

RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

EAST EUROPE

● POLAND/18

13 March 1968

SITUATION REPORT

* Unrest Continues -- Sharp Regime Reaction

Unrest Continues -- Sharp Regime Reaction

Violence erupted in the Warsaw streets on Monday, March 11, but it was not primarily the Warsaw students who clashed with the police; it was also the Warsaw population, mostly young people, many teenagers and high school pupils. According to a [probably exaggerated] official report (Radio Warsaw, March 12), "hooligan elements armed with sticks and stones took over the initiative" in the afternoon of March 11 and in a number of "aggressive moves" in several parts of the capital demolished a cinema, broke shop windows, etc. Two home-made explosive charges ("petardy") were also thrown at the police. The result of the clashes: 27 policemen slightly injured, eight ORMO (volunteer Militia reserve) men wounded, as well as a dozen or so "social activists" (a synonym for Party apparatchiks). About 300 persons were detained, of whom only about 30 were said to be students, while the majority were "hooligan elements, people without firm employment." Quite a number of those detained were high school pupils, "a sad and most significant fact," Radio Warsaw commented. It cited at least six names of those pupils, including Andrzej Domagala, "the 16-year old son of the director of the Central Post Office in Warsaw." (The father, Stanislaw Domagala was one of the hosts to John A. Gronouski who--as U.S. Postmaster General--visited Warsaw in June 1964.)

The listing of these names does not augur well for the parents of the "delinquents," particularly after the dangerous precedent established by dismissals of at least three high government officials, fathers of students blamed for being instigators of the March 8 events at the Warsaw University (cf. Polish Situation Report/17, Radio Free Europe Research, March 11). In a short communique, Radio Warsaw and PAP announced in the evening of March 12 that the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Cyrankiewicz, "released from their

13 March 1968

positions: Jan Grudzinski, an under-secretary of state in the Ministry of Forestry and Timber Industry; Jan Gorecki, a director general in the Ministry of Finance; and Fryderyk Topolski, government plenipotentiary for the deconcentration of industry in Warsaw." While no reasons for their dismissal were given, Western agencies noted that the official press, notably Trybuna Ludu and Stowo Powszechne of March 11, named Grudzinski's daughter, Irena, Gorecki's son, Wiktor, and Topolski's son, Kazimierz, as being among the most active demonstrators and instigators of the demonstrations. (While it is known that Topolski is of Jewish origin, it is difficult to say whether Grudzinski and Gorecki are also Jews.)

Before the riots started in the streets of Warsaw on March 11, the students of the Warsaw University met at noon and presented a resolution demanding--according to Radio Belgrade, March 11--among other things, the democratization of studies, participation of students in the disciplinary commissions dealing with violations of university regulations by students, the re-admittance of the expelled students, and a condemnation of the intervention by the Militia in the university on March 8. "During the meeting the students themselves watched over the order in the university area," Radio Belgrade stressed. Western agencies reported additionally that the students also demanded to know the name of the University official who gave authority to the Militia to enter the University's "extraterritorial" grounds and asked for an official denial of biased press accounts of the events of March 8 and 9. A few hours later, the students of the Warsaw Polytechnical Institute met and passed a similar resolution fully supporting the stand taken by their colleagues from the University.

Almost parallel to students' meetings and to the riots, a Party meeting took place at which Jozef Kepa, First Secretary of the Metropolitan Party Committee, gave a report on the situation. He said that the unrest originated with a "small but determined group of students, capable of all possible actions." Kepa blamed them for taking advantage of every available opportunity "to prepare an atmosphere of ferment, to bring about all kinds of conflicts," and "to create the impression that an active political opposition exists." He also accused the group of "applying the bogey of anti-Semitism at every available opportunity," a "trick they have resorted to particularly often since the Israeli aggression against the Arab states." Kepa declared: "We have been combatting and we will consistently combat all symptoms of nationalism and racial hatred. But we will also not allow ourselves to be blackmailed by the bogey of anti-Semitism."

Kepa's assurances about combatting racial hatred must have sounded quite strange to the readers of Stowo Powszechne, the "Pax" pro-regime daily, of March 11, which linked the events in Warsaw with an Israeli-West German conspiracy. According to the daily, there exists a close cooperation

13 March 1968

between the Zionist circles in Israel and the "revanchist" forces in the FRG, and these two forces combined to inspire the Polish Zionist circles to sow trouble in Poland. "Zionists in Poland want to turn intellectuals and youth against the primary demands of patriotic responsibility for People's Poland," the paper concluded. It gave names such as "Blumstein" and "Rubinstein" as those who had been sowing discontent and said they "wanted to disturb links between the community and the people's authority." Kurier Polski of March 12 also made a strong attack with anti-Semitic overtones on many of Poland's most prominent intellectuals as "enemies of People's Poland." It also attacked the Jewish Cultural Association for harboring many of the dissident student leaders. ZBOWiD, too, issued a resolution on March 12 attacking "the same people who were years ago known for their national nihilism" as responsible for instigating the students and warned that they would be "punished appropriately, independently of their positions. . . ."

While Warsaw was relatively quiet on March 12 (Radio Warsaw reported on one minor incident in which "hooligan elements" were involved), the unrest spread to other university centers in the provinces. On March 11 Cracow students met at the ancient Jagiellonian University and passed a resolution of solidarity with their Warsaw colleagues. Agencies reported also that a crowd of about 10,000 gathered at the town's main square but no violence occurred. Lublin was also a scene of a students' solidarity meeting and some subsequent brawls on the streets (admitted officially by Radio Warsaw). Students solidarity meetings were also held in Poznan in the afternoon of March 12. (According to the latest reports riots occurred in Cracow on March 13 as well.)

The Party has done its best to organize a counter-action. Radio Warsaw reported on countless meetings and resolutions of factory workers all over Poland condemning the "irresponsible" actions of the students. In the resolutions, satisfaction is expressed that among the main "trouble makers" there are no sons of workers and peasants. The efforts to estrange the students from the "working class" is thus more than evident. In this respect, it should be noted that while the theme of a juenesse dorée may be at least partly true with respect to the Warsaw University, it is difficult to say that the impressive meeting of the Warsaw Polytechnical Institute was held by well-to-do students, since most of them come from the workers' and peasants' families. It is these students who, at least in one respect, went further than their Warsaw University colleagues in their demands, issuing a type of ultimatum to the regime. In their resolution of March 11 they stated that they would hold a demonstration inside the Institute today (March 13) if the Polish press did not withdraw its criticism of student demonstrators.

As on March 8 and 9, the demonstrations of March 11, did not produce other demands than those of "freedom," "democracy," the observance of the Constitution, etc. Not one

13 March 1968

Western correspondent and not one Western agency reported any anti-Soviet slogans. However, Zygie Warszawy stated (on March 12) that a group of demonstrators used slogans "directed against the Polish-Soviet alliance." While this cannot be excluded, the general impression of the demonstrations is that the demands of the students and the Warsaw population did not go beyond the basic demand for more freedom and democracy. In view of this, the regime's sharp reaction to the demonstrations (arrests of hundreds, sentences to a few of as much as six months' imprisonment, threats of more severe measures) is all the more surprising.