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COMMITTEE OF POLITICAL ADVISERS

RESHUFFLEMENT OF THE POLISH GOVERNMENT

Note by the German Delegation

I. On 27th October, Edward Ochab, Minister of Agriculture and Gomulka's predecessor as First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, was suddenly released from his post and replaced by Mr. Mieczyslaw Jagielski, former Under-Secretary at the same Ministry. Eugeniusz Szyr, First Secretary of the Economic Council to the Council of Ministers, and Julian Tokarski, heretofore on the economic board of the Communist Central Committee, were appointed deputy chairmen of the Council of Ministers. In addition, Wladyslaw Bienkowski was relieved of the post of Minister of Education and Wacław Tulodziecki appointed in his place. Tadeusz Gede, at present Polish Ambassador to the Soviet Union, was appointed first deputy chairman of the Planning Commission. The next day, Jerzy Morawski, member of the Politbureau, resigned from all his Party functions and Ochab was appointed member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. Both these changes are subject to endorsement by the Central Committee.

These events took place against the background of a grave economic crisis which has compelled the régime to impose heavy restrictions in the field of consumption. The reasons for the crisis are a drop in agricultural production coupled with an increased purchasing power on the part of the consumers, a high birth-rate, and a wrong price policy conducted by the Government who had failed to make up for the shortages by increasing imports.

II. The above-mentioned changes seem to indicate a strengthening of the elements in favour of a tightly controlled economy in Poland. The newly appointed deputy chairman Szyr is known in the Polish United Workers' Party as an exponent of a policy of radically planned economy. Until summer 1956, he had been chairman of the National Planning Commission and was removed from

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office - as was Tokarski, the then Minister for the Engine Building Industries - in the course of the first reform measures taken by the régime in order to mollify the Poznan workers. At the 12th plenary session of the Central Committee late in 1958, Szyr led the attack launched by the Stalinist faction against those supporting a more liberal Polish economic policy, singling out, as an example to be followed, the achievements of China, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria.

Tadeusz Gede, too, believes in the virtues of rigid economic planning, and he is one of the leading men of the former Stalinist wing of the Party. It is expected that the policy of the National Planning Commission, which under its former chairman Jedrychowski had been one of cautious economic decentralisation and part-liberalisation, will change under Gede's influence to one of more rigid control. This is all the more likely because the Economic Council to the Council of Ministers, who under the chairmanship of Professor Langen advocated a more liberal approach, has lately been losing ground and was severely criticised by Gomulka during a recent internal discussion.

The change within the Ministry of Agriculture, on the other hand, would neither seem to involve a change in agricultural policy nor a reduction of power for Ochab. Ochab, whose astute tactics had played a certain part in Gomulka's coming into power and helped to settle the internal conflict threatening the Government in 1956, was given wide space in the Polish press on the occasion of his promotion to the Central Committee. His successor and former subordinate Jagielski had taken a decisive part in the first collectivist measures immediately after the war and has lately displayed much activity in organizing those agricultural circles who are trying to force ahead the collectivisation of the Polish villages "in the soft way". Ochab will probably continue to exercise a direct influence on his former ministry.

III. In view of these facts it appears doubtful whether Gomulka was really compelled by the economic crisis to sacrifice Ochab as scapegoat to the discontent of the population. It appears more likely, that Gomulka - after years of discussions and compromises on the question of the Polish economic structure - followed the Party's call for energetic measures and took one further step along the road followed by the régime since summer 1958 towards an introduction of economic and inner-political restrictions by degrees. It seems that the régime intends to combat the symptoms of the crisis by resorting once again to the old rigid control methods of the Stalinist era.

If this were not the case, the Government would hardly dare to add to the general discontent by removing Bienkowski. This latter is known to favour a party reform and more liberal tendencies

inside the Party. There are indications that he was strongly opposed to a "polito-technical" school education on the lines of the Soviet example. His successor, a senior trade union official, has played a certain part in the Society of Atheists and the Association for Non-Religious School Instruction. In view of his distinct anti-religious attitude his appointment is bound to strain the relations between the Church and the State.

Which further motives may have compelled Gomulka to call his former opponent T. Gede to Warsaw and to drop his old adherent Bienkowski cannot yet be clearly established. The possibility cannot be excluded that Gomulka is prepared to yield to Moscow's influence and that a real shifting of powers is underway.

Perhaps the most revealing indication as to the meaning of the present re-shuffling seems to be Jerzy Morawski's voluntary resignation from his Party functions. This is a step which cannot be reconciled with Communist Party discipline and which is probably unique in the history of the Politbureau and possible only in the special conditions of Poland. Morawski, who has always advocated a policy of moderation and conciliation, also in the field of culture, was among Gomulka's most loyal adherents of the Party centre group. As one of his closest collaborators, he delivered on 17th March, to the Party Congress, an address on ideological questions, in which he formally rehabilitated Gomulka in connection with his "legal deviations" of which he had been accused in 1948. His spectacular resignation seems to indicate that Morawski considers the re-shuffling as a decision to break with the political middle course established in October 1956.

The entire re-shuffling so far carried out seems to support the theory of a more rigid course in the domestic as well as economic policy. Developments, however, are still in process and cannot, therefore, be definitely judged.

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