

270 Munich, March 25, 1963 (Target Area Research and Analysis/Anielewski) -- On March 14 the Parliamentary Committee for Light Industry and Artisans of the Polish Sejm refused to approve the draft of a revised bill on the licensing of private craftsmen which in the opinion of many deputies would have granted too extensive powers to the licensing authority. Since there was general agreement that a new law was necessary in this field, the Parliamentary Committee appointed a subcommittee to study the problem further and to propose suitable amendments to the draft law. The rejected draft concerned the government's rights to withdraw private artisans' licenses in cases where commission of economic crimes could be proved, where quality of product was inadequate, and for recidivism (three convictions) in economic crimes.

These parliamentary committees serve a critical function in Poland's Sejm, for it is only during discussions before the appropriate one of them that a draft law can be minutely studied and discussed in detail, and thus it is before them that the fate of a draft law is decided: whether it will go on to be voted upon by a plenary session of the Sejm -- which has no time to ascertain whether such a draft contains too loose wording permitting too broad a scope of interpretation, etc., -- or whether it dies in committee.

In May 1959 another such Parliamentary Committee rejected the draft law on the issuance of passports and assigned the task of revising it to a subcommittee. The rejected law had stated that every citizen of Poland had the right to a passport, but stipulated four exceptions, three of which were unobjectionable, but the fourth of which barred issuance of a passport to a citizen for important state or social reasons and thus nullified the liberal provisions of the other clauses.

During the past six years no fewer than 16 such draft laws have been refused approval by the appropriate parliamentary committees which have thus helped the Polish Sejm become "the only legislative body in the Soviet bloc that acts and behaves somewhat as a Western parliament", as the "New York Times" correspondent in Warsaw wrote some two years ago.

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No one, of course, can claim that Poland's parliament plays a decisive role in the political life of the nation, but this recent example shows that it can have an influence, the extent of which no other parliament in the Communist world can even approach.

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