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THE EIGHTH PUWP PLENUM

Summary: The Eighth PUWP Plenum dealt primarily with shortcomings of the Polish mass media and training of cadres in the face of "hostile propaganda" from the West. It prescribed a series of restrictive measures intended to foster "socialist" attitudes. Gomulka repeated the Polish position on the German question, and the problem of the church was raised briefly.

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The Eighth Plenum of the PUWP met in Warsaw on 16-17 May and was devoted primarily to ideological matters. After seven plenums devoted to economic affairs since the Fourth Congress, and a period of nearly four years since the XIII "ideological" Plenum of 1963, the Party could have been expected to turn its attention from the country's chronic economic problems to ideological matters. The immediate impetus for convening the Eighth Plenum occurred last fall, in the form of a new wave of resentment on the part of a group of Warsaw intellectuals against restrictive measures in the cultural sphere (symbolized by Kolakowski's expulsion from the Party, which resulted in protests on his behalf by one-fourth of the membership of the basic Party organization in the Warsaw branch of the Writers' Union) and a further demonstration of the limited "socialist consciousness" of the youth (especially the unrest in Warsaw University, which led finally to a protest against disciplinary measures against Adam Michnik signed by over a thousand Warsaw University students.)¹ Postponed while Gomulka joined with Ulbricht in spinning a web of new bilateral treaties in East Europe intended to counter

1) See RFE EERA Background Report, "Intellectual Ferment in Poland - 1966," 25 January 1967, by A. R. Johnson.

Bonn's new Ostpolitik and until after the Karlovy Vary conference, the Plenum was finally convened in May. Its participants heard a Politburo report on ideological matters read by Kliszko, a report on foreign policy by Gomulka, and contributions to the discussion by 32 of those present. The proceedings² revealed a preoccupation with three problems: 1) Proper ideological training of Party members and correct ideological content of the mass media, particularly in response to the effect of "hostile propaganda" from the West; 2) the German question; 3) Relations with the Church. This paper will focus on the first problem, with only a brief section on the other two.

Against Ideological Coexistence

The background to the Plenum's discussion of topical ideological problems was a restatement by Kliszko, in his Politburo report, of an essential negative characteristic of the doctrine of peaceful coexistence -- standard since the doctrine was enunciated in the USSR after the 20th CPSU congress; the inadmissibility of ideological coexistence. Kliszko repeated the usual formulations: Socialism is being built in Poland, not in isolation, but in a world where the struggle between socialism and capitalism is still in progress; the class enemy has been defeated in Poland, but the inheritance of the old, bourgeois mentality, reinforced by "bourgeois influences" from the West, means that the struggle for the socialist consciousness of the masses in Poland is a long and complicated one; in this struggle, the Party must maintain constant vigilance against hostile foreign propaganda and wage its own socialist ideological offensive; criticism must be constructive; there can be no freedom of criticism for enemies of socialism. These same theses were stated four years ago at the XIII Plenum. In quoting verbatim from its resolution, Kliszko in effect admitted that the Party still faces the same problems it then faced, that the directives of the XIII Plenum had not been "implemented."

Again repeating what had been said at the XIII Plenum, the present Eighth Plenum attacked in particular foreign radio stations -- including RFE -- as a major source of "hostile propaganda,"³ noting that Poland was a "particularly privileged" target and that such radio propaganda sought to exploit "any shade

2) As reported by Trybuna Ludu, PAP, and Radio Warsaw, all of which carried only selected parts of the discussion speeches. For Kliszko's speech see Polsih Press Survey #2075.

3) At the XIII Plenum, Western radio broadcasts were attacked by Gomulka, Motyka, Putrament, Moczar, and Cyrankiewicz. Gierek referred to hostile "Western propaganda" in general. At the Eighth Plenum, Kliszko, Starewicz, Sokorski, and Putrament attacked Western broadcasts.

It should also be noted that the Plenum proceedings contained no references, even veiled ones, to Radio Tirana's Polish broadcasts, now amounting to two hours daily.

of [domestic] opinion and any small group, no matter what its political image, as long as it is against our Party...." (Kliszko) But the present Eighth Plenum differed from the XIII Plenum in its more detailed analysis of the purpose of foreign radio propaganda. In Kliszko's analysis Poland faces a heightened effort at penetration by "hostile propaganda," particularly radio propaganda, and this is to be explained by an alleged increase in "psychological warfare" against Poland and the other "socialist" countries on the part of the U.S., in alliance with West Germany. His charge is supported by a full-scale attack against the policy of "bridge building" (and the theses in Brzezinski's Alternative to Partition) as "selective coexistence" designed "to isolate some socialist countries from others, to perfect political penetration, to subvert them from inside, to play on bourgeois-liberal and Social Democratic, as well as national and anti-Soviet tendencies."⁴ More important, the present Plenum differed from the XIII Plenum in terms of the scope of the measures it prescribed in an effort to counter the influence of "hostile propaganda." Four years ago, the emphasis was on cultural policy in a narrow sense, with Gomulka calling for a partial return to themes of "socialist realism" -- albeit not in the strict Stalinist sense. The Eighth Plenum concentrated on the deficiencies, from the Party's point of view, of the mass media in general, prescribing a whole series of political corrections and technical improvements.

A New Ideological Offensive

Warning that, too often in the field of propaganda, "we leave a free field to the adversary," Kliszko called for a series of changes in the work of the organs of mass communication. He first attacked uncritical treatment of "Western life" by the Polish media:

...our polemics are too weak and too dull in combatting bourgeois propaganda with regard to democracy and with regard to the false and sugary picture of political relations and civic rights in capitalist countries.... Social relations, and the mechanics of power, the struggle of the working class and the Communist Parties against the domination of monopoly capital, the situation of the working masses, social conditions,

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- 4) Before the Plenum, a series of theoretical articles appeared attempting to expose the "bridge building" policy. See A. Kruczkowski, "Anti-Communism in US Policy," Nowe Drogi, January 1967; R. Werfel, "Zbigniew Brzezinski's Political Concept vis-a-vis Europe," Nowe Drogi, February 1967; Z. Nicinski, "Activity of the Ideological-Propaganda Apparatus of the USA against the Socialist Countries," Sprawy Miedzynarodowe, February 1967; J. Kolczynski, "Doctrinal Principles in U.S. Policy toward the Socialist Countries," ibid (Polish Press Survey #2071, 16 May 1967).

and so forth, are a rare and superficially treated subject in our press and in our polemics. The reader or the television viewer learns much more about new models of cars, about the careers of actors, about the Beatles, and about various luxurious living facilities for privileged strata than about the real, strained, and proud life of the working people in the bourgeois countries.

This criticism was coupled with a call to devote greater attention to developments in the other "socialist" countries, Poland's neighbors in particular, and a warning to avoid "parochial nationalism." Appealing to the mass media to increase their efforts to foster a "socialist attitude towards work," Kliszko implored: The subject of work should not, even for a moment, be absent from the pages of the press and radio and television programs."

Together with other leaders responsible for the "ideological sector" -- who spoke in the discussion -- Kliszko then presented the mass media with a list of specific failures. They were chastized for not displaying "sufficient knowledge" of the Party's economic policy, inter alia in their uncritical treatment of the problems of limited exports and unemployment. Dealing with the education of the youth, several participants in the Plenum decried the lack of any "positive heroes" in the mass media.

Turning to the social sciences, Kliszko criticized "functional" sociology for ignoring the qualitative class differences between "socialist" and "capitalist" society -- a theme developed by Starewicz, CC Secretary in charge of propaganda and culture, who condemned attempts to use interest-group and "power-elite" concepts to analyze Polish society and called on Polish sociologists to oppose "ideological indifference" and "bourgeois sociological theory and anti-Communist propaganda." Kliszko and other speakers deplored the excessive rehabilitation of previously condemned historical personalities and events, saying that the World War II Government-in-Exile and pre-war Governments, in particular, could not be rehabilitated.

Several press organs were singled out for severe criticism. Olszowski (head of the CC Press Bureau) was the most explicit, reporting that Trybuna Ludu had been criticized for its lack of sufficiently strong articles on "cultural and literary-artistic" themes and Party political work; that Polityka had been reprimanded for failing vigorously enough to expose the "revanchist essence" of West German policy, for unjustified criticism of economic problems, and for failing to resist "revisionist tendencies" in certain literary and intellectual circles; and that Zycie Literacki had been rebuked for its handling of "socio-economic and ideological-Party" themes -- an obvious reference to Machejek's articles. Ptasinski, first Party secretary in Gdansk, attacked Polityka for failing to "expose" U.S. and West German foreign policy and also urged that suitable editorial commentary be added to Forum. Rakowski, the editor of Polityka, called on Polish writers to be more critical in their treatment of West Germany, bourgeois democracy, neo-capitalism, the issue of an "ideological crisis" in Communism, and historical rehabilitation -- an obvious form of self-criticism. Putrament, secre-

tary of the Party organization in the Writers' Union, appealed for greater "coordination" of the "Party press."

The Polish film industry also came in for its share of criticism at the Plenum. Kliszko attacked film critics for fostering "decadent models" and condemning films just because they dealt with "everyday problems." Putrament dwelt on the same theme, but also noting on the other hand, that attacks on Polish films "by certain official circles" also would not contribute to improving the films. Discussion programs on radio and television were attacked by several speakers for their uncritical airing of sensitive subjects.

As already pointed out, literature as such was not a major preoccupation of the Plenum; perhaps this subject was intentionally left for the congress of the Writers' Union which began on 2 June (details of which are not yet available). Only in the course of the discussion itself were there references to Kolakowski's expulsion from the Party and the subsequent dispute with the Warsaw writers -- one of the immediate causes for summoning the Plenum.

Reducing the affair to a matter of "opposition in the Party" and claiming -- obviously quite incorrectly -- that in terms of creative freedom, publishing policy, and "true literary matters", "there have not been for years any important disagreements between us and the writers," Starewicz declared that the writers' expulsions or resignations from the Party had "deprived them in fact of the possibility of political activity," although, he claimed, not of the opportunity to write. Nevertheless, he continued, in their works they would have to choose "on which side they stand;" it was the task of the Writers' Union to see that they served the culture of "People's Poland." Putrament also referred to the "harmful" conflict, again attempting to discredit the rebellious writers with a reference to the "tendentious support" of Western, particularly West German, publishers. Sokorski (head of the state committee on radio and television), too, dealt indirectly with the matter. Noting that "ideological complexes seem to live longest in [the sphere of] intellectual creativity," and granting that "literary and satirical works possess their own autonomous rights and cannot be changed or rewritten at will," Sokorski called for a three-fold program to combat incorrect influences in the literary milieu: work of basic Party organizations in artistic circles; the influence of mass media organs on writers; "responsible [i.e., Party-determined] economic and philosophical journalism." Patience had to be combined with adherence to principles, he continued; it was the Party's task to "offer help" to those writers "who, although basically vowing their allegiance to People's Poland, still show many misunderstandings and complexes in their work."

In addition to prescribing these negative measures, the problem of the informational function of the mass media was also aired at the Plenum. Putrament stated the problem quite accurately:

5) As he did in his March 1967 article in Miesiecznik Literacki.

[Foreign radio stations] are being helped by the fact that we, for our part, do not attach sufficient importance to the role played by information. Our press does not print information on many political events which have direct importance for our country. Thus, information is the factor of greatest importance. Information is one of the absolutely necessary elements of effective propaganda.

Sokorski, too, made a similar acknowledgement, while CC Secretary Jaroszinski stressed the necessity of Party cadres being well informed. But Kliszko, in his report, was silent on the issue, while Starewicz, in his wind-up speech (which thus represented the Gomulka-Kliszko view) took issue with Putrament:

We have already talked here about the information service of our radio and television networks. In my opinion, this service has improved considerably during the last few years. It has become richer and more up to date. I think that Comrade Putrament has grossly exaggerated the actual state of affairs ...on the other hand, I cannot deny that some of the news is deliberately omitted: this procedure is wrong and should be done away with. Nevertheless, I consider it to be a totally wrong premise that we should try to engage in a sort of competition with RFE in providing information about the activities of every kind of group of ideological greenhorns among our university students, or else concerning what, let us say, Mr. X said to Mr. Y in a Warsaw cafe and which allegedly, according to the Gentlemen from Munich, should shake our People's Republic to its very foundations....

These words can still be interpreted as acknowledging the necessity of making some improvement in the information service of the Polish mass media.⁶ More important, however, is the Party's attitude towards the content of information broadcasts; on this critical point, Starewicz would seem to have formulated authoritatively the Party's view. Even Putrament's words should perhaps not be taken as signifying a markedly different position; it seems doubtful that he, any more than Starewicz, would have considered, for example, the resolution against censorship proposed to the Lublin Congress of young writers last November as legitimate "information". He demonstrated that -- unless in fact he was totally ignorant -- he did not consider the recent scandal in the Ministry of Health as legitimate "information."⁷

6) No unified position on this issue has emerged in post-Plenum commentaries. The Kultura editorial on the Plenum (28 May) mentioned the importance of "speedy information," while the Trybuna Ludu (21 May) and Zolnierz Wolnosci (26 May) editorials ignored the subject.

7) He denied its existence in Zycie Warszawy, 2-3 April 1967.

Yet these are precisely "political events" of "direct importance" for Poland. The Eighth Plenum has offered no indication of a change of Party policy in this field.

In addition to the directives for changes in the work of the mass media outlined above, Kliszko also outlined a series of routine measures intended to improve the effectiveness of the "ideological" training of Party cadres: more and better Party schools, more "political science" courses, better textbooks -- the usual remedies offered at all such Communist Party plenums. Of particular note was only Jarosinski's announcement that a new Central Party School would be established, since the existing Higher School of Political Science "no longer corresponds to the current needs of schooling the Party apparat and aktiv."

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At the Eighth Plenum, the PUPP leadership made in effect a unique public admission of Western influence in Poland. The Plenum did not deal with an abstract Stalinist bug-bear of "foreign propaganda" or "imperialist intervention" to justify pre-determined domestic policies; it discussed in very concrete terms the fact that, in the propaganda field, "we leave a free field to the adversary". The anti-Western, "socialist" prescriptions intended to combat that influence, as outlined above, clearly represent a regressive development. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to overreact to the Plenum. It would be rash to expect a qualitative change for the worse in the content of the Polish mass media; there is little reason to expect a return to the state of Party control outlined in the cultural sphere, for example, at the recent Bulgarian Cultural Congress. It was probably quite symptomatic that, only a week after the conclusion of the Eighth Plenum, the Polish television network broadcast a special morning program including Doris Day, "Bonanza," and the Beatles in an attempt to compete with religious celebrations on Corpus Christi Day. The prospects would thus seem to be, not a return to anything like Stalinist content in the mass media and cultural sphere, but a measured dose of regression -- e.g., more articles on "Party work" in the press, additional restraints on airing controversial subjects in discussion programs, more television features on the GDR. Yet these would seem to be precisely the failings of the Polish mass media which have encouraged Poles to listen to Western radio broadcasts. In prescribing more of the same, the regime is only perpetuating a vicious circle of its own creation.

Secondary Issues -- Foreign Policy and the Church

The second item on the agenda of the Eighth Plenum -- foreign policy and international Communism -- was the subject of Gomulka's report. Its central focus, as was to be expected, was the German problem and the series of bilateral mutual assistance treaties concluded by Ulbricht and Gomulka. He was silent on the issue of China; the resolution on the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution adopted by the Plenum read: "The PUPP joins with the CPSU in efforts aimed at restoring the unity of the international

Communist movement...." The Karlovy Vary conference of European Communist Parties was discussed largely in terms of its relation to the German problem, with Gomulka stressing its "uniform appraisal" of the European situation and "unanimous appreciation of "what forces are endangering security and peace" in Europe. He repeated the now standard Polish position on West Germany's Ostpolitik and the importance of the GDR to East Europe as a whole. There is no need to restate that position here; it will suffice to point out three new features in Gomulka's analysis. He seemed to suggest that, not only had Bonn's foreign policy aims not changed with reference to East Europe, and East Germany in particular, but that they could not change, because of the class nature of the West German government:

The Government of Adenauer and Erhard followed that policy [aimed at "liquidating the GDR"], the present Kiesinger Government is continuing that policy, and every Bonn government representing the interests of the capitalist monopolies will continue it.

Gomulka also linked Polish interests with those of the GDR, not in terms of national interest, but in terms of Communist solidarity, calling the GDR the "Western bulwark of socialism." In attacking West German policy, he again explicitly criticized the establishment of diplomatic relations with Rumania as a "political diversion." A sincerely new Ostpolitik, he noted, would have begun with Yugoslavia; that would have demonstrated the final abandonment of the Hallstein Doctrine and would not have been an attempt to split the members of the Warsaw Pact.

In praising the series of bilateral treaties, Gomulka made explicit the obvious -- they were directed against Bonn. The fact that Czechoslovakia's treaty with the GDR immediately followed the Polish treaty, he declared, "was not an accident but a conscious and agreed-on political move which struck at and confused the plans of the new West German government."⁸ Gomulka also sought to differentiate the rationale of the new bilateral treaties from that of the Warsaw Pact:

The fundamental difference between the defense system based on the bilateral alliance pacts concluded among individual socialist countries and the multilateral Warsaw Pact lies in the fact that in the latter there is a unified military command controlling common armed forces formed from military formations delegated to the control of that command by the individual member states of the Warsaw Pact. However the mutual alliance pacts do not provide for the organization of common armed forces and a unified common command, but only for mutual assistance in the event of an attack on one of the parties.

This distinction is a false one; Article 4 of the Warsaw Pact provides for mutual assistance quite apart from the existence of a unified command. But it was apparently the only way Go-

8) This flatly contradicted the Czechoslovak view, as expressed by Rude Pravo, 3 March 1967.

mulka could find to justify militarily what was in fact a political move against West Germany. The very effort at drawing an explicit distinction is striking; it could suggest a reaction to criticism of the bilateral treaties as redundant gestures serving primarily to further Ulbricht's own interests.

The third subject to be treated at the Plenum was the Church. In the Politburo report, Kliszko evaluated favorably recent trends in world Catholicism, including the latest Papal encyclicals, in terms unprecedented for a top Polish Communist. He also called for a "unity of believers and non-believers" in developing socialism in Poland. But this was not an offer of reconciliation with the Church as an institution under its present leadership. Accusing "part of the leadership" of the Church of standing aloof from the progressive changes in world Catholicism and serving as a "bastion of the internal forces which are hostile to socialism," Kliszko called on the Party to "expose the reactionary essence of the policy of the present leadership of the episcopate." His remarks suggest that, particularly with the appointment of Wojtyla as the second Polish cardinal, the Party can be expected to continue to play its old game of attempting to divide the Polish Church leadership and play off the Vatican against Cardinal Wysinski -- although there is no reason to suppose the results will be any more favorable for the Party than in the past. If such a line is continued, it would also seem to impose certain restraints on the regime's ability to wage a more general anti-religious campaign with administrative measures.

Sidelights from the Discussion⁹

The great majority of the 32 participants in the discussion at the Eighth Plenum dutifully turned their attention to the Party's ideological problems in the face of foreign "hostile propaganda," -- the main item on the agenda. The most important speeches on the subject, as indicated above, were those of Putrament, Starewicz, Sokorski, Olszowski, Rakowski, Jaroszinski, and Krasko (Chief of the CC's Cultural Department). Most of the remaining speakers concentrated on specific ideological problems of their local organizations. Thus Kruczkowski, Director of the Institute for International Affairs urged that more resources be allocated for research in institutes such as his, while Majchrzak, first Party secretary in Bydgoszcz, praised, as an instrument for "educating" ideologically the youth, an essay competition he had introduced on the theme "My first months at work."

Yet, a few dissonant notes were struck. Most surprising and potentially significant, no member of the so-called "Cyrankiewicz group"¹⁰ of former socialists participated in the discussion, al-

9) Detailed analysis of the discussion, would require the full texts of the contributions, which are presently unavailable and which may never be published. The Radio Warsaw, PAP, and Trybuna Ludu versions of some of the speeches differ. For extensive excerpts in translation see Polish Press Survey Nos. 2072-2074.

10) Cyrankiewicz, Rapacki, Motyka, Reczek, Jablonski, of the full CC members.

though Motyka, as Minister of Culture, would certainly have been expected to speak; Cyrankiewicz himself took part in the XIII Plenum discussion in 1963. Gierek, the Silesian Party leader, clearly distanced himself from the main thrust of the discussion, dealing instead with Party work in Silesia, which he described as largely successful, and stressing that the social effect of "hostile propaganda" had declined with each passing year and that the correct method of countering its remaining impact was to ensure the participation of the intelligentsia in local affairs -- allegedly successful examples of which, again, he offered from Silesia. Moczar, too, abstained from dealing directly with the problem of an "ideological offensive," confining himself to the problem of informal Western spying in Poland and the alleged tendency of many Poles to talk too freely with foreigners.

Finally, the conservative opposition to Gomulka within the PUWP, while largely ignored, did have a slight impact on the Plenum. Two speakers, Szydla and Kruczek, both local first Party secretaries, deplored an excessive stress on material incentives in the economy -- a theme much stressed lately in Radio Tirana's Polish broadcasts. Jarosinski seemed to be reacting to conservative criticism, perhaps that of Mijal, when he referred defensively to "some people" who called the PUWP a "pragmatic Party." According to the PAP version of his remarks, Roman Nowak (Chairman of the Control Commission) said that the Party had rid itself of revisionist elements; now it "should also get rid of those members who attack it from sectarian and dogmatic positions." The remarks of Ruminski, an old Stalinist, were summarized in the third person ("the speaker presented his view"); his reference to unity "of all socialist countries, together with the PRC" -- the only mention of China at the Plenum -- suggested that he may have expressed dissatisfaction with Gomulka's excessively pro-Soviet posture in the world Communist movement.

The Eighth Plenum and the Gomulka Leadership

Examined in a broader perspective, the Eighth Plenum reflects very poorly indeed on the quality of the Party leadership in Poland and its willingness and ability even to make an attempt to tackle the problems and inner conflicts of a modern society in the 1960's. It is no exaggeration to say that, aside from the partial re-evaluation of "progressive" changes in world Catholicism, the tactical purpose of which vis-a-vis the Polish Episcopate is self-evident, the Plenum did not produce a single positive development. Its theoretical analysis of the "epoch," as contained in Kliszko's speech, was not only dogmatic, ignoring the revised views of Polish Marxists -- not to mention others in East Europe -- on such issues as "monopoly capitalism" and post-revolutionary social conflicts, but also, for a regime's leading "ideologist," simplistic. Instead of even beginning to ponder the question of why the youth has found no modern Po-

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- 11) One wonders about the reaction of an Ilyichev to Kliszko's description of the "proletariat's" seizure of power as the victory of a "new class."

lish heroes, the Plenum put the blame on "foreign propaganda." Instead of a discussion of the Party's role in society, even in the relatively conservative terms in which that problem was aired at the February 1967 "ideological plenum" of the Czechoslovak Party, the Eighth Plenum dealt only with how to improve the "ideological" training of cadres. Instead of recognizing the need to benefit, even on its own terms, from Western technological progress, it called for more attention to the "exploited worker" in the West. This list of problems ignored and shibboleths repeated could be extended at length. The Eighth Plenum has shown again -- if any further demonstration were needed -- that the PUWP is led by a mediocre and backward-looking leadership. Having played a constructive integrative role in 1956, Gomulka has since become increasingly a negative factor, postponing or blocking entirely the general modernization of Polish society. As long as he remains in power, positive change in Poland is not to be expected.

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