

Subject as Master



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cc to Sir PC

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LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

4 November 1988

Dear Lynn,

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF THE CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

The Prime Minister met members of the Consultative Council at the Sejm in Warsaw on 3 November. Thirteen members of the Council were present (out of a total of nearly sixty) but only seven of these spoke. The Prime Minister was greeted by Professor Secomski who invited Professor Legatowicz, a Catholic, to introduce the Council.

Professor Legatowicz said the Consultative Council was an unconventional institution, composed of people invited personally by General Jaruzelski. It was intended to broaden the base of the advice available to the General. Among its members were many people who had not previously taken any part in public life. Two-thirds of members did not belong to any political party. The Council was very broadly based therefore, although it was true that at the time of its formation some people had refused to join it. The Council held only plenary meetings, at which there were no taboo subjects, and no constraints of time. The purpose of their meetings was to present General Jaruzelski with their views and the views of those whom they represented. The General always sat through meetings. Members could be confident that points raised would get a response. Finally, Professor Legatowicz said that it had been clear from the start that the Council was not a closed body. There had been no changes yet, although there was a suggestion that the Council could be transformed into a Council of National Reconciliation. But this lay in the future and awaited a broader national consensus. Professor Secomski added that the Council had been important in opening up the political process in Poland. Its role now was to broaden the dialogue and try to draw in Solidarity, representatives of the official unions, and the church.

The Prime Minister asked on what subjects the Council had given advice, and why. Professor Skubiszewski said that meetings were concerned with three types of subjects: those proposed by General Jaruzelski, those of specific interest to members, and those put forward in correspondence between members and the public. The advantage of the Council was that views could be expressed direct to General Jaruzelski and through him to the Government. The Council had discussed various social problems: economic reform, the environment, emigration of young people, and would soon discuss international problems. Professor Secomski commented that subjects were usually general in nature.

Professor Maciszewski said that the Council's decisions were taken by consensus. Perhaps this was an excess of democracy, but Poland had not had enough democracy in the past. Moreover, he was one of only two Communist Party members of the group meeting the Prime Minister. The others belonged to the "constructive opposition" or even to the opposition unqualified by an adjective. Professor Szczepanski said the Council mostly composed of Professors, preoccupied by analysis of facts. The information they provided to General Jaruzelski was factual and was therefore sometimes unpleasant for him. Professor Gleysztor said another quality of the Council was that its proceedings were published in 40,000 copies without any censorship. Professor Sila-Nowicki said he viewed the Council as a platform for free expression, and a reflection of the greatly increased freedom of speech in Poland. The Prime Minister commented that she found the Council easier to understand described in this way than as a platform for tendering advice. The meeting then broke up as the Prime Minister had to leave for her meeting with General Jaruzelski.

I am copying this letter to Alex Allan (H.M. Treasury), Brian Hawtin (Ministry of Defence), Neil Thornton (Department of Trade and Industry) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,
C. D. Powell

C. D. POWELL

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office.