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Letter from A. Stelmachowski to Józef Glemp, Primate of Poland

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Summary:

Letter from A. Stelmachowski to Józef Glemp, Primate of Poland, discussing problems with the proposed Roundtable Talks, including false charges against Solidarity and changes to previously determined plans. Stelmachowski requests an explanation from Glemp of the prospects of realizing the goals of the proposed reforms.

Original Language:

Polish

Contents:

Translation - English

His Eminence
Józef Cardinal Glemp
Primate of Poland
in Gniezno

Your Eminence,

In view of the prospect of Your Eminence's talks with Gen. W. Jaruzelski, I feel it is my duty to inform you about a crisis which has arisen in connection with the "Roundtable" negotiations and the prospect of [their] breakdown at the very start.

First I am going to describe the difficulties which we have encountered:

a) Contrary to the impressions we received from preliminary talks held on 31 August and 15 and 16 September that the authorities were ready to come forward towards "Solidarity's" position, an acute press campaign has been intensified (particularly in "Trybuna Ludu"), in which it is incessantly repeated that the "Roundtable" cannot lead to the re-legalization of "Solidarity." This campaign, conducted through the central party daily, gives an impression that the authorities not only do not attempt to convince their own "hardliners" on matters which were to be discussed at the "Roundtable," but that since that time they themselves have hardened their position, creating a general impression that now, after setting up the Rakowski government,[1] they are less interested in the "Roundtable."

b) Despite arrangements agreed upon with Mr. Czyrek, that each side decides on the composition of its delegation to the "Roundtable," we have encountered an attempt to interfere with the list presented by Mr. Walesa. Nine persons were called into question. They are: Jan Józef Szczepanski,[2] Andrzej Szczepkowski,[3] Stefan Bratkowski, Zbigniew Romaszewski,[4] Henryk Wujec, Jan Józef Lipski,[5] Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Jacek Kuron, and Adam Michnik. Now the opposition relates to the two latter ones. Lech Walesa takes the position that the principle of mutual non-interference into the composition of delegations should not be violated. However, in a letter that he sent over a week ago to Gen. Kiszczak he stated that he would see to it that the whole "Solidarity" delegation will abide by all arrangements and prove the will for a sincere and honest dialogue.

c) An objection has been raised that "Solidarity" representatives had been meeting with the extreme opposition circles, such as the KPN,[6] "Fighting Solidarity,"[7] and others. This charge is biased and exaggerated on purpose.[8] That meeting was not directed against the "Roundtable," but was aimed at making sure that those groups would not undermine the idea of the "Roundtable" meeting and the position which "Solidarity" intends to take at it. It is also a fact that "Solidarity" representatives at that meeting were rather under attack.

Another charge that was raised was that [we are responsible for the] street disturbances in Gdansk, which took place on Sunday, 16 October, when ZOMO [9] made it impossible for a group of demonstrating youth to pass through from the Saint Brigid church to the NMP.[10] Such events, which were also influenced by ZOMO's attitude, testify not so much of "inspirations" from the "Solidarity" side, but rather of radicalization of the young generation.

Procedural difficulties and charges put forward by the authorities are—it seems—of a fallacious nature. The real obstacles are as follows:

1) The question of goals of the "Roundtable." Mr. Czyrek has formulated them (in personal conversation with me) as an attempt to form a Council for National

Understanding,[11] which would deal with all controversial problems. In our opinion the “Roundtable” should adopt guiding resolutions on major questions and the proposed Council for National Understanding should deal with the implementation of those resolutions and technical matters, if need be.

2) The question of union pluralism. The prospects of settling this question are more than unclear. The press campaign, as I have indicated, has been aiming for some time at questioning union pluralism. The most important element here is a statement by General Jaruzelski himself, published in today's press, in which three premises for the implementation of such pluralism are being defined. The most distressing one is economic, which the General has defined as: “[The] achievement of indispensable, fundamental economic equilibrium, so that some kind of spontaneous social pressures [licytacga roszczc, claim bidding] would not endanger a highly complex reform process.” This means sticking to the theory that economic reform can be realized without social support (in any case a meaningful number of workers), and union pluralism is a sort of luxury, which should be realized later on.

3) The question of social pluralism. Last week Mr. Czyrek questioned the advisability of setting up a team for social pluralism (despite the fact that earlier such a team had been envisaged) explaining that some social organizations like the Polish Literary Union, Union of Artists, or the Journalists' Union of the Polish People's Republic do not want to sit at the same table with representatives of the previous regime's creative unions. Admittedly, he later expressed willingness to reactivate the government-church negotiating group, which had been preparing a draft law on associations, with the possibility of some enlargement of its composition. However, an important question arises, which is whether the reserve shown [by some of the social organizations such as the Polish Literary Union, Union of Artists, and the Journalists' Union of the Polish People's Republic] will adversely affect the drafting of the projected law on associations.

4) The question of post-strike repression. Some time ago the Church representatives became guarantors of job restitution for all those who had been dismissed from work for their participation in the August strikes. At a meeting on 15 September, General Kiszczak very solemnly promised to withdraw all repression. That promise has brought about positive effects on the Seacoast (in Gdansk and Szczecin), while in Silesia jobs have not been restored to 114 miners, and in Stalowa Wola to 2 people. A communique of the press bureau and the Episcopate on this question was confiscated by the censorship office last week and it has not appeared in the national mass media.

In this situation I would be extremely grateful to your Eminence for an explanation of the essential prospects for the realization of both “pluralisms” (trade union and social). The whole thing can be reduced to the question: “Are the reforms (economic and political) to be realized jointly with an empowered society, which also means with ‘Solidarity'—or without it?” If the prospects are not encouraging, I don't see the purpose of further preparatory talks, which would only serve narrow purposes, instead of [those of] the society.

With expressions of a son's devotion,
[signed by Andrzej Stelmachowski]

[1] Mieczyslaw Rakowski, CC Politburo member, from June to December 1988 CC PUWP secretary, from September 1988 to August 1989 Prime Minister, from July 1989 CC PUWP first secretary.

[2] Jan Józef Szczepanski, a writer, in the years 1980- 1983 president of the Polish Literary Union, member of KO appointed by the Chairman of NSZZ “Solidarity”, “Roundtable” participant.

[3] Andrzej Szczepkowski, an actor, member of KO appointed by the Chairman of NSZZ “Solidarity”, from June 1989 a senator.

[4] Zbigniew Romaszewski, KOR member, from 1980 an activist of NSZZ “Solidarity”, member of KO appointed by the Chairman of NSZZ “Solidarity”, “Roundtable” participant, from June 1989 a senator.

[5] Jan Józef Lipski, KOR member, from 1980 an activist of NSZZ “Solidarity”, member of KO appointed by the Chairman of NSZZ “Solidarity”, from June 1989 a senator.

[6] Konfederacja Polski Niepodleglej [Confederation for an Independent Poland]—a radical opposition group, proclaiming goals of independence (led by Leszek Moczulski).

[7] A radical group (led by Kornel Morawiecki), which in the second half of the 1980s departed from the main “Solidarity” movement.

[8] A meeting of the representatives of the main “Solidarity” stream with the outside-solidarity opposition groups took place on 13 October 1988.

[9] Motorized Battalions of Citizens' Militia—a special formation used for breaking up demonstrations.

[10] The church of Our Lady in the old section of Gdansk [NMP = Najswietszej Marii Panny, Virgin Mary].

[11] The Council for National Understanding eventually was not created. Instead, a Conciliatory Commission with narrower powers was set up, which was to take care that decisions of the “Roundtable” were implemented.