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May Day Celebrations

The May 1 celebrations in Poland were preceded by the awards of decorations, on April 30, to 126 representatives from various walks of public life. They were made by State Council Chairman Edward Ochab and Premier Jozef Cyrankiewicz.

The so-called "central" celebrations took place in Warsaw on May 1 and lasted for at least four hours. After a speech by First Party Secretary Gomulka, there was a parade in which "veterans of ^{the} workers' movement," Party members and representatives of all walks of life, including ministerial employees, professors, literati, journalists and students, marched past the reviewing stand manned by top Party leaders. These leaders were present not only in person but also in countless portraits displayed above the reviewing stand and along the parade route. Radio Warsaw reporters referred to the portraits of Gomulka, Ochab and Cyrankiewicz and to such dead Communist leaders as Lenin,

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Marx and Engels. Of the living foreign Communist leaders, only Ho Chi-Minh was referred to in this context.

Similar celebrations also took place in the provincial cities. In Katowice, Politburo member and voivodship first secretary Edward Gierek delivered a speech, but the citizens of Lodz listened to Gomulka's speech transmitted from Warsaw. Apparently, the newly appointed Lodz secretary, Jozef Spychalski (cf. SR December 16), was not considered important enough to speak publicly. Also Politburo member and trade union chief Ignacy Loga-Sowinski, who was sent to Lodz to add splendor to the workers' celebration, remained diplomatically silent. Another Politburo member, Marshal Marian Spychalski, took part in the celebrations in Poznan.

Anti-American Declarations

"In this year's May First celebrations in all the countries of the world there resounds a powerful common voice of protest and indignation of the international worker class and of the people's masses against the armed intervention of the United States in South Vietnam and against the bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, bombings which are provocations to all socialist countries." This excerpt is taken from Gomulka's speech in Warsaw on May 1. "The imperialist USA aggression in Indochina," the Polish leader continued, "puts the world's peace in immediate danger. The United States, in its role of the policeman of neo-colonialism and anti-Communism, is trying to impose its domination over the Vietnamese nation by armed force. The USA is brutally violating the Geneva convention and international law. It refuses the Vietnamese nation the right of self-determination. By the means of dirty war, bombs, napalm and gas, the US wants to break the (Vietnamese) spirit of freedom and independence."

Gomulka also did not spare the US in his criticism of what he called "armed intervention by Washington" in the Dominican Republic. "We protest against the new act of brutal aggression and interference by the USA in ^{the} internal affairs of other countries," he said..

Apparently instructed not to mince words, the lesser lights of the regime followed suit. Thus a Radio Warsaw reporter who covered the May Day parade offered the following comment on the US: "Blinded by great-power chauvinism and anti-Communism, American militarists trample on elementary laws of nations and do not shrink from using in this dirty war such genocidal instruments as gases and napalm." Also Trybuna Ludu of May 1 devoted some passages to "American imperialism" and its "acts of extreme barbarism."

Two days earlier, on April 29, the All-Polish Committee of the Front of National Unity passed a resolution "condemning the armed intervention of American imperialism in South Vietnam and the terrorist air raids on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam." The USA was also singled out in another public declaration of the Committee -- in the electoral platform published on the same date. "Peace is threatened by the policy of the German Federal Republic and by its ally number one -- the United States," read the pertinent passage.

Interview with Couve de Murville

The French Foreign Minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, granted a "special interview" to the Paris correspondent of Radio Warsaw, Jan Zakrzewski. Broadcast yesterday, the interview pertained to the recent talks Couve de Murville had with his Soviet opposite number, Andrei A. Gromyko. The purpose of these talks, the French Minister stated, was a renewal of contacts rather than ^{the} conclusion of any treaty, and the "orientation" of French-Soviet relations in the new climate reflecting the evolution of relations between Eastern and Western Europe. This evolution had found its expression last year in the taking up of contacts between France and a "certain number of the states of East Europe, and even possibly with all the states of East Europe."

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While the interview contained no more than diplomatic platitudes, its significance becomes clear against the background of Polish-French relations. It is precisely Poland which had no "contacts" with France last year, reportedly because there was no agreement in the Polish leadership on whom to send to Paris, Prime Minister Jozef Cyrankiewicz or Politburo member Zenon Kliszko (cf. SR March 4). This fact ^{was} glossed over by Couve in his qualified statement on the contacts with East European states.

Criticism of Comecon Bank

An appraisal and criticism of the operations of the Comecon Bank were voiced by Henryk Kotlicki, one of the directors general of the Polish Ministry of Finance, in an interview granted to a PAP correspondent and published by Trybuna Ludu on April 27. The interview was granted soon after the termination of the first year of the Bank's existence. Kotlicki asserted that the first year of activity of the Bank was very satisfactory. However, he referred to the recently submitted Polish proposal for the exchange of the "transferable ruble" into gold or other convertible currencies. The first stage of the changes would be based on the following principles:

- the country which for a longer time possesses a surplus on its account could, under certain circumstances, exchange 10% of that surplus into gold.

The debtor with negative balances for a longer period would be required to pay part of his debt in gold or convertible currencies.

After a number of years and through a series of stages the proposal suggests the attainment of 100% convertibility of the "transferable ruble" into gold or convertible currencies. According to Kotlicki, the Polish proposal would transform the bank into a financial instrument influencing the whole of trade between member countries.

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Noting that the interest rates charged by the Bank on loans to cover negative trade balances were too low to encourage greater interest in avoiding and clearing up such negative balances, Kotlicki hopes that the adoption of the Polish suggestion for ultimate genuine convertibility would eventually bring about greater international financial discipline among Comecon members.

Reporting on the interview on April 30, Radio Moscow (in Polish) omitted all references to Kotlicki's criticism and to Poland's suggestions for change in the Bank's financial operations. Instead, the broadcast summed up only those passages of the interview praising the Bank's operation over the past year.