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1. Floods May Affect Harvest Results

Over the last few weeks continuous rains in Poland resulted in extensive flooding over a large part of the country, causing heavy damage to property, irrigation installations, and agricultural land. Mainly affected are large areas on the Baltic Coast and in the Kujawy region (central Poland), although the floods have spread to the Beskidy region (southern Poland) as well as to Walbrzych (southwest), Rzeszow (southeast), Lodz, and Konin (both central Poland) Voivodships.

According to the latest information, (1) over 1,000,000 ha of agricultural land is under water. Most affected are Bydgoszcz, Konin, Torun, Elblag, Wloclawek, and Poznan Voivodships. Considerable, if relatively lesser, damage occurred in Kalisz, Leszno, Kielce, Szczecin, Walbrzych, and Wroclaw Voivodships.

Whereas seasonal floods (mainly in early spring) are not an unexpected occurrence in Poland, those coming so late in the year, occasioned by freak rains rather than melting snow, present special problems and are therefore that much more difficult to cope with.

At the recent conference of the central party and economic affairs Minister of Agriculture Leon Klonica stated (2) that in Bydgoszcz and Torun Voivodships the monthly rainfall was six times greater than average. Indeed, rainfall on the coast was said to have reached 90 mm in one day, 30 times the average. Although it is too early to assess the total damage, it is feared that it may be considerably greater than initially thought. In agriculture alone losses are said to have already exceeded 1,600 million zloty. No figure has as yet been put on the losses suffered in transportation, and to installations and equipment.

At first the rains were looked upon as beneficial, after a very dry May. It now appears, however, that even if grains have not suffered inordinately, although it is too early to know exactly, considerable damage was sustained by root crops and even more so by grassland. In Torun Voivodship, for example, as much as 30 per cent of the crops have been destroyed, with the sugar beet harvest expected to be 70 per cent lower and that of potatoes 50 per cent. Furthermore, the first hay harvest is down by 80 per cent. In Bydgoszcz Voivodship 80 per cent of all grassland is under water, and damage to sugar beets and potatoes is assessed at 50 per cent, respectively. (3) The damage to grassland nationwide, added to an earlier forecasted loss of some 250,000 tons of oil plants (owing to bad spring weather) and generally poor expectations for fodder crops, may create problems later on with animal feed supplies.

- (1) Radio Warsaw, 14 July 1980, 1205 hours.
- (2) Ibid., 9 July 1980, 2100 hours.
- (3) Ibid., 15 July 1980.



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As it is, Poland was forced to import some 4,700,000 tons of grains and fodder valued at nearly 1,000 million US dollars in the first 6 months of this year. (4) Although it is not yet certain to what extent and in what way this year's harvest results may influence Poland's future grain imports, there can be no doubt that yet another year of natural calamities, after last year's unprecedented inclement winter and spring floods, will bring considerable additional hardships in its wake.

## 2. Poland's Creditworthiness Questioned for the First Time?

Last April Jan Woloszyn, Deputy Chairman of the Bank Handlowy, announced in a special press release (5) that his bank "had invited Western banks to participate in a new loan to be syndicated in the near future." The first, informal approaches were apparently made on the occasion of the April 15 opening of the Bank Handlowy's new London offices. This was followed by a meeting in Warsaw on April 24 and 25 between representatives of some 31 Western banks and the Bank Handlowy to discuss Poland's financial requirements and its debt servicing obligations.

According to First Deputy Finance Minister Marian Krzak, the Bank Handlowy Chairman and chief official at the conference, Poland needs 7,400 million US dollars for the current year: 1,800 million US dollars for interest payments and the remaining 5,600 millions for capital repayments. Neither the size nor the composition of Poland's reserves that would enable it to meet its financial obligations are known; but according to the Financial Times, (6) Poland's immediate requirement was for some 500,000,000 US dollars.

Very soon after Poland's official request Western bankers expressed their reservations about "whether it is feasible for the lending consortium to establish and supervise the sufficiently tough conditions that Poland must meet if it is to qualify for the loan requested." (7) Some bankers were doubtful at the outset, while others, even if prepared to cooperate, were in favor of a lower figure between 250,000,000 and 300,000,000 US dollars.

At the bankers' next meeting, on July 10 and again in London, (8) agreement was said to have been reached, but indeed for a lower figure than originally requested and on much harder

- (4) According to Minister of Foreign Trade and the Maritime Economy Ryszard Karski, ibid.
- (5) See Polish Situation Report/10, Radio Free Europe Research, 9 May 1980, Item 1.
- (6) 30 April 1980.
- (7) At their meeting in London on July 3; International Herald-Tribune, 7 July 1980.
- (8) Financial Times, 11 July 1980.

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terms. The figure now suggested was between 300,000,000 and 350,000,000 US dollars, at 1.5 per cent over LIBOR (London Interbank Offered Rate) for 7 years with only a 3 year grace period. A loan similarly organized early last year for 550,000,000 US dollars, also for a 7-year term, carried a split spread of 1.25 per cent for the first 2 years, rising to 1,375 for the remaining 5 with a 3 1/2-year grace period.

There can be no doubt that the bankers' general reservations reflect Poland's poor economic performance. Also a factor in their decision must have been the additional strain placed on the Polish economy by the government's determined policy of a concurrent cutback in imports including some essential industrial inputs combined with an order to divert all available resources for export, often regardless of the resultant hardships and inconvenience on the domestic market. Of certain relevance may have also been the attitude of the population, reflected specifically by the workers' recent strikes, as well as the subsequent wage increases that, if not related to work productivity and labor efficiency, may have a further detrimental effect on Poland's already strained economy.

At the moment, however, the bankers appear to be satisfied with Poland's ability to cope with the situation, as well as with the information provided on the country's debt repayment schedule and the breakdown of its total indebtedness, and with the basis of calculating Poland's current hard currency earnings and their future projections. (9)

### 3. Farmers' Old Age and Disability Pensions

The much criticized pension scheme for farmers finally became law on July 1 when the last stage of legislation came into effect. The central authorities have tried to put it across as an unqualified success, but the picture that emerges upon careful reading of even the official papers is more equivocal.

a. The New Provisions. The farmers' pension scheme can be traced back to the passage in 1974 of a law on transferring farm ownership to the state in return for old age pensions and payment. (10) However, it was on 27 October 1977 that the present law "on providing old age and disability pensions and other benefits for farmers" was introduced. Broadly speaking, it gave private farmers who were getting too old to work their land as productively as possible the opportunity to cede their farms to either the state or a successor in exchange for a pension, the size of which was based on the amount of agricultural produce delivered to the state under contractual arrangements. (11)

(9) Financial Times, 14 July 1980.

(10) See Polish SRs/17 and 27, RFER, 31 May and 16 August 1974, Items 2b and 3c.

(11) Ibid., No. 27, 9 November 1977, Item 3.



The first stage of implementation provided for a transition period from 1 January 1978 to 30 April 1980. During this time only farmers over the age of 80 and those with registered first or second class disabilities were entitled to pass on or give up their farms under the provisions of the law; 216,832 took advantage of the offer.

Effective July 1, those who surrendered their farms to the state before 1 January 1978, i.e., before the first stage of the law came into force, and whose pensions were below 1,500 zloty a month, will have their pensions raised to the 1,500 zloty level. This rise will be made automatically. All farmers over the age of 80 and those with first class disability should get a bonus of 500 zloty a month.

Secondly, those farmers who deeded their farms to a successor before January 1978 and received no payment or who turned their farm over to the state without compensation will henceforth be entitled to a monthly payment of 750 zloty, or 1,000 zloty for a married couple where both are eligible, provided that they have no other source of permanent income. (12) Moreover, payment is not automatic, and each individual must submit a personal application through his parish or municipal office. Applications must be accompanied by a plethora of documentary material including the officially authenticated deeds, a written statement of whether or not the applicant(s) has a source of permanent income, and sundry other papers such as the death certificate of a deceased spouse, court rulings annulling joint ownership, etc. (13)

Thirdly, all farmers who have reached retirement age (65 for men, 60 for women, and 60 and 55, respectively, for war veterans), no longer just those over 80, are entitled to take advantage of the pension scheme. However, those who wish to pass their farms on to a successor must be able to prove state deliveries of 15,000 zloty annually since at least 1 January 1977.

Finally, active farmers will henceforth be eligible for the same welfare benefits as workers, who are entitled to a monthly allowance of 500 zloty for every child requiring constant care for reasons of health; and farmers' wives and women farmers will be entitled to an extra birth allowance of 500 zloty for each child. (14) In the case of peasant-workers' families, these benefit will continue to be provided from the workers' pensions and welfare fund and issued through the place of work rather than through the agricultural sector.

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- (12) Exceptions include earnings not exceeding half the minimum wage, currently fixed at 2,000 zloty a month, PZU (Social Insurance Agency) insurance, alimony payments, and annuity rights.
- (13) Dziennik Popularny, 6 March 1980.
- (14) This is in addition to the 2,000 zloty which all women receive on giving birth.

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b. Problems. Although these provisions sound impressive -- indeed, PAP has claimed (15) that no other country in the world can boast of a law affording universal protection to private farmers and their families on such a scale -- the situation needs to be studied more closely.

The pension scheme was rejected by the majority of the peasant population right from the outset. The farmers felt that they had not been properly informed about the various strings attached to the pension package. The main causes of discontent were the size of the farmers' own contributions, which are assessed on optimal potential production, (16) and the size of their pension, which is calculated according to the amount of produce they sell through the state procurement agencies. (17) Peasants in the Lublin and Grojec areas organized themselves to resist the pension scheme, (18) and it seemed that the authorities might review at least some of their proposals before the law became fully effective. The organized protests may have forced the State Insurance Agency (ZUS) to clarify some of the obscurities of the law in the peasants' favor: e.g., if a farmer does not deliver his produce to the state procurement agency himself, it will still count toward his pension if a third person, not necessarily a partner or co-owner of the land, makes a delivery on his behalf. Peasant workers may enjoy their full pension rights as workers while at the same time claiming half the farmers' pension entitlement. (It appeared, at first, that peasant workers would only be able to draw one pension, while being obliged to pay contributions under the farmers' pension scheme as well.) Also, much has recently been made of the other universal welfare benefits to which farmers are now entitled, such as sickness benefits, compensation for accidents sustained at work, etc. (19) However, the overall effect of the law is still to discriminate against the small peasant farmer who prefers to sell his produce on the open market or who can barely produce enough to feed his family and whose surplus cannot hope to yield the annual minimum quota of 15,000 zloty's worth of state deliveries.

Official sources calculate that the average farmer's pension should be about 2,400 zloty a month, assuming that he provides the state with 160,000 zloty worth of produce yearly and pays contributions amounting to 1,500 zloty a year. However, this hypothetical farmer is not representative. Of the 3,000,000 private farms in Poland, about a third did not achieve the minimum

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(15) Trybuna Ludu, 2 July 1980.

(16) According to John Darnton, the mandatory pension contribution comes to 8.5 per cent of the peasant farmer's estimated annual income, New York Times, 20 June 1980.

(17) See Polish SR/14, RFER, 21 June 1978, Item 2.

(18) Ibid., No. 19 and 22, 11 August and 25 September 1978, Items 3 and 3e, respectively.

(19) Trybuna Ludu, 14 September 1978.



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quota of state deliveries last year. (20) According to Trybuna Ludu, (21) the average pension paid to contracting farmers in the first few months of this year was 2,300 zloty a month. However, over 720,000 farmers who surrendered their farms before 1978 are still only getting 1,500 zloty (and that, in many cases, only since July 1 of this year) which effectively places them at the subsistence level. (22)

It is estimated that some 970,000 farms are run by farmers past or rapidly approaching retirement age. (23) In 1977 about 210,000 farms were run by farmers aged 70 or over. Most of them eke out a pitiful existence from their one or two acres, often split up into strips or plots; yet they cling to the land. Moreover, they can no longer work a 16 hour day as intensively as they once did and their farms have become unproductive. Farming under the present system is not attractive to young people in Poland and a mass exodus from the country to the towns has left many individual farmers with no one to take over from them. Aging in the agricultural sector is a cause for much concern to the government. Furthermore, the older farmers are unwilling to invest in new farming techniques and to specialize. Thus, the pension scheme is both an economic strategy and a social policy. It has been advertised not only as a welfare measure designed to ensure a comfortable old age for the rural population but also as a way to provide a new stimulus for agricultural production. The peasants saw it as a ploy to transfer more land to state management, and many of them tried to dodge the scheme by naming as successors persons who have not the least intention of working the land, so that they themselves can remain on their land.

The financial incentives to old farmers are designed to speed the process of transferring agricultural production to the technologically oriented and college educated younger generations. The old system of small-scale private farming can no longer do justice to Poland's farming potential. However, it has survived all attempts to replace it by large-scale socialized agriculture; and indeed, it provides about 80 per cent of the total agricultural production. (24) The government's decision to encourage the continuation and development of private farming, as demonstrated also by the extension of the pension scheme to farmers passing on their land to private successors as opposed to the state, is tantamount to an admission of failure by the state farms. In the last two years

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(20) Ibid., 11 June 1980.

(21) 5 June 1980.

(22) For more details about the plight of old farmers living at the subsistence level, see Polish SR/12, RFER, 11 June 1980, Item 3.

(23) Zycie Warszawy, 11 March 1980.

(24) Trybuna Ludu, 4 January 1980.

180,000 farms with some 950,000 ha changed hands under the pension scheme. Young farmers took over about 65 per cent of the farms, amounting to 70 per cent of the land. According to a contributor to the economic weekly Zycie Gospodarcze, (25) young private farmers have achieved production increases of 5 to 10 per cent within a very short time. A survey conducted by the Institute of Agricultural Economy (IAE) revealed that every second successor desires to enlarge his farm by an average of five ha. Young farmers are officially encouraged to increase their holdings, and credit is available for this purpose. Interestingly, the majority of peasants with large farms hand them down to a successor while small and parceled farms tend to be surrendered to the State Land Fund (SLF). The IAE estimates that the SLF needs to sell 150,000 ha a year to keep abreast of demand in this respect. At the beginning of this year, the fund had some 720,000 ha, compared with 810,000 hectares at the beginning of 1979, so the peasants' fears that the state is hogging the land seem exaggerated. On the other hand, there are still widespread instances of local administration officials making difficulties for private farmers who wish to buy land. (26)

It is significant that response to the state pension scheme on the part of private farmers has been less than enthusiastic. Irena Bankowska of the Warsaw daily Zycie Warszawy (27) has drawn attention to the poor response as did other papers. By April 30 ZUS had received only 1,500 applications for crippled children's allowances whereas there are 35,000 to 40,000 such children in rural areas. Of the 300,000 farmers who handed down or gave up their farms before 1978, only 70,000 have applied for the scheme. In desperation, ZUS has announced that all applications received up to 31 March 1981 will be backdated to 1 July 1980. The authorities have been caught up in a paradox of their own making. On the one hand, they wish to boost agricultural production and must therefore tolerate the existence of private farming; on the other, they try to maneuver private farmers into selling their products to the state at unfavorable terms. The Polish peasant has had a good record in defending his own interests and his land. If the authorities want his cooperation, they will have to gain his confidence and take more fundamental steps to reform the agricultural sector and not limit themselves to a pensions scheme which, whatever its intrinsic value, is largely perceived by the farmers as a propaganda exercise.

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(25) Marcin Makowiecki, "Pensions for Farmers," Zycie Gospodarcze, 20 January 1980.

(26) See Jerzy Wisniowski in Trybuna Ludu, 21 August 1979.

(27) Zycie Warszawy, 3 June 1980.



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#### 4. A Muslim Minority in Poland: the Tatars

In the wake of the current worldwide "Muslim revival" renewed interest is being shown in the life and activities of Muslim minorities in the Soviet Union and other bloc countries. There has also been much speculation about the possibility of their becoming socially and politically more active, closing their ranks to defend cultural and religious liberties and keeping up ties with other Muslim communities abroad. In this context, it is useful to recall the fate of the Muslim minority in Poland, chiefly composed of Polish Tatars, once quite numerous and influential but now greatly reduced in number, dispersed over a vast area beyond their traditional settlements, and organizationally dormant. Indeed, as things now stand they hardly could be perceived as a challenge to the communist state.

a) History. To speak of Muslim believers in Poland one must focus on the many Tatar enclaves that have a very long tradition in Polish history. Last year two such communities in the northeastern province of Bialystok, Kruszyń and Bohoniki, celebrated their 300th anniversaries. From a number of articles and interviews published at that time (28) some interesting facts could be gathered about the history of Tatar settlements in Poland over the centuries.

The earliest mention of a large number of Tatar families in Lithuania, then within the confines of the Jagiellonian state, (29) is found in the Chronicles of Jan Dlugosz, a 15th century Polish historian. According to Dlugosz, "many thousands" of them were taken prisoner by Duke Witold in a 1397 expedition on the Volga River, and were subsequently relocated with their entire families to his lands. Over the next three centuries more and more Tatars followed in their steps, although in a more peaceful manner. Following a succession of famines, epidemics, internal clashes, and feuds in their native khanates, a considerable number of the Tatar nobles left their homes and resettled in Polish lands, mostly in the Vilna province but also more to the south in the Podlasie and Lublin regions. Renowned and experienced warriors, they served mostly in special Tatar units with either the royal forces or the local magnates' own private armies. Legally enjoying the same privileges as the Polish nobility (knights), they were given vast estates; those of a more humble origin soon established themselves in the cities and became known as excellent artisans, horse traders, and horticulturists. A census ordered in 1631 by King Sigismund III listed more than 100,000 Tatar resettlers in Poland. The last important colonization scheme involving the Tatar nobility was started a few decades later by King John III

(28) See Zycie Warszawy, 14 March 1979; Tygodnik Powszechny, 15 July 1979; and Gazeta Robotnicza, 19 July 1979.

(29) In 1385 the Duchy of Lithuania and Poland were united under a common king, Wladyslaw Jagiello, a union that was to last for more than 400 years until the last partition of Poland in 1795. Toward the end of the 15th century the Jagiellonian state controlled vast territories in the east including Byelorussia and large portions of the Ukraine.

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Sobieski in the late 17th century. Unable to pay his Tatar officers their salaries, overdue for more than three years, Sobieski decided to give them properties from the state-owned estates in Podlasie. By 1679 several Tatar communities were thus established, including Kruszyń and Bohoniki, mentioned at the outset.

Despite the fact that the Tatars had lived chiefly in their own ethnical enclaves for centuries, they became Polonized very soon. As early as the late 17th century they hardly used their native tongue, having switched to the local Polish-Byelorussian dialect instead. They also tended to Polonize their family names, either by giving them appropriate Polish endings or by adopting new names derived from their Polish estates. On the other hand, many Tatar customs became part of Polish tradition, especially among the Polish nobility whose cherished national customs included such items as the kontusz (long robe), kolpak (fur cap), and karabela (curved sword), all imitations of the garb worn by the Crimean Tatars. Few present-day Poles would remember that the name of the traditional Polish light cavalry -- the Ułans -- actually stemmed from an historic Tatar family: Adam Ulan, a Royal Cavalry captain raised to the nobility in 1681, founded a long succession of Tatar officers commanding these special formations that were named after them.

The Polonized Tatars became known as fervent Polish patriots. They took an important part in practically all freedom fights including the 1794 Kościuszko insurrection and Bonaparte's Russian campaign, as well as the two national uprisings (1830 and 1863) against the Russians. That earned them the bitter persecution of the Czarist regime. Later entire Tatar detachments took part in both the First and the Second World Wars. Their exploits in the September 1939 campaign led to a series of persecutions by the Nazi invaders, which were responsible for the extermination of most of the Tatar intelligentsia.

b) Modern Times. Upon re-establishment of Poland's independent statehood in 1918, only a small part of the Tatar enclaves, dispersed all over the Eastern provinces, remained within the Polish borders. According to official estimates, (30) between the wars the number of Poles of Tatar descent varied between 6,000 and 8,000. They appeared to enjoy considerable social and cultural liberties, including the right to form cultural and religious organizations. Following an all-Polish congress in 1925, the Sociocultural Association of Tatars was formed with headquarters in Warsaw, its publications included Rocznik Tatarski /Tatar Annals/ and a periodical called Życie Tatarskie /Tatar Life/. On the religious side, the Muslim Religious Association (MRA) was established in 1936 by a special legal act. According to its provisions, the head of the Polish Muslims, a Mufti, reigned over 19 Muslim parishes situated mainly in the northeastern region of Vilna where most of the traditional Tatar enclaves were located.

(30) See Polityka Wyznaniowa (Warsaw: CC Higher School of Social Sciences, 1972), p. 223; and Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna, PWN, Vol. XI, p. 411. It should be noted that Polish Muslims are of the Sunni sect, in contrast to the Shiites prevailing in Iran.



Each community was built around a "parish council" with its Imam ; (priest) and had, as a rule, its own mosque and an appropriate religious cemetery. Needless to say, close ties were maintained with similar communities abroad, involving visits to the holy cities and to the renowned Koran schools, as well as occasional return visits of distinguished foreign Mullahs to Poland. MRA also published its own periodical, the Przegląd Islamski [Muslim Review].

The situation changed dramatically in 1945, when most of the surviving Polish Tatar communities "found themselves" -- to use the official expression -- behind the Curzon Line. Only a small part of their inhabitants could avail themselves of "repatriation" by joining the mass resettlement of Poles from the trans-Bug regions into the newly recovered western and northern territories. After the war, utterly impoverished, uprooted, and decimated, an estimated 3,000 Polish Tatars remained. It was difficult for them to find ways and means of survival in a communist Poland that for more than two decades had seemed consistently to ignore their existence. It was only in 1969 that the first postwar Muslim congress could be convoked. It produced a new legal basis for Muslim religious work, if only in a vestigial form. The new act, validated incidentally only two years later by the Government Office for Religious Denominations, provided for the reactivation of the MRA. However, instead of the traditional leader, the Mufti, the association was henceforth to be led collectively by a five-man body called the Muslim Board, headed by a lay person, with headquarters in Warsaw. By 1970 there were seven Muslim parishes (31) scattered over the eastern and the western regions, and served by the only three surviving (mostly aged) imams. They have only two mosques at their disposal, reportedly utterly neglected and in need of thorough renovation; in other locations people pray in provisional chapels or community halls. One of the three existing religious burial grounds is in Warsaw. Although Muslim festivals are still held once or twice a year and wedding and burial ceremonies occasionally performed, there is hardly any doubt that attendance is rapidly decreasing, as is knowledge of the liturgical language (Arabic) and the Koran, (there are no Koran schools in Poland). The overall number of the believers had plummeted from some 3,000 in early post-war years to the present 1,800. Numerically strongest is the Bialystok parish with an estimated 800 members.

Ethnically and culturally the situation is even worse. The prewar act establishing the Tatar Association was abolished, and no other social organization was established in its place. The 3,000 surviving Polish Tatars found themselves deprived of even the slightest means of organizing ethnically in order to cultivate their age-old customs and rites, to study their history and traditions, or to publish their own periodicals. (32) Most of the

(31) To the three remaining prewar Muslim parishes (two in the Bialystok region, and one near Warsaw) four more ones were added after World War II to cater to the religious needs of Tatar resettlers in Bialystok, Gdansk, Szczecin, and Zielona Gora.

(32) The only postwar Tatar publication on record was a single edition of Muzulmanin Polski, a 19-page pamphlet issued in 1966 in connection with Poland's millennium.

present-day Tatars, especially the younger generation living in urban areas, can hardly be distinguished from other Poles, and mixed intermarriage contributed visibly to the obliteration of the typically Tatar features. The consensus is that modern Polish Tatars are becoming more and more the last of their race, interesting mainly as an exotic Oriental aspect of Polish folklore and objects of tourists' curiosity rather than members of a genuine ethnic group entitled to organized participation in public life. Thus far, there seems to be no indication that things might change in the near future, although everyone apparently agrees that letting the Tatars simply vanish from the Polish scene would do irreversible damage not only to that unique ethnic community itself but also to the entire Polish cultural heritage. At a time when ethnic consciousness is emphasized so much worldwide, such policy appears ill-advised.

#### 5. Flying University Critical of Poland's School System

For years Poland's ailing school system has been known to suffer from an ever deepening organizational and ideological crisis. The successive official attempts at pulling it out of the doldrums have so far been as ineffective as they were inconsistent and superficial. (33) The alarming situation in this field and ways to improve it were discussed recently at a meeting of leading representatives of the Society of Academic Courses (Towarzystwo Kursow Naukowych or TKN). The TKN sponsors the work of the so-called Flying University, a prestigious group of academics and intellectuals, set up in 1978 to organize lectures on subjects not adequately covered in the officially approved university curricula. The conference, reportedly attended by more than 40 prominent scholars and writers from various Polish cities, was held in Warsaw on June 14. According to a statement by one of the movement's leading members, Wojciech Ostrowski, (34) the session was convoked primarily to settle important organizational matters and to decide on the further course and methods of the society's work in view of the persisting efforts by the regime to clamp down on its teaching activities. It also devoted considerable attention to current educational problems.

One of two related documents, adopted by the meeting in a draft form and later re-edited for publication, was a dramatic "open letter" to the nation's teachers and educators. It urged them to live up fully to their lofty task of "bringing up new generations of Poles," (35) According to the letter, all teachers, regardless of their political beliefs, should be aware of their great responsibility to the whole nation and should do their best to counteract the ideological and material inadequacies of the present school system.

(33) For the most recent version of the proposed school reform see Polish SR/14, RFER, 9 July 1980, Item 3.

(34) See AP (Warsaw), 17 June 1980.

(35) Excerpts appeared in Western dispatches from Warsaw; Reuter, 7 July 1980; AP, 8 July 1980; and the Financial Times, 9 July 1980.



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The letter first drew a sad picture of the more technical aspects of educational policy, pointing out that the state budget gives too low a priority to that particular field. This results in a series of shortcomings: teachers' wages are less than the national average; school buildings are inadequate; and there is a general shortage of teaching aids and printed materials needed for reference purposes. However, what worried the TKN scholars most was the content of official educational programs, which are ideologically biased and often grossly distorted and encourage "submissiveness" rather than independent thinking. The authors stressed that the history, philosophy, and science curricula in schools and universities have been adjusted to Marxist interpretation and no alternative solutions have been presented. The teaching of both general and Polish history was said to have been particularly affected with entire areas either omitted or misrepresented. This has been especially true with respect to modern Polish history, where relations with the Soviet Union and specifically with the neighboring Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Lithuania are depicted in a completely false and distorted way. Moreover, the Jewish contribution to Polish culture has often been forgotten, as well as the role of the Catholic Church in both Polish and European culture.

Deploring the fact that even courses such as "Basic Introduction to the Social Sciences" have become nothing more than political indoctrination and a "compendium of primitive propaganda," the TKN scholars pointed out the adverse effects of teaching students to apply a "double standard" to facts. This was said to have created an evident contrast between the theory of the system that they learn in school, and the practice of which they observe around them. That turns many students into cynics, and results in a perceptible decline in morals. Needless to say, the TKN letter did not offer the teachers any ready-made program of how to act, but rather referred them to their conscience and professional ethics.

The "open letter" was signed on behalf of all those who attended the assembly by nine TKN lecturers: Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, Secretary of the Polish PEN Club; former Minister of Education Wladyslaw Szczepanski; the prominent writers, Marian Brandys and Jan Jozef Szczepanski; Professors Marian Malowist and Wladyslaw Kunicki-Goldfinge and two Catholic editors, Tadeusz Mazowiecki (Wiez) and Jacek Wozniakowski (Tygodnik Powszechny). Authorized copies of the letter were sent to (unspecified) regime authorities and to certain trade unions.

It is clear that in a school system tightly controlled by the ruling communist party, any attempt at presenting the students with an interpretation of their nation's history and culture that differs from the Communists' must be regarded by the regime as a challenge. This, however, is the main task the TKN set before itself nearly four years ago. After a period of relative tolerance, the authorities grew more and more determined to stifle or even end the entire undertaking. (36) Therefore, TKN leaders decided to pursue their

(36) For an extensive presentation of the repressive measures over the last year, and solidarity actions organized by Western scholars in support of their Polish colleagues, see Polish SR/26, RFER, 11 December 1979.

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lectures and seminars on a smaller scale for the time being, while at the same time stepping up their publishing activities. Last year the Flying University publications, called "TKN Notebooks," offering the texts of delivered or planned lectures on various aspects of modern history, became very popular not only with Flying University students. This year a new publication by the name of Kronika was started. Its first issue provides extensive information about TKN plans for the current academic year, including its further publishing projects such as instructional materials to supplement the official textbooks in lower level educational institutions as well.

The TKN meeting in June also elected a board of leaders that reportedly included several professors and members of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). TKN spokesman Ostrowski identified only two of them thus far; Professors Jan Kielanowski (a KSS "KOR" member) and Kunicki-Goldfinger. Both are PAN members and highly respected personalities in the Polish academy. Other points on the meeting's agenda were a report on the society's work during the last terms of the board's office and the election of Program and Auditing Commissions. Those activities suggest that Poland's Flying University is alive and well, and is determined to continue its useful work, though in a somewhat modified form better adapted to the current situation.

#### 6. General Zygmunt Berling Dies at 84

General Berling, the organizer in 1943 of the Soviet sponsored Polish Army in the USSR, died in Warsaw on Friday, 11 July 1980, at the venerable age of 84. (37)

Born in Limanowa, southern Poland, then in the Galicia of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, very early in his life Berling found his way to the circles that Jozef Pilsudski was organizing in his struggle for partitioned Poland's independence. He joined the Pilsudski Legion at the outbreak of World War I, very soon distinguishing himself and attaining the rank of officer. After the war he stayed in the army, completing his military as well as his legal studies.

Even though he supported Pilsudski in his May 1926 coup d'état, he seems to have fallen out of grace with his successors. In the end he was retired, at the age of 45, to take up as of 1 September 1939 a civil service post with the State Accounting Institute. However, with the outbreak of the World War II, unable to get a military assignment Berling went eastward and was taken a prisoner of war by the Soviets, who in accordance with the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact had entered Poland on 17 September 1939.

(37) Radio Warsaw, 11 July 1980, 1730 hours.



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Official Polish sources (38) are rather circumspect about this period in Berling's life, favoring the now generally sanctioned phrase that he "found himself within the Soviet borders." In fact he was in the Starobielsk prisoner of war camp, which along with the Kozielsk and Ostaszkow camps, accounted for some 11,000 officers, whose fate still remains a grim mystery and has passed into history as the Katyn massacre, though not all the remains of those killed have yet been located. Only a few officers, having been transferred to Pawlisczew Bor and to Grazowiec, survived. Berling, along with a small group of others considered sympathetic to the Soviets, was kept in a villa outside Moscow, pending further developments.

In the wake of the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 and shortly after the signing, on 14 August 1941, of the Polish-Soviet military agreement, General Wladyslaw Anders, until then a Lubianka prisoner himself, was commissioned to form the Polish Forces in the Soviet Union, largely from among the inmates of the prisons and labor camps. Berling and his group were seconded by the Russians to help Anders in this work and he was initially appointed chief of staff of the Fifth Infantry Division. After a conflict of an unspecified nature with his commander, General Mieczyslaw Boruta-Spiechowicz, Berling received another post as evacuation base commander at Krasnododsk on the Caspian Sea. According to Anders, he deserted in August 1942 as the last troops were living for Iran, in line, it is mooted, with the previously agreed strategy of his Soviet friends. (39)

Very shortly afterwards Berling was instrumental in the formation, under the auspices of the so-called Union of Polish Patriots (ZPP -- Zwiazek Polskich Patriotow, the nucleus, under Wanda Wasilewska, of the future communist government of Poland), of the First Tadeusz Kosciuszko Infantry Division, which he commanded. This later grew into the First Corps, later the First Army, and finally into the Polish People's Army of which Berling was for a short period second in command.

In the tragic days of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising Berling commanded the First Polish Army which, as part of Marshal Rokossowski's command, found itself outside Warsaw. When he was deprived of his command later that year rumor had it that this was because, in trying to help the insurgents, he had contravened Soviet orders. Ostensibly he was sent to Moscow's Voroshilov Soviet General Staff Academy.

Between 1946 and 1953 he headed a Polish military academy, which was modeled on the Soviet One. In 1953 he was transferred to a comparatively menial post as an undersecretary in the Ministry of State Farming (the PGRs -- Panstwowe Gospodarstwa Rolne) before being finally retired the following year.

(38) See his official biography on the occasion of his 80th birthday, Trybuna Ludu, 28 April 1976.

(39) Wladyslaw Anders, Bez Ostatniego Rozdzialu (London: Gryf Publications Ltd., 1959).

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His second retirement lasted over a quarter of a century, though he occasionally re-emerged when he could be made use of by some faction or another, as was apparently the case when he was drawn into the veterans' activities, to be used by Moczar's partisans to settle their score with Gomulka, with whom Berling had seldom seen eye to eye.

The comparative popularity that Berling seemed to have enjoyed in recent years -- television and radio appearances, interviews in the press, and articles written by or about him -- is said to be partly the result of the latest historical research which seems to confirm his intention of helping Warsaw in 1944.

It would seem that Berling's motives were not always clear and were often even suspect, but at the same time he appears to have been his own man, even though during the many difficult periods of his long life he was apparently forced to compromise more than once.

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(38) See his official biography on the occasion of his 80th birthday, Trybuna Ludu, 28 April 1978.  
(39) Wiesław Anders, Przebiegiem losów (London: Gryf Publications Ltd., 1959).