

12 of 45 DOCUMENTS

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Solidarity's Caution

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SOLIDARITY took over the prime ministership and created the Soviet bloc's first noncommunist government nearly five months ago. Since then, the new government has proceeded with deliberate moderation.

Hungary, Poland's foremost reform-minded Eastern-bloc partner, has liquidated the Communist Party, changed its name to the prewar noncommunist one, and withdrawn the Red Star, communist Hungary's emblem. Even in East Germany, long regarded by Poles as the most hard-line of its neighbors, the party leadership has dissolved its Politburo and Central Committee.

Poland's Solidarity-led government could be tempted to jump on the bandwagon of dramatic change now sweeping the Eastern bloc. It could, for example, pass a referendum extricating itself from the Warsaw Pact. The government has responded to popular demand and destroyed some symbols of the old regime, like the Feliks Dzierzynski statue and square in Warsaw, named for the infamous first chief of the Soviet security police.

But the government appears to be concentrating on step-by-step perestroika. Its nonspectacular changes affect almost all areas of life, but they are not striking.

The government of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki has not dismantled the massive apparatus established during 45 years of communist rule. To be sure, Solidarity leaders did get rid of several Communist institutions overnight - like the infamous ZOMO riot police that used to beat up Solidarity demonstrators - and the Ministry of Religion, an agency that monitored activities of the Roman Catholic Church. When Solidarity cabinet members took their posts, some replaced managers and employees with their own people. But the government has restrained from purges in the state economy, and in the fat bureaucracy that employs most Poles and (until now) was totally controlled by Communists.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Krzysztof Skubiszewski, a Solidarity appointee, has vowed to protect the experienced and loyal civil servants his agency inherited from the previous government. In an interview with the official newspaper, *Rzeczpospolita*, Mr. Skubiszewski explained why he did not purge his ministry of the holdovers: "Neither Solidarity nor the democratic groups now emerging have any alternative civil service of their own who could work for my department." The Mazowiecki government is preparing a comprehensive civil service training and employment system, but that will take time.

Some Poles are critical of the government's moderation. Andrzej Drawicz, the Solidarity head of state-owned radio and television has come under attack for not overhauling the mass media installed by the Communists. Under the new government, television and radio openly discuss matters that were previously taboo; Poles can turn on their own stations for reliable news instead of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) or Radio Free Europe (RFE). Still, the Communist

Party controls the RSW publishing company, by far the largest publishing enterprise in Poland. The Solidarity-led government recently announced that the RSW - until now the major moneymaker for the Communists - would lose its tax exempt status, a measure that will cost the party an estimated 40 percent of its income.

But some Solidarity leaders would like to see more radical restructuring. The Council of the Polish Journalists' Association recently issued this statement: "We trust that the Parliament and the government will shortly tackle the issue of breaking the monopoly on the press."

The Solidarity government has also shown moderation by tolerating some Communist Party privileges, including its ownership of a huge amount of property. Poland's newly forming political parties - ranging from Christian Democrats to Nationalists - are without such privileges. This fall one of them publicly rebelled.

The once-banned political party KPN (Konfederacja na rzecz Niezależnej Polski) - staged sit-in demonstrations in Communist Party-operated public places in a number of cities, demanding equal rights for all independent groups and equal access to premises and media. The Solidarity-led government tried to negotiate a settlement between the illegal demonstrators and the party, but has not supported the demonstrators. In most areas compromises were reached. But negotiations failed after KPN members occupied the post office in the city of Katowice. The government announced that such illegal acts would not be tolerated and the local police forcibly evicted the trespassers. Minister Aleksander Hall, a Solidarity appointee, affirmed in a television interview that allotting KPN meeting and media facilities would amount to replacing one privileged group with another.

In the coming months, radical groups and calls for swift political change may well become a thorn in the Solidarity government's side. Living standards already have declined by 17 percent since 1980 and, according to government estimates, will fall by another 20 percent in 1990 alone. Poles widely acknowledge the difficulties the government faces in reforming a basket-case economy, and instead may vent their frustrations in noneconomic terms. A government that is proceeding with caution may come under increasing pressure from a population impatient for spectacular, political change.

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