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Support of Gomulka or Challenge to Him?

Against the background of countless resolutions passed in almost every plant and establishment in Poland, all ostensibly supporting the Party leadership and specifically its First Secretary, Wladyslaw Gomulka, voices are being raised which clearly indicate that the support is not unanimous on all the issues he raised in his speech of March 19 (cf. Polish Situation Report/22, Radio Free Europe Research, March 21). There are also voices which can be interpreted as representing a direct challenge to him.

In this latter respect, a couple of articles which appeared in two different periodicals, emanating from two different quarters (and not only in the geographical sense) may serve as examples. The Cracow literary periodical Zycie Literackie of March 24 published an article by editor-in-chief Wladyslaw Machejek entitled "Did It Start with Dziady?" The question mark already indicated an answer which Machejek presented in his usual esoteric and rather nebulous fashion. Quoting from the Bible, he referred to words (of October 1956) and deeds (thereafter). The "democratism" introduced in October 1956 could not work since there had been "reshufflings" (in 1959 Gomulka started introducing hard-line elements into the Party and state leadership). "Did you ever see fire and water reconciled?" Machejek asked. "Every political activist," he continued, "knew or sensed that the mountain of controversies in the center of our political life was growing."

The problem did not start with Dziady, Machejek stated. Centrifugal movements in the Warsaw political center were resurrected in 1956 and have been growing in strength since then," he concluded. There were Trotskyites among "certain circles of Party minority," always ready to form an alliance with "revisionism," and there were also "orphans" of Beria. And there was silence about all these controversies, Machejek charged. This truth was presented at recent workers' and Party meetings, he said, adding that there had been an "unjustified silencing and toning down of some vital problems in Poland." Referring to the situation in Cracow, he stated that students there "persist in resistance," which he, Machejek, is not able to

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"decode," that they are "spiritually barricaded." A postscript to the article suggests that it had been written a day before Gomulka spoke. While this may explain why Machejek preferred to quote from the speech of Edward Gierek (cf. Polish SR/20, RFER, March 18), it still leaves open the question whether Machejek's choice of the source of his quotations may not have been deliberate. After all, other weeklies appearing on the same day (March 24) did publish editorials on Gomulka's speech (Polityka did so on March 23).

Among the periodicals dealing extensively with the speech of the Party leader was Prawo i Zycie, a mouthpiece of the Polish Lawyers' Association. An article entitled "Causes and People" by its editor-in-chief, Kazimierz Kakol, was published in the March 24 edition. More outspoken and less esoteric than Machejek, Kakol (who is known to be a spokesman of the Partisan faction) criticized what he called "lack of decision," and called for "a detailed and uncompromising analysis." He said that public opinion and particularly the Party organizations (i.e., the middle and lower echelons) "are entitled to know who has been paralyzing the process of positive changes in many areas of our life, and in what way." The medicine applied in the post-October period, Kakol claimed, "did not help in the implementation of the proclaimed principles of socialist democracy, especially in the economy." He complained about "the tumor of bureaucracy" which had hampered progress and suppressed talent and initiative. "The cadres of scholars, scientists, technicians, production organizers and experts of all shapes and sizes are a brain capital only awaiting correct investment." Kakol concluded by raising the challenge that Gomulka and the Party leadership "are faced with the urgent task of offering our nation the answer as to the further prospects of development."

Both Machejek and Kakol referred to Zionism, but both stated that it was not a problem which could present a real danger and that it would be absurd to concentrate on it and to view it as the sole source of "conspiracy." This attitude, however, has not been reflected in all the resolutions adopted and in the press campaign. The differing nuances in the treatment of the Zionism issue may be illustrated by two resolutions: one passed by the basic Party cell at the Foreign Ministry, and another one by the Warsaw Party aktif of foreign trade (i.e., representatives of various state foreign trade agencies).

"We condemn with indignation any attempts at fomenting provocative disturbance by survivors of reaction, by anti-Party elements, including Zionist ones. We demand from our Party leadership and state authorities that all directing centers of these elements be revealed and given exemplary punishment by the Party and state authorities in keeping with the statutes of our Party and the laws of the Polish People's Republic," read the resolution passed by the Party organization at the Foreign Ministry on March 22 (emphasis supplied).

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The foreign trade agencies' resolution (passed on March 25) stated: "We feel responsible for the selection of the representatives of People's Poland and her interests abroad. We declare that there can be no place there for people who do not feel any links with the people's fatherland, for the agents of international imperialism and its Zionist lackeys."

True enough, similar unrestrained demands could also be heard from the trade union aktif of the Foreign Ministry, but they were voiced on March 19, i.e., before Gomulka's speech: "We express our solidarity with the general demands for an unconditional purge of Zionists from the Party ranks, and particularly from our foreign service."

However, as illustrated by the resolution of the foreign trade agencies, Gomulka's speech did not mark a dividing line between an unrestrained and a more sober approach to the issue of Zionism. "There are growing signs that attempts (by Gomulka) to moderate the anti-Semitic campaign... are not being taken seriously," UPI reported from Warsaw on March 23. Signs at Polish factories on March 21 and 22, UPI continued, had said "Mosiek aggressor" and "Mosiek, the first aggressor" ("Mosiek" being a most derogatory Polish slang term meaning "dirty little Jew"). Quoting "Western observers," UPI said that the "conflicting stands of the press and public, and the Party, in a country which usually follows the lead of its leaders is a sign that Gomulka does not have the whole support of the ruling bodies."

Another observer of the Polish scene, as quoted by Jonathan Randal (New York Times, March 24), asked: "Will he (Gomulka) succeed in getting the genii he released back into the bottle?"

Reactions to Czechoslovak Events

Polish information media continue to report cautiously and with reticence on developments in Czechoslovakia.

After having devoted relatively much attention to the circumstances of Novotny's resignation (for the reasons, cf. Polish SR/24, REFER, March 25), the Prague correspondent of Radio Warsaw, Czeslaw Berenda, announced (Radio Warsaw, March 26, 2100 hrs) the date and place of the election of the new president, listing the names of three candidates, Josef Smrkovsky, Laco Novomesky and Gen. Ludvik Svoboda, and stressing that their names had been put forward by the Union of Anti-Fascist Combattants.

On the following day, Berenda gave brief biographical sketches of these three candidates. Speaking of Smrkovsky, Berenda stressed that he had been imprisoned "for many years" during the period of the cult. The same theme was mentioned in the sketch of Novomesky, who "in 1951, was unjustly sentenced to several years' imprisonment." The Polish radio correspondent devoted twice as much time to Svoboda as to each of the other candidates. It was recalled that "after the outbreak of hostilities (in 1939) the then Colonel Ludvik Svoboda was in Poland, together with other Czechoslovak

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soldiers. As is known, a Czechoslovak legion was organized in Poland, whose nucleus was formed by the so-called Czechoslovak foreign military group, set up in Cracow on 30 April 1939. Later on Ludvik Svoboda became commander-in-chief of that group.

It is also most interesting to note that on the same day, March 27, Radio Warsaw did not fail to register a statement by Hungary's Zoltan Komocsin in an interview granted to Nepszabadsag. According to Radio Warsaw, Komocsin had devoted part of his comments to the events in Czechoslovakia; he was then quoted as saying: "...the process which is moving basically in the right direction has also been joined by anti-socialist and right-wing elements." The speaker expressed the opinion, Radio Warsaw continued, that the Czechoslovak Communists should conduct their fight on two fronts: against the retreating conservative forces, and against the nationalist and right-wing forces which idealize a bourgeois republic.

East-West Contacts

An Italian economics mission is now visiting Poland, Radio Warsaw reported on March 26. According to the same source, a Turkish trade delegation is also now in Poland.

Two bands from Poland will participate in a Jazz Festival in Nuremberg next weekend, German sources reported on March 26.