

More on Party Counter-Propaganda against the Letter of the 34

Although the "overwhelming majority" of Polish writers signed the protest against "foreign interference" in Polish cultural affairs, "some persons, Party members did not sign", Wladyslaw Gomulka complained on June 4 at the pre-Congress conference of the Warsaw City organization, Radio Warsaw reported the next day. In this connection Gomulka referred to "about 600" writers who did sign. (The actual number of the "protesters" is 580, of more or less known writers.)

The day before, Walenty Titkow (cf. Sit. Rep. May 8) also referred to this subject. "Unfortunately, not all the members of the Party organization of the Warsaw branch of the Union of Writers joined this protest. Is it so because they feel that such a gesture (of signing) would be too primitive and not quite becoming their rather complex nature", Titkow asked sarcastically,

There is a new development in the intellectual turmoil created by the letter of the 34. It is the regime effort designed to portray the object of the writers' complaints as being the so-called "authors' convention", which sets payment rates. As is known, the 34 raised two points: paper allocation and censorship. Now the regime propaganda does its best to prove that the real issue was financial. Another aim of the regime seems to be a further confusion of all the issues so as to dilute and possibly erase from memory the paramount problem of censorship. Thus, Jozef Lenart in his speech of May 8 (cf. Sit. Rep. June 4) charged the oppositionist writers with double-facedness in presenting their claims. Lenart stated that the "opposition" first demanded better financial advantages and when these had been granted, stated flatly that money did not count, that it was "non-material values" ("imponderabilia") they had been seeking. In this connection, Lenart specifically mentioned the "broadened" plenary session of the Polish Writers' Union (which took place on January 17 and 18) at which the Union's chairman Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz announced the revision of

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payment rates retroactive to January 1. As already mentioned (cf. Sit. Rep. June 4) such revision was reportedly decided upon by the "Party leadership" upon an earlier recommendation of the CC Cultural Commission. While this section of Lenart's speech did not contain any hint of regime tactics in confusing the issue, "Kultura" of May 31 published an editorial on the authors' convention which revealed the trend. The editorial is an open and quite sharp attack on the Ministry of Culture and Arts and -- although no names are mentioned-- on Minister Tadeusz Galinski. His crime consists of delaying the implementation of an earlier decision of the Party leadership to revise payment rates to authors. According to the editorial, such a decision was passed "in the autumn of the last year". Rather surprisingly, the editorial states that the new convention was to be retroactive to 1 January 1964. How can a decision passed in the autumn of 1963 be made retroactive to 1 January 1964, the editorial does not explain. Without trying to solve this puzzle, the editorial accuses the Ministry of Culture and Arts of two sins: 1) of not implementing the decision, and 2) of not caring about informing the Writers' Union about the decision itself. Two additional conclusions can be drawn from the "Kultura" editorial. It is an attempt to whitewash the Writers' Union's chairman, Iwaszkiewicz, who had been blamed for not pressing for a revision of the authors' convention and of the social security scheme for writers, on the one hand. On the other, it was an attempt to find a scape-goat for the alleged "delay" of a "previous" decision (possibly a non-existent one) of the Party leadership. (In this latter respect it is quite probable that such a decision was reached sometime in the beginning or mid-January, as Lenart reported, but not earlier.)