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WHAT HAPPENED IN POLAND

Hyman
Lumer

35c

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hyman Lumer is widely known as a political analyst, writer and educator. He is the author of numerous books and pamphlets, the most recent being *The Middle East Crisis*, published in English and Yiddish by New Outlook in 1967. He is also the author of *War Economy and Crisis* (1954), *The Professional Informer* (1955), *The Promise of Automation and How to Realize It* (1956), *Disarmament and the American Economy* (1960), *Is Full Employment Possible?* (1962), *Poverty: Its Roots and Its Future* (1965), and the New Outlook pamphlet *What Are We Doing in the Congo?* (1965). Among his numerous writings on the Jewish question are "Soviet Anti-Semitism"—*A Cold-War Myth* (1964); and the New Outlook pamphlet *Which Way Israel?*, based on a visit to Israel in 1966.

Dr. Lumer is the National Educational Director of the Communist Party and the Associate Editor of its theoretical journal *Political Affairs*.

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The present pamphlet is based on a trip to Poland in November 1968 as a fraternal delegate from the Communist Party, U.S.A. to the Fifth Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party. In the course of this visit Dr. Lumer was able to meet with government and Party leaders and with leading spokesmen of the Cultural Society of Jews in Poland, as well as to speak to Polish citizens in various walks of life.



Published by

NEW OUTLOOK PUBLISHERS

32 Union Square East • Room 801 • New York, N. Y. 10003

March, 1969



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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

WHAT HAPPENED IN POLAND

By Hyman Lumer

The events in Poland during the past two years have been the subject of much discussion and a source of much confusion. The confusion arises, I believe, primarily from a tendency to view these events in isolation, without due regard for the world setting in which they occur. If we wish to understand them properly, therefore, it is necessary to begin with an examination of that setting.

The Basic World Conflict

We live in the historical era of the transition from capitalism to socialism. In this era the basic conflict on a world scale is that between the new and growing camp of socialism and the old and declining camp of capitalism. At the head of the world forces of socialism stands the Soviet Union; dominant among the forces of capitalism is the United States.

All other struggles—the fight for national liberation, the democratic and socialist struggles in the capitalist countries, the building of socialism in the socialist countries, the antagonisms within the imperialist camp—take place within the framework of this central conflict, that is, of the class struggle on an international scale. They are profoundly influenced and conditioned by it.

World imperialism strives by every possible means to prevent the spread of socialism and to destroy it where it exists. Similarly, it strives to throttle all national liberation movements and to reverse the process of liberation wherever it can. The leading force in this drive is U.S. imperialism, the world policeman of reaction. Its closest ally is a revanchist West

German imperialism, seeking a return to its pre-World War II status. To achieve these ends every available method is employed, ranging from outright military aggression to counter-revolutionary intrigues and coups, and to ideological warfare and subversion.

In the days of John Foster Dulles, U.S. policy toward the socialist world was described as one of "containment and rollback." Its aim was not only to keep socialism from spreading but, through the engineering of armed counter-revolutions in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, to push it back to the borders of the Soviet Union—and eventually beyond them. Such efforts were made in both Hungary and Poland in 1956. As we know, they both failed.

The imperialist powers have not given up these aims. But today the anti-imperialist forces are much stronger. The world balance of forces has irrevocably shifted in their favor. Hence imperialism has been compelled to change its tactics and to shift its emphasis to reliance on ideological subversion. With regard to the socialist countries, the main effort is now to undermine and soften them up from within, to render them ripe for a takeover by the counter-revolutionary elements. The goal is what has been described as "peaceful counter-revolution."*

We have seen this process at work in Czechoslovakia. We

* A detailed picture of the new tactics is presented by Zbigniew Brzezinski in his book *Alternative to Partition* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1965). Here Brzezinski, who is currently director of the Research Institute of Communist Affairs at Columbia University, projects the use of U.S. economic and political resources to foster: a) the "independence" of the Eastern European socialist countries from the Soviet Union; and b) the internal "liberalization" of these countries. Through such a process he envisions the eventual return of these countries, and the Soviet Union, to the capitalist fold.

An even more precise blueprint is presented by Herman Kahn, director of the Hudson Institute, in his article "How to Think About the Russians" (*Fortune*, November 1968). He envisions first the conversion of Czechoslovakia to "a social democracy with capitalist overtones" and following this, among other things, "the fall of Gomulka in Poland."

have seen it in Poland. The fact that both instances took place at the same time is more than coincidental.

Those Who Look Backward

In pursuing these tactics the forces of imperialism rely on the fact that there still exist in every socialist country substantial numbers of people whose ties are with the old order, who would like to see a return to capitalism. Among them are former capitalists who dream of the return of their wealth and power, small business people who would like to be capitalists, former well-to-do peasants who yearn to get back their holdings, sections of the professional and intellectual strata who date back to the days before socialism, the forces of organized religion, and others.

These elements play unceasingly upon every form of backwardness among the people, on every gripe and dissatisfaction, on every economic difficulty, on every error of the government or the Communist Party. They foster a persistent atmosphere of unrest. If socialism is to be built they must relentlessly be fought. In a word, the class struggle in the socialist countries is far from ended.

In Poland these anti-socialist elements are especially strong. In the countryside, where half the population resides, some 83 per cent of the farms are still in the hands of individual peasants, some of them quite well-to-do. Such small proprietors tend to think not in terms of socialism but in terms of becoming bigger proprietors.

Second, the Catholic Church remains a very powerful force in Poland. Headed by Cardinal Wysinski, the personification of clerical reaction, it has wide influence especially in the countryside as well as among the considerable numbers of peasants who have migrated to the cities in recent years. It remains basically a foe of socialism and progress, keeping alive every form of backwardness and prejudice. "If you want to look for real anti-Semites," we were told by a liberal Catholic, "look in the direction of Cardinal Wysinski."

There exist also a still considerable number of individuals who were pro-fascist in the prewar years and who have not fully given up their former way of thinking. And there are other sources which contribute to keeping alive anti-Russian and anti-Jewish prejudices among the Polish people.

Finally, there is the fact that in the leading capitalist countries the standard of living is still appreciably higher than in the socialist countries. Therefore ideas that life might be better under capitalism persist, especially where economic development has lagged.

All this provides fertile soil for the operations of the State Department, the CIA and other agencies of subversion. And with all these obstacles the Polish United Workers Party has had to contend in its struggle to build socialism in Poland.

The influence of bourgeois ideology makes itself felt also within the ranks of Marxism and the Party, particularly in the form of revisionism. In the name of "improving" and "humanizing" socialism, revisionism preaches its abandonment. It replaces class concepts of socialism with an abstract, classless humanism and it extols the individual as against the collective. Arguing that "everyone is now for socialism," it advocates the elimination of all restraints and the establishment of unrestricted freedom of speech and organization for all—including the anti-socialist and counter-revolutionary elements. In the name of "combatting bureaucracy," it rejects the leading role of the Communist Party and seeks to reduce it to merely one of a number of contending political parties.

In the economic sphere the revisionists call for the independence of individual enterprises, for the virtual abolition of central planning and a return to basing production solely on the market. Further, under the guise of promoting national independence, they advocate the weakening of economic ties with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and the strengthening of ties with the capitalist world.

Such theories open the door to the forces of anti-socialism

and counter-revolution. It is not surprising, therefore, that they are actively cultivated by the subversive agencies of imperialism. It was an upsurge of revisionism that lay at the center of the struggles that developed during the past year in both Czechoslovakia and Poland.

The Fight Against Revisionism

The Fifth Congress of the Polish United Workers Party, held in early November of 1968, was preceded by a period of intense political struggle against Right-wing, revisionist and nationalist elements. At its core was the fight against revisionism.

The situation is summed up in the Report of the Central Committee to the Congress in these words:

During the period since the Fourth Congress the political struggle within the country has sharpened. Forces of the social Right and the revisionist groupings which cooperated with them tried to spread ideological confusion and political disorientation among the people by undertaking actions aimed at creating unrest and undermining our socialist order. These forces find inspiration and support in the political and propaganda centers of the international bourgeoisie. The imperialist apparatus of ideological subversion and psychological war has become their natural ally.

These efforts came to a head in the wave of student demonstrations in March 1968. These have been painted as spontaneous rebellions, set off by the government's closing down of the play "Dziady," the classical work by the great Polish writer Adam Mickiewicz, and giving expression to demands for full freedom of expression as well as to a pent-up accumulation of dissatisfactions and grievances.

In reality, however, this was a well-organized and apparently well-heeled operation, set in motion by a small group of instigators who sought to use the legitimate dissatisfactions

of the students for their own ends. Floods of leaflets were produced and circulated. Posters appeared everywhere. Emis-saries were sent from Warsaw to initiate similar actions in other cities.

Having started the ball rolling, "Dziady" was quickly forgotten. The slogans on the leaflets and posters dealt with other matters. Wladislaw Gomulka, in a speech delivered on March 19, 1968, gives the following sample: "Down with the Polish United Workers Party. To arms. Down with communism. Let's throw off the Moscow yoke. . . . Down with the USSR. Down with Gomulka's rule." All sorts of provocative rumors and concocted stories of police brutality were spread. In short, the real aims of the instigators—anti-Party, anti-Soviet, anti-socialist—swiftly came to light.

What made such outbreaks possible? Behind them lies a background of revisionist theories propagated over a period of years in academic and other intellectual circles. Among the leading proponents of these anti-Marxist, anti-socialist ideas were such well-known academic figures as the economist Wlodzimierz Brus, the philosophers Leszek Kolakowski, Adam Schaff and Stefan Morawski, and the sociologists Zygmunt Bauman and Stefan Zolkiewski.

These theories persisted and spread primarily because they were tolerated, because no serious ideological struggle was waged against them. The Fifth Congress took note of grave weaknesses in the Party's ideological work and the failure to do battle with the forces of revisionism until they reached the point of joining with Right-wing forces in actual struggle against the state and the Party.

At this point, in the words of the pre-Congress Theses: "The disease had progressed so much that it could no longer be fought by ordinary means. Surgical cadre operations became necessary in some higher school milieus, as well as other moves of a legal and organizational nature."

Thanks to the solid support of the workers, the March challenge of the forces of revisionism and social reaction was

successfully met. The necessary surgery was performed. A number of leading revisionists were removed from their posts. The student ringleaders were expelled from the universities. There were a number of expulsions from the Party, and some criminal prosecutions.

At the same time, it was recognized that legitimate grievances did exist among university students, and that the institutions of higher learning were in many respects much out-moded. The Congress decided to launch a program of needed reforms.

The struggle is by no means over. The need to come to grips with the ideological tasks remains. In his summary speech to the Congress, Gomulka stated:

The Party's ideological tasks . . . cannot be solved by the personnel policy alone. These tasks demand, above all, a polemical discussion with the opponent, an ideological struggle against false and reactionary notions as well as a correct answer to problems raised by life itself. . . . This long-term task cannot be replaced by some sort of campaign against revisionist views, by merely thundering against revisionism.

Such a long-range struggle is especially urgent in view of the new role of ideological subversion in present-day imperialist strategy. The ideological struggle now takes on a world-wide character; it becomes the primary aspect of the international class struggle.

This new role of revisionism became most clearly evident in the events in Czechoslovakia. It was also at the heart of the events in Poland, but here the Party leadership stood firm and was able to put down the offensive.

Nationalism and Chauvinism

Among the most striking characteristics of the Polish people is an intense national pride and patriotism, which makes itself felt in a thousand ways even to the newly-arrived visitor. This is the product of many centuries of struggle for national

independence against foreign conquerors, beginning with the invasion of Frederick Barbarossa in 1157 and extending to that of Hitler in 1939.

Poland suffered deeply at the hands of the Nazis—more deeply than almost any other country. The Poles were keenly aware that if the Jews stood first in line for extermination, they stood close behind. Death camps dotted the country. More than six million Poles were slaughtered—22 per cent of the population. Of these, half were non-Jews. On Hitler's orders the city of Warsaw was literally razed to the ground. At the end of the war the country's economy lay in ruins.

These things no Pole is permitted to forget. And there exists among the Polish people a fierce determination that never again will they permit the Nazi horror to be repeated.

The menace of a renazified, revanchist Bonn regime, bent on restoring the prewar state of affairs, is to them a very real and immediate peril. It colors their every attitude, their every policy and action. Hence, the reaction in Poland to the events in Czechoslovakia, bearing the potential threat of a Bundeswehr lined up along Poland's entire southern border, was extremely sharp.

So, too, was the reaction a year earlier to the Israeli aggression in the Middle East. Israel's ruling circles were in league with U.S. and West German imperialism, the deadly foes of People's Poland, and their war of aggression served directly the aims of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East, specifically its designs against the governments of the U.A.R. and Syria. Moreover, Israel's policies since then, policies of annexation and of oppression of the Arab people in the occupied territories, have given rise to a swiftly growing danger of renewed warfare, which can all too easily escalate into a major nuclear war. Consequently, those in Poland who supported Israel's action were, not surprisingly, looked upon as supporters of Poland's enemies and as hostile to Poland's best interests.

But patriotism and national pride can be perverted into

rank nationalism, playing on the backward national prejudices which still remain among the people. In stirring up such prejudices, as we have noted, a major role is played by clerical reaction. Furthermore, just as revisionist elements emerged within the Party, so too did elements influenced by nationalism and chauvinism. In fact, the two were not unrelated. Thus, an essential part of the stock in trade of the revisionists was anti-Sovietism, which they sought to promote through appeals to long-standing anti-Russian prejudice. And not least, the subversive agencies of U.S. and West German imperialism have worked diligently to cultivate every variety of nationalism and chauvinism.

Hence the fight against nationalism and chauvinism was no less a part of the ideological struggle than the fight against revisionism. Hence it became necessary for Gomulka and other Party leaders to inveigh against those who employed "a nationalist approach to nationality questions."

Zionism

With the outbreak of the Middle East war in 1967 a new element came to the fore—Jewish nationalism in the form of Zionism.

Zionism is a reactionary ideology based on the doctrine that anti-Semitism is incurable and that Jews can escape it only by having a state of their own in which they can live by themselves. It regards all Jews throughout the world as constituting a single nation whose homeland is Israel. It preaches that Jews everywhere owe their first allegiance to the state of Israel and, indeed, that all Jews should migrate to Israel.

Zionism makes Jews aliens in their own countries. It divorces them from the class struggle and the fight against national oppression. It makes them pawns of Israeli foreign policy. And because it seeks the establishment of a pure, closed Jewish state in the middle of an Arab world, it necessarily finds itself in conflict with the Arab peoples and seeks its allies among their oppressors.

The policies of the Israeli ruling circles are based entirely on Zionism, which they actively propagate in Jewish communities everywhere. In this they work closely with the World Zionist Organization and a host of national Zionist organizations spread throughout the capitalist countries.*

Zionism was not without influence within the Jewish community in Poland. When the war broke out in the Middle East in June 1967 a sizable delegation of Polish Jews went to the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw to offer their loyalty and support. A number expressed a wish to fight with the Israeli army. These actions aroused considerable resentment. How, it was asked, could one be loyal both to Poland and to Poland's enemies? The position of those who presumably placed their loyalty to Israel first was—I think rightly—characterized as Zionist.

To be sure, these individuals were but a small fraction of the Polish population. Nevertheless their action had a pronounced effect. Gomulka, in a sharply worded speech, made it plain that there would be “no difficulties for Polish citizens of Jewish nationality to move to Israel if they desired to do so.”

The situation was further aggravated by the launching of a campaign of slander against Poland, emanating principally from Israel. The character of this campaign is illustrated by the following remarks of Gideon Hausner (best known as the prosecutor of Eichmann) before the Israeli Knesset on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising:

Nowhere else as in Poland did so many welcome the Holocaust with joy, nowhere else did so many people

* To be sure, in the United States not all who call themselves Zionists adhere to all its doctrines. There are few American Jews who are prepared to migrate to Israel. Moreover, there are Zionists who have played an active and honorable role in the struggles for peace and civil rights. But this does not alter the reactionary character of Zionism as an ideology. Nor does it alter the fact that in Israeli ruling circles the adherence to this ideology is total.

betray, rob, blackmail and massacre the Jews. . . .

Neither Polish patriots, churchmen, intellectuals nor resistance members helped the Jews, as today's regime tries to claim . . . the Polish underground leaders of yesterday, some of whom are trying to hide their shame by distorting history, left the ghetto fighters in the lurch and lyingly said they had no arms to spare for them. . . . After the ghetto fell and a few Jews escaped to the outside, the Polish underground refused to arm or help them. (*Jerusalem Post*, April 26, 1968.)

Not content with this, Hausner goes on to identify Gomulka and other Polish leaders with the Tsars and Hitler. Not the least remarkable feature of this venomous—and entirely false—display is the fact that it is accompanied by total silence about the renazification of West Germany, about the growth of anti-Semitism there and the rising electoral strength of the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party. It is now only the Polish (and the Soviet) governments which are to be compared to Hitler. And ironically, the Bonn regime joins energetically in this obscene campaign of slander.

Needless to say, these attacks aroused intense anger in Poland. They fed the rise of anti-Zionist sentiment and added to the resentment against those who allied themselves with the policies of Israel's rulers.

The climax came with the outbreaks in March 1968. Not surprisingly, the Right-wing and revisionist combination was joined by a number of pro-Zionist Jewish nationalists. It was only natural that these elements, who sought freedom to campaign against the government's policy on Israel, should ally themselves with those who came forward as crusaders for “freedom of speech.” And the revisionists in turn leaped to the defense of the Israeli government. Here as in Czechoslovakia, where the revisionist and anti-socialist forces campaigned actively for restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel, revisionism and bourgeois nationalism emerged as ideological partners.

In some instances the most notorious revisionists were also Zionists. Illustrative is the case of Zygmunt Bauman, one of those dismissed from their positions for their role in the March events. On his dismissal he went to Israel where, an interview in the Tel Aviv Polish-language newspaper *Nowiny* records, he declared that he had at last found his home.

Zionism was therefore not a false issue, as some maintain. It *was* involved in the political struggles which developed in Poland in 1968. And it is, as Gomulka noted, "a component part of the anti-Communist front." At the same time, the number of individuals involved was not large and the issue of Zionism was distinctly subordinated to others. However, in the months that followed, it became grossly exaggerated, leading to acts of an anti-Semitic character.

Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism

The March 1968 outbreaks were followed, as we have already noted, by a series of administrative actions against those involved. In the course of these, certain excesses appeared.

In particular, in certain circles the question of Zionism was seized upon and blown up into an alleged threat to People's Poland supposedly overshadowing all others. The term "Zionist" was made all-inclusive: to be a Jew was to be a Zionist. Consequently, in the name of "anti-Zionism" there took place a series of anti-Semitic actions in which Jews were dismissed from their positions or demoted, and in a number of cases were expelled from the Party, for no other apparent reason than that they were Jews. And these actions were accompanied by other expressions and manifestations of anti-Semitism, at times very crude.

The occurrence of these excesses has been acknowledged by the leadership of the Polish United Workers Party. Thus Zenon Kliszko, in his speech at the July 1968 plenum of the Central Committee, said:

In the process of political enlivenment of Party activity . . . certain negative phenomena have appeared.

What is their essence and scope? In some Party organizations, especially in offices, an atmosphere of struggle against Zionism is being kept up artificially; this atmosphere at times becomes more intense and does not permit a calm analysis to be made of the real sources of the current difficulties, does not allow the real opponents of our Party and the people's power to be seen, and does not allow the real enemies of socialism and the nation to be perceived.

Jew is equated with Zionist. Moreover, a critical justified lack of faith in a concrete, specific case as to the activities of a Party member of Jewish origin becomes an altogether general lack of faith. Extremely severe penalties are imposed for petty offenses by persons of Jewish origin, for offenses of the type which at times are not even noticed in the case of others.

There were similar expressions by other Party leaders.

How widespread were these occurrences? It is impossible to say with any accuracy. Kliszko, in the above-quoted speech, maintains that "the scope of these phenomena is not very great." Others with whom we spoke shared this judgment. This could well be an underestimation. However, it is pointless to speculate. And it is dangerous to make estimates based on stories of individual cases, since in a number of these it turns out that factors other than anti-Semitism were involved.

Whatever the numbers involved, however, these occurrences had a severe impact within the Jewish community. Among sections of the Jewish people an atmosphere of fear and insecurity developed, leading considerable numbers to leave the country. This is not surprising. In a small community (there were no more than 25-30,000 Jews in Poland) and one, moreover, in which many of the older generation had lived through experiences of unbelievable horror, it would

not take many instances of anti-Semitism to produce such a strong reaction.

How many have left or are seeking to leave can only be guessed at. There are no "official" figures, and there is no factual basis for the astronomical figures being circulated by some in this country. We found no indications that, as is being charged in certain circles here, Poland is becoming "Judenrein." On the contrary, in Krakow, which has a Jewish community of some 1,500, we were told by the two leading officers of the local Jewish Cultural Society that no more than 15-20 had left between June 1967 and November 1968. Nor was it expected that substantially greater numbers would leave in the future.

How are these occurrences to be explained? In part, I believe, the door was opened to them by the whole complex of developments already described. These encouraged an unfriendly attitude toward Jews generally and made it possible to stir up latent remnants of anti-Semitism among the Polish people. The way was opened up for nationalist and chauvinist elements and other Right-wing forces, not to speak of the subversive agencies of imperialism, to utilize the situation for their own ends.

Secondly, the emphasis given to administrative measures in the sharp fight against revisionist and other anti-socialist forces encouraged among certain people in positions of authority an overzealousness in rooting out "revisionists" and especially "Zionists." Not infrequently such overzealousness was motivated by an opportunist desire to advance one's own position by getting someone else fired. Of this, the Party leader Edward Gierek says in his speech at the July 1968 plenum:

... as a rule incorrect cadre decisions which wrong the people they affect are made by individuals who have nothing, or very little, in common with the Party and our ideology. As a rule, these are persons of doubtful political, professional and moral qualifications. In a

desire most frequently to distract the attention of their collective away from their own persons, from their errors and shortcomings, these people begin at first to talk a lot about revisionism, imperialism, morality, social justice, and following that, take cadre decisions which are not motivated and wrongful.

In the heat of a very difficult struggle against the enemies of the Party and socialism, such excesses were unfortunately able to gain headway.

In presenting these explanations, however, we do not in any way seek to condone the acts or expressions of anti-Semitism which have occurred. Anti-Semitism can never be condoned; it must be condemned and opposed wherever it appears. And its occurrence in a socialist country can only do serious damage to the cause of socialism.

No Policy of Anti-Semitism

It is no less damaging, however, to present, as some in progressive Jewish circles in this country unfortunately do, an exaggerated and distorted picture. It is particularly wrong and damaging to attribute these occurrences to a deliberate policy of anti-Semitism on the part of the Polish government and Party leadership.

A letter sent by a progressive Jewish writer to a number of other writers charges that "the many splendid Jewish cultural institutions . . . which the Polish government had helped to create in the postwar years are now being systematically destroyed by the same government and the Party." Other progressive sources charge Gomulka with direct responsibility for whipping up "anti-Zionist" hysteria, on the grounds that in his June 1967 speech he warned about the danger of a Zionist "fifth column," thus triggering off the whole campaign. The top Party leadership is likewise held directly responsible for the occurrence of unjust expulsions of Jews from the Party.

But there are no grounds for holding the Party leadership responsible for the excesses which occurred. Nor is there any basis for charging it with a policy of destroying Jewish cultural institutions.

The anti-Semitic acts which took place grew out of the entire complex of developments we have described. They can hardly be attributed simply to an unfortunate formulation in a speech (the reference to a fifth column does not appear in the printed text), even though such a formulation is scarcely helpful. Moreover, as Kliszko and others have pointed out, the injustices were committed by certain lower-ranking Party organizations and administrative officials, not by the national government or Party leadership.

In his speech of March 19, 1968, Gomulka warned that "it would be a misunderstanding to see in Zionism a danger to socialism in Poland, to her socio-political system." He added that "regardless of what feelings Polish citizens of Jewish origin may have, our Party is decidedly against all manifestations having features of anti-Semitism." In his speech at the July 1968 plenum, he again warned that "it is not Zionism which is the main danger, but reactionary, revisionist and clerical forces in general."

Zenon Kliszko, on the same occasion, stated: "The fundamental criterion for all personnel decisions can consist only of an appraisal of the political and ideological posture of members of our Party, For it is alien to our Party to differentiate between its members and activists, as well as citizens of our country, according to national criteria, or criteria of origin." He, too, warned that "a false and exaggerated understanding of the struggle against Zionism would threaten to distract the Party from the truly main danger, reaction and revisionism."

One could cite more such declarations. But the fight did not end with them. Thus, Kliszko refers to a letter sent by the Warsaw Committee of the PUWP to all Party organizations in the area. "This letter," he states, "contains a correct

evaluation of these phenomena and instructs Party organizations to rectify the errors committed." We were also told about the letter by a comrade active in the Warsaw Party organization. He said there had been a flareup of unjust dismissals of Jews from jobs and of other such actions after the March events. However, thanks to the letter, which sharply condemned them, and thanks mainly to the intervention of Gomulka, they died down after a couple of months.

That Gomulka acted to put a stop to these incidents is grudgingly admitted even by the *New York Times* Warsaw correspondent Jonathan Randall (September 28 and October 31, 1968), who hardly qualifies as an ardent supporter of People's Poland. To place the onus for the anti-Semitic occurrences on Gomulka is therefore clearly unjustified, as is the allegation that these represent a policy of anti-Semitism on the part of the Polish government and the Party.

The Jewish Cultural Institutions

What of the fate of the Jewish cultural institutions? We had the opportunity to discuss these with the Minister of Culture, Lucjan Motyka, and with leading representatives of the Cultural Society of Jews in Poland. In addition, I had the opportunity to attend a play at the Jewish State Theater.

I saw a performance of Peretz Hirschbein's "The Blacksmith's Daughter." The major part of the audience was non-Jewish, and most of those present listened to a Polish translation via earphones. The printed program, which announced the forthcoming opening of the Yiddish classic "The Golem," was almost entirely in Polish. In fact, I found that the theater is looked upon not simply as a Yiddish theater but as a Polish theater. "It is one of our finest," I was told by more than one person.

What was the outlook for the future? With the departure of Ida Kaminska, some had felt that the theater could not go on. However, there remained a sufficient body of talented

actors, many of them young, to sustain it. Moreover, the government planned to erect a new building for it. The outlook, we were told, was optimistic.

As for Ida Kaminska's departure, we were informed that there had been no pressure upon her to leave. On the contrary, she had been told of the government's intention to bestow national honors upon her as well as to build a new theater. It was she herself who felt she did not wish to stay.

This is hardly a picture of an institution being "systematically destroyed."

In some instances—for example, the Jewish schools—the outlook is not so optimistic. These have been declining for some time. For a number of years they have been taught in Polish, not Yiddish. As of January 1, 1968 there were four schools with a combined enrollment of 250 students. These, we were informed, were to be consolidated into one. The reason for declining enrollments was simply that parents increasingly preferred to send their children to the regular public schools rather than to separate ones.

The Yiddish newspaper *Folkshtimme*, which had appeared four times a week, had been reduced to a weekly. This was attributed to declining circulation. As of January 1, 1968 its total domestic circulation was 3,700. That of the monthly journal *Yiddishe Shriftn*, which was later discontinued, was 1,000.

In general, the outlook was that any given institution would go on as long as an adequate base of support exists. The government subsidies on which these institutions depend are being continued. This is not to say that the dismissals and emigrations are without effect. But the important fact is that there is *no official policy of abolishing these institutions*.

Our Responsibilities

We have no desire to minimize the seriousness of the anti-Semitic manifestations in Poland. But what we have sought to show is that these developed in the course of a very diffi-

cult political struggle in which the future of the Party and of socialism was at stake. To accuse those who fought the forces of revisionism and anti-socialism, *and who also fought against the anti-Semitic manifestations*, of a policy of anti-Semitism, is to play into the hands of the enemies of People's Poland—and of the Jewish people. To organize public protests on such grounds is to join hands with these enemies. The Eastlands and Wallaces will gladly join in such protests.

Basically, the anti-Semitic acts are the work of anti-socialist forces. The fact that they occurred is indicative of the strength of these forces at the particular moment, also of what would happen to Polish Jews should they ever gain control. Let us not forget that among the first acts of the counter-revolutionary forces in Hungary in 1956, next to the murder of Communists, was the launching of pogroms against Jews.

Criticism must always be made in the framework of the fundamental need to defend socialism against the attacks of those who would undermine and destroy it. The first responsibility of Communists and progressives is to combat the vicious campaign in this country, inspired by reactionary, racist and anti-Semitic elements who slanderously accuse the Soviet and Polish governments of a deliberate policy of anti-Semitism.

The Fifth Congress of the PUWP, it was generally felt, reflected a significant ideological consolidation of the Party and a strengthening of its Marxist-Leninist base under the leadership of Gomolka. It can be expected that with this the drive against alien ideologies and violations of socialist norms will greatly sharpen. In fact, recent *New York Times* stories (January 12 and 18, 1969) give indication that action is already being taken against a number of those who were guilty of fanning the "anti-Zionist" excesses.

If there is a basis for criticism, I believe it lies along somewhat different lines. In his book *Poland, Eagle of the East* (Hill and Wang, New York, 1968), based on a long

stay in Poland, William Woods concludes that "Polish Communists are most emphatically not anti-Semitic, and this in spite of the almost ludicrous and indeed inflammatory headlines in Western papers" (p. 260). With this we agree.

What we did encounter, however, was an insensitivity to the feelings of Jews. Thus, a member of the Central Committee told us of a Jewish colleague who, despite a recent promotion, had suddenly picked up and left for Israel. "I can't understand why he did it," we were told. My instinctive reaction was: "But I can."

This insensitivity is not confined to Polish comrades. It exists elsewhere, not excluding this country.

It shows itself in a failure actively to combat anti-Semitism, here as well as elsewhere. I believe that if we want to make a truly significant contribution, we can best do so by launching an all-out campaign against anti-Semitism in this country, the center of world imperialism, where there are many Jews and the fascist threat is real. Nothing would serve to convince others so much as this.

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