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The Church-State War Goes On

The propaganda war over the Polish bishops' letter is two months old today, and shows no sign of ending. On the contrary, recent attacks seem to suggest that a decision was taken to step up the campaign and also to broaden the front by including some of the "fraternal" propaganda machines.

Recently, Trybuna Ludu (February 8) reported that it had learned only "a few days ago" that among the episcopates of the 56 countries invited to take part in the Millennium celebration in Czestochowa there were no invitations to the "countries closest to Poland," Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

"This fact is as unusual as it is significant," the paper commented. "Who but Cardinal Wyszynski should know the role which the Czech princess Dabrowka and her sister Mlada as well as the priests who arrived from Bohemia with Bishop Jordan played in the acceptance of Christianity" (by Poland)?

And with respect to Hungary, did the authors of the invitation forget the historical links between the Churches of Poland and Hungary, Trybuna Ludu asked. After these rhetorical questions the Party paper concluded that the selection of invitations had been dictated by political rather than religious considerations. The episcopates of these two countries, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, "entered a road of normalization of relations and civic cooperation with the people's state and gave up drawing the Church into a hopeless and harmful political play against the new (state) system."

On the other hand, Trybuna Ludu commented bitterly, the Polish Episcopate, "after having left out the Hungarian and Czech bishops, did its best to assure the participation, as honorary guests, of the German bishops, those bishops who traditionally, and till today,

are engaged in the anti-Polish revisionist action of the West German militarists."

Trybuna Ludu's assertions are not entirely correct. "A Polish Church spokesman," quoted by Reuter from Warsaw (February 8), maintained that the Czechoslovak Church had already received an invitation and that an invitation to the Hungarians was now being prepared.

This statement was also supported by Angela Nacken reporting for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (February 9) that Cardinal Wyszynski, in a sermon on December 12, mentioned the Czechoslovak Episcopate among those invited to the celebrations. Nacken also quoted Trybuna Ludu as asking whether, in Wyszynski's opinion, the agreement between the Hungarian state and the Vatican, concluded over the head of Cardinal Mindszenty, had brought any harm to the Hungarian bishops.

The same question was raised by a well-known Party expert on religious affairs, Wieslaw Myslek, speaking over Radio Warsaw yesterday. Myslek was commenting on an article by Rev. Gyorgy Vitanyi published in the Hungarian bi-weekly Katolikus Szo. The article is very similar in its content to that of Trybuna Ludu. It adds, though, that the "leading circles of the (Polish) Episcopate, and particularly Cardinal Wyszynski, during the debates of the Vatican Council, treated the episcopates of socialist countries differently than they treated other episcopates, ignoring them and stressing their own superiority and the line they represented." Rev. Vitanyi came to the same conclusion as Trybuna Ludu: the selection of guests was not religious but political. He also referred to the agreement between Hungary and the Vatican as one of possible reasons for the omission of the Hungarian Episcopate.

This reference, Myslek commented, reminds one that the agreement had been concluded "against and over the head of the former Hungarian cardinal (emphasis supplied) -- the politician Mindszenty, rejected by the current of life, a fierce enemy of the socialist system, who still today sits in internal emigration in the American Embassy in Budapest."

While the content of the Trybuna Ludu and Katolikus Szo articles suggests that they are addressed not only to the Polish Primate and to the Polish Episcopate, but also -- if not first of all -- to the Vatican, the Myslek statement about the agreement concluded "over the head of Cardinal Wyszynski" contains a clear message to the Vatican on how to solve "certain" problems.

This same point is made even more sharply by Rome's pro-Communist daily Paese Sera (February 9). As quoted by an RFE Special, the paper said:

"It seems evident to us that, if the Polish Primate continues to maintain his position of obstinate intransigence, his presence in Warsaw could become an obstacle in the discourse between the Vatican and the socialist states."

The Trybuna Ludu attack concerning the invitations was one of a long series. They were made methodically and systematically at every meeting of the voivodship committees of the Front of National Unity, which followed the all-Polish meeting of January 14, and at

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meetings organized on other occasions. All these attacks were duly reported by Radio Warsaw. Thus, Radio Warsaw reported on January 22 that, at a meeting of the Front of National Unity in Olsztyn, voivodship Party first secretary, Stanislaw Tomaszewski, "condemned the stand taken by the Polish bishops in the message to the German bishops;" and that at a voivodship congress of the United Peasant Party in Warsaw on January 29, national chairman Czeslaw Wycech "took a stand on the well-known letter of the Polish bishops to the German bishops." Another speaker, trade union leader, Politburo member, Ignacy Loga-Sowinski, during a plenary session of the Central Council of Trade Unions in Warsaw, stated on February 1 that the entire Polish society had "rejected the reactionary aims expressed in the political content of the message of the leadership of the Polish Episcopate to the Episcopate of Catholic bishops in the GFR, a message imbued with irreconcilable hostility toward People's Poland and questioning the definitively settled problem of our borders on the Oder and the Neisse." (It seems that Loga had "forgotten" by February 1 what he was told by Gomulka on January 14, namely that the bishops had not questioned the border.)

In its effort to discredit the Episcopate, and particularly the Cardinal, the regime has resorted to publishing letters from individuals attacking the Cardinal. Thus, an open letter from Henryk Ryszewski of Lodz, who studied with Wyszynski at the Wloclawek seminary from 1917 to 1921, was published by Zycie Warszawy on February 7. The author violently accused the Cardinal of being pro-German. (Ryszewski, a would-be journalist, used to work for the Caritas organization, known for its pro-regime sympathies. In 1954 he received the Silver Cross of Merit for activities in a "Catholic progressive organization.")

Another letter published by Zycie Warszawy (on February 8) came from T. Sobolewski of Greenacres in South Australia. "These Polish martyrs travelling abroad with Polish diplomatic passports," Sobolewski wrote, "have such privileges as no priest here can dream of because the (Australian) constitution does not grant any privileges in the field of religion."

The question arises concerning the extent to which this intense propaganda against the Episcopate is dictated by the desire to discredit the Cardinal at home, the desire to influence the Vatican, or is generally a reaction to the series of sermons by Polish bishops, headed by the Cardinal -- sermons which appear to be greeted enthusiastically by the population.

On this point Henry Kamm reported for The New York Times (February 6) that although there had been initial confusion among the Polish faithful about the letter, the violence of the regime attacks against the Episcopate, "climaxed by the government's refusal to let Cardinal Wyszynski attend a Millennium celebration at the Vatican last month, conferred the status of martyrdom on the Church and rallied the faithful around her."

The best indication of support of the Church by the population has been reflected in two recent events, rather extraordinary in Polish religious life. During a sermon in Czestochowa, the faithful shouted "Long live!" to Cardinal Wyszynski, and in Wroclaw, Archbishop Boleslaw Kominek was applauded in the cathedral during a sermon.

Mass Protests Over Vietnam

"Protest meetings are in full swing across Poland," Henry Kamm reported from Warsaw for The New York Times (February 3). "The tone of the resolutions is harsh, sometimes violent, as are the newspaper editorials," he continued. However, "condemnation was less harsh and indignation less high" in what the American journalist called "a series of random sidewalk chats," although, "to be sure," there were "no endorsements of United States bombing raids."

"The resumption by the American air force of the bombing raids on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam produced great indignation among Polish public opinion," Radio Warsaw reported on February 1. It quoted excerpts of resolutions passed at "mass protest meetings" in several towns. Speaking on the same day at a plenary session of the Central Council of Trade Unions, the Council's chairman and Politburo member Ignacy Loga-Sowinski devoted much time to "US imperialism trying to play the role of a policeman of the nations of the world," and to "napalm used against the liberation struggle" in South Vietnam, etc.

Day by day, Radio Warsaw and the Polish press, central and provincial, have been carrying reports about a "swelling wave of indignation and protest" against the resumption of bombing. No public meeting takes place without, at best, a critical reference to air raids on Vietnam.

On February 5, State Council Chairman Edward Ochab sent a letter to Ho Chi Minh expressing solidarity with the "struggle of the Vietnamese nation." Ochab assured Ho Chi Minh of Polish support for the stand of the DRV government, and particularly of the "known program of solution of the Vietnam problem contained in four points," as well as of the "just demands of the Front of National Liberation of South Vietnam contained in the five-point program."

Ochab was answering a letter of Ho Chi Minh, dated January 24, sent to the "chiefs of several states interested in the problem of Vietnam." This letter of the President of North Vietnam was published by Trybuna Ludu on January 30, a day before the resumption of the bombing.

Commenting on Ochab's answer to Ho Chi Minh, Trybuna Ludu (February 7) stressed that Poland, "once again," demands categorically that the US "stop unconditionally and finally the bombings and other military actions directed against the DRV."

Intense Anti-German Propaganda

Although anti-German statements by Polish officials and other manifestations of hostility toward West Germany have become part and parcel of Poland's political life, one has to register a recent increase in intensity of such propaganda brought about by the Church-state controversy over the letter of the Polish Episcopate.

It seems that Polish propaganda experts have managed to create in the press and radio world a condition of constant hysteria

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erupting in outbursts of hate at the very sound of such words as concession, dialogue, frontier, forgiveness, reconciliation, etc. Nor does it matter in what context and for what purpose these words are uttered.

One of the recent events supporting this impression was the official Polish reaction to an interview granted by the West German Minister for Refugee Affairs, Johann Baptist Gradl, to the popular magazine Der Spiegel (January 17), in which Gradl conceded that a final peace treaty between Poland and Germany may entail "sacrifices," territorial, military and economic. It was the first statement of a West German government official which implied that at least part of the present Oder-Neisse territory may be lost to Germany, a statement which -- serious observers agreed -- would have been impossible a year ago. True, he was cautious to stress that Germany is not ready to renounce all this territory:

"A reconciliation with Poland could come about only when both sides did not treat their present position as absolute, but only as starting points from which both countries could come nearer to each other."

The typical Polish reaction was: "Hoax!" The military daily Zolnierz Wolnosci (January 18) carried a headline "Minister Gradl's Old Trick" and stated bluntly: "No, Mr. Minister, such hoaxes will not fool anybody in Poland."

On the same day, Zycie Warszawy -- without any reference to Gradl's interview, but in connection with the "proposal of a so-called dialogue" -- stated that the price for "normalization" of relations with the German Federal Republic, and specifically for a resumption of diplomatic relations, was a recognition of the Oder and the Neisse border; recognition of the GDR; and a "renunciation of all the attempts at the so-called reunification through annexation of GDR." If somebody asks what the Poles are ready to offer in exchange, the paper continued, the answer is: nothing. "Putting the problem on a give-and-take basis amounts to naivete and to misunderstanding. It is not we who register territorial claims under the address of the GFR, it is not we who arm in order to attack that country, it is not we who interfere with establishing peace in Europe, it is not we who have to ask for forgiveness," Zycie Warszawy concluded.

A few days later, on January 22, Trybuna Ludu specifically referred to Gradl's interview, and added one more condition to those enumerated by Zycie Warszawy. It was a renunciation by GFR of any ambitions to possess nuclear weapons.

Polish official reaction to another statement by Gradl was also negative. The statement was made during a conference arranged at Bad Boll, West Germany, to discuss the Evangelical Church Memorandum with the expellee leaders, on January 21-23. It was on the last day of the conference that Gradl called for closer relations with Poland, including an unofficial dialogue, and again referred to "sacrifices." As quoted by Stuart S. Smith writing from Bonn for Baltimore Sun (January 24), Gradl said:

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"We don't deceive ourselves into thinking we won't have to stand up to our guilt, that we won't have to make further sacrifices despite the severity of those which have already been imposed. We will not bow before any dictate, but we also don't dream that everything again could be as if the great calamity had never been."

"The West German Minister for Refugee Affairs Gradl repeated yesterday Bonn territorial claims vis-a-vis socialist countries," Radio Warsaw reported on January 24.

Commenting on these reactions to Gradl's statements in Warsaw, Angela Nacken warned in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (January 24) that this "cool atmosphere between Warsaw and Bonn" may continue for several months, for the tone seems to be set by the program of Millennium celebrations, most of which have a clear anti-German accent (cf. SR February 3).

Conference of People Councils' Chairmen

A two day conference of the chairmen of the Presidia of district and voivodship People's Councils took place in Warsaw on February 3 and 4. It was chaired over by Premier Jozef Cyrankiewicz and attended by high Party and government officials.

The conference is a routine yearly event. This year, the participants of the conference received in advance a special issue of the monthly Gospodarka i Administracja Terenowa, devoted to the problems of local government, with the texts of three reports, one by State Planning Commission Chairman on most important tasks of People's Councils in 1966, another by Finance Minister on the budget of People's Councils, and the third on the tasks of agricultural economy in 1966 prepared by Agriculture Minister.

According to Radio Warsaw reporting on the conference on February 4, altogether 35 participants of the conference took part in the discussion. They also put several questions to at least two rapporteurs, Agricultural Minister Mieczyslaw Jagielski, and Chief Planner Stefan Jedrychowski.

According to Jagielski, the three key questions of Polish agriculture are the expansion of grain production, the intensification of cattle rearing, and the necessity of stepping up what he called "production discipline," for -- as he said -- increased investment is not always reflected in rational use of investment means.

Jedrychowski spoke about the "activization" of small towns and, in this connection, complained that the possibilities of development of small industry and handicraft still remain unexplored in the countryside and towns.