81 pp 1, 24

[Roger Boyes 'Letter to Editor': "Cold Cells for the Thousands Who Err"]

[Text] Warsaw--The following letter to the editor from Roger Boyes, THE TIMES correspondent in Warsaw, was received in London yesterday:

Poland's new military leadership is rounding up several thousand dissident intellectuals, writers, and union activists in an effort to stamp out any potential opposition. Western diplomats talk of 15,000 arrests but other sources have estimated the total to be at least three times that.

Church sources say that there is a move to concentrate as many of the internees as possible in the Bialeleka [Bialoleka] jail outside Warsaw. Conditions are said to be extremely bad with most cells having no water or heating. The prisoners are technically "interned under the statutes of the state of war" and most have not been charged.

It is sufficient grounds for arrest, to be suspected of future involvement in opposition activities. That has created a particularly wide net and secret police, often backed by troops, have been extremely active after the 10 o'clock curfew over the past four days.

Almost all the Solidarity leadership has been arrested--98 union activists are held in Gdansk--though there are mixed reports about the fate of Mr Lech Walesa, still technically the chairman of Solidarity. Some sources, within the Church, say he is being held virtually incommunicado in a Government villa outside Warsaw--in a smuggled message he is understood to have said: "I see only trees and tanks"--while other reports suggest he has since been moved to prison.

Long-Standing Ambition

The pattern underpinning the arrests is to deny the nascent opposition any kind of base, either within the Church or intellectuals. Journalists and writers who could have written critical pamphlets have been arrested, including the deputy chairman of the Polish Pen Club. PAX, the Catholic intellectual organization, has been dissolved, and other Catholics outside the organization have been arrested.

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Most members of KOR, the Workers' Self-Defence Committee--effectively Solidarity's think tank--are being held, a long-standing ambition of the Polish Government even in its most reformist mood. Historians, sociologists, and philosophers from the Academy of Sciences have been detained after trying to stage a sit-in, and organizers of the dissident seminar, "Flying University," active in the mid-1970's have also been arrested, although it has not been active for some time.

Students active in the 1976 riots--now frequently young professional people without any strong political leanings--have also been picked up. However, it is significant that the security forces have not arrested any deputies from the Sejm, the Polish Parliament.

The Military Council of National Salvation, as the new leadership has named itself, rules with and through the Council of Ministers. That is to say, most ministers have kept their portfolios. But under normal circumstances governmental decisions would have to be submitted to the critical scrutiny of the Sejm, which has developed considerable independence over the past year and indeed has shown sympathy with Solidarity.

The military leadership has eliminated this problem by cancelling the scheduled sessions of the Sejm and this in turn allows it to preserve a semblance of respect for constitutional niceties and removes the need to arrest deputies. The big problem lies with the reformist wing of the Party.

General Jaruzelski had represented, until about two weeks ago, a source of qualified optimism; here at least was a Party chief who swore by dialogue with Solidarity and the Church. Now the reformers are an embarrassment for the regime. Economic reform, in the sense of decentralization, will almost certainly be abandoned and political reform is almost inconceivable in a situation where the ruling party has a minimal say in the running of the country.

Reformists in the Party fear the worst and reformists close to but outside the Party--such as Mr Stefan Bratkovsky [Bratkowski], the President [chairman] of the Union of Journalists--are understood to be in hiding. A full scale confrontation will mean a continuation of the internment programme.

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POLAND

UK CORRESPONDENT'S LETTER ON WARSAW SITUATION NOTED

PM181241 London THE TIMES in English 18 Dec 81 p 8

[Roger Boyes 'Letter to Editor': "At Least the Tank is Polish--Outside My Window"]

[Excerpt] Warsaw--The following letter to the editor from Roger Boyes, THE TIMES correspondent in Warsaw, was received in London yesterday:

I'm afraid I'm having to send you this in rather unconventional form. It's one of a series and I only hope you're getting my other letters. Mainly colour. Tucked into a discreet corner of Warsaw where the world seems an infinity of overpopulated tower blocks and under-used factories, there is a snowbound T55 tank, one of the few in the Polish capital. "At least it's Polish," a Pole tells me, the meaning distinct enough.

There is a curious air of strained normality about the town; the military have not become a simple fact of life as in Belfast, but neither have they seriously interrupted the daily ebb and flow of existence. Shops and banks admittedly find it hard to operate but this is because of the telex and telephone black-out rather than any intrusive military presence.

The queues are still there--longer if anything--for food and almost every product apart from petrol, private sales of which are now banned. The first instinct has been to stock-pile for the winter and worse.

But the troops, most of them from out of town, have moulded themselves surprisingly quickly to the contours of city life. Steel-helmeted police direct traffic, check identity cards, search the backs of vans for Solidarity leaflets. Red-bereted paratroops--who took over the State radio station on Saturday night--guard key institutions such as the Sejm (Parliament).

Troops with batons and naked bayonets patrol the streets to enforce the 10 pm to 6 am curfew. Officers read the news on television, soldiers in plain clothes run the bus and tram system.

There are signs, though, that all these functions are over-straining the Army; it has an active force of only 210,000 or so and yet has to perform a dual role: Prove itself to be a competent governing force capable of giving the population what it wants while at the same time acting as a forceful guarantor of law and order.

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The conflict of interest that this produces can be seen in the countryside. The army seems to be planning to bring plentiful or at least sufficient food into the shops by Christmas, yet can only do this by putting pressure on the farmers.

If it fails to produce the goods, the populace may well end up blaming the Army for the shortages and the uneasy truce between townships and their protectors will wither away. This dilemma has been posed by the Party.

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POLAND

UK CORRESPONDENT REPORTS ON POLISH STRIKES, WALESIA

PM181239 London THE TIMES in English 18 Dec 81 p 8

[Report by Roger Boyes: "Spontaneous Strikes Defy Military Solution"]

[Text] Poland is still wracked by spontaneous labour unrest despite the efforts of the new military leadership to cordon off and at times forcefully break up sit-ins and strikes at factories throughout the country. This situation has been at least partially admitted by the official media which have reported continuing "irresponsible acts" by workers.

The immediate difficulty in judging the scope of the strike wave is the country's shift system. The authorities will often report that they have cleared a strike but within hours there is a change of shift. The new workers then enter the factory and a substantial part of the old shift are persuaded to stay.

This confusion goes some way towards explaining the conflicting reports emerging from the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk about the strike, which has either been successfully ending (according to the officials) or is sporadically continuing (according to Solidarity sources).

But it is clear that there is considerable unrest not only in the traditionally maverick factories--Nowa Huta in Crakow [Krakow], Huta Warszawa in Warsaw--but also in the coal mines in Silesia and in Poznan, Lodz, Wroclaw, Radom, and Katowice.

The pattern of breaking the strikes is that troops, usually backed by armoured personnel carriers, surround the factories, the factory management relays an ultimatum to the strikers and without any delay for negotiations, the soldiers then go in.

There have been no reports of serious injuries and, apart from conflicting reports from Crakow, shooting seems to have been avoided.

At the Nowa Huta Steel Works, some travellers report as many as six people shot, while other reports state that there was shooting but only above the heads of the crowd. Foreign correspondents, who apart from a telex and telephone black-out, have been banned from leaving Warsaw, have been unable to confirm the stories one way or another.

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The only lasting solution is the closing down of the factories concerned. The military have done this at the Ursus Tractor Factory, a traditional source of worker militancy.

But this only creates more problems than it solves. The Army clearly cannot close down every factory in the country!

This [is] particularly evident in the coal mines of Silesia, where some 20 pits are out of action.

All of this points to a role of some sort for Solidarity, the trade union, which is facing serious inhibitions on its activities.

Mr Lech Walesa, the leader of Solidarity, although in Government hands, is insisting that he will only make a decision on the union's attitude to martial law, with the full Praesidium of the union, which implies that a number of the interned activists would have to be released.

The Roman Catholic Church too, though careful not to attack the new leadership, has called for the release of the interned, for the freedom of the union to operate within its legal bounds, and for the continuation of the process of democratic renewal.

There are thus clear bounds on the military--economic, religious, and the simple inability to cope with all of its various tasks. But the military is seeking in the first instance a military solution.

The Communist Party seems to have disappeared, at least temporarily, from the political landscape and the Army seems to be content to solve the national problems by simple military means.

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POLAND

UK CORRESPONDENT REPORTS ON CONDITIONS IN WARSAW

PM221541 London THE TIMES in English 22 Dec 81 pp 1, 22

[Roger Boyes dispatch: "Poles Adjust to the Face of Change"]

[Excerpts] Warsaw, 21 Dec (censored)--Life, never easy in Poland, has taken on new complexity in the past few days. Officially, the country has entered a period of normalization and the Poles are adjusting to the new ground rules of everyday existence.

There is still a degree of confusion about the present, anxiety and some fear about the future, and the past is no longer a suitable subject for discussion.

Soldiers and armoured vehicles are seen in the streets but it is not possible to discuss them in any detail. Soldiers too can be seen on the only functioning television channel--not only as programme announcers but also as heroes in the patriotic war films that have been showing every night since Sunday, December 13. These depict Polish soldiers defending the motherland, often from invasion by German soldiers during the Second World War.

State television has also been relating the biographies of some of the interned Solidarity leadership. The television, for example, raised questions about the wartime activity of the family of Mr Jan Rulewski, once on the extremist wing of the union. The overall effect was not flattering to Mr Rulewski, especially for an audience particularly sensitive to patriotic values.

A recent article in TRYBUNA LUDU, the Party organ, however, gave a far more charitable view of Mr Lech Walesa, the chairman of the former union. Despite Mr Walesa's absence from the political stage, he is still by no means a "non-person" in the official media.

Martial law has both simplified and complicated everyday life in Poland. On the one hand, it has relieved the Poles of having to worry about the daily Punch and Judy show between Party and Solidarity.

For all the obvious unstated reasons, this is now a thing of the past.

On the other hand, the Army's drive to restore law and order has meant, as the official press admits, a degree of discomfiture.

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Life in Poland has become more private over the past week. Families withdraw into their shells. Christmas trees are on sale in the capital's main thoroughfares but as usual the Poles are waiting until the last possible moment before buying.

Contacting relatives has become nearly impossible, however, because of the cutting of telephone lines. A senior Foreign Ministry official told me last Friday that this was the unfortunate by-product of the campaign to restore law and order in the country.

When opposition elements have been brought under control communications will be restored to normal.

The queues are still there. Indeed, some hardy shoppers are ready to break curfew to start their queueing at 4 am, as usual, before going to work. The Army usually tolerates these infringements. Eyewitnesses report isolated cases of fraternization between soldiers and workers in the North and elsewhere but as correspondents are confined to the capital it is difficult to gauge how typical this response is.

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