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SITUATION REPORT

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Tense Situation in Cracow

Several university professors in Cracow were beaten by militia last week. Ludwig Zimmerer reported from Warsaw for the Bavarian Broadcasting Service on March 21. Rector of the Cracow Polytechnical Institute, Kazimierz Sokalski, died of a heart attack on March 20, and his sudden death was linked with what Zimmerer described as "continuing tense situation in Cracow." In the evening of March 19, long discussions of Cracow students with their professors took place, and it was with great difficulty that the professors -- who were afraid of a "massacre" -- managed to persuade the students not to start a new demonstration. Zimmerer did not explain whether the discussion had taken place before or after the crucial speech of First Party Secretary Wladyslaw Gomulka (cf. Polish Situation Report/22, Radio Free Europe Research, March 21) but it would be logical to assume that, irrespective of their tempers, the Cracow students waited first for what Gomulka would say, and only after they learned what his stand was were they about to stage a new demonstration.

A much more serious development, reported by Zimmerer, was a strike of solidarity with Cracow students staged on March 18 by workers of the Nowa Huta steelworks, the largest in Poland and the most publicized "socialist" industrial giant. In this connection Zimmerer quoted the following passage from the local Gazeta Krakowska (the Party daily) of March 19:

"The surgical ambulatorium of the First Aid Station at Siemiradzki Street treated 112 persons yesterday. In the majority of cases, patients were involved who suffered injuries at the place of their work. Several of them were bitten by dogs."

Since dog bites seldom appear on the list of work accidents, Zimmerer explained that it was the militia that used trained dogs against the striking workers of Nowa Huta. He added that the

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authorities are determined to be as tough with the demonstrating students as they were with the striking workers.

Confirmation of this determination -- and, in an indirect way, of the seriousness of the situation -- was supplied earlier by Cracow authorities when both local papers, Gazeta Krakowska and Dziennik Polski, published on March 14 a "special regulation" of the Presidium of the People's Council of the City of Cracow introducing summary proceedings ("postepowanie przyspieszone") in cases tried by "penal-administrative courts" at People's Councils. These proceedings were introduced for the period of 13 March 1968 to 10 September 1968. In practical terms, it means that administrative courts can pass, in a "sitz"-procedure, sentences of arrest up to three months. One of the offenses for which a citizen may be held in a place of detention is "demonstrative manifestation in a public place of dislike or slight of the Polish State or state institutions."

Student unrest started in Cracow on March 11 when -- as reported by the local press on March 13 -- students gathered on the market place, then marched towards the Jagiellonian University "to take a stand on the events at the Warsaw University." On the same day, March 11, the Polish Students' Association Council at the Medical Academy issued a resolution suggesting legal meetings at other schools of higher learning in Cracow to discuss the events in Warsaw "in all earnestness," and -- at the same time -- dissociate themselves, "children of workers and peasants in the overwhelming majority," from "voices and articles" which pointed up "the alleged antagonism between students and the working class." Such meetings took place, local papers reported, but in the evening "groups of demonstrating students gathered at the Main Market Place."

Violent clashes of March 13 and the strike at the Jagiellonian University, initially intended to last until March 16, were covered in Polish SR/19 and 21, RFER, March 14 and 19 respectively. The local press confirmed that on March 15 the strike was 100 per cent effective at the Jagiellonian University, at the Higher School of Economics, at the Mining and Metallurgy Academy, and at the Physical Training Academy, while at other schools of higher learning the attendance was either "almost normal" or "about 40 per cent."

Subsequent news agency reports from Poland confirmed that the strike at the Jagiellonian University, begun on March 14, continued through March 19. On March 20, the Jagiellonian University students "switched their five-day boycott to a sit-in," UPI reported on March 21. This "sit-in" was to last for two days, and agency reports confirmed that it was in force on March 21. (The situation at other schools of higher learning in Cracow is not known.) "The sit-in involved students sitting in corridors and not attending lectures," Jonathan Randal reported for The New York Times (March 21). "It followed a five-day classroom boycott during which some parents had been warned that their children would be expelled unless they returned to school," Randal added, quoting "informed sources,"

According to earlier reports, at least two professors of the Jagiellonian University were either beaten up or maltreated by

police. Rector Mieczyslaw Klimaszewski was "beaten by police as he tried to come to the help of some beleaguered students," an RFE Special from Vienna reported on March 15. Another was Prof. Karol Estreicher, deputy rector, who was "reportedly maltreated" during the demonstrations, Bernard Margueritte reported for Le Monde (March 17-18). In this connection, Margueritte said that "a movement of solidarity is developing among a part of the professorial body in Warsaw, and particularly in Cracow." Warsaw students, according to Margueritte, received from Prof. Estreicher "a message of solidarity."

Confirmation that a number of professors sided with students can also be found in the resolution passed by the students of the Warsaw Polytechnic "at a legal meeting on March 13," the full text of which was published in The Guardian (March 21). The resolution contains 13 demands, the seventh of which reads: "The refusal to take steps against the academic workers for any support they may have shown the students."

Support for the Students' Cause

Prof. Estreicher and the workers of Nowa Huta (cf. preceding item) were not the only ones to support the students' cause. The Warsaw Polytechnic students who, like their Cracow colleagues, started a 48 hour sit-in in the evening of March 21, received a message of support and solidarity from the "true workers" of the large and internationally known rolling stock factory "PAFAWAG" in Wroclaw, Margueritte reported for Le Monde (March 22), as did Randal for The New York Times (March 21).

Earlier (Le Monde, March 15) Margueritte said that "several dozens of lawyers" volunteered to defend the students at court. Support of the students' cause also took the form of petitions, one of which was reported by Margueritte to have been prepared at the Polish Academy of Sciences. "Numerous" members of the Socialist Youth Union, in protest against regimes brutal repressions of students' riots, returned their membership cards. (Official press reports admitted that the SYU members felt "unsafe" among their student colleagues.)

Professors of the Faculty of Biochemistry and Biophysics of Warsaw University adopted a resolution protesting against "the brutal action of the police," rejecting the principle of collective responsibility, and dissociating themselves from "anti-Semitic provocations," AFP reported on March 16. The resolution was similar to the one adopted earlier by professors at the Mathematics and Physics Faculty of Warsaw University, Reuter added on March 18. On the same day, DPA reported from Warsaw that at an "illegal" meeting of 3,000 students in Warsaw several professors took part "unofficially." That they did so not only in Warsaw was confirmed by the local press of Poznan, where Wlodzimierz Wierzilow, "assistant lecturer at the chair of the Russian language and literature," was detained on March 12 along with a number of other persons (altogether 84) in connection with student riots.

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In connection with the support shown students by the workers of Nowa Huta and "PAFAWAG," it should be recalled that at least a large number of the workers of the Zeran (Warsaw) automobile factory refused to take part in a meeting called to condemn student riots (cf. Polish SR/19, RFER, March 14). In a dispatch from Warsaw (March 16), UPI also quoted "reports from factories" referring to "derision and scepticism," with which workers greeted the official version of the events.

As early as March 11, the five "Znak" deputies to the Sejm sent a letter to Premier Jozef Cyrankiewicz asking for a stop to the "brutal action of the police," for "answers to questions which interest the youth" and the public with regard to civic liberties and the cultural policy of the government, and stating that the disturbances had been brought about by "visible errors of the authorities responsible for cultural policy." "Suppression of demonstrations is no solution," the "Znak" deputies concluded. (On the same day, March 11, former "Znak" deputy Stefan Kisielewski was beaten up by thugs, several Western sources reported from Warsaw. He recovered from the injuries a few days later.)

Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, in an apparent effort not to aggravate the situation, cancelled his routine Monday conference with students at St. Anne's church in Warsaw on Monday the 11th. However, a week later, on March 18, he prayed for "our youth suffering in hospitals and prisons."