

Warsaw Ghetto Celebrations

Celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising (cf. Situation Report, March 7) started on April 18. The overall supervision of the celebrations rested with Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz.

On the eve there was held a commemorative meeting in the Congress Hall of Warsaw's Palace of Culture, and Edward Ochab, in the capacity of the Deputy Chairman of the Council of State, decorated many persons for participation in or cooperation with the Jewish resistance movement. A well-known writer Zofia Kossak-Szczucka was among them. A proportion of the total 91 decorations were granted posthumously.

Also on April 18 was opened an art exhibition connected with the Ghetto uprising. At the commemorative meeting there were many prominent personalities: Cyrankiewicz, Wycech and Stanislaw Kulczynski, chairmen of Peasant and Democratic Parties respectively, Walenty Titkow, First Secretary of the Warsaw Party Committee and Marian Naszkowski, Deputy Foreign Minister. The speeches were delivered by Janusz Zarzycki, Chairman of the Warsaw National Council in his capacity of the Chairman of Combattants and Hersz Smolar as representative of the Social-Cultural Union of Jews. He spoke in Yiddish.

On April 19 there was a celebration at the Heroes of Ghetto Monument, in which Gen. Stefan Orlinski, commander of the Warsaw garrison, played a leading role.

Western information media reported that Jews from over 20 countries attended the celebrations (cf. Reuter, April 20), but Radio Warsaw only reported of an East German delegation, which brought to Cyrankiewicz a letter from Ulbricht, with brotherly greetings for underground fighters and survivors of the Ghetto uprising. At the ceremony of receiving this letter

22 APRIL 1963

were present Generals Mieczyslaw Moczar and Grzegorz Korczynski. This seems to be the only contribution of "partisans" to the celebration.

From a passing remark in the broadcast one can also gather that there was also a delegate (or delegation) of the International Federation of Resistance Movement.

Only from foreign reports do we learn that the leader of Israeli delegation was Attorney General, Gideon Hausner, and that the Chief Rabbi of Tel-Aviv was present, and that there were Jews from the USA, Great Britain, France, Israel, Italy, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Mexico -- 1,500 in all. Also from these sources we learn that there was no delegation from the Soviet Union, but that one woman journalist came to report on ceremonies (cf. Reuter 19 and 20 April, UPI, 19 April). On April 21 foreign guests visited Tremblinka concentration camp.

At the same time there are in Israel accusations of Polish anti-Semitism because a number of Israeli citizens were refused visas (cf. RFE Special, Tel-Aviv, April 19).

The whole Polish press published suitable articles. The radio reported that celebrations were also organized in the Soviet Union, the USA and East Germany and castigated West Germany for the lack of any mention of the anniversary (Radio Warsaw, April 18 through 21).

Polish Episcopate on Religious Instruction

The new Pastoral Letter on religious instruction was read in all churches throughout Poland on April 21, reported AP the same day.

It marks a new flare-up of this never ending controversy (cf. Situation Report, January 3 and 10 for its most recent manifestations).

The controversy has existed since shortly after 1956, when the regime began various tricks in connection with religious classes in schools. It reached a climax by the parliamentary bill of 15 July 1961 ending religious instruction in schools. Not so much the law itself, as its later implementation, must be considered the most retrogressive acts the church has so far been subjected to.

Religious classes in schools, as long as they existed, after the war as well as before the war, were subject to general school regulations (inspection by schools inspectors) and teaching priests (before the war Catholic as well as teachers of other denomination) received state salaries for their work within schools. There were also some restrictions e.g. already before the war it was agreed principle that members of monastic orders could not teach religion.

But outside schools, before and after the war, the clergy were free to teach whenever and to whomever they choose.

With the removal of religious classes from schools the regime regularized the teaching outside schools, retaining most of the restrictions. Thus the classes have to be registered, subject to sanitary and educational inspection, reports on activities were to be sent to school authorities, monastic clergy were barred from teaching, and priests who taught were to be paid a monthly salary. Strong opposition by the clergy brought about slight modifications in the instructions, in essence amounting to exemption of classes held in churches from inspection, and offering salaries only to those priests who applied for it.

The hierarchy forbade priests to register, and they on the whole complied. As is usual also with the taxation of clergy, the whole matter was held in abeyance, except for occasional cases of local persecution. But judging from the present Pastoral Letter, confirmed also by other unofficial information, the

22 APRIL 1963

Ministry of Education has started the full execution of the regulation, and imposes fines for non-registration of classes.

Apart from forcing the application of regulations (i.e. exclusion of monks even though they are vicars of parishes -- a not too rare occurrence in today's Poland) there are also known cases of transgressing regulations by authorities by demand of permitting inspection of classes held in churches. On this subject there was also earlier information.

The hierarchy's stand is now, as it has always been, that religion will be taught whatever the fines and persecutions. "The Church shall continue to teach religion, because this is in accordance with our conscience, our vocation and the highest legal acts of our fatherland, the constitution of the Polish People's Republic, the decree about freedom of conscience and confession, the agreement between the government and the Episcopate."