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EAST EUROPE

Poland/15
4 March 1968

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Writers Protest Against Party Cultural Policy

The meeting of the Warsaw Branch of the Polish Writers' Union on February 29 (cf. Polish Situation Report, Radio Free Europe Research, February 5, 19 and 29) was stormy and lasted until after midnight, Western correspondents reported from Warsaw.

Thus far the most detailed account of the meeting was that of Angela Nacken, writing for Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (March 4). The Party, which apparently did its best to prevent the discussion from going beyond the Dziady incident, presented -- through its spokesman, writer Stanislaw Ryszard Dobrowolski -- a resolution regretting the suspension of the play but at the same time condemning "the demonstrations of the audience." This resolution was supported by 125 writers. (The Warsaw Branch is composed of about 600 writers, of whom about 100 are Party members.)

The resolution of the majority, presented by writer Andrzej Kijowski, expressed the demand for greater participation of writers in cultural policy, appealed for democratization of cultural and artistic life, asked for the reintroduction on the stage of Dziady, and protested against "excesses of the censorship" and against "administrative methods." This resolution received the support of over 200 writers, Nacken reported or -- as other agencies had it -- of a majority of over 100.

According to Nacken, the most outspoken critic of the government's cultural policy was Prof. Leszek Kolakowski, who drew a comparison between what had been promised in 1956 and the present

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situation. He was quoted as stating that the Party is destroying cultural life. An unnamed participant of the meeting went as far as to state that the cultural policy is determined by fools.

The Party reaction to the meeting demonstrated serious concern about the writers' resistance. At the time the writers' meeting started, a government spokesman, editor-in-chief of the "Interpress" agency Jerzy Solecki, explained to representatives of the Western press that the suspension of Dziady had been provoked by "organized excesses of hooligans" and accused Kazimierz Dejmek, the play's producer, of falsifying the intention of the play's author by omitting a phrase about the cooperation of Polish and Russian revolutionaries. Thus the government's criticism, Solecki explained, is directed not against Dziady but against its producer, Nacken reported for FAZ on March 2.

Similar explanations were given to the writers' meeting by Stanislaw Balicki, director general of the Ministry of Culture and Arts, news agencies reported.

The same sources, notably Reuter and DPA, reported on March 1 that one hour before the closure of the writers' meeting, two groups of workers appeared outside the building and asked for admission to present "resolutions to the writers." Neither was admitted, but a woman worker was quoted as saying that she would prefer "ten writers who defended the Party line" to the entire Writers' Union.

No details of the stormy meeting were published by the official media, but PAP reported on March 1 that "a meeting of the Warsaw Branch of the Polish Writers' Union was held" on February 29 and that Balicki "informed those present on the latest adaptation for the stage of the Forefathers' Eve (Dziady), a drama by Adam Mickiewicz, and the reasons for which it had been taken off the stage."

Two days after the meeting, on March 2, Warsaw's Party actif met with the Executive of the Warsaw Party Committee, Radio Warsaw and Reuter reported on the same day. The Committee's First Secretary, Jozef Kepa, delivered a report, whereupon the meeting passed "unanimously" a resolution which "severely appraised all attempts to undermine the Party's cultural policy and all actions aimed at its fundamental principles and the good name of national culture."

Nina Karsow's Appeal Rejected

Poland's Supreme Court has rejected an appeal by Nina Karsow against a three year sentence passed on October 26 (cf. Polish SR, RPER, October 30), Reuter reported from Warsaw on March 2, quoting "informed sources." The appeal heard on March 1, like Karsow's three week trial in October, was held behind closed doors.

"Informed sources" also said that Miss Karsow was married in prison last February 2 to her former employer, blind writer Szymon Szechter.

The Bensberg Circle Memorandum

A new document on Polish-German relations was published in excerpts on March 3, an RFE Special reported from Bonn on the same day. The document, entitled A Memorandum of German Catholics on German-Polish Questions, was prepared by the so-called Bensberg Circle, a group of prominent Catholic intellectuals, whose number is estimated variously at 70 to 80 higher school and university teachers, intellectuals, and other personalities. News agencies reported from Cologne (March 3) that the document had been signed by "some 150 Catholics."

The German press reported earlier that the draft had been prepared by columnist ("Publizist") Walter Dirks, Prof. Eugen Kogon, and education official (Oberstudienrat) Manfred Seidler.

According to the RFE Special, the Bensberg Circle urges "concrete steps," including the acceptance of the present status of the Oder-Neisse areas, designed to bring about a reconciliation with Poland.

"We are grieved that we did not make public endeavors toward peace with Poland much earlier," the authors of the memorandum wrote. They also admit that "German Catholicism has not displayed the courage and strength to protest the terrible wrong committed against the Poles under the Nazi regime."

The memorandum has already provoked much controversy in the FRG. Details were leaked to the press a few months ago, and the memorandum was sharply attacked by the expellee organizations. Cardinal Julius Döpfner's endeavors to have the Bensberg Circle reconcile its views with those of expellee organizations failed. Not surprisingly, the association of German Catholic refugee organizations rejected the Bensberg draft as a basis for a joint statement of all German Catholics, the Special reported. The association announced that it would issue an independent declaration. There was opposition to the publication of the memorandum even within the Circle, three prominent members of which, Professors Otto Roeggele, Georg Smolka, and Paul Mikat took exception to the memorandum because they approved neither of the full contents nor its timing.

West German Expellee Minister Kai-Uwe von Hassel declared on March 2 that an attempt to solve individual problems by advance concessions made an overall solution more difficult. Criticism was also voiced by a spokesman of the "Working Committee of Catholic Expellee Organizations," CDU Bundestag Deputy Clemens Riedel, as well as by a number of representatives of expellee organizations.

The official Polish reaction was expressed in a Trybuna Ludu article written by Marian Podkowinski (for several years in the past the paper's correspondent in Bonn). While positive on the suggested recognition of the Oder-Neisse status quo, Podkowinski expressed serious reservations about what the memorandum did not refer to, namely, the recognition of the GDR and the renunciation of the use of nuclear weapons.

Farewell to Gen. Bordzilowski

Gen. Jerzy Bordzilowski's departure from active service seems to be taking place in installments. After being released from the post of the Chief Inspector of Training (on his own request) (cf. Polish SR/10, RFER, February 12) on February 26 he was decorated by Marshal Marian Spychalski with the Great Cross of the Order of Reborn Poland. At the same time, Spychalski bade him farewell "in connection with conceding to his request and releasing him from his functions in the Ministry of National Defense, because of his reaching retirement age." Apart from Politburo member Spychalski, in his capacity as Minister of National Defense, and other generals, the ceremony was attended by CC Secretary Wladyslaw Wicha who deals with military matters in the CC Secretariat. Later Bordzilowski was received by Prime Minister Jozef Cyrankiewicz, who thanked him for his work, on behalf of the Party and government (cf. Trybuna Ludu, February 27).

Several observations may be made in connection with the mode of Bordzilowski's departure. First of all, the question arises what is his present status. Every officer is, irrespective of the post he fills, on active service until retired. So far it is known that Bordzilowski resigned his post as Chief Inspector of Training and as Deputy Minister of National Defense, but nothing is known about his retirement from active service. Furthermore, he resigned his appointments "because of reaching retirement age." Officers of his rank could be pensioned off on achieving the age of 62 (cf. Dziennik Ustaw No. 2/1958, Item No. 5, Article 56). Thus, at 68, Bordzilowski could be pensioned off without submitting a request. The farewell ceremonies seem to indicate that in spite of his position and undoubted meritorious service, Gomulka did not wish to receive him on retirement. Finally the point of decoration. The highest Polish decoration is the Order of Builders of People's Poland, which can be given only to Polish citizens. The second highest award (and the highest that can be given to a foreigner) is the Grand Cross of the Order of Reborn Poland. It is extremely rarely given to Polish citizens, and rarer still to Party members who do not already possess the higher decoration. Thus Bordzilowski, who is a CC member, received an unusual decoration, corresponding to the rest of his retirement procedure.

East-West Contacts

Raymond Marcellin, French Minister-Delegate for Planning and Development, arrived in Warsaw on February 29 for a four-day visit, an RFE Special from Paris reported on the same day. He was accompanied by French Planning Commissioner Rene Montjoie and other persons. They were to conduct talks with Polish officials on problems of industrialization and regional development.

Rwanda's Minister of Health arrived in Warsaw on March 2, Radio Warsaw reported the same day.

The Chamber Orchestra of the Warsaw Philharmonic arrived in London on the way back from the US, Radio Warsaw reported on March 2.