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TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 308 OF 16 SEPTEMBER 1980

INFO ROUTINE MOSCOW PRAGUE SOFIA BUDAPEST BUCHAREST  
EAST BERLIN BELGRADE UKDEL NATO WASHINGTON PARIS  
BONN MODUK HELSINKI.

MY TELNO 299 POLISH CRISIS.

1. THE INSISTENCE BY THE POLISH GOVERNMENT THAT THERE WAS NEVER ANY QUESTION OF SOVIET INTERVENTION IS RATHER CURIOUS. IT REPRESENTS A COMPLETE TURNABOUT FROM THE LINE TAKEN DURING THE WEEK BEFORE THE GDANSK SETTLEMENT WHEN, FOR INSTANCE, CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER WOJNA BROADCAST AN IMPASSIONED REFERENCE TO THE PARTITIONS OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

2. EITHER THE CURRENT LINE IS TRUE, WHICH I AM INCLINED TO DOUBT, OR IT IS SOMETHING DECIDED ON AFTER DISCUSSION WITH THE RUSSIANS, POSSIBLY IMPOSED BY THEM FOR THEIR OWN REASONS. FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE POLISH REGIME THE DENIAL OF ANY SOVIET THREAT MIGHT PERHAPS HAVE A CALMING EFFECT ON THE PEOPLE AND FITS WITH THEIR INSISTENCE THAT THEIR METHODS OF NEGOTIATION AND NON VIOLENCE WERE THE ONLY CORRECT ONES. ON THE OTHER HAND IT TENDS TO REMOVE, OR AT ANY RATE GREATLY WEAKEN, THE ONE MAJOR DETERRENT AGAINST FURTHER STRIKES OR OTHER RASH ACTION.

3. THE CONTINUATION OF STRIKES ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, IN SPITE OF THE GOVERNMENTS ASSURANCE THAT THE GDANSK CONCESSIONS APPLY EVERYWHERE, APPEARS TO ARISE FROM A NUMBER OF REASONS. THE WORKERS ARE SUSPICIOUS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PROMISES AND WANT THEIR OWN PIECE OF PAPER. THE LARGER GROUPS LIKE MINERS AND STEEL-WORKERS RATHER RESENT THE PORT-WORKERS BECOMING THE HEROES OF THE HOUR, AND WANT TO GET INTO THE ACT TOO. MOREOVER THERE ARE PRACTICAL REASONS. SOME OF THE GDANSK CONCESSIONS ARE APPLICABLE ONLY TO PORT-WORKERS AND CANNOT SIMPLY BE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER BRANCHES OF INDUSTRY WITHOUT FURTHER ADO: CONCESSIONS ABOUT HOURS OF WORK, SHIFTS ETC HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED AND THE BEST IF NOT THE ONLY WAY TO NEGOTIATE THEM IS TO SET UP A STRIKE COMMITTEE. WE KNOW THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED AT A BRITISH-RUN CONSTRUCTION SITE IN WARSAW WHERE A SEMI-STRIKE WAS SETTLED AFTER A VISIT BY THE MINISTER CONCERNED WHEN CONCESSIONS SUCH AS FREE SATURDAYS AND EXTRA "FAMILY DAYS" WERE GRANTED.

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THIS SORT OF THING IS PROBABLY GOING ON ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. IT OCCUPIES MUCH TIME AND ENERGY OF MINISTERS AND OTHERS AND FOR THE MOMENT NO END TO THE PROCESS SEEMS IN SIGHT. TO SHOW THEIR GOODWILL THE GOVERNMENT HAVE ALREADY ISSUED AN INTERIM DECREE AUTHORIZING THE REGISTRATION OF TRADE UNIONS AND THEY ARE TRYING TO GET BROADCASTING OF THE MASS GOING. BUT THE NEW LEADERS STILL GIVE AN IMPRESSION OF FLOUNDERING AND INDECISION AND INDEED OF INVISIBILITY TO THE NATION AT LARGE. THE PARTY IS THEIR FIRST PRIORITY.

4. THERE ARE TWO MAIN POSSIBLE LINES OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT. THE NEW FREEDOMS GRANTED OR TO BE GRANTED BY THE END OF THE YEAR MAY SATISFY THE PEOPLE FOR SOME TIME, REDUCE INEFFICIENCY AND SOULLESS BUREAUCRACY, PRODUCE SOME ECONOMIC AND EVEN POLITICAL REFORM AND LEAD TO A LESS DISCONTENTED IF STILL AUSTERITY-BOUND SOCIETY UNDER A REGIME CHALLENGED BUT STILL IN CONTROL. OR THE WORKERS ( OR THE PEASANTS) FLUSHED WITH SUCESS AND DISAPPOINTED AT THE EROSION BY INFLATION OF THEIR PAPER GAINS MAY TRY THEIR HANDS AT FURTHER ORGANISED AND PROLONGED STRIKES FOR A COMBINATION OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAT DEMANDS.

5. THE MOST THINKING MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION PROBABLY HOPE FOR A GRADUAL STAGE-BY-STAGE MOVEMENT TOWARDS A MUCH FREER, MORE OPEN AND PLURALISTIC SOCIETY ALLIED WITH THE SOVIET UNION BUT NOT SLAVISHLY SO. I DOUBT IF SUCH ORDERLY PROCESS WILL BE POSSIBLE. DE TOCQUEVILLE'S OPINION THAT AN OPPRESSIVE REGIME IS NEVER IN SO MUCH DANGER AS WHEN IT STARTS ON REFORM AND THAT THE SITUATION PRODUCING REVOLUTION IS USUALLY BETTER THAT THAT IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING IT IS VERY RELEVANT TO POLAND. IN THIS COUNTRY PEOPLE HAVE ACCEPTED THINGS BECAUSE THERE SEEMED NO ALTERNATIVE. NOW THEY SUDDENLY SEE THAT THINGS CAN BE CHANGED. THE EFFECT IS LIKELY TO BE PROFOUND AND DESTABILISING.

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