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EAST EUROPE

Poland
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Polish-Bulgarian Friendship Treaty to Be Renewed

Party leader Wladyslaw Gomulka and Premier Jozef Cyrankiewicz will be heading a Party-government delegation which will pay an official visit to Bulgaria in the first third of April, Radio Warsaw announced on March 16. The broadcast explained that the visit would be upon an invitation of the CC of the Bulgarian CP and of the Council of Ministers. It said that it was expected that during the visit, a treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual aid would be signed.

More details were supplied by the Radio Warsaw correspondent from Sofia. Quoting an official Bulgarian announcement of March 16, he said that the visit would take place "in the first days of April." He also recalled that the last top-level official Polish visit to Bulgaria took place nine years ago, in May 1958, and that the previous friendship treaty between Poland and Bulgaria was signed on 29 May 1948 in Warsaw.

Since the two sides thus have at least one year's time to renew the old treaty (valid for 20 years), it would follow that the sudden decision to speed up the signing of the new treaty was dictated by other than purely legal considerations. (It is interesting to note that the announcement issued after Todor Zhivkov's recent visit to Moscow also mentioned the accelerated renewal of the Soviet-Bulgarian friendship treaty of 1948 -- see Bulgarian SR of March 16.)

Presumably, the visit is part of what seems to be largely a Polish and East German offensive in response to the GFR's new Ostpolitik.

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The Polish visit to Sofia will be the fourth major element of this offensive, so far as Poland is concerned. It will follow the renewal of the Polish-Czechoslovak friendship treaty on March 1 (cf. SR March 2); the two-day "friendly and unofficial" visit of Gomulka and Cyrankiewicz to Budapest on March 8 and 9 (cf. SR March 9 and Hungarian SR March 10); and the signing of a friendship treaty with East Germany on March 15 (cf. SR March 16). Needless to say, a similar treaty between East Germany and Czechoslovakia signed on March 17 falls within this pattern.

Polish-Vatican Relations

Pope Paul VI has let the Polish government know that he is ready to receive State Council Chairman Edward Ochab during the latter's visit to Italy at the beginning of April (cf. SR March 13). To convey this message, the Pope used the good offices of certain unnamed states which have diplomatic relations with both the Vatican and Poland, Sueddeutsche Zeitung -- quoting an AP dispatch from Warsaw -- revealed on March 18. A similar story was also carried by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (March 18) quoting the paper's Rome correspondent.

Interesting, if not outright revealing, is an article by Hansjakob Stehle in Die Zeit (March 17) devoted to the mission in Poland of the Vatican's emissary, Msgr. Agostino Casaroli.

According to Stehle, Casaroli had found serious reservations about an agreement between the Vatican and Poland not only on the part of Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski but also on the part of "not a few" high clergymen. If only for this reason, Casaroli was also looking for contacts with lay Catholics who had been striving for a better modus vivendi, Stehle said. During a reception in Cracow arranged by Archbishop Karol Wojtyla, Casaroli had a long talk with Stanislaw Stomma, chairman of the Znak group of deputies, and on March 5 he received in Warsaw the pro-regime Pax leader Boleslaw Piasecki. The talk which had been requested by Piasecki, lasted three hours, according to Stehle. Casaroli had also received earlier another pro-regime Catholic leader, Jan Frankowski, chairman of the Christian Social Association, an organization whose following is less impressive than its name.

Stehle did not exclude possible contacts of Casaroli with regime representatives, but these, he stressed, would take place only at the end of Casaroli's tour around Poland. On this occasion, Stehle revealed that Casaroli had already met, in the late autumn of 1966, Andrzej Werblan, head of the CC Culture and Science Department.