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Church-State Relations

The critically posed balance on the religious sector partly depends on the diplomatic talent of the Minister Without Portfolio, Government Plenipotentiary for Questions of Relations with the Church. Where the interplay of personalities may bear heavily on the internal coexistence, which has been maintained without a serious rupture since 1956 between two fundamentally incompatible forces, the forbearance and tact of this regime representative during periodic negotiations can assuage a potentially dangerous clash between Gomulka and Wyszynski, neither of whom has shown a willingness to compromise on matters of principle or even tactics. With the transfer of Minister J. Sztachelski from this key position in which he participated in the work of the mixed Church-State commission to the Ministry of Forestry, fears have been voiced that his rumored successor J. Siemek would bring a harsher interpretation of Gomulka's policy to bear against the Roman Catholic Church (cf. Situation Report, May 23). Whereas Sztachelski was often reported as seeking to maintain a semblance of decorum when meeting Church dignitaries (tea and cookies indicated balmy political weather, their lack stormy sailing), Siemek has long identified himself with atheist agitation in vitriolic articles for the official monthly Nowe Drogi, trade papers Glos Pracy and Glos Robotniczy, and in a 1960 brochure.

Two foreign correspondents now report the rumored appointment of K. Rusinek instead (Le Monde, June 8 and Die Welt, June 9). Although both Siemek and Rusinek are former Socialists of the pre-war PPS who have been serving the communist cause since the unity congress of 1948, the difference between the two men is important enough to have evoked "reserved optimism" among the Church circles (Zimmerer).

The earlier report by J. Wetz of May 19 named Siemek as the probable successor to Sztachelski, not in the post of a minister but General Director. It is possible that he has in fact acted in that position during the interim.

The appointment of Rusinek, if confirmed, would bring a 56-year-old journalist turned Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, deputy to the parliament, and member of the CC, PUWP, before 1956 to a touchy sector where he might be expected to exercise the caution (and opportunism) of

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his supporter, former Socialist J. Cyrankiewicz. Exact personal record of Rusinek is rather sketchy and he has not contributed written works which would give clue to his attitude towards the Church. Like many former Socialists, he was alleged to have been "persecuted" during the Stalinist period. As Vice-Minister of Culture and Art under T. Galinski, he was said to have aspired to the office of his superior even though he does not appear to have more qualifications than Galinski himself. If Rusinek's appointment is confirmed, it could well signify that the Polish regime in contrast to the Hungarian party, is not embarking on a tougher policy against the Church hierarchy.

### Party

The present a-political mood in Poland is succinctly described by the noted author and recognized expert on Soviet and bloc affairs, Louis Fischer, who recently revisited the country. In an article entitled "Poland's Second Revolution" which appeared in the Swiss weekly Die Weltwoche (June 9) the author attributes the general political coma to Gomulka's deliberate tactics which aim to sterilize not only the population at large but also the Party itself of all ideological or political thought. Fischer quotes some significant utterances made to him by veteran party members which go to show that except for the inner sanctum, on a country-wide scale the PUWP has been stripped of all political initiative. Party meetings are now by design devoted entirely to pragmatic problems of implementing the economic program. Any political discussion is simply becoming taboo. As to the prevailing atmosphere of indifferent acceptance, which manifested itself in the large vote at the recent elections to the Sejm, this must be attributed to the fact that the population sees no better alternative than the present status quo under which it is at least left politically unmolested.

Fischer's article will be telexed to you soonest.

### Items Pouched

- 1) Tygodnik Powszechny (4.6.61) Kisiel: The Match (on the incidents during the football match Poland v. USSR. Attack on RFE)
- 2) Glos Pracy (24.5.61) WRYS.: Private Owners of Houses Do Not Want to Carry out Repairs
- 3) Glos Pracy (26.5.61) JAKUBOWSKI S.: Mr. Jacek Sniady Protests and Talks Nonsense - This Time about Work Safety and Hygiene (attack on one of the RFE editors)



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4) Polityka (3.6.61) NAJDUCHOWSKA H.: Profiles - Mr. C. (interviews with the population).