

MUNICH, 25 May 1971 (CAA) Following is the English translation of an article by R. Garrand which appeared in the dissident-Communist magazine, Unir-Debat, Paris, 10 March 1971. (Unir-Debat is the organ of an anti-Stalinist faction founded within the French CP 20 years ago; it is now divided into an "underground" section comprising members of the party and an "open" section of ex-members.

Despite appearances, the Polish crisis is rocking the Socialist world and communist parties even more than the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, and it will continue to do so. To appreciate this fact, one need only note that even the Soviet Union's CP had to alter Brezhnev's plans for its coming 24th Congress and renounce any idea of overt "restalinization." An even better indication lies in the Soviet Union's recent decision to lower some prices and revise certain wage categories, because the Polish revolts gave the entire "camp" the shivers.

Without in the slightest minimizing the importance of the "Czechoslovak Springtime," it must, however, be stated that that movement was due to the initiative of part of the members of the leading fraction backed at the outset by the majority of the intellectuals, and subsequently approved by the working class. But in Poland, the movement spontaneously started among the rank and file of the workers. The weakness of the Dubcek leadership can best be evaluated by noting that the Polish workers' revolt will have culminated in the purge of more in-service cadres than Prague's "Springtime of Freedom."

The Predictable

One question arises, a question we must ask our French CP leaders who think they can dodge the real issue by officially condemning -- and only after the revolt -- the "mistakes

committed" in Poland. Was it in compliance with the principle of "non-interference," or because of lack of information, that they had not denounced these "mistakes" earlier, and thus help the Polish CP to spare itself a bloody test of strength, depicted by l'Humanite as an "incident," while in fact proletarians were killed?

What happened at Gdansk, Gdynia, and Szczecin, and could have occurred throughout the whole of Poland, if the leadership had not yielded and sacked those responsible for the bloody repression, was predictable however. And our leaders could have foreseen these events better than anyone else, not to mention the Soviet leaders who bear a large share of the responsibilities in this tragic affair.

Here is what a bourgeois specialist in economics wrote in the November 1967 issue of Analyse et prevision [Analysis and Forecast] on the basis of figures furnished by the Polish authorities themselves (figures which the French CP economists could not therefore have overlooked, if they have the ability to analyze):

"Poland's economic situation is the Achilles heel of the Gomulka regime. The snail's pace of all economic advance, especially with respect to the standard of living, is actually the principal cause of the feeling of bitterness and disappointment that is so widespread in Poland ten years after the noteworthy events of October 1956.

"This subjective feeling of stagnation that prevails among the mass of the population is conspicuously inconsistent with the official statistics....But there are other figures (also issued by the government) which shed a different light on the country's economic situation. The wide disparities between Plan goals and what has actually been achieved in key sectors of the economy are unmistakable signs of a serious economic distortion that could indeed deeply affect the outcome of the Polish economy over the next five year period.

"...The existence of a formidable manpower surplus is shown by the extremely excessive number in the employment plan.

"...They (the Polish planners) claim that by employing all available resources for investments, they could create approximately 1.5 million new jobs between now and 1970. This

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increase would absorb both the total net growth in urban manpower and a slight balance remaining in the countryside after having frozen total agricultural manpower at its present level. But then it is highly possible that they would have nothing left with which to increase real wages.

"...To realize that manpower savings can be made in Poland, one need only note that a Western firm of efficiency experts called in to analyze results obtained in the URSUS machinery plant in the vicinity of Warsaw, informed the management of that manufacturing facility that with improved work organization methods and by using modern time and motion techniques, the factory's assigned production goals under the 1966-70 Plan could be achieved with 12,400 workers instead of the 22,500 provided for in the Plan."

We will not go into the technical analysis of the official figures made by this expert, who in 1967 concluded with the following statement: "Toward 1970 the situation could become even much worse."

Could our Central Committee's economic section and similar sections in other CPs possibly not have understood what these figures said? Why did they not come to the same conclusions? When the Warsaw correspondent of Le Monde announced (18 August 1970) the acute crisis by comparatively pointing out that the "national income rate" in Poland was the lowest in all the COMECON countries and "the lowest recorded in that country within the past 20 years," why then did our leaders continue to sing the praises of Polish economic successes, in the same way that they depicted the price hikes that sparked the revolt, by using Gomulka's arguments, that is by saying that these hikes were a sort of natural "normalization" to maintain the wage-price balance?

Patchy Solutions

The dissatisfaction of the workers was so deep, their resolve so spirited, that the authorities made serious concessions, rescinded the price hikes, promised increased wages, sacked Gomulka and the minister who had covered the order to fire on the strikers, dismissed party and labor union leaders who had refused to listen to the workers' protests. But

Gierek, a member of the apparatus who had joined in all the "unanimous" (what else?) decisions of the Gomulka leadership, is now represented as an innovator who favors a totally different policy. The Poles know full well that if there had not been a revolt and that shameful repression which increased that revolt tenfold, Gierek, the replacement, would still be spilling in support of the "Gomulka line."

The price hikes were rescinded not because they had been a clever trick to salvage the Polish economy at the workers' expense, they were rescinded because of the revolt and because the trick did not fool the workers. A Polish newspaper quoted by Le Monde (17 February) clearly states that because of this decision "those individuals who believed it to be to their advantage to encourage worker unrest from behind the scenes, are now stripped of all their arguments, pretexts, and ability to act."

That type of autocriticism is rather strange in that it interprets the rescission of an unjust decision as a means "of stripping pretexts" from those whom that injustice had stirred up against the incompetent leadership. It would even have us believe that the workers had been "manipulated" from behind the scenes, and had not been spontaneously aroused to indignation by unacceptable decisions.

The regime dismissed the bureaucratic union leaders who instead of expressing the legitimate dissatisfaction of the workers, covered it up or strove to silence them. But their replacements were not elected by the workers in free assemblies. They were once again appointed by the top echelon, by the party apparatus.

If methods are not changed, if the workers are not given the ways and means to manage and control their enterprises, then before long we will have a revived crisis situation and the newly "parachuted" union leaders will react like their predecessors who consider the labor union as an agency serving the State and not the workers.

The new Minister of the Interior -- a product of the same leadership group as his predecessor -- declares that "the forces under my Ministry will henceforth keep within the law," and that "all misuse of authority will cease."

Where and when had this comrade minister protested against his predecessor's violations of the law and misuse of authority? How many militiamen, among those who are "henceforth" going to keep within the law, have been dismissed, and how many have been imprisoned for having fired upon the strikers? When will those persons who issued and covered the criminal orders be brought to trial?

The real situation in Poland today is that men are being charged and dismissed in order to save a bankrupt system. And that is why l'Humanite contents itself with references to "mistakes committed," to dismissals (penalizing the mistakes committed and not resulting from the worker revolt).

Without a radical change in the system that led to this revolt, the whole affair will break out again. An analysis must be made which covers all the economic and political causes of the crisis, the reasons why the successors of Gomulka and of the cadres responsible for the crimes committed were unable under the Gomulka regime to criticize those failures which today they openly mention. Either Gomulka possessed extraordinary powers which obliged the entire apparatus to obey him, or else the apparatus sided with Gomulka in his "unforgiveable mistakes." In either case, the system itself is at fault, notably the absence of a democratic centralism.

If the system -- patterned on the "Soviet model" -- is not changed, we shall maintain this situation that is so prejudicial to socialism, a situation whereby the only way workers in a socialist country can ward off injustices, misuse of authority, and a declining standard of living, is by revolt and bloodshed.

It was on 21 October 1956 following the Poznan revolt, that Gomulka was introduced as Poland's "democratizer" heading a purged Central Committee.

On 20 December 1970, Gierek is introduced as Poland's democratizer heading a purged Central Committee.

On 8 February Rouge devoted an entire page to comparing Gomulka's 1956 speeches with Gierek's 1970-71 pronouncements. We are dumfounded by the identity of the promises made in both instances. And knowing what became of Gomulka's promises made 14 years earlier, we can only conclude: It is the system that must be changed, otherwise the same causes will bring about the same results.