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FM WARSAW 231300Z JAN

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 52 OF 23 JANUARY.

INFO ROUTINE MOSCOW PRAGUE EAST BERLIN UKDEL NATO MODUK

SAVING TO SOFIA BUDAPEST BUCHAREST BELGRADE WASHINGTON  
PARIS BONN HELSINKI STOCKHOLM UKMIS NEW YORK UKREP BRUSSELS

POLISH SITUATION

1. THE GENERAL SITUATION IS MORE THAN USUALLY UNCLEAR. THE PRESENT CONFUSION ARISES BOTH FROM THE GREATER SCALE OF SOLIDARITY'S RECENT STRIKES AND STRIKE THREATS AND FROM SOME REPORTED READINESS FOR CONCILIATION ON BOTH SIDES OVER THE FIVE-DAY WEEK.
2. THE STRIKES HELD ON 22 JANUARY WERE FACTUALLY REPORTED IN THE OFFICIAL PRESS, WHICH ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR WIDESPREAD SUCCESS. THE PAPERS RECORD EFFECTIVE ACTION IN GDANSK, KIELCE, SLUPSK, BYDGOSZCZ, KONIN AND CZESTOCHOWA. TODAY'S 4-HOUR TRANSPORT STRIKE IN WARSAW APPEARS TO HAVE ACHIEVED THE SAME TOTAL SUCCESS AS ITS PRECURSOR LAST WEEK AND THERE IS STILL THE THREAT OF WIDESPREAD ABSENTEEISM TOMORROW, TO BE FOLLOWED BY A GENERAL STRIKE OF LIMITED DURATION ON 28 JANUARY.
3. NEVERTHELESS THERE WAS EVIDENCE OF SOME FLEXIBILITY ON THE GOVERNMENT SIDE AT A PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN LAST NIGHT BY THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, OBODOWSKI, AND THE GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN, BARECKI. ALTHOUGH THE MINISTER, ARGUING ON ECONOMIC GROUNDS, FIRMLY MAINTAINED THE GOVERNMENT POSITION, BARECKI SAID ALL SUBJECTS WERE OPEN FOR DISCUSSION AND IN PARTICULAR THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT YET TAKEN A VIEW ON SOLIDARITY'S MOST RECENT PROPOSAL FOR A 41 1/2 HOUR WORKING WEEK. DISCUSSIONS WERE STILL CONTINUING ON THIS PROPOSAL WHICH WAS ESSENTIALLY NOT VERY FAR FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFER OF A 42 1/2 HOUR WORKING WEEK.
4. GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES AT THE RECEPTION ALLEGED IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO CONDUCT BUSINESS WITH SOLIDARITY SINCE THEY WERE DIVIDED REGIONALLY AMONGST THEMSELVES. SOLIDARITY HOWEVER CLAIM IT IS THEIR WHOLE MEMBERSHIP, RATHER THAN JUST THE LEADERS, WHICH IS PRESSING FOR A 40 HOUR WEEK.

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5. ANOTHER POTENTIALLY DESTABILISING FACTOR IS THE CALL BY SOME SEJM DEPUTIES FOR THE RENEGOTIATION OF THE GDANSK AGREEMENT. THOUGH ECONOMICALLY JUSTIFIABLE, SUCH A MOVE COULD RE-OPEN MANY WOUNDS THAT HAVE REMAINED CLOSED SINCE LAST AUGUST. ON THE OTHER HAND, A MORE HOPEFUL SIGN IS THE PROPOSAL, WHICH BOTH SIDES CLAIM TO HAVE ORIGINATED, FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT JOINT TRADE UNION/STATE COMMISSION THAT WOULD ENSURE CONTINUING CONSULTATION ON THE MANY ISSUES OUTSTANDING THE CHURCH IS SAID TO BACK THIS IDEA WHICH, IF IMPLEMENTED, COULD HELP TAKE SOME HEAT OUT OF THE SITUATION.

6. THE GOVERNMENT WERE SLOW TO CONSULT SOLIDARITY ON SUCH SENSITIVE MATTERS OF LABOUR RELATIONS AND SATURDAY WORKING. THIS WAS AN ERROR WHICH THEY HAVE ADMITTED AT DEPUTY PREMIER LEVEL. BUT GIVEN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC POSITION SOLIDARITY HAVE ACTED IRRESPONSIBLY AND PROVOCATIVELY IN CALLING STRIKES. THEY SHOW SOME SIGNS OF RECOGNISING THAT FREE SATURDAYS MAY NOT BE THE BEST ISSUE FOR A SHOW-DOWN AND IT IS NOW BEING SUGGESTED THAT THE STRIKES ARE ALSO ABOUT LACK OF PROGRESS ON THE TRADE UNION AND CENSORSHIP LAWS. THE PRESENT SITUATION LOOKS LIKE A VICTORY FOR THOSE IN SOLIDARITY WHO ARE LOOKING FOR A FIGHT OVER WALESA AND HIS MODERATE WING. A CRUCIAL FACTOR IS WHETHER THE LATTER CAN REGAIN CONTROL. OTHERWISE THE PROSPECT IS BLEAK.

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