

April 06, 1989

Special Analysis: Poland: Roundtable Accords Signed

Citation:

“Special Analysis: Poland: Roundtable Accords Signed,” April 06, 1989, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Approved for Release by the Central Intelligence Agency, October 29, 2019.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/209434>

Summary:

An analysis of Solidarity's legalization and its effects on Polish politics.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

- Scan of Original Document

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Special Analysis

POLAND: Roundtable Accords Signed

The Roundtable accords signed yesterday by Solidarity and the Warsaw government that legalize Solidarity and allow significant participation by the opposition in parliament leave each side with difficult commitments to keep and formalize only general agreement on the goals of painful economic reform. The failure of the official union (OPZZ) to sign a controversial wage-indexation formula may presage a battle over Solidarity's power and influence in Poland's factories.

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Solidarity is touting major achievements like the legalization of free unions, important access to the media, a liberal freedom of associations bill, and a new freely elected chamber in parliament. The regime hopes its concessions, particularly the parliamentary election in June, will give it legitimacy and increase support for austerity measures. The government also believes it will remain the ultimate political power because of a powerful new presidency and its continued hold over the state economy, security services, and the original chamber of parliament. Warsaw, moreover, feels that stability will be enhanced if such a dialogue facilitates the historic agreement on the church's legal status and an exchange of ambassadors with the Vatican. The opposition and the regime are almost certain to make a joint appeal for Western economic aid.

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Opposition to the Agreements

Opposition to the new agreements, however, is growing.

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Walesa believes the outcome is a major step toward democracy and powersharing. He will try to persuade union skeptics and workers to accept the deal because it leaves the opposition well-placed to demand a role in future economic policy making. Walesa probably is confident that Poland's continuing economic crisis will allow the

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Key Points of Roundtable Agreements

Solidarity, Rural Solidarity, and the Independent Students Union are legalized.

- Solidarity may have given up right to strike unilaterally during next two years.

Creates 100-seat upper chamber of parliament:

- To be elected in June.
- Can veto lower house legislation but subject to 66-percent overrule by lower house.

Lower house of parliament to be comprised of:

- 35 percent are opposition members.
- 38 percent are Communist Party members.
- 22 percent are members of pro-Communist alliance parties.
- 5 percent are members of pro-Communist Catholic parties.

Creates presidency with powers to:

- Nominate or dismiss prime minister.
- Dissolve parliament.
- Veto legislation.
- Will be elected by both houses of parliament for six-year term.

Eases restrictions on associations and political clubs

Will allow Solidarity a national daily newspaper and modest uncensored TV and radio time.

Agreement only on broad economic goals; implementation left to further discussion.

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opposition to attack even bastions of the party's power like its control over the selection of enterprise managers as the price for supporting austerity measures. Impatient workers, however, are likely to threaten job actions unless they also get guarantees of action to deal with economic hardships and dislocations; widespread industrial unrest could still derail the June election and prompt party hardliners to try to negate the agreements. [redacted]

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Next Steps for the Regime

The regime must convince party hardliners that it has regained the political initiative; is making pragmatic, tactical adjustments; and has not wandered onto the slippery slope of powersharing. Although the regime can cajole party officials into formally accepting the accords, it too must worry that hostile local party and official union bosses will sabotage understandings reached in Warsaw on such issues as Solidarity's role in the factories. The regime already has failed to keep self-imposed reform pledges like its promise to stop bailing out insolvent party-managed state firms, and it will continue to have difficulty delivering on its pledges. [redacted]

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