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EDWARD GIEREK -- OPINIONS AND FACTS

Introduction: For the past several years the person of Edward Gierek (54), (1) the first secretary of the PUWP Voivodship Committee in Katowice and member of the Politburo, has been of interest to those who are concerned with Poland's political and economic life. There is general agreement that, among the people who exert a decisive influence on the political and economic life in the country, Gierek occupies one of the leading positions. To a still greater degree, observers relate Gierek's name to eventual future changes in key positions in the government and the Party.

Various, and sometimes contradictory, opinions have been expressed concerning Gierek's influence and future role in the government and the Party:

1) He is credited with the economic successes of Silesia and with the above-average standard of living of the people of that area.

2) His special position as political leader of a voivodship is described as a manifestation of independence from the central authorities, resulting from a wish to oppose Silesia to the rest of the country.

3) The organization of Silesian industry is said to constitute proof of Gierek's above-average economic and organizational talents.

(1) Edward Gierek was born in 1913 in Silesia. In 1923, he went to France with his family, where he worked as a miner and later became active in the French CP. After expulsion from France, he worked for the Belgian CP and for Polish émigré organizations. In 1948, he returned to Poland and entered the Party apparatus. He rose to the positions of secretary of the CC and member of the Politburo. Since 1957, he has been in his present post of first secretary of the voivodship PUWP committee in Katowice. According to his official biography, he obtained an engineering degree from the Cracow Mining and Steelmaking Academy after passing off-campus examinations.

4) Gierek is presented as an example of an idealistic Communist, to whom any symptoms of "bureaucratic degeneration" are totally alien.

5) Gierek is often connected with various factional groups within the PUWP.

6) Gierek is considered Wladyslaw Gomulka's or Jozef Cyrankiewicz's potential successor.

These views are often colored by purely subjective considerations, as a result of which evaluations of Gierek are not free from a kind of mythical approach to his person, and in any case, from simplifications and from an ignoring of the influence of many factors which are indispensable to an understanding of his position. This paper will discuss each of these views, considering, on the basis of available material, and against the background of political and economic life in Poland, to what extent they might be justified.

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1) Katowice Voivodship⁽²⁾ has played, and still in large measure plays, a decisive role in Poland's economic life. At present, despite a more rapid rate of economic development in other voivodships, Katowice Voivodship produces one-fifth of the country's industrial output. Because of its high degree of industrialization, the standard of living in this area is higher than the average for the remaining voivodships. This was the case before the war and is still the case. About 60 per cent of the workers employed in the socialized economy in Silesia receive wages which are above the national average. The average miner's wage -- an occupation typical for this area -- was 3,860 zloty per month in 1961. At the same time, the average national monthly wage in the socialized economy was 1,720 zloty.

Both in the 20-year period between the wars and after the Second World War, the central authorities did everything to assure that the development of this region was as intensive as possible. This was a result of the great concentration of industry in the area, which had no parallel anywhere else in Poland. As late as 1950, Katowice Voivodship's share in the national product was 36.5 per cent. (There are no comparative figures for the pre-war period, but the voivodship's role in the country's economy is best

(2) An administrative area more or less covering the territory of Upper Silesia. Because of its important reserves of hard coal, it is an area of a great concentration of industry, mainly mining, steelmaking, and heavy machinery. Area: 9,518 sq. km.; population: 3.5 million; population density: 368 per sq.km. (national average 101). The voivodship accounts for 21 per cent of Poland's total production, including 75 per cent of its fuel production, 60 per cent of the steel industry, 30 per cent of the machine industry.

shown by the fact that it produced about 50 per cent of the country's electric power.) Silesia played a major role in Poland's export drive, especially in the early post-war years. At that time, coal constituted the essential part of the country's exports. As late as 1956, Silesia's share in Poland's exports was about 50 per cent.

From its first months in power, the Party clearly favored Katowice Voivodship from the point of view of wages, supplies, social benefits, housing construction, etc. This tendency was sanctioned by official state documents and treated as one of the important conditions of economic policy. This trend also found expression in the Party's propaganda; such slogans were coined as: "the miners are the leading section of the working class" and "Silesia is the heart of Poland's industry."

The policy of favoring the miners found expression in the so-called "Miners' Charter," a document which set down special privileges (financial, social, and status) for the miners. While causing widespread resentment among workers in other parts of the country, from the point of view of the state, it fulfilled its most important task: it boosted production in Silesia.

However, with the more rapid industrialization of other areas of the country and, later, decreasing domestic and foreign demand for coal, Silesia's role began to decline. This is shown by the data in the following table: (3)

		1950	1955	1960	1965
Growth of industrial production	whole country	100	212	338	508
	Katowice Voivodship	100	167	217	280
Katowice Voivodship's per cent share in Poland's global industrial output		36.5	29.5	24.3	20.9

Since 1955, the rate of growth of industrial production in Katowice Voivodship has been the lowest of all the voivodships in Poland.

Against this background, one must decisively reject the thesis that it was under Gierek's political leadership that Katowice Voivodship's role in the country's economy has grown and an improvement in the population's standard of living has taken place. This thesis is unacceptable because:

(3) Statistical data based on the yearbooks of the Central Statistical Office for 1963, 1964, and 1965.

(a) the favoring of Silesia and its population was a matter of economic policy from the very first months after the Communists came to power and was implemented with particular emphasis in the Fifties;

(b) Gierek took over the functions of first Party secretary in Katowice Voivodship in 1957, and hence at a time when Silesia had already begun to lose some of its key significance for the national economy, in view of the fact that the main stress was by then being placed on rapid investment in the industrial development of other regions;

(c) Gierek's term of office in Katowice Voivodship coincides with a period of systematic decline in the rate of growth of industrial production in this area as compared to other voivodships, and of the reduction of the disparity in the standard of living between Silesia and other parts of the country.

2) The role of Silesia (Katowice Voivodship) in Poland's economic life -- as pointed out above -- is such that, despite a relative decline, it is still a region of first class significance. In 1965, it turned out about one-fifth of the country's total industrial production and was inhabited by 11 per cent of the population, although it occupies only 3 per cent of its territory. This continued special position of Silesia can be seen, not only when compared with the rest of the country, but also when compared with other specific voivodships. Thus, for instance, Bialystok Voivodship, which turns out 1.4 per cent of the country's total industrial production, occupies 7.3 per cent of its surface and is inhabited by 3.7 per cent of the population. (Bialystok Voivodship is one of those that is being the most rapidly industrialized. As late as 1950, it turned out only 0.7 per cent of the country's total industrial product.)

Katowice Voivodship is thus still, in economic terms, unquestionably the most important voivodship in the country. In large measure, this disproportion is responsible for the fact that the role of the region's political and administrative leaders cannot be considered as typical of voivodship activists. This factor would seem to have had a decisive influence on Gierek's special position.

In Poland's specific situation, Silesia also plays an important role in view of the concentration on its territory of unusually large numbers of workers and -- what is most important -- in view of the fact that Party membership here is exceptionally high. The Silesian Party organization is the largest in the country, containing 13 per cent of all Party members in Poland (the area being inhabited by 11 per cent of the country's total population). There is no doubt that this factor, too, plays an important role in Gierek's atypical position.

In the period when local Party organizations were being strengthened in 1957, Gierek -- then a secretary of the CC of the PUWP -- was sent to Silesia. It must be remembered that, at that time, several leading Party officials were thus shifted to local

Party work. A similar move was made in Wroclaw Voivodship, where the leadership of the Party organization was taken over by another CC secretary, Wladyslaw Matwin.⁽⁴⁾ The election of Gierek to the Politburo in March 1959 ⁽⁵⁾ should be interpreted, on the one hand, as recognition of his personal merits, and, on the other, as a move to raise the prestige of both the Party organization and the voivodship he represented. It seems, however, that the evaluation of his personal merits was decisively influenced by Silesia's position in the economic and political life of the country and that any talented and ambitious Party official, who had the proper political background, could have reached, in his situation, the same position of importance.

For these reasons, it is difficult convincingly to defend the thesis that, with the beginning of his term of office in Silesia, Gierek began to oppose that region to the rest of the country and sought to increase its independence from the central authorities. (Silesia -- compared with other administrative areas -- formally possesses the strongest ties with the central authorities, through Gierek's membership in the Politburo and the election of the chairman of the voivodship national council in Katowice, Jerzy Zietek, to membership in the Council of State.) The widespread opinion that there is, in Silesia, a trend toward independence and that Gierek is his own master is based on observations which suggest only that Gierek's position is strong as a result of his especially close links with the central authorities. It is evident that a man in his position, having a direct influence on central decision-making, can permit himself certain departures from standard patterns of action or even certain experiments, with the blessing of the central authorities.

Here it is worth going back once again to the example of Wroclaw Voivodship. The former secretary of the voivodship committee of the PUWP, Matwin, was sent there at the same time that Gierek went to Katowice. Both were then secretaries of the PUWP CC. As a result of his having followed a more independent policy and of the differences of opinion to which this gave rise in the CC, Matwin was forced to resign from all Party offices and to withdraw from public life. As for Gierek -- as is well known -- he greatly strengthened his position during the same period, both in Silesia and among the central authorities. Even taking into account real differences in political abilities between these two men, it seems

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- (4) According to one view, Matwin's and Gierek's transfers to local Party work were an attempt to rid the central apparatus of officials manifesting excessively liberal tendencies. But this view is unconvincing, because, in 1957, at a time of disintegration in the Party, the strengthening of local organizations with men who retained the full confidence of the leadership was a matter of first-rate importance.
- (5) He was elected to the Politburo for the first time in July 1956, and remained in that office until October 1956. At the 8th Plenum (October, 1956), his candidacy was not put forward during elections to the Politburo, but he was elected unanimously to the post of secretary of the CC (with one vote more than Gomulka).

unconvincing to argue that Gierek has achieved his present position by following a policy differing substantially from that of the central directives.

It seems more likely that he owes his present position to the efficient execution in Silesia of the political line laid down by the central authorities (with his participation) and that the Politburo treats him as the best possible executor of its own policies in Silesia.

Nevertheless, this does not exclude differences of opinion in matters of lesser importance. Such differences in fact arose during 1964. During the preparations for the Fourth Party Congress in 1964, a group of Party officials from Gierek's entourage strongly emphasized their differing views on problems of investment policy. In particular, it seems, the issue was one of halting the drop in the rate of economic development of Silesia, which resulted from a higher rate of investment in other parts of the country. At the congress, there were no open polemics on this matter, due to a promise that the question would be the subject of one of the forthcoming plenary sessions of the CC, which would be devoted to a discussion of Silesia's economic problems and at which the issues at stake would be presented by Gierek himself as the main speaker. In the meantime, the issue lost some of its controversial nature, thanks to minor concessions by the central authorities. At the Second CC Plenum in November 1964, Gierek won -- it seems -- partial approval of his line on the priority of additional investment in existing enterprises, instead of creating new enterprises, as well as assurances that the various economic ministries and the central Party authorities would, in the future, take a greater interest in Silesian problems. (This was subsequently shown, inter alia, in the greater frequency of visits to Silesia by representatives of the central authorities.) Gierek's aim in getting his theses accepted was to increase Silesia's share in the distribution of investment capital during the period of the present five-year plan. With additional investment in existing enterprises, Silesia would almost automatically increase its share in the distribution of investment capital, because of its great concentration of industry. The guiding principle of Gierek's campaign was the justified fear that, with the decreasing significance of coal in the national economy, interest in Katowice Voivodship would decrease in general. That is why he sought arguments proving the need to invest in those sectors of production which would permit increasing the output of highly-finished heavy industry products. At the same time, he stressed the indispensability of this direction in investment policy in order to increase the share of machines in Polish exports. It can be assumed that last year's failures in machine exports will be exploited by Gierek as an argument supporting his point of view.

The compromise which was reached at the Second Plenum apparently did not fully satisfy Gierek, nor did it quell what seemed to be Gomulka's suspicions of Gierek's excessive

ambitions.(6) This is suggested by Gomulka's and Gierek's speeches at the Party conference which took place in February, 1967 at Katowice. At that conference, Gierek once again stressed that the share of Katowice Voivodship in the creation of the national income should be much greater. Gomulka, on the other hand, drew attention to changes taking place in the structure and location of industry in Poland as a result of the industrialization of other areas of the country.

However, this controversy should be evaluated with a degree of care. It did not concern the general line of the Party nor its general economic policy, but was rather the expression of a certain "localism." Gierek, by representing localism, has won for himself ever wider support in Silesia.

It would seem that, since 1964, Gierek has clearly tried to stress the significance of his position in Silesia in his relations with representatives of the central authorities. In the period from July 1965 to June 1966 (i.e., 12 months) there were seven visits to Silesia by members or alternate members of the Politburo (not counting the Technical Congress, which brought seven Politburo members or alternate members to Silesia) and 11 visits by ministers. It is interesting to note that the latter looked like answers to summonses by the chief of the Katowice Party organization.

All this contributes to the fact that Gierek is treated as an independent prince in Silesia, and, in jokes, he is called the "Polish Tschombe" and Silesia the "Polish Katanga." It must not be forgotten, however, that, as a member of the Politburo, he is senior to ministers in the Party hierarchy. But, by the same token, he stresses the fact that, as a member of the Politburo, he feels himself more a representative of Silesia than of the central authorities.

Many people, probably correctly, consider this great frequency of visits to Silesia by Politburo members as a manifestation of a certain prudence on their part in view of Gierek's great popularity.

3) Gierek has had little theoretical training in the field of economics. During the period of his life when he was in exile, he benefited only from a little self-schooling and Party training. (One should not, however, underestimate the sum total of experience which he may have gained by working as a miner in France and by his later political activity among miners and heavy industry workers.)

(6) That this suspicion had arisen is suggested, inter alia, by an excerpt from a statement made by Gomulka when speaking, several months later (January 28-29, 1965), during a Party voivodship conference in Katowice. At that time, Gomulka warned Katowice Party activists against becoming "dizzy with success."

While holding important Party functions in Poland, Gierek won, as an off-campus student, an engineering diploma from the Mining and Steelmaking Academy in Cracow. Without overestimating the importance of this fact (there is no doubt that he got his diploma partly as a result of certain "allowances"), one must assume that he gained a certain knowledge of economic problems in mining and heavy industry. He also underwent training at the Higher School for Social Studies (where he majored in economics) which undoubtedly could have given him some theoretical knowledge. Before taking over the functions of secretary of the voivodship committee in Katowice, Gierek was chief of the PUWP CC Industrial Department and -- as CC secretary -- in charge, among other things, of industrial affairs. Moreover, he was chairman of the Sejm Industrial Committee. All these functions must have broadened his sphere of experience and the range of his thinking on economic affairs.

Summing up, therefore, Gierek seems to possess, for Polish conditions, sufficient professional training to be able to fulfill the functions of Party secretary in the country's most heavily industrialized region. But one can hardly speak of specialized education in economic problems. This may explain the methods, peculiar to him, which he applies in order to influence Katowice Voivodship's economic life.

As far as this issue is concerned, it should be stated that there are no indications of his having carried on a personal, markedly ambitious economic policy, a policy influencing the general organization of Silesian industry or resulting in basically more favorable economic results in that region.

As has been mentioned above, the first fundamental administrative-economic policies (the "Miners' Charter") were formulated for Silesia before Gierek took over the job of Party secretary. Further measures (such as limitation of the excessive exploitation of coal deposits, raising productivity, systematic elimination of work on Sundays and holidays, lowering of extraction costs) were initiated by the central authorities. This is evident, if only from the fact that one of Gomulka's main arguments in favor of the indispensability of economic changes, presented when he took over the leadership of the PUWP in October, 1956, related to the bad situation in the mining industry. The program of rehabilitation carried out by Gierek after 1957 was formulated in its main outlines in 1956, and at best, one can credit him with co-authorship. There is no doubt that the chief author of the program aimed at making Silesian industry more efficient was Gomulka himself. On the other hand, one cannot deny Gierek's role in the practical carrying out of this program. There is no doubt that he turned out to be an efficient executor of central directives and that, with time, he also began to manifest his own ambitions.

Gierek's name is often mentioned in connection with the theory of horizontal coordination, which entails tightening economic links between various economic units without regard for their organizational affiliation. The purpose might be, for instance, to give a steel mill, standing next to a coking coal mine (but

belonging to another industrial association), formal legal grounds to undertake common economic ventures with that mine, despite the two partners' different organizational affiliations. Briefly speaking, horizontal coordination was designed to neutralize the negative economic effects of rigid organizational centralism. In practice, the introduction of horizontal coordination undoubtedly strengthened the role of the local authorities and the managers. Perhaps for this reason, many people credited Gierek with developing the concept. But, in fact, the author of this idea (if one can link it with personal authorship at all) was Eugeniusz Szyr, in the years 1960-1963, and it is he who is now its chief propagator. Szyr used the concept in the conflict within the State Planning Commission which helped him to become a member of the Politburo. Gierek's role in the realization of this concept perhaps went beyond that of a simple executor (in view of the period needed for experimentation), but, in fact, it amounted to the propagation and implementation of ideas approved by the central authorities.

It is difficult, on the other hand, to deny Gierek certain achievements in the field of industrial micro-economics, above all in the area of minor organizational improvements. This fits the picture of his personality, a man with more practical than theoretical knowledge, who advocates, in the economic sphere (solely!), a pragmatic viewpoint. It is perhaps because of this that his achievements consist primarily of limiting the effects of organizational and economic absurdities in enterprises ("mobilization of reserves") by application of the criteria of "common sense."⁽⁷⁾ This is an area of activity which pays good political dividends and -- what is most important -- has resulted in his increased popularity both among workers and among the technical intelligentsia. Gierek was able to win the support of this latter group mainly through increasing its

(7) Some fairly characteristic examples of small improvements achieved in Katowice Voivodship: A few years ago, when industrial uses of steel furnace slag had not yet been found, the transportation of slag away from steel mills caused a technical and organizational headache. It was then decided that any farmer who would bring fresh vegetables or fruit directly to the mill would be entitled to taking away as much slag as his cart would hold. This solution had a triple advantage: the mills had a supply of fresh fruit and vegetables, the farmers had very good building material, and the problem of carting away the slag was also solved.

The problem of maintaining parks in Katowice and neighboring cities was solved in a similar way. This was done by neighboring farmers, who, in return, would get the hay made from the grass they mowed.

Equally typical of Gierek's approach was the problem of distributing fruit in periods of exceptional abundance, as in the summer of 1966. Faced with large losses of rotting fruit, with a simultaneous shortage of fruit on the market, Gierek ordered that fruit be transported on factory trucks. This fruit, bought in bulk, would then be sold directly to workers in factories.

social prestige and raising, to some degree, the salaries of technical personnel, and also by creating relatively good conditions for technical research and development.

4) It is interesting that a relatively large number of opinions on Gierek refer to the ethical and moral side of his behavior. What is characteristic here is the unanimous nature of these opinions, which, in their own manner, idealize Gierek and lead to the schematic conclusion that he is a "true son of the working class."

In this case, at least, the matter seems quite simple: Gierek really was a worker, and in comparison with other top Party dignitaries, he remained in direct contact, for an exceptionally long period of time, with the workers. Moreover, he came from that professional group -- the miners -- which dominates in Katowice Voivodship. One should not underestimate the real significance of Gierek's class "purity" from the point of view of internal Party conflicts. In cases where there are no other outstanding qualifications, this circumstance can turn out to be decisive, in filling a leading Party post. More important, however, are the real ethical and moral values held by Gierek. From the many, unfortunately general opinions on the subject, one can draw the conclusion that he is an idealistic man who takes care not to create the appearance of drawing any personal advantage from his position. It is hard to tell just how much of this is show and how much is a true manifestation of his personality. What is important is that, in comparison with many other officials, he presents a good image. According to people who have had contact with him at work, he is, in human relations, businesslike and somewhat distant, as if thus wishing to stress his special position.

There is no evidence to prove that Gierek is a determined foe of bureaucracy. On the contrary, it is known that he has initiated large-scale, typically bureaucratic drives, such as the campaign to unearth reserves, which was carried on on the basis of an unprecedented number of conferences and reports from factories. It seems that this tendency toward paperwork was criticized by the central authorities. In any case, the whole system of industrial administration in Poland is excessively bureaucratized and it would hardly be possible to expect any changes in this field solely in a single voivodship.

While it is difficult to deny that Gierek has a lot of common sense and experience in economic matters, in ideological matters he seems to stand for views which are rather typical of old-style Party officials. There is undoubtedly a certain dualism in his nature, he is a pragmatist in economic affairs, but more a traditionalist in politics and ideology. Proof of this is the rather archaic -- for present-day Polish conditions -- tone of the Katowice voivodship press, which reminds one of the press of the Stalinist days (dominance of propaganda features, Party subject-matter, reports from rallies, etc.).

It is characteristic, for instance, that it is precisely in Silesia that so-called production literature -- previously completely discredited -- has been reborn. This is mainly literature describing

men against the background of process, and the style is poor enough not to conceal its propagandistic purposes. Such literature is actually the result of directives from above, as is shown by the dominance of this type of literature in the publications of the local Slask Publishing House, which is fully controlled by the PUWP Voivodship Committee. Maintaining such a high ratio of propagandistic literature anywhere else in Poland would be unthinkable.

In similar fashion, the Katowice TV station stands apart from other Polish TV stations in the predominance of unusually primitive propaganda.

The literary group in the Katowice region is very small (about three per cent of the members of the Polish Writers' Union live in Silesia). To a large extent, this is the result of the industrial character of the area and the existence nearby of the historic Cracow cultural center. The Katowice branch of the Writers' Union, at the instigation of the Party, have recently sought to oppose an "ideologically healthy" Katowice to the Warsaw cultural milieu, which has been called overly intellectual and alienated from the working class. In December 1966, during a meeting of Silesian writers with Gierek, the Party authorities were assured of the writers total support for the program and activity of the Party in the field of culture. This meeting took place almost immediately after the unrest at Warsaw University which followed Kolakowski's 21 October 1966 speech and the resignation from the Party of several leading writers, members of the Warsaw branch of the union.(8)

A somewhat separate problem is Gierek's attitude toward religion and the influence of the Catholic Church on the population. It is understandable that, as a leading Party functionary, Gierek is fully responsible for the Party's policy toward the Church. On the other hand, he must take into consideration the undeniable fact of the traditional attachment of miners to the religious cult. Therefore, the tactics which he employs may give the impression that he cares about public opinion; this may not necessarily be dictated solely by a search for popularity but may also arise from his desire to avoid any unrest which might harm economic output. Yet while Gierek personally rarely engages in anti-Church activity, he exploits to this end -- with eagerness-- the local press and his subordinate functionaries. Thus, after the Zycie Warszawy article inaugurating the anti-Church campaign on 10 December 1965, following the letter of the Polish to the German bishops, the Katowice Trybuna Robotnicza joined in, with rare violence and particularly absurd accusations.

(8) A clear indication of the stand of the Silesian writers came from a Trybuna Robotnicza columnist, Krzysztof Nemo (pseudonym), who, in January 1967, wrote that they "walk on the ground" without "leaping over the mountains." This was clearly a sarcastic allusion to the book of Jerzy Andrzejewski, a "rebellious" Warsaw writer, entitled, He Cometh Leaping Upon The Mountains.

This dualism could be seen during the 1966 Millennium celebrations. Czestochowa lies within Katowice Voivodship. During the Millennium celebrations in 1966, the local state administration, under Gierek's supervision, was active in limiting the scope of Church celebrations, however -- according to many observers -- this was done more tactfully than in certain other voivodships. Gierek apologists may even maintain that, in this case, he was only executing clear instructions from above.

5) The above presentation of the broad background to Gierek's activities was aimed at drawing attention to the circumstances which determine the basis and scope of his position. This background is indispensable for an understanding of his present activities and for formulating an opinion concerning the perspectives for his future career.

There is no doubt that, in the first years after taking over the functions of Party secretary in Katowice, Gierek restricted himself to the carrying out of central directives. This period resulted in his achieving the highest possible distinction in the Party hierarchy -- membership in the Politburo. At the same time, he won for himself a certain popularity in Silesia. What is most paradoxical is the fact that he won that popularity mainly thanks to his implementation of the policy of "thaw" -- a line which was laid down centrally as a result of Gomulka's coming to power. It seems, therefore, that there can be no question of an attempt on his part to carry out a personal policy during that period. At best, there could have been a certain difference in tactics.

At that time, too, factional groups formed in the Party leadership, both opposed to Gomulka and supporting him, but conditional on certain changes in the general political and economic line. It seems that all of the existing groups tried to "woo" Gierek, but that none of them won him over. From the point of view of each faction, the winning over of Gierek could be a decisive factor in the successful implementation of its program, while from Gierek's own point of view, siding with any one faction would decrease his attractiveness as a potential arbiter. By remaining outside the mainstream of intra-Party conflicts, he can accumulate, with time, a capital of trust on the part of many Party members, and consolidate his right to intervene arbitrarily in the very center of conflict at a moment which could guarantee him victory in a struggle for power.

In April 1964, a threat to Gierek's position arose. In the offices of the voivodship national council in Katowice, documents were found containing the program of the factional Stalinist group led by Kazimierz Mijal (who fled to Albania two years later and founded the pro-Chinese "Polish Communist Party"). As a result of the disciplinary proceedings that followed, the then chairman of the voivodship national council, Ryszard Nieszporek, was transferred to diplomatic work. But Gierek came out of this incident on the winning side, for, to replace Nieszporek, a man completely devoted to Gierek -- Jerzy Zietek -- was appointed. As far as Gierek himself is concerned, it seems that he was not directly involved in the affair.

The fact that Gierek has remained aloof from intra-Party squabbles should not be understood to mean that he has completely cut himself off from the struggle for power. It is significant that he has placed his close collaborators in key political posts, both in the local and central Party organizations. It is enough to say that the present Party secretaries in Szczecin and Poznan Voivodships were, until recently, his close collaborators. On 24 February 1967, the chairmanship of the executive committee of the Socialist Youth Union was taken over by Andrzej Zabinski, who was hitherto chairman of the voivodship committee of that organization in Katowice. Such moves are relatively easy to achieve in the sense that, as a member of the Politburo, Gierek has a great deal to say about personnel appointments, while the significance of the Party organization in Katowice justifies the appointment of activists drawn from it. Nor should one underestimate the advantages which Gierek might achieve in the future through the support of the technical intelligentsia.

Gierek has also tried to spread his influence into neighboring voivodships. Apparently some people who are devoted to him are "infiltrating" into Cracow, especially its literary circles. New Year's messages and other ad hoc TV speeches by Gierek are often retransmitted in neighboring voivodships.

One gets the impression that, despite the strengthening of his position and the rise in his popularity, Gierek has not entered into any serious conflicts with other members of the top Party leadership. Certain differences of opinion on economic matters between him and Gomulka do not seem to forecast any basic conflicts for the immediate future. The only person who is clearly not partial to him is Boleslaw Jaszczuk, one of the secretaries of the PUWP CC (in charge of economic affairs) and an alternate member of the Politburo. Jaszczuk seems to treat criticism of Gierek as a factor advancing his own career. Jaszczuk was, in the past, chairman of the voivodship national council in Katowice, later Minister of Power and Minister of Heavy Industry. As a result, he is very well acquainted with all the problems of Katowice Voivodship. Armed with this knowledge, Jaszczuk, in his present influential position, can no doubt influence any evaluation of Gierek's activity within the top Party leadership.

6) What are the possibilities of Gierek taking over one of the leading posts in the Party or the government? In what measure do rumors to that effect reflect the actual state of affairs and what are the reasons for their periodic reappearance? Undoubtedly, the chief reason for these rumors is Gierek's high but atypical position in the Party hierarchy which, on the one hand, permits him to harvest the fruits of power (membership in the Politburo), but, on the other, does not burden him with responsibility for the errors and less popular moves of the central authorities (in such cases, only his ties with Silesia are seen).

As a result, a situation has arisen in which every unpopular move by the central authorities, although made with Gierek's participation, strengthens his position as a man on the sidelines.

Silesia's acceptable economic results (though they do not necessarily prove the existence of any particular abilities on Gierek's part) contribute in this situation to a consolidation of his reputation as a man who is the opposite of the incompetent central authorities. On the basis of this not necessarily logical thinking, which appears, not only in public opinion, but also in the views of a substantial section of Party activists, the legend of Gierek as the only "just man," talented economist, and potential successor to Gomulka or Cyrankiewicz has arisen. It is difficult to say to what degree he himself has encouraged this legend.

One of the manifestations of Gierek's reputation as a future "God-sent" man is the intensification of rumors about his imminent summons to a leading position in the Party or the government every time there are increased economic difficulties. The first time such rumors spread was after the exceptionally bad economic results of 1963. There was a persistent rumor at that time that he would be named Prime Minister, while Cyrankiewicz would be moved to Chairman of the Council of State (or even foreign minister). With the normalization of the economic situation, these rumors died out in 1965. At the moment, it is typical that Gierek is being mentioned as Gomulka's successor.⁽⁹⁾ While rejecting many unsubstantiated opinions about Gierek, it is impossible not to take their effect into account. It is a fact that the views about him outlined above are very typical for the Party, and among the masses, they constitute a force which, given favorable conditions, can contribute to Gierek's elevation to a leading post. It is necessary, in this connection, to take into account the following:

(a) from Gierek's point of view, taking over the post of premier would not necessarily be desirable, because the key position is that of first secretary of the CC;

(b) by staying in Katowice, Gierek assures himself more trump cards in an eventual show-down for the job of first secretary of the CC than by temporarily taking over the post of premier

(9) The apparent last-minute addition of Gierek to the Party-state delegation to the USSR in October 1966 sparked additional rumors that he had been named Gomulka's successor. This matter remains unclear. The first Warsaw Radio communiqué on the departure of the Party-governmental delegation (October 10, 0830 hours) did not mention Gierek's name. But it was mentioned in a later news item on talks between the Polish and USSR delegates (October 10, 1600 hours). There are two explanations for this: either Gierek could already have been in Moscow, or he was added to the delegation at the last minute. It seems improbable that he went directly from Katowice to Moscow, or that this could have been the reason for his being omitted in the first communiqué.

(it is rather unlikely that the same person would take over both these posts in Poland);

(c) it seems unrealistic to expect Gierek to engage in openly factional activities against Gomulka, and therefore, he could take over his job only either on Gomulka's death or retirement;

(d) it is quite probable that Gierek's candidature might be put forward in the event of Gomulka's death or retirement by various factions, because he is a man who is capable of arbitrating intra-Party conflicts and -- according to prevailing opinion -- he could maintain order, both in the economy and in the Party.

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