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A Turn in Church-State Relations?

In what may be a sudden reversal of the trend, Trybuna Ludu, in an article today entitled "New Interpretation," found that the Polish bishops had made a "clear attempt at filling in, at least in part, the abyss created between the stand of the Church hierarchy and the opinions of the overwhelming majority of Poles on the German question."

According to a summary of the article broadcast this morning by Radio Warsaw, Trybuna Ludu saw such an attempt in a pastoral letter read in Poland's churches on Sunday, March 6. In this pastoral letter, Trybuna Ludu stated, the Polish bishops "found that it was proper and necessary to explain to Polish [public] opinion the sense of particular formulations used in their letter to the German bishops." It follows, Trybuna Ludu continued, that either this message (to the German bishops) was badly prepared, in a way "offering various interpretations," or that it contained formulations which its authors would like "either to renounce or revise." Since they did not want to lose face, Trybuna Ludu explained, they prepared a pastoral letter which gave a "new, different meaning" to these formulations. The Party mouthpiece went further: it published the pastoral letter, "with minor cuts," Radio Warsaw explained.

The text of the pastoral letter of March 6 is not available here. However, Reuter reported from Warsaw March 9 that it dealt with: 1) the attitude of the Polish Episcopate towards Poland's Western Territories; 2) the question of on whose behalf the bishops were speaking in their message to the German bishops; and 3) the significance of the words used in the message "we forgive and ask forgiveness."

The letter was read from the pulpits of the Warsaw churches on the same day as Trybuna Ludu published a long expose of Prime Minister

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Jozef Cyrankiewicz, explaining the reasons for the refusal of a passport to Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski (cf. SR January 10) and strongly criticizing the Cardinal and the Polish Episcopate for their attitude toward the state. This expose came in the form of a letter addressed to the Polish Episcopate in answer to Bishop Zygmunt Chormanski's earlier (February 10) refutation of charges raised in connection with the passport refusal.

This letter of Cyrankiewicz (dated March 5 and published by Trybuna Ludu on March 6) was evidently intended as a most severe "reprimand" by the State and Party authorities of the Polish Church hierarchy. At the same time, it seemed to constitute a climax of the propaganda campaign which had been going on since early December and was interpreted as such by serious observers from Poland interviewed by RFE. They even expressed the opinion that it would be followed by a gradual relaxation and a final return to relative peace between the Church and the State.

If the Trybuna Ludu article of today is what it appears to be, the relaxation has begun earlier than expected. In this connection, it is worth noting that the last criticism of the Polish Episcopate was on Radio Warsaw on March 13 in the much used form of an answer to a listener's letter.

There seems to be little doubt that it is not the bishops who are sounding the retreat, but that Trybuna Ludu only pretends to be hearing such sounds coming from the Church so as to camouflage its own retreat. For, if the pastoral letter really meant a reversal of the Polish bishops' stand, why did it take the Polish Party more than ten days to find this meaning in the bishops' message of March 6?

Is it not possible that the pressure of "brotherly parties" -- and in this connection the visit of Luigi Longo in Warsaw and the rather mysterious appearance in the Polish capital of the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister (see next item) give grounds for speculation -- influenced a reversal of the stand of the regime rather than of the Church?

Semenov Received by Gomulka

Party First Secretary Wladyslaw Gomulka received on February 14 Soviet Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Vladimir S. Semenov, Radio Warsaw announced the next day. In a "rather long talk" Polish Politburo members Zenon Kliszko and Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki as well as Soviet Ambassador to Poland Averky Aristov took part. Semenov handed Gomulka a letter from First Secretary of the CC, CPSU, Leonid Brezhnev, the broadcast explained, as well as a copy of the Soviet emblem placed on the moon by Luna IX. There was no reference to the content of the letter delivered by Semenov.

Week of Solidarity with Vietnam

A "Week of Solidarity with Fighting Vietnam" was proclaimed in Poland on March 12, in accordance with the decisions passed by the first conference of solidarity of "three continents" in Havana last January.

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On the eve of the "solidarity week," on March 11, a session of the Works' Council of the Lenin Steel Combine at Nowa Huta decided to assign from the Council's fund 10,000 zloty for the "Fund of Solidarity with Heroic Vietnam," Radio Warsaw reported on the same day. The Council appealed to other Works' Councils in Poland to follow the example of Nowa Huta. In addition, the Nowa Huta "trade unionists" initiated a silver collection for the "Solidarity Fund".

Since that date Radio Warsaw has continued to report on similar meetings of Works' Councils, crews of other factories, schools, and various institutions all over Poland. Thus the first to respond to the appeal of Nowa Huta "trade unionists" was the Locomotive Factory at Chrzanow whose workers collected 15,000 zloty on March 12. On March 14 the workers of the Poznan chocolate factory "Goplana" decided to pay out of the Works' Council funds 1,000 zloty, a share more than proportionate to that of the Nowa Huta steel giant. They resolved: "We express our indignation at the barbarous air raids on the peaceful population of Vietnam, in which innocent children, women and old people are dying." In a meeting of professors and students of the Main School of Planning and Statistics in Warsaw 700 persons took part, Radio Warsaw reported on March 15. While the above are only samples, it should be stressed that the wave of meetings, resolutions and contributions for the "solidarity fund" are proceeding throughout the whole country.

It is likely that these meetings and contributions will have an affect quite opposite to the one designed by the regime. For one thing, people are tired of the prolonged propaganda campaign against the Polish Episcopate. In addition, the poorly paid Polish workers are unlikely to become more enthusiastic supporters of their Vietnamese comrades following a silver collection and other payments.

Polish Pen Club's Appeal for Clemency for Sinyavsky and Daniel

The Polish Pen Club sent a request for clemency for Sinyavsky and Daniel, the two Soviet writers sentenced on February 14 to seven and five years "deprivation of liberty" respectively, an RFE Special from London reported yesterday.

The request was sent from Warsaw to the Union of Soviet Writers which was asked "to apply for clemency" for the two writers. "We believe that an act of clemency will largely contribute to strengthen the international cooperation of writers," the Polish message said. The text of the message was released by the London Headquarters of the International Pen Club.

There was no reference in the message to the nature of the "crime" for which the two writers had been sentenced. However, Trybuna Ludu, reporting on the sentence on February 15, explained that the proceedings had established that in the years 1953-1963 Sinyavsky and Daniel -- under the pseudonyms Abram Tertz and Nikolai Arzhak respectively -- "had written and sent (their works) abroad illegally, with the aim of publishing nine works of an anti-Soviet character. These works were published in the capitalist countries and are used

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in the ideological warfare against the Soviet Union."

Earlier reports, notably UPI and Reuter from Warsaw of March 10, referred to a "protest" of the Polish Pen Club. As it turned out, the Polish letter contains a plea for clemency rather than a protest. Nevertheless, even in this form, the intervention of the Polish Pen Club must be rather embarrassing to the Soviets.

Since that date Radio Warsaw has continued to report on similar meetings of Workers' Councils, crews of other factories, schools and various institutions all over Poland. Thus the first to respond to the appeal of News Huts "trade unionists" was the locomotive factory at Chorzow whose workers collected 15,000 zloty on March 12. On March 14 the workers of the Poman chocolate factory "Gopians" decided to pay out of the Workers' Council funds 1,000 zloty, a share more than proportionate to that of the News Huts steel plant. They resolved: "We express our indignation at the barbarous air raids on the general population of Vietnam, in which innocent children, women and old people are dying." In a meeting of professors and students of the Main School of Planning and Statistics in Warsaw 700 persons took part, Radio Warsaw reported on March 15. While the above are only samples, it should be stressed that the wave of meetings, resolutions and contributions for the "solidarity fund" are proceeding throughout the whole country.

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There was no reference in the message to the nature of the "crime" for which the two writers had been sentenced. However, Tribune India, reporting on the sentence on February 15, explained that the proceedings had established that in the years 1953-1954 Sinyavsky and Daniel -- under the pseudonyms Abram Tertz and Nikolai Arzhak respectively -- "had written and sent (their works) abroad illegally, with the aim of publishing nine works of an anti-Soviet character. These works were published in the capitalist countries and are used