

# RADIO FREE EUROPE

Research

## EAST EUROPE

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### NEW PHASE IN POLISH-SPANISH RELATIONS

Summary: The recently signed, long-term trade agreement between Poland and Spain is another indication of the improvement of Polish-Spanish relations. This latter development has been possible in part due to the decreasing significance of previous obstacles to the bilateral relationship. The impetus for the economic accord comes from the consular and trade agreement signed in Paris in July, 1969. This paper reviews several aspects of Polish-Spanish relations since World War II and concludes that Poland's current stance vis-à-vis Madrid reflects the former's appreciation of the economic benefits to be derived from a more normal relationship.

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On 14 July 1969, Poland became the second East European bloc country, after Rumania, to establish official relations with Franco's Spain. The agreement was concluded by an exchange of notes between the Polish and Spanish ambassadors in Paris and provides for delegations to be established in Warsaw and Madrid. In addition to discharging normal consular functions, the respective delegations will be responsible for supervising all economic, industrial and technical co-operation agreements and for promoting cultural, scientific and tourist exchanges between the two countries.

That the Polish leadership suffered some embarrassment from making an official overture toward a government that it has so often and so long labeled as fascist can be seen in the way in which the consular agreement was presented and justified to the Polish public. On this occasion, Radio Warsaw (1) recalled that

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(1) 15 July 1969.

many countries which shunned diplomatic relations with Spain "because of too fresh associations of the Franco system and Hitlerism," nonetheless maintained trade relations with Spain, because "reasonable people" considered that one cannot deprive millions of people in a country of the technical achievements of another country and of a full range of foodstuffs. The broadcast also stressed the necessity of providing legal protection for Polish representatives, experts and Polish ship crews visiting Spain in connection with Polish-Spanish trade relations, which have existed for many years.

#### Past Obstacles to Better Relations

Apart from the general prerequisites of Communist bloc policy toward Madrid, in the case of Poland, a number of additional obstacles made it particularly difficult for Poland to change its attitude toward the Spanish government. On the protocol side, after the war, Spain continued to recognize the Polish government in exile (London), whose representative in Madrid since 1944, the envoy Jozef Potocki, was no mere figurehead. Thus, for instance, the applications (presented in Paris) of Polish citizens for Spanish visas were forwarded to the Spanish Foreign Office, which in turn referred them to Potocki for his opinion and approval. But in September, 1958, Potocki died, and thus one of the problems in Warsaw-Madrid relations was eliminated. Moreover, the Spanish government decided not to accredit any new envoy of the Polish exile government to replace Potocki.

Another obstacle of a different nature involved the internal political scene in Poland. There exists in Poland a group of Polish veterans of the Spanish Civil War who fought on the side of the Republicans, in the Tabrowski Brigade. A large part of the brigade consisted of Polish Communists in France, many of whom settled, after World War II, in Poland and occupied important Party and government positions. They formed a branch attached to the Association of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBoWiD), in effect constituting a pressure group against any improvement of relations with the Franco government. However, their influence has gradually diminished over the years. Their ranks have shrunk due to natural causes (34 years having passed since the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War). Secondly, the group included a large number of Jews, whose voice has, in recent times, lost much of its weight. This applies above all to the present

head (since 1966) of the Spanish veterans branch of ZBoWiD, Vice-Premier Eugeniusz Szyr, who, as the sole Jew still left in an important government position, could hardly be expected at this point to oppose the government's change of policy toward Madrid.

Another impediment to closer ties with Madrid was the previously friendly relations between the Polish and the Spanish Communist Parties. After the war, Poland granted asylum to a certain number of Spanish Communists from France and other West European countries. The Spanish CP set up two organizations in Poland, one dealing with foreign affairs and the other representing Spanish émigré military circles. (The Spanish exile government had a chargé d'affaires in Warsaw; the latter, however, was not officially recognized by the Polish government.) These relations appear to have been strained since the invasion of Czechoslovakia. In view of the Spanish CP's critical attitude toward the Warsaw Pact move, the Polish Communists have taken less account of the latter's sensitivity to an improvement in the Warsaw-Madrid relationship.

Thus, in the course of the past few years, many of the obstacles barring the way to a normalization of relations have disappeared or lost significance. This does not alter the question of principle, that of not recognizing a political system which the Polish government has so strongly criticized in the past. However, as is also true of Poland's attitude toward Greece, Warsaw has managed to separate political principles from the practical issues of trade and economics.

#### The Development of the Economic Relationship

These latter elements prompted the initial postwar contacts between Poland and Spain, starting with some haphazard, undercover deals conducted through third parties. The first semi-official form of agreement regulating trade between Poland and Spain was signed in Paris in July, 1957, between the representatives of the Polish National Bank (Narodowy Bank Polski) and the Spanish Monetary Institute (Instituto Español de Moneda Extranjera). (2) The agreement projected an annual exchange of goods between the two countries to the tune of 20 million dollars on both sides. In provided for Polish exports to Spain of coal, machines and machine

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(2) Trybuna Ludu, 6 July 1957.



tools, industrial equipment and chemicals, in exchange for Spanish iron ore, pyrites, potash, citrus fruit, cork and precision instruments.

In June, 1957, Poland sent representatives, for the first time, to the Barcelona International Fair, at which she has since been a regular and increasingly active exhibitor. Subsequently, Poland began to send exhibits to other Spanish fairs, such as that at Saragossa, the International Exhibition of Construction and Public Works in Madrid, and the International Fair of Mining Equipment in Gijón. In June, 1958, Spain exhibited at the Poznan International Fair for the first time in the postwar period.

These contacts led to an expansion of trade and to new economic agreements. Through her representatives at Poznan, Spain acquired considerable orders for Pegaso heavy trucks. The Polish side, in turn, got important orders for complete sugar refineries (in Valladolid and Jaen) and a slaughter house (in Murcia). At other levels, significant economic advances were registered. In October, 1957, the first Polish ship to sail for Spain since the war left Gdansk with a cargo of coal. In the same month, the first Spanish ship to enter a Polish harbor arrived in Gdynia to pick up coal. In 1958, an agreement was signed providing for Polish delivery of 300,000 tons of coal to the Spanish railways. And in March, 1959, the original trade agreement was expanded by means of a protocol that projected a considerable increase in the Polish-Spanish goods exchange. (3)

In order to deal with the rising volume of trade, Polish and Spanish trade representatives set up offices in the respective capitals. In mid-1963, a Polish representative began handling Comecon (Polish, Czechoslovak, and Hungarian) trade from an office in Madrid, described as a "representative of the Polish Chamber of Commerce." In the spring of 1965, representatives of the Spanish National Monetary Institute (a government-controlled interbank agency) established an office in Warsaw; they were not considered government officials but rather executives designated to facilitate and carry out agreements between Spanish and Polish banks.

Slowly, trade contacts also expanded in other spheres. In 1964, Poland negotiated an arrangement to obtain a fishing

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(3) Ibid., 13 March 1959.

base in Las Palmas to sell the catches of the Polish fishing fleets around the Canary Islands in Las Palmas, instead of in distant Ghana as before. In 1965, Poland concluded agency agreements to open consignment stores in Valencia, Bilbao and Barcelona; according to the agreements, Spanish firms were to sell goods supplied by Baltona, the Polish shipchandlers organization.

During this time, the Polish-Spanish payment protocols were gradually acquiring the form of actual trade accords. Thus, the payment agreement of 1963 stipulated that reciprocal payments were to be effected in dollars and that the reciprocal commodity exchanges were to be restricted to home markets, excluding exports to third countries. The 1965 protocol on the exchange of goods for the first time introduced measures of liberalization in Polish-Spanish trade. It also included an investment agreement projecting the delivery of Polish investment goods (sugar refineries, slaughter houses, cement factories) and rolling stock to Spain in exchange for Spanish transport goods (heavy trucks).

By the mid-1960s, economic self-interest clearly played a major role in the bilateral relationship. On the one hand, Poland viewed Spain as a potentially important market for Polish industrial installations, machine tools, and complete factories -- goods for which Poland could not easily find buyers on other, more sophisticated West European markets. Spain, on the other hand, realized the importance of East European trade for her own industrialization programs.

Poland's attempt to take advantage of this situation is reflected in the trade statistics. Her trade with Spain, although still on a low level, has consistently increased, from 15.6 million zloty in 1960 (0.1 per cent of total Polish foreign trade) to 113.4 in 1969 (0.5 per cent). (4) Since 1966, Poland has been Spain's most important economic partner among the East European countries. In 1969, Poland ranked first among the Comecon countries in exports to Spain and third (after Rumania and Hungary) in imports from Spain.

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(4) The figures for 1969 are cited in Handel Zagraniczny No. 1, 1970. Those for earlier years can be found in the Polish Statistical Yearbooks. The official exchange rate is one dollar = 4 zloty.

### Relations in Other Spheres

The steady development of economic relations notwithstanding, Poland has maintained its official stand, supporting the Spanish Communists and the "Spanish people" in their opposition to the Franco government. In 1962, a "Committee of Solidarity with the Spanish People" was set up in Warsaw. A "Week of Solidarity with the Spanish People," organized by this committee in 1963, was fairly widely advertised by the Polish news media and attended by important members of the Spanish CP. In the spring of 1963, several Polish protests against the trial and sentence of Julian Grimau, the leader of the Spanish Communist underground, were sent to Madrid, including a telegram of protest from the Marshal of the Sejm to General Franco.

At the same time, certain aspects of the economic relationship have not been without political impact upon Poland. Thus, quite recently, Poland came under sharp attacks from various quarters for delivering coal to Spain during the Asturian coal miners' strike in winter, 1970. The Spanish CP sent a letter to the PUWP protesting Poland's reported sales of coal to Spain in order to offset the effects of the Asturian strike and condemning Poland's alleged subordination of its ideological responsibility to fraternal Parties to state interests. Another vehement protest came from the French Communist philosopher, Roger Garaudy, who has repeatedly charged that Polish coal helped the Franco regime to break the Asturian miners' strike. (5) A Polish denial of alleged surplus deliveries of Polish coal came from the representative of the Polish Chamber of Commerce in Madrid. According to the French Communist daily L'Humanité, he maintained that the amount of coal delivered to Spain during the period in question did not exceed the contractual agreement. (6)

This is not the first time that such charges have been leveled at Poland. In May, 1962, again during an Asturian miners' strike, the American trade union executive George Meany accused Poland of collaborating with the Franco regime by sending additional

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(5) The letter of the Spanish CP was quoted in Garaudy's latest book, Toute la Verité, and attributed to the newspaper of the Spanish CP Mundo Obrero, 23 January 1970.

(6) 20 February 1970.



quantities of coal to offset Spain's coal deficit resulting from the strike. The Polish press attempted to rebut this charge with a clumsy argument that the Polish dockers had issued a protest in the form of their refusal to load coal for Spain. (7)

Madrid's attitude toward Poland has gradually changed in recent years. After the war, Spain committed herself to a policy of support for the exile Polish government in London, as was reflected by her recognition of its Madrid envoy and by her provision of educational facilities for young Polish émigrés. This policy was supplemented in the propaganda field by the Polish broadcasts of Radio Madrid, known in former years for its virulent attacks against the Communist regime in Poland. However, in the mid-Sixties, the Franco government initiated an effort to "Europeanize" its policy and to expand economic contacts with Eastern Europe. In 1965, the Spanish government reportedly authorized a program of unofficial contacts between Spain and the East European governments.

With respect to Poland, this change of attitude began to be felt in the field of propaganda. Late in 1965, Radio Madrid's domestic service broadcast a series of programs devoted to the millennium of the Catholic Church in Poland, including an appeal for donations to commemorate the millennium. Various religious objects were purchased and presented to Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński in Rome. The Polish episcopate reciprocated in a letter (December, 1965) to the Spanish bishops on the occasion of the millennium, stressing the historical, religious, and cultural links between Poland and Spain. In the strictly political field, in 1969, Spain promised to shorten the length and soften the tone of Radio Madrid's broadcasts in Polish.

Poland's cultural relations with Spain since the war have been rather scarce to date, both for political reasons and also for the practical reasons caused by the complicated formalities in obtaining visas in Paris due to the lack of direct consular representatives in Warsaw and Madrid. However, some Polish scholars and specialists did occasionally attend international conferences and meetings in Spain, and Poland did send motion pictures and film representatives in recent years to the international film festivals in Santander. The first major initiative in the field

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(7) For details, see Glos Pracy, 8 June 1962.

of cultural relations was the May, 1969, tour of Spain by the Polish song and dance ensemble, Mazowsze, which gave performances in Madrid and Barcelona and received an enthusiastic reception from the Spanish public.

#### Recent Developments

The agreement of July, 1969, on consular and trade representatives was a significant step in the normalization of Polish-Spanish relations. Both countries were henceforth to regulate their trade according to the norms of GATT. An additional clause obliges Spain to liberalize her policy toward imports from Poland, while Poland is to accord Spanish products the same opportunities on the Polish market as are offered to goods of similar quality coming from other countries. The agreement also included a protocol on cultural and scientific co-operation and on increased travel between the two countries.

The agreement has already provided impetus, both directly and otherwise, for an improvement in the bilateral relationship. In December, 1969, Senor Emilio Beladiez Navarro arrived in Warsaw to head the Spanish consular and commercial mission. Although details are not yet available, Poland was expected to establish her consular office in Madrid in April.

Economic co-operation is to be discussed on other levels as well. In March, 1970, the Supreme Council of the Spanish Chambers of Commerce and Industry announced the formation of a Spanish-Polish Committee, whose task will be to expand trade and technical co-operation. The committee will also study such questions as the possibilities of joint co-operation on the Latin American and Middle Eastern markets. More importantly, the first Polish-Spanish trade talks on an official level have just culminated in the signing of a long-term trade agreement that provides for enhanced economic and industrial co-operation. According to Radio Warsaw, the agreement also includes provisions in the spheres of shipping, transportation, and air communication. (8) Negotiations on the accord had been under way since mid-April, when a nine-man Polish delegation arrived in Madrid. The agreement, which was signed by Polish Deputy Foreign Trade Minister Karski and the Spanish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, is for five years.

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(8) 2 May 1970.



Another step facilitating bilateral contacts has been the establishment of a direct air link between Warsaw and Madrid. (9) The Polish airline LOT will make twice-weekly flights to Madrid beginning in June, 1970. Poland is thus the first East European country to institute regular flights to Spain.

In addition to (and partially as a result of) these developments, the attitude of the Polish information media toward Spain and its government has undergone considerable change. In recent months, the press and radio have carried relatively objective reports on Spain. For example, reports on the Spanish political scene have included extensive explanations on the role of the Spanish branch of Opus Dei. The Warsaw weekly Polityka has recently published a series of articles on Spain, based on the travels and interviews of the former PAP correspondent in Cuba, Mirosław Ikonowicz. Although the series, as other recent articles in the Polish press, does criticize certain aspects of Spanish domestic and foreign policies, the nature of such criticism differs from Poland's earlier hostile attitude toward Spain, and probably reflects Warsaw's appreciation of the benefits to be derived from a more normal relationship with Madrid.

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(9) The agreement was reported by AFP from Madrid on 3 April 1970.