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● Poland
17 February 1966

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Intense Attacks on the Episcopate

Recent events seem to confirm earlier suggestions (cf. SR February 10) that a decision has been taken to step up propaganda attacks against the Episcopate and also to seek cooperation of the "fraternal" propaganda machines of other socialist countries.

Although in this latter respect cooperation is rather negligible, particularly if the effort is compared with the Polish "output," at least one contribution deserves attention. It is a newspaper article in Lidova Demokracie (February 13) by Dr. Josef Plojhar, the Czechoslovak Health Minister and a suspended Catholic priest. Plojhar condemned the letter of the Polish bishops to the German Episcopate as "irresponsible and thoughtless," and assured readers that the Catholic clergy and believers in Czechoslovakia "fully understand the justified indignation of the Polish people and Polish patriotic priests" at this act of the Polish Episcopate.

Plojhar's reference to "Polish patriotic priests" seems to be no more than a propaganda trick, since -- so far -- there has been no evidence of such indignation on their part. This may be explained by the fact that there is no organization of such priests in Poland which would carry sufficient weight. (The existing "Caritas" priest circles are too weak and discredited to be of any value to the regime).

Some Polish officials go even further than Plojhar, for they suggest that there are also some Polish bishops who do not necessarily agree with the content of the letter to the German

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bishops or with the very idea of any dialogue. Thus Minister of the Interior and chairman of the ZBOWID (veterans' organization), Gen. Mieczyslaw Moczar, used the occasion of a meeting of ZBOWID's Main Council on February 15 (see following item) to declare:

"One has to simply state that some (emphasis supplied) Polish bishops entered on an infamous road. They have been blinded by Cardinal Wyszynski's hate of socialism in Poland and -- as is evident -- they are ready to sign a pact with the devil himself so as to make difficult and delay everything that is called progress, everything that is in line with the spirit of the development of our country. But not all the bishops are of this opinion, not all the bishops would sign with the Hitlerite vampires an alliance against socialism, against People's Poland."

Moczar was specifically referring to the content of a letter written by the Polish Episcopate to the Episcopate of Spain, which was recently commented on by the Madrid newspaper ABC. It is from ABC that Trybuna Ludu (February 15) learned the content of the letter (sent to the Spanish bishops along with over 50 letters addressed to the episcopates of other countries), and violently attacked the Polish Episcopate for being "backward," "medieval," and "reactionary."

In turn it was this article from Trybuna Ludu which supplied ammunition for a public attack on the Polish Episcopate by Tadeusz Cwik, a high ZBOWID official, and former member of the international brigades fighting against Franco in the Spanish Civil War.

In a speech delivered during the meeting of ZBOWID's Main Council, Cwik was particularly bitter about a comparison of two countries, Poland and Spain, as bulwarks of Christianity. According to Cwik, the Polish bishops referred particularly to the period of the Civil War as one which shows "parallel aspects of the historical fate of Spain and Poland."

"At another geographical latitude," Cwik quoted the letter of the Polish bishops, "Poland similarly fought on the fields of Legnica, Chocim, Vienna and on the shore of the Vistula. Two bulwarks of Christianity, at two edges of Europe, thus fulfilled their dramatic and glorious mission."

If Cwik's quotations from the letter to the Spanish bishops are accurate, it gives the regime much propaganda ammunition and one need not be surprised if it is exploited to the full. However, the resolution passed by the ZBOWID meeting (as quoted by Radio Warsaw February 16) did not contain any reference to the letter to the Spaniards. But this resolution did criticize the letter sent to the German bishops. From a rather garbled version of the resolution one can conclude that its main points are: the Oder-Neisse border, the problem of forgiveness, and in general the "politically harmful action of the authors of the message."

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Significantly, the resolution stressed ZBOWID's support for the policy of the state aimed at "normalization of relations with the Church and harmonious living together of the believers and non-believers."

This was not the only attack of ZBOWID against the Polish Episcopate. The organization's fortnightly, Za wolnosc i lud, as quoted by Radio Warsaw (February 13), carried excerpts from numerous letters reportedly received by ZBOWID from its members, former inmates of German concentration camps, on the subject of the "message" of the Polish bishops. These letters contain several questions directed to the "authors of the message with respect to many formulations used in the aforesaid message." These were obligingly answered by ZBOWID's secretary-general, Kazimierz Rusinek.

According to Radio Warsaw, Rusinek "demonstrates on which points the position taken in the message of the Polish bishops infringes on international law and on the existing legal position, where it offends the pride and dignity of the nation, and where it acts against the official stand of the Polish government and against the interests of former inmates of Hitlerite camps."

A similar propaganda method was adopted earlier by the Polish television. On January 26, it had a program called "Different Points of View." The full text of these "different" points of view was carried on February 13 by the weekly Kultura, and it contained the now familiar criticisms of the historical exposition of Polish-German relations presented in the letter of the Polish bishops, on forgiveness and on the problem of the Oder-Neisse border. It seems that the "diversity" consisted only in the fact that four "different" persons were used to express the same points of view: Prof. Konstanty Grzybowski of the Jagiellonian University, Prof. Franciszek Ryszka of the Polish Academy of Sciences' Historical Institute, Prof. Marian Zychowski of the Higher School of Social Sciences (the top Party academy), and the moderator, Dr. Kazimierz Kakol, editor-in-chief of the Bar's weekly Prawo i Zycie.

What is rather significant is the complete disregard of the statement made by Gomulka himself on January 14 "absolving" the bishops of the sin of intending to trade the Oder-Neisse border. In studying all the attacks on the Polish Episcopate since January 14, one gets an impression that none of the authors of these attacks had read or listened to Gomulka's speech.

A most glaring example of such "disregard" was supplied by Henryk Korotynski, editor-in-chief of Zycie Warszawy. Using his other capacity as a member of the Polish Sejm Foreign Affairs Committee, Korotynski wrote in Le Monde Diplomatique that the Polish bishops had broken with "the firm and unanimous attitude of the Polish government and nation on the question of the Oder-Neisse frontier." The article, as quoted by an RFE Special from Paris yesterday, contained all the known arguments on this point used against the bishops before the speech of Gomulka.

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One may ask why all such statements seem to disregard Gomulka's speech. At least part of the answer seems to be supplied by Korotynski's own paper Zycie Warszawy, which on February 10 complained bitterly about the sermons of Cardinal Wyszynski; these were filled with "attacks on all those who produced public criticism of the Polish bishops message to the West German Episcopate."

Zycie Warszawy's complaint is not the only evidence of the apparent effectiveness of the sermons of the Cardinal, and of other bishops. Thus, Gazeta Poznanska (February 6) carried a lengthy answer to a reader who had written to the "comrades" that, "whether you like it or not," the thousand year history of the Polish state is inevitably a thousand years of Polish Christianity. Also in February 6, Radio Warsaw argued with a listener who wondered why the Polish bishops were still attacked on the problem of the Oder-Neisse border, despite what Gomulka had said.

Meetings of the Main Council of ZBOWID

The meeting of the Main Council of the Polish Veterans' Association, ZBOWID (the first since the general meeting 15 months ago), was held on February 15. Minister of Internal Affairs, Mieczyslaw Moczar, as Chairman of the Board, reported to the Council on past activities and the current situation. "The speaker devoted a considerable part of his report to organizational matters and social problems of the Association. He spoke on sanatorial treatment and medical care for former partisans and concentration camp inmates... problems of help to former soldiers, now settled as farmers, and at the same time, he drew attention to the not always sufficient help of national councils to those who fought against fascism..." (cf. Radio Warsaw, February 15).

This "considerable part" of Moczar's speech was sandwiched between two purely political statements of policy. The concluding part was devoted to the sharp attack on the Polish hierarchy (see previous item). The initial part contains an explanation of ZBOWID's, (and/or Moczar's) definition of the Polish emigration. In this connection Moczar heavily attacked Radio Free Europe, which, "along with other agencies acting on an American budget" is characterizing "our interest in Polonia" as being one of "plotting and penetration." (Polonia is a special Polish term applied to those groups of Polish origin, who lost active interest in Polish state policy but still retain Polish sentiments, identifying themselves, however, with the country in which they have settled). Moczar was at pains to deny this RFE slander, maintaining that ZBOWID's interest in Polonia was genuine and disinterested. ZBOWID was anxious to work toward the association of all Polish ex-combatants, wherever they might be regardless of whether they had fought in the People's Army (communist), the Home Army or the Peasant Battalions.

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This theme of the unity of all veterans loomed large in the discussion on Moczar's report in which 21 members spoke (cf. Radio Warsaw, February 16).

First on the subject was General Grzegorz Korczynski, Moczar's close associate and considered number two man in the "Partisan" political faction. Probably much more effective than his contribution, however, was that of Colonel Jan Mazurkiewicz, who as "Radoslaw" was one of the Home Army war-time heroes, a very brave man indeed, who later declared his loyalty to the new People's Polish Republic. "Radoslaw's" stand for unity of all war veterans might well have some influence on non-Communist veterans who would otherwise be highly suspicious of ZBOWiD's attempts in this direction.

Wladyslaw Tykocinski Sentenced to Death

Wladyslaw Tykocinski, former chief of the Polish Military Mission in West Berlin, who defected to the West in May 1965, has been sentenced to death in absentia for "high treason to the motherland," reported UPI quoting PAP. "Proceedings before the military court proved that Tykocinski committed treason in cooperation with American intelligence, that he transmitted to that intelligence information constituting State secrets. He had also been inducing other persons to treason" (cf. Radio Warsaw 16 February 1966).

Vice-Premier Jaroszewicz on Comecon

Vice-premier Piotr Jaroszewicz has again complained that the present state of Comecon cooperation and specialization is not satisfactory. He made this statement, according to Radio Warsaw of February 12, to the Moscow correspondents of PAP and two Warsaw papers, Trybuna Ludu and Zycie Warszawy following the 21st session of the Comecon Executive Committee which ended in Moscow on February 11.

According to the broadcast, Jaroszewicz said that much attention had been paid during the 21st session to the question of the coordination of plans of economic development of the member countries during the next five-year period. He also added that in Poland and other Comecon countries a special conference is being prepared to discuss further development of specialization and cooperation, because the present situation is not satisfactory.

(For other critical statements of Jaroszewicz on Comecon, cf. SRs of January 10 and September 27.)

Trade Protocols with Austria, Italy and Rumania

1. Poland and Austria signed on February 5 in Warsaw a protocol by which the goods quotas fixed by the current trade agreement could be exceeded, according to Radio Warsaw of February 5 and 6. Concrete problems of cooperation, said the broadcast, will be a subject of talks between the representatives of industries of both countries.

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A spokesman of the Austrian Trade Ministry revealed that the participants in the Warsaw talks had expressed the willingness of both countries to cooperate more closely in the future, reported an RFE Special from Vienna (February 7).

(2) The annual trade protocol between Poland and Italy was signed on February 9 in Rome; it is part of the current trade agreement for 1965-69 (Radio Warsaw, February 10). The protocol introduces a broad extension of Polish exports to Italy in such commodities as machines, laboratory apparatus, agricultural consumer goods, timber products and coal. As far as Polish imports from Italy are concerned, there will be more opportunities for importing such goods as machines and equipment, metallurgical products, artificial fertilizers and tyres.

(3) A trade protocol for 1966 was signed between Poland and Rumania on February 12 in Bucharest, according to Radio Warsaw of the same day. The trade turnover between the two countries will increase by 10 per cent over the stipulations for this year of the five-year trade agreement. There will be a particularly big increase in reciprocal deliveries of machines and equipment as well as of consumer goods.

The long-term Polish-Rumanian trade agreement was signed on January 4 (cf. SR January 10).

Trade with Albania

Poland and Albania have signed in Warsaw a long-term trade agreement for the years 1966-70, Radio Warsaw reported on February 16. The Vice-Ministers of Foreign Trade of the two countries signed simultaneously a five-year payments agreement and a protocol on exchange of goods for the year 1966, said the broadcast.

According to a UPI dispatch from Warsaw, Poland is to export machines, lathes, technical equipment for coal and iron ore mines, cars, coke, chemicals and consumer goods in exchange for Albanian copper and copper products, leather, fruit, nuts, tobacco and chrome ore. The overall value of the agreement was not disclosed, said the agency.

The Albanian Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade, Gogo Kozma, came to Warsaw to negotiate and sign the new agreement, Trybuna Ludu reported on February 5. A Reuter dispatch from Warsaw on the same day stressed that, according to observers it was the first Albanian delegation at this level to visit Poland in years. Actually, the Albanian Vice-Minister Gogo Kozma visited Warsaw last time in December 1963 to sign the trade protocol for 1964.

Trade News

(1) A delegation of British fibre makers arrived in Warsaw on a seven-day visit to study possibilities for expanding trade relations between the two countries, reported UPI from Warsaw quoting PAP (February 11). The visiting group, comprising representatives from ICI, is scheduled for talks with Poland's Foreign Trade Board on a widening of trade exchanges between both countries in artificial fibres, said UPI.

2. Cuba's Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade, H. Garzia Lazo, arrived in Warsaw on February 2 to negotiate the trade protocol for 1966, Radio Warsaw and PAP reported the same day. Up to now there has been no news about any signing of the protocol.

The first Polish-Cuban trade agreement was signed in Havana in March 1960 and was later extended till March 1965.

Note: An article by Czeslaw Farkowski on "The Trends of Change in the February 1966 issue of Nowe Drogi is available in English translation in Polish Press Survey No. 1968 of 17 February 1966.