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1 November 1988

Dear Charles,

Prime Minister's Visit to Poland: Possible Trouble in Gdansk

We cannot yet judge the likelihood of demonstrations or security problems in Gdansk as a result of the Polish Government's announcement of the decision to close the Lenin Shipyard. But we need to consider what circumstances might require the Prime Minister to consider cancelling her visit to Gdansk, or how we might react if the Polish authorities try to cancel it. Any final decisions will of course have to be made on the spot in the light of the latest information.

Walesa has said Solidarity will "defend" the shipyard and support efforts by the Workers' Council to restore its economic health. He has not called for strikes or demonstrations, but these are quite possible as disgruntled workers return to work after the 1 November holiday. All precedents suggest that such action would be entirely peaceful unless the security police responded with force, though that cannot of course be guaranteed. There is nothing to suggest that for their part Solidarity would wish to do anything to embarrass the Prime Minister - on the contrary.

If serious police violence is used at any stage before or during the Prime Minister's visit to Poland, we assume she will wish to cancel or terminate it. It would clearly be inappropriate for her to hold talks with a regime currently using violence to suppress peaceful expression of workers' grievances. If, against all precedent, the demonstrators themselves turned violent, and it appeared to the Prime Minister's security advisers that it would not be safe for her to visit Gdansk, then I imagine she would want to terminate the visit rather than prolonging her stay in Warsaw.

The main problem arises if the Polish authorities seek to use peaceful demonstrations, which do not threaten the Prime Minister's safety, as grounds to cancel her visit to Gdansk. I imagine the Prime Minister would wish to resist such efforts. Her best form of defence might be attack. We suggest that she tackle the problem in her first meeting with Rakowski. Depending on the current circumstances she might make some or all of the following points:

- She is greatly looking forward to her visit to Gdansk; essential part of programme;

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- Understands there may be strikes/demonstrations;
- Not concerned about this; used to crowds (cf Australia); confident protesters in Gdansk will not be hostile to her personally; her security advisers happy for her to go;
- (if suggested) cannot accept cancellation; would undermine part of purpose of visit; attach importance to Westerplatte as well as to rest of programme in Gdansk;
- Rakowski will understand she cannot continue with visit if police use violence in Gdansk; public opinion in UK would be outraged.

The Poles could come up with a whole range of ploys designed to circumscribe the Prime Minister's programme. They might provoke incidents in Gdansk in order to secure cancellation of the visit. They might close off the centre of the city allegedly for security reasons. They might close off the square outside the Lenin Shipyard, to prevent the Prime Minister laying flowers - in which case she could insist that at least she and the media be allowed through. They could offer to fly Walesa (and possibly other Solidarity lunch-guests) to Warsaw so that the Prime Minister could have her meeting with them without going to Gdansk - a proposal unlikely to be acceptable to Solidarity if Gdansk is otherwise calm, and which the Prime Minister would no doubt wish to reject. We cannot plan for all eventualities, and I suggest the Prime Minister tackle any such problems as they arise in the light of advice from the Ambassador on the spot.

It is clear that some elements in Poland, particularly in the Party and the security forces, do not welcome the Prime Minister's visit and would be happy to see it cancelled or less than successful. In these circumstances some hiccup is quite likely. But we are convinced that the vast majority of Poles - like Solidarity - are delighted that she is going and will do all they can to make her visit a success.

I am copying this letter to Trevor Woolley.

Yours ever,

L Parker

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