

Minutes of the Meeting of the Presidium of the Citizens' Parliamentary Club

1 August 1989, 8 p.m.

Present: J. Kuron, K. Kozlowski, A. Stelmachowski, Z. Kuratowska, T. Mazowiecki, B. Geremek, J. Ambroziak, A. Wielowieyski, H. Wujec, A. Balazs, J.M. Rokita, O. Krzyzanowska, J. Slisz, J. Ziolkowski, A. Michnik, E. Wende.

B. Geremek: I will remind you of the things that have taken place within the last few days and hours. I had a meeting with Gen. Kiszczak at 2 p.m. It turns out that, at a Politburo meeting, out of four candidates submitted for the position of prime minister only one is left—Rakowski. Baka and Malinowski have declined. Kiszczak is not willing either, but he thinks it's his duty. He asked about the position of our Club. The Club decided to vote against [him] or to abstain. Walesa took the position: "I supported Gen. Kiszczak for president of the Polish People's Republic, I refuse to support him for prime minister." He asked me to inform the OKP about it.

Kiszczak had a very difficult meeting with the PUWP Club yesterday, when it was deciding about the discipline [in party line bloc] voting. Today only 120 members showed up, which means that 50 have deserted [the PUWP Club].

From the other Clubs the figures are changing. At one point, half of the ZSL and half of SD were against. Today it's even worse—the whole ZSL is against [him], and from the SD only 4 persons [are in favor of him]. He lacks 80- 70 [sic] people to ensure his [Kiszczak's] election.

Meetings of all three Clubs are going on, debating separately. The leaders have arrived, debates are stormy.

ZSL has come up with a proposal to form a government with the OKP. They think that the opposition should form the government. Bentkowski argues that the ZSL is decidedly against the candidacy of Kiszczak. He has contacts with the PUWP—there is a group of young PUWP parliamentary delegates who would like to meet jointly with [me], B. Geremek. If I meet with them, it would be an attempt to interfere with the coalition. They have to ask for it themselves.

Today it is to be decided whether General Jaruzelski will withdraw the letter proposing Kiszczak [for Prime Minister].

Bentkowski says [ZSL] cannot form a government with the PUWP. They are ready to do it with us.

[ZSL] is asking if we would leave the three main ministries with the PUWP if we were to form a government. This is an indispensable guarantee of a peaceful transfer of power.

When PUWP proposed a coalition with them, ZSL was offered 4 ministries and a vice premier. They were not expecting this from the opposition. They put forward their proposal not for the sake of bargaining, but because there is no other way out of the crisis in the country. If we would recognize this, they [ZSL] would be satisfied with 2 ministries. At 6 p.m. there was a meeting with Orzechowski. Based on that conversation, the situation is at a critical point, the President's motion is suspended.

On the other hand Bentkowski was still presenting doubts as to whether to enter into coalition with the PUWP. I admitted he was right—we know what cooperation with

the PUWP did to the ZSL. They didn't perceive it as arrogance. To be sure, after that conversation Jacek Kuron critically summed it up for me: we will take power if PUWP makes better conditions in the country for us.

We have to take into consideration quite unexpected solutions. Our whole Club is opposed, and yet they have to have a majority.

If Kiszczak won't get through, then [perhaps] another candidate—Sekula. Club meetings are stormy, sharp with mutual accusations. Party leaders are convincing their Clubs to [decide in favor of] the coalition with PUWP.

We may very well dream that this is a parliamentary democracy and that the majority decides. But the dream may be cut off and reality will let us know where we are. We have to see the situation clearly.

J. Kuron: Is it true that the Senate has issued some sort of statement relating to the annulment of the President's election?

A. Stelmachowski: Such motion has come in from Senator Leszek Piotrowski—I sent it out to the proper commission.

A. Wielowieyski: What is the motive of those 41 PUWP [members] who have not come to the meeting with Kiszczak?

J. Slisz: I spoke with Bak—a peasant, for them a membership card is not important, they want Bronislaw [Geremek]. As far as Bentkowski is concerned, they would like to have Olesiak in the government. Approximately 40 deputies are not going to vote for Kiszczak.

A. Balazs: Bentkowski said that Sekula's candidacy also won't get through.

J. Slisz: From a talk with Switka—we would have support of SD deputies.

J. Ambroziak: As of 8 p.m. the information is as follows:

PUWP—12 deputies are against Kiszczak

ZSL—60 deputies are against [Kiszczak]

SD—the whole is in favor [of Kiszczak for Prime Minister].

Pax, UChS—in favor [of Kiszczak for Prime Minister].

A. Michnik: Will the Club be in favor of not being involved in it?

J. Slisz: The ZSL was asking if we would be ready to propose a prime minister.

We need to think about this.

A. Balazs - If we put forward our candidate for prime minister, the whole ZSL will be for him.

A. Stelmachowski: To sum it up, the situation is as follows:

- some consensus is emerging to vote against Kiszczak.

- are we to vote negatively against each PUWP candidate?

- do we see the possibility of forming our own government with small concessions?

T. Mazowiecki: My position is known to all of you. When I was invited to the Council, I went, putting aside any other considerations. Since the moment I have learned about Kiszczak's candidacy, I have been trying to form an opinion on this matter.

- I think that the Club's decision to vote against Kiszczak is not good. I do not share the position of our Chairman, who is sending out this news by telex. SIS 162 communicated this news yesterday evening.

- My political assessment is the following: if such a strong man is being proposed, then the power is being shifted towards the line of the parliament-government. It's going

to be a strong government, a situation will emerge, which will stabilize the process which has already begun. There is no need for the Club to vote against, it may abstain. I am afraid that the situation with the national list may repeat itself—first we are booming radicals, but then we withdraw. If we are not reaching for power ourselves, we should permit the other side to do it.

- As far as the ZSL proposal is concerned, one ought to remember that the ZSL doesn't have access to the proper centers of power. I would not bet on this combination. There are other centers of power, which will let themselves be known. We are not at a stage, at which parliamentary relations decide.

I am opposed to Adam's concept also for the reason that on the opposition-Solidarity side there is no program and within three months that would become dramatically clear.

I think that the most proper position on the question of prime minister is a neutral one. But if we were faced with a situation of the state crisis, then some talks about a great coalition might be possible, but not us in coalition with the ZSL.

I think that the moment is very serious. The public would not tolerate a situation in which first they see advances, and then withdrawals.

A. Celinski: [...] I exclude the possibility of a great coalition.

The nearest option is something that took place in Spain—a government stands somewhere aside, it gains support from the ZSL, part of the Party, our Club can be convinced.

J. M. Rokita: I get the impression that a Kiszczak government, after all, would not be strong in a situation where it wouldn't have support of a strong majority in the Sejm.

It would be a government in which we would constantly have to be hypocrites. In the long run it would be a trap for us.

Coalition with the ZSL is absurd. It would mean a clash of opinions from the beginning—that reforms are being introduced with a strong power center, the PUWP. Technically such coalition cannot be realized in defiance of the power centers.

In case there is a government of a purely communist coalition, the reforms will be coming from them, they will be throwing them upon us, but they will not strike at the system, as markets would do. They will be lumping together various ideas and we would think there is no other alternative. It will be a consolidation of the system.

It is necessary that we have at least part of the political initiatives. Something that is called a great coalition is a matter of time. It will come, it may be delayed, or accelerated. So, we should not be confusing people.

E. Wende: (to Mazowiecki) Do you take into consideration a situation in which the President will not recommend Kiszczak but Geremek?

T. Mazowiecki: It is possible, but we don't have such a situation. At this moment there are back-corner talks with the ZSL.

There are two ways out:

A better one—a Kiszczak government, the strongest one from the other side. A big offensive, execution of legal reforms, great stability.

The second one—a great coalition with the PUWP.

A. Balazs: It's a pity that such a discussion was not held prior to the presidential election. The situation that arose was the fault of both the Presidium and the Club. It would be very unfortunate if it were to repeat itself.

We have no chance for a coalition government, it would be short-lived and tragic for us because of the economic situation and the fact that we don't have the people.

But the opposition certainly has a candidate for prime minister, as people from other parties see it. There are also people on the other side whom we might be able to put forward, e.g. Kwasniewski.

A. Wielowieyski: Two arguments can be added against the coalition:

- We should not be wasting our social capital by entering into a small coalition. I see no gain from it.

- The Big Brother has other methods of conducting politics. Depriving the PUWP of power would be a blow to Gorbachev. The result—a mortal poisoning of our life, impossibility of realizing anything.

It is apparent that we will have to support one government or the other. We must get them to understand that another candidate would get our support. Though Kiszczak is not bad.

[Break]

J. Ziolkowski: We are observing a great acceleration of the political process. *Pacta sunt servanda*—this has been our principle. The fact that Jaruzelski is president is good, it is a stabilizing factor. There is a great weakness of power, a rebellion with the Party itself. There is a dissention within the coalition, the ZSL is bending over backward, in the SD [the situation] must be likewise—as it is improbable to have complete silence after those noisy declarations about a crown in the eagle, etc. There are two possibilities:

- a great coalition-us and the PUWP.

- a small coalition-us, the ZSL and other smaller groups.

One of the elements of the situation is tremendous social impatience. Adam [Michnik] has had a sense of this impatience—[they say] so much is in your hands, and you don't react.

The new configuration means a strong triumvirate, unusually tight. A strong Kiszczak, about whom there was talk here, is too strong. [...]

We have to approach Kiszczak negatively. [...] This is a configuration in which we have a minimal possibility of maneuver.

What can we do? Coalition with the ZSL is dangerous, as we cannot steer this process. A small coalition is on their good grace or the lack of it. In the end there are not too many of those contestants.

Only a great coalition is acceptable—a Government of National Salvation.

J. Kuron: That triangle is not a solution under any circumstance. Abstaining from voting—impossible, in any case we would lose the steering wheel, the Club would kick us out through the window.

The first variant: the strikes take off, which will start costing money. Anarchy will follow. Someone will have to bring stability. When a fire bursts, Jaruzelski will call on us to form a government.

With each day our situation is becoming increasingly difficult. Empty shelves are being played out against us, as it was in 1981. And our statements are in the Sejm.

If they [PUWP] are battered in the ZSL, SD—then in which groups do they find support? In the SD they are still trying to steer, but are saying that this cannot go on.

Stabilization is an illusion. If we remain passive, we will lose—then we will have to take it over in a worse situation and with less social confidence [then even currently exists]. As long as we don't make a decision—we are not going to have a program.

Could it be a government of a great coalition? Initially it was supposed to be such a government: for us two, three ministries. What “Solidarity” has to give social confidence, less likely [perhaps the] possibility of obtaining a moratorium on debts.

The government should be ours, i.e. formed by us. We should vote against all of Kiszczak's candidates.

H. Wujec: a PUWP government means a continuing crisis, waiting for a change. Now those price increases, people see it clearly. We are delaying solutions.

The only chance is a broadly based Government of National Salvation. It would have to represent a new line, new spirit, have a different social perception. Can we do it? We have to search already for programs, people. We have to keep in mind that everything moves quickly.

J. Slisz: We need to form a government that is a great coalition—in which we should be the dominant force. How do we let the other side know that they should propose letting us have the position of prime minister? The coming 24 hours have to decide.

J. Stelmachowski: I agree with the diagnoses, but I don't agree with the conclusions. The strategy is to wait until an auspicious moment. If the economic diagnosis is bad, it would be a folly to take over the government until such time as the “Solidarity” is the only way out. If we are expecting a deterioration [of the situation], we should not assume responsibility for it. They are not so weak and it's not the parliament that decides. We need to be against Kiszczak; a strong PUWP government is not in our interest. It would be ill-perceived abroad—two generals in top positions. It was rightly pointed out as a jamming phenomenon. We should be voting against, but I would not vote against any candidate put forward by the General.

A. Michnik: I have been listening with some surprise to what the Senate Marshal was telling us. It's something from the area of games, we don't have time for it. I am afraid that in a little while we will have to leave that parliament, called off by people from the queues.

From my point of view, neither Kiszczak nor anyone else will change anything. This configuration is sentenced to death. Do you know what will be left of the PUWP—only trash will be left. There is a 60 percent probability that our talk is an academic discussion, but if Kiszczak doesn't get through—I propose Mazowiecki, Stelmachowski and others. We have such an international constellation, a historical moment, when we can catch something. We should not use an argument that there is no program—as no one in the world has that recipe, e.g. what should Russia or Yugoslavia do?

We are doomed for one [program]—a sharp, sudden entrance into the market. To say this a year ago would have been a lot, we need to keep this in mind when we say that something is impossible.

There is no one who would defend a coalition with the ZSL. It's falling apart. We are not attacking frontally, rather we propose something, e.g. Kwasniewski for vice premier, someone who will pull over the reformist elements.

O. Krzyzanowska: Tomorrow we need to vote almost ostentatiously. Our government will be in a much worse situation, as the Union is inclined to press demands and we will be calling for belt-tightening. If we don't preserve the ethos of the Union and the opposition—the future election will be lost. Our hands are tied by the Union. Perhaps it will be our prime minister, but not our government.

K. Kozlowski: The situation is difficult, we should speak up strongly against Kiszczak and Sekula. Maybe in the end they will come up with something that will be acceptable and we will abstain from the vote. Perhaps in a few weeks they may desperately seize upon some combination, which will be acceptable. If they cannot come up with anything, then a government of National Salvation will appear to be a solution. If this happens, we will not join into a coalition but we salvage Poland: we then must have prime minister and demand tolerable names. A crisis situation, a Geremek or Lech government. The first thing that our new prime minister would have to do is to talk with the MON. History teaches that invasions, martial laws are threatening when the power structure is falling apart. We are close to this. I don't know which general, but one of them will do it.

Tomorrow vote against [Kiszczak for prime minister], press ahead, see what can come out of it. Do not reject the option of a tolerable government, [if it is] partly a non-party one. Otherwise, press for hard terms into the government.

E. Wende: If this government fails the country, will there be an economic chance to get out of it? We must clearly say—no, it won't be better. So, will our prime minister have better or worse chances of rescuing the country?

Z. Kuratowska: We have to vote against. Sekula doesn't have a chance. We cannot wait any longer. What kind of professionals are they? It's very hard to find them. Are we supposed to leave the country? The ovation at Powazki was a kind of an opinion poll[!] They were telling Brzezinski—we are ready to wait out this situation if you [the US government] are going to decide.

J. Slisz: In the corridor there are gentlemen from the ZSL and PUWP, they want to come here and talk.

(A brief consultation and the conclusion that this should not be discussed at the meeting. B. Geremek and A. Michnik are going for talks). [Recess]

B. Geremek: According to the latest news the situation is as follows:
PUWP—12 against [Kiszczak] (despite party discipline and threats)
ZSL—21 against
SD —?

It looks as though the solution is still that Kiszczak will form the government.

In justifying our position we will argue that we are against the continuation of the present rule. We are not in a position to extend credit to the teams which have been in power so far. We are accepting a diagnosis that under the present international situation our taking over the government is impossible. But potentially we are ready to do it.

A government of a great coalition came out of Jaruzelski's mouth: "you are coming into our government." If we are taking over, we form the government, we see in it a place for representatives of different social forces. It is a government formed by the opposition. It is an anti-*nomenklatura* government. That is how our position can be presented.

We reject a government [of] General Kiszczak plus Solidarity. If there is a chance to form a Government of National Salvation, which would have a chance of gaining public trust. If such a possibility doesn't exist, then we will perform a controlling function to see that aspirations expressed in the election are met.

T. Mazowiecki: I don't see a difference between the conceptions of government; from the general point of view each of them is a coalition government.

B. Geremek: It is a government formed by the "S" on the basis of a coalition. We are leaving the undemocratic system and the main problem is the structure of power.

A. Stelmachowski: It is the model that Hitler gave to Hindenburg—he just wanted the ministry of internal affairs and the chancellery.

T. Mazowiecki: This is a government proposed by us, but it still is a great coalition government.

B. Geremek: Lech Wałęsa has two possibilities:

- he will form that government
- or someone else will.

If we would get to the next stage (a 1 percent probability), if the president would talk with us, that is how I would present the proposal of Walesa's government.

A. Balazs: We need to allow the possibility that they will form a government and wait for their overthrow. Within three months they will be completely finished in terms of propaganda. They are in the ultimate situation. This is a very difficult situation for us, too. We need to find some alternative solution.

B. Geremek: I told Kiszczak that his candidacy is not good, that someone else would be better. He has recognized this argument.

B. Geremek: The motion on an Extraordinary Commission has not passed. It has the backing of half of the ZSL, half of SD and a little in the PUWP, it has a chance of passage.

The following team will be needed: 1. R. Bugaj

2. J. Osiatynski
3. G. Staniszevska
4. the Peasants will fill in
5. the Peasants will fill in
6. K. Dowgallo
7. J. Lopuszanski

M. Rokita: Najder is thanking [us], asking to take care of his dispossession of Polish citizenship.

A. Ballazs: a 10 day vacation break is needed, right now it's a harvest time.

[Source: Archives of the Bureau of Senate Information and Documentation. Translated by Jan Chowaniec for CWIHP.]