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EAST EUROPE

Poland
16 February 1967

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Casaroli Present at Episcopate's Conference

More than 60 bishops, headed by Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski, met in Warsaw on February 15 for a two-day conference to hear what news agencies called "a progress report on recent Church-state talks."

There was no information on the presence at the conference of Archbishop Boleslaw Kominek (cf. SR February 13), who was expected to give an account on the Vatican's present attitude toward East Europe.

This gap was certainly filled by Msgr. Agostino Casaroli, who arrived in Warsaw on February 14 and was reported by Reuter (February 15) to have spoken at the bishops' conference.

Several news agencies reported that Casaroli had come to Poland on the orders of the Vatican and that he would be staying in Poland for about two weeks, and possibly longer, during which time he will also tour the country so as to have "the widest possible contacts with the Polish clergy," as a Vatican spokesman explained.

An RFE Special from Rome (February 14) quoted an authoritative Vatican source who explained that Casaroli will consult with the Cardinal, the Polish episcopacy, and the Polish clergy to ascertain their views "on what agreement could be reached with the regime." Only when Casaroli brings back to Rome "a complete study of the Polish Church's position," the Vatican will study the Polish regime position. "Then we can begin to talk," the Vatican spokesman explained. He also stressed that "negotiations with Yugoslavia took two years," and that "those between the Vatican and the regime in Poland could be equally long drawn out."

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Although the Vatican official insisted that Casaroli would not "at this time have talks with the regime," Angela Nacken, writing from Warsaw for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (February 15), quoted Casaroli as saying that he would first of all (in erster Linie) discuss matters with Church representatives. This statement, Nacken stressed, did not exclude his also talking to state representatives. The same conclusion was also reached by Franco Fabiani, Warsaw correspondent of L'Unità (February 15).

In connection with Casaroli's mission, several sources pointed out that State Council Chairman Edward Ochab will be paying a visit to Italy in March (or in April), on which occasion he may have a talk with the Pope whom he may invite to come to Poland "as a pilgrim."

Casaroli went to Warsaw accompanied by Polish-born Msgr. Andrzej Deskur, undersecretary of the Pontifical Commission for Mass Communications. They were greeted at the Warsaw airport by Bishop Bronislaw Dabrowski.

Regarding Dabrowski, previous information on his possible appointment as bishop ordinary of Lodz (cf. SR February 13) is not accurate. A conference of the Polish Episcopate cannot appoint a bishop, as mistakenly reported by a Western news agency from Warsaw. What was meant was probably the formal election of Dabrowski as deputy-secretary of the Episcopate and, in this capacity, member of the Joint Church-State Commission to replace the late Bishop Michal Klepacz.

It is not yet known whom the Pope will appoint as bishop ordinary of Lodz. Upon the death of Bishop Klepacz, the Chapter of the See of Lodz elected Bishop Jan Wawrzyniec Kulik as vicar capitular of the See, Slowo Powszechnie reported on January 30.

British Statement on Oder-Neisse

The Polish press and radio quoted enthusiastically (and in the original English) the three words uttered recently by British Foreign Secretary George Brown: "Yes, in a way," in answer to a question put to him during a press conference on February 13 whether a passage in the British-Soviet communique implied "the beginning of recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line" by Britain.

The passage of the communique issued at the end of Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin's visit to Britain referred to bilateral contacts and cooperation between European countries and to agreement that "such cooperation between all the countries of Eastern and Western Europe" should be encouraged "on the basis of respect for their sovereign equality and territorial integrity."

Although the Foreign Secretary immediately began to qualify his reply and -- as reported by an RFE Special from London on February 13 -- "left the correspondents who attended the press conference thoroughly confused" by insisting that he did not want "to go beyond the words of the communique," Polish media stressed that a change had occurred in the British attitude on the Oder-Neisse Line.

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The next day, the British Foreign Office declared quite emphatically that there has been "absolutely no change" in British policy toward the recognition of the border. A further clarification came on February 15, when press chief Guenther von Hase declared in Bonn that he had been authorized by the British to state that Britain holds to the view that "the final determination of the frontier must await the conclusion of a peace treaty." Von Hase also confirmed what Foreign Minister Willy Brandt stated on February 14: that Mr. Brown's remarks on the Oder-Neisse Line were nearly identical with the stand adopted by Michael Stewart in September 1965 (RFE Special from Bonn, February 15).

Speaking at a press conference in Warsaw on 21 September 1965, Stewart said that a final settlement of the Polish-German border must await a peace treaty with all of Germany and suggested that before the problem of the frontier is settled the population of the disputed territories should be consulted (cf. SR 23 September 1965).

On 22 September 1965, the Bonn government declared that Stewart's position coincided with Bonn's views, but added that in "tackling the border problems, the rights of those whose home these areas have remained as well as of those they ^{have} become must be taken into consideration.

Poland, a Mediator in Vietnam Conflict?

A high official of the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs just completed a series of visits to North African Countries, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, which led to speculation on the possibility of his playing a mediating role in the Vietnamese conflict (Time, February 17). The magazine pointed out that Algiers is a center of Viet Cong diplomatic activity.

Trybuna Ludu (February 8) reported that Ambassador Jerzy Michalowski, director-general in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, arrived in Algiers on February 7 for a visit of several days for talks on Polish-Algerian relations, to continue later his trip to Morocco. According to Western news agencies' dispatches, Michalowski's talks with the Algerian Foreign Minister also concerned a wide range of international issues.

There are three factors which would support such speculation on the purpose of Michalowski's trip. First of all, his visit took place just at the time of the temporary cessation of military activities in Vietnam and increased peace moves in different quarters. Second, Michalowski himself is no newcomer to the Vietnamese problem. At one time Polish ambassador to London and permanent Polish representative at the UN headquarters, Michalowski was assigned at the very end of 1965 to fly to Hanoi to explore chances for negotiation. He then spent ten days in Hanoi talking to North Vietnamese leaders, including President Ho Chi Minh. Third, there was apparently no issue in Polish-Algerian relations (such as a new bilateral agreement) requiring Michalowski's trip to Algeria at this particular time.

Population's Postulates as Main Item on Sejm Agenda

The main item on the agenda of the latest Sejm meeting (cf. SR February 6) was the debate on the compliance with and fulfillment of suggestions and postulates made by the population, Radio Warsaw reported on February 14.

The meeting, which was the last of the autumn session of the Sejm, passed two amendments, one on arts academies, the second on passports. As explained by Radio Warsaw parliamentary reporter Ewa Stocka, the amendment on arts academies was intended merely to bring the respective law on these academies in line with the laws on other university schools, particularly with respect to scholarly grades and titles. The amendment on passports provided for the extension of their validity from the present one year to two, with a possibility of further extension for another period of two years. The so-called inserts in lieu of visas, where these are not required, will be valid for six months and those for several trips, for two years.

Regarding the main item on the agenda, 147,000 suggestions and postulates were put forward by the population during the pre-electoral campaign in 1965 (34,000 more than in 1961). Over 60 per cent of these postulates pertained to economic and investment problems; 40 per cent, to administrative ones. Of these postulates, 66 per cent were expected to be dealt with by people's councils at the district level, 15 per cent at the lower village commune level, 11 per cent at the voivodship level, seven per cent by bodies independent of the councils, while only one per cent were expected to be settled by central authorities.

Although the respective Sejm committee acknowledged "in principle" that the realization of the postulates "takes its course in a rather positive way," it may have been complaining about their ineffectiveness which prompted Vice-Premier Zenon Nowak to assure the Sejm that the government regards the postulates as "an instrument of co-ruling" (i.e. the population's participation in governing the country) and that it will "energetically fight all the signs of neglect of the postulates, of red tape and of shunning criticism."

A Seminar for Leaders of Student Discussion Centers

A seminar for the leaders of student discussion centers of the Socialist Youth Union and the Rural Youth Union is taking place in Warsaw. While Radio Warsaw did not specify when the seminar began and when it would end, it stressed on February 13 that there are at present 180 student discussion centers in Poland and that these centers initiate "numerous meetings and discussions devoted to current political, economic, ideological and world-outlook problems."

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The participants of the seminar have an occasion to meet "leading state and Party activists," Radio Warsaw explained. Thus, on February 13, Interior Minister General Mieczyslaw Moczar talked about the role of the Polish Workers' Party (predecessor of the PUWP) in the fight with Nazi Germany and in the strengthening of "people's power," while Prof. Henryk Jablonski, Minister of Education and University Schools, talked on "current problems of ideological and education work in the schools of higher learning."

On February 15, Politburo deputy member and CC Secretary Boleslaw Jaszczuk spoke to seminar participants on the "key problems of the Five-Year-Plan."

There seems to be little doubt that the seminar is intended to ensure that there should be no repeat performance of the lecture by Prof. Leszek Kolakowski, arranged by a Warsaw University SYU organization, on October 21, which resulted in the intellectual turmoil brought about by his subsequent expulsion from the Party.