

(Munich, 27 October 1963, TARA/Polish Unit - AFD/JFB) --
The bitter factional struggle within Poland's Communist Party is still going on and the more "liberal" element has received another setback. This seems to be the significance of the political demise of Wladyslaw Matwin, announced Friday by Radio Warsaw.

Matwin was reported to have "resigned" from his position as First Secretary of the Wroclaw Voivodship Party Committee. Since this occurred at a meeting of the voivodship committee it was natural that no mention was made of Matwin's Central Committee secretaryship, which he has held continuously since 1955. One may assume, however, that he will also soon "relinquish" this post.

Matwin has, since 1956, always been regarded as -- for want of a better word -- one of the most "liberal" of the top members of the Polish Party. He was born in 1916 and, though a miner's son, received a university education and is also reported to have studied for a time in Czechoslovakia. A Communist since his student days, he spent the war in the Soviet Union. Immediately after the war he began his association with the Wroclaw Party Committee, being its first secretary from 1946-1949. After a brief spell as chairman of the Polish Youth Union, he became in 1952 First Secretary of the Warsaw Voivodship Party Committee. In 1954, he began his first period as chief editor of "Trybuna Ludu". He relinquished this post in 1955 but was renominated to it in November 1956, immediately after, and as an immediate consequence of, the fateful October days. It was during this period -- just before and just after the Polish October -- that Matwin acquired his "liberal" reputation; this was a result of both his speeches and writings. He was then at the height of his power and influence and was considered by some as a good tip for future Party leader.

The Decline

Then something evidently went wrong. In February 1957 he left "Trybuna Ludu" and was transferred back to his old post as First Secretary in Wroclaw. Perhaps even as early as the beginning of 1957, his "liberality" was beginning to be out of tune with the times; perhaps it was mainly due to his being disliked by the implacable Gomulka. But now, with the wisdom of hindsight, one can say that his slow decline began with his transfer to the provinces. (That the transfer need not in itself have begun his downfall is proved by the case of Central Committee Secretary and Politburo member Edward Gierek who was transferred to Katowice at just about the same time. While Matwin was withering on his provincial vine, Gierek, recalling earlier, feudal times, built up Katowice as a real power base and is now a possible contender for the position of Poland's crown prince. Retrogression and Gomulka's antipathy seem to

have left Matwin behind.)

Last of a Trio

In the heady days of the great Polish thaw Matwin, together with Jerzy Morawski and Jerzy Albrecht, belonged to a trio of young Central Committee secretaries who, at least in the top Party ranks, were reported to be setting the pace of October. Not one of them is any longer a power. Morawski resigned in 1960; in the same year Albrecht left the Secretariat and became Minister of Finance. Now Matwin, whose very few appearances in the last few months have been noted with concern, has also gone.

This is a sad reflection of the "retrogression from October". It is also more than that. It is a further proof of the bitter factionalism at present in the Polish Party and a sign that the struggle is ebbing and flowing with no side as yet having a clear advantage. Economic and political crises have interplayed with one another to produce a resurgence of a strong "neo-Stalinist" element spearheaded by, but not necessarily identical with, the so-called "Partisan" group. This element, encouraged by the existing tide of retrogression, has sought to increase its momentum. It has scored successes both in the shaping of political policy and the elimination of political opponents. But by its very success it has alarmed a wide variety of other elements, moderates, "liberals", opportunists or potential targets. These have been fighting back with considerable tenacity and will continue to do so. The struggle is growing in fierceness and incident. For example, as recently as July this year, Roman Zambrowski, long a principal target of the "Partisans", was forced out of his Politburo and Secretariat positions. Yet at the 13th CC Plenum which followed immediately afterwards, the "neo-Stalinists" failed to secure Zambrowski's former Politburo seat for their own champion, Ryszard Strzelecki. They even received something of a setback through the appointment to the Secretariat of another old target, Artur Starewicz. But now they have bounced back with the final fall of Matwin.

As the Party congress approaches (the spring of next year) these struggles will intensify. Obviously Gomulka, still all powerful, has not made up his mind which side to back. But he can hardly delay much longer, now that the organization of the congress is getting under way.

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