

Sino-Soviet Dispute at the 6th Plenum

Stehle, writing in today's Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, offers some specific and indeed, revealing details regarding the debate on the Sino-Soviet dispute at the recent Plenum of the CC of the PUWP (cf. Situation Reports September 14, 15 and 16). He confirms outright the existence of a Chinese circular letter which, subsequent to the Bucharest meeting was distributed to the Politburos of all communist parties. Moreover, he also confirms the existence of a Russian explanatory reply, a document of 70 pages, which the Soviet CC in turn distributed to its satellites. According to Stehle, Gomulka submitted at the Plenum both documents to members of the Central Committee who, after a brief discussion, and without any opposition being voiced, adopted his stand, as now reflected in the public resolution on the "conference of communist leaders in Bucharest". Perhaps even more startling is the fact that the Chinese circular letter allegedly contained not only criticism of Khrushchev's policy of coexistence and his support of "national bourgeois governments" but also rebuked the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary for "Phillistine trends" which are openly gaining momentum in these countries. In particular the Chinese are supposed to have criticized Polish tolerance of private agricultural economy and policy towards the Church. According to Stehle, Gomulka, undismayed and without much ado, passed over both documents, and merely stated that Poland's place is on the side of the Soviet Union. At the same time he is reported to have expressed regret that the Chinese failed to recognize the "peculiar Polish conditions". Considering that Stehle sent his dispatch from Warsaw and wrote it in such unequivocal terms, great credibility is given here to these disclosures. In fact, the form in which the resolution of the Plenum was couched, marked by considerable restraint, indirectly corroborates Stehle's report. Please note that Halperin's dispatch, also on the Sino-Soviet dispute, which we telexed to you yesterday has appeared in today's Münchener Merkur in its complete version, in addition to what the paper published yesterday.

Church-State --- Religion in Schools

Equally revealing and factual is the second part of Stehle's dispatch, also that by Halperin in today's Münchener Merkur, both on the regime's campaign to remove religious instruction from schools. The additional facts to be noted in the current tug of war between Church and state on the school front (cf. Situation Report September 9 and 15) are as follows: In its sharpest form the present offensive is mainly concentrated on schools in the Warsaw area where, according to Halperin, two-thirds of the public schools began the new school year without religious instructions being given. A similar trend in other major cities is, for the time being, less pronounced

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while in the countryside most schools still continue to offer religion as a subject. Nevertheless, the regime is determined to step-up the campaign on a nationwide scale notwithstanding the 1956 agreement with the Episcopate, in which religious instructions in schools was formally guaranteed. According to what both Stehle and Halperin report, it would appear that once again for the sake of national unity both the Episcopate and the regime reached a temporary compromise in this matter. According to what both Warsaw correspondents report, at the national conference of the Episcopate which took place in Czestochowa on September 7, the Polish Bishops planned to protest by means of a pastoral letter against the government action to remove religion from about 60% of all schools in the country. Subsequently, however, through direct intervention by the provincial authorities with all the Bishops the regime prevailed upon them not to issue the pastoral letter in their given Diocese. The regime authorities on their side proposed to soften the blow by offering assistance to the Church to conduct religious instructions outside the schools. After further consultation with Cardinal Wyszynski, the proposed pastoral letter was withdrawn. According to Halperin, the Primate as Bishop of the Warsaw Diocese issued instead his own appeal to the faithful of the Warsaw area to provide for the religious education of their children, at the same time reminding them to respect the attitude of non-believers. This must be interpreted to mean that Warsaw children will now receive their religious instruction outside schools where such facilities exist.

Altogether it would appear that the Church in Poland is prepared to compromise on the school issue evidently confident that it will be able to provide on its own for the religious education of youth in a manner more effective than the now meaningless agreements with the regime.

Pouched

(1) Polityka (September 17) M. F. Rakowski, "Znak" and Questions (recent political articles in Tygodnik Powszechny supply the pretext for an attack on Polish Catholics and the Church as a whole); (2) Nowa Kultura (September 18) T. Galinski, "We Have the Criteria, But Less Literature" (on the publishing policy and need for socialist literature); (3) Dziennik Polski (London) (September 20), Unsigned, "Gomulka Blasts Opposition Within The Party" (alleged text of two secret Gomulka speeches, unconfirmed).