

The Letter of the Polish Intellectuals

This letter previously reported upon (cf. Sit.Reps., April 2, 6 and 16), has now become a cause celebre and continues to occupy public attention both in and outside Poland. It appears that this interest is still increasing.

In Poland, on April 14, there were student demonstrations involving 200 (according to L'Unita) to 800 (according to Reuter) students. According to Paul Underwood the demonstrations were caused by a reported suspension of 12 (or 65) members of the university teaching staff in connection with the letter.

While the letter has still not been mentioned inside Poland by regime media, its existence was admitted by the government in their denial of reprisals against the signers, released to the foreign press (cf. UPI and Reuter of April 18). This regime statement denies facts which to our knowledge have not been reported in the foreign press, and for the most part glosses over those which have been reported. It does, moreover, admit some victimisation of the signers, e.g. the suspension of Antoni Slonimski from "Szpilki", claiming that this was not by government but by editorial board action, a most academic distinction as only the government could have informed the board of the letter. It also denies that Jan Kott has had his passport withdrawn. He simply has not been issued one, the statement said.

This denial shows that the regime concerned about the reaction of public opinion in the West. With the exception of France (which at a meeting of the International PEN Club voted against a resolution condemning the Polish regime -- cf. "Daily Telegraph" of April 20), opinion is, to say the least, very critical of the regime. Articles on the subject have appeared in several West European and American papers.

The most important of these Western manifestations of sympathy with Polish intellectuals are, in addition to the previously mentioned resolution of the PEN Club, is a letter to the editor of the "Times" signed by 21 outstanding British intellectuals, i.a., Henry Moore, Stephen Spender, Angus Wilson, Malcolm Muggeridge, V.S. Pritchett, Arthur Koestler and Alan Bullock.

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Field Verdict Revised

Poland's Supreme Court on April 17 threw out the conviction of American student Andrew Field and found him not guilty of "striking and shaking" a border guard official, but merely of "improper behavior". Consequently the sentence of eight months imprisonment was changed into a fine of 3000 zloty and 450 zloty costs. There is however one point which remains obscure. Since the prison sentence was suspended, is the fine suspended also, or is it to be paid? (Cf. UPI, April 17. For earlier reports, cf. Sit.Rep. February 4 and 17, 1964.)

Polish Workers to Czechoslovakia

More than 4,000 Polish workers will work in Czechoslovakia this year, Radio Prague reported on April 17. Last year the figure stood at 1800, mostly miners and construction workers. This year some 500 will work in forestry and agriculture.