Note on Proposals for Meetings between Chairman of the Council of State and Representatives of Opinion Making Social Groups

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A note on a proposal for meetings of Chairman of the Council of State with individuals representing opinion-making social circles who do not have contacts with the highest state authorities.

I. The amnesty act has created a new situation in Poland and created possibilities for a broader social dialogue. It is very much needed due to the many unsolved problems and the deteriorating social and economic situation—despite some normalization. Among these problems one should include the following: 1) a sense of lack of prospects and any chances for the future for many people, particularly the youth; 2) the lack of credibility of the authorities, frequently connected with deep aversion to them; 3) [problems] stemming from economic and technical development, or even some regress vis-a-vis the developed countries.

Getting out of the crisis and moving [into] recovery, and particularly undertaking efforts to reform and achieve economic equilibrium, requires, in the first place, changes in peoples' attitudes. Such changes will not be achieved in a sufficiently broad scale without:

a) conviction, in the sense of effort and sacrifice,

b) an understanding of the government's policies,

c) approval of such policies. So far, signs of any such changes are lacking, and in this respect the situation is getting worse.

II. Taking the initiative [to arrange] meetings with Chairman of the Council of State could be an important factor on the road toward a broadly defined understanding and renewal, if it is conceived:

1) as one factor harmonized with other measures contributing to renewal, understanding, and social cooperation, and particularly a change of [the political] climate and human attitudes. Consideration of this initiative apart from the specific social situation and other measures is doomed to failure;

2) as a factor in the increasing rationalization of political and economic decisions. However, one needs to note that: a) in observing the work of the state organs one doesn't detect any particular interest in a dialogue with different social groups, and b) experiences of the Consultative Economic Council or the Socio-Economic Council at the *Sejm* [Polish Parliament] have not been encouraging so far;

3) as a factor in strengthening the government's position through some kind of legitimacy, as these meetings can and should be recognized as a form of support and cooperation from social circles. It will have an effect both inside and outside, but it will be durable only when these meetings will not be a facade and of temporary character;

4) as a factor of dialogue and mediation, particularly in difficult situations.

III. For the dialogue conducted at these meetings to bring about the desired results, it has to:

1) meet decisively the postulates of the Polish Episcopate and broad social circles relating to the freedom of association. The question of trade union pluralism 7 is meeting with particular opposition [by the government]. In the long run, however, one cannot imagine social development without the implementation of this postulate. Right now broad social circles do not have legal opportunities for social activity and expression—[a lack] of which will unavoidably lead to tensions and conflicts. Thus, opening broader opportunities to form socio-cultural associations is becoming indispensable. Catholics will attempt to form professional, agricultural, intellectual, youth or women's associations, acting on the basis of Catholic social teachings, charitable associations and institutions, as well as those preventing social pathology;

2) adopt the principle of philosophical neutrality in the school and educational system and accept the principle of philosophical pluralism in scientific and cultural circles;

3) invite to those meetings not only publicly known people, but, above all, people who are representative of their [social] groups. In this way opinions and considerations of those circles could be directly presented and defended. This postulate should not contradict the conditions of factual dialogue and limits on the number of participants;

4) assure the truly independent character of invited participants, among whom, besides people connected with the Catholic Church, should be properly chosen representatives of other independent circles.

IV. Proceeding to the organization of the above meetings and the possible formation of a consultative body, the following questions should be resolved:

1) What is the real motive for organizing these meetings and forming a consultative body?

2) What are going to be the tasks and powers of that body?

3) Should this body be created by Gen. Jaruzelski as Chairman of the Council of State, or by the Council of State [as a whole]?

4) What will be the composition (what social circles and proportions), the manner of appointment, and the size of this body?

5) In what way will the society be informed about the work of this body and the opinions of its members?

6) Will it be possible to adopt the principle that people who are not representing official political structures and the state organs also be invited?

7) Is there a possibility to hold proper consultations with Lech Walesa on the participation of people from the "Solidarity" circles?

8) Would the state authorities, before the final decision on meetings and setting up the consultative body, publicly take a positive position on the proposal to expand activities for social associations?

9) Is it possible to calm philosophical conflicts in schools in connection with the study of religions and atheization, as well as with philosophical diversification of teachers in the school system?

[Source: Stanislaw Stomma Papers. Translated by Jan Chowaniec for CWIHP.]