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S I T U A T I O N R E P O R T

- * Repressive Measures Against Warsaw University Students
- * The Stand of Religious Bodies
- * Reaction to Czechoslovak Events
- * Polish-Danish Trade Protocol
- * East-West Contacts

Repressive Measures Against Warsaw University Students

"In connection with the illegal meeting" at the Warsaw University, Rector Stanislaw Turski decided (on March 29) to "cross off from the list" 34 students and to suspend 11 others "from among the organizers and participants of the meeting," Radio Warsaw and PAP reported on March 30. "Disciplinary proceedings against a certain numbers of persons guilty of disturbing order at the school are under consideration," the communique announced. In addition, the rector, "with the consent of the Minister of Education and Higher Schools," decided to end courses in a number of subjects. These are: economic theory, economics, and econometrics at the Economic Faculty; philosophy and sociology at the Philosophy Faculty; psychology at the Pedagogics Faculty; and the third year study of mathematics and physics at the respective faculty. New registration of students for these subjects has been ordered. Applications for new admissions must be made by April 6.

Commenting on these steps, the Warsaw daily press (March 30) -- as quoted by Radio Warsaw -- stressed that the rector's decision was not easy (it had been taken "under pressure of the circumstances") and that it had become necessary to interrupt normal work of "these few study links at which an atmosphere of particular passion was concentrated and which, to a large extent, succumbed to a process of political corrosion." The decision, the dailies concluded, was "painful and costly but it was just." Zygie Warszawy added that "over 1,000 students of a few faculties would have to bear the consequences of the activities of a few hundred of their colleagues, which were contrary to the academic pledge." The students who had respected the university regulation, Zygie Warszawy continued, should not worry about the results of new entrance applications. The same pertains to those who "renounce following the firebrands

1 April 1968

and who instead are guided by civic responsibility and a patriotic will to gain knowledge."

At another Warsaw school of higher learning earlier affected by less severe measures, the Polytechnical Institute, normal study will begin at 0800 hrs. on April 2, Radio Warsaw announced on March 29. This pertained to a number of faculties situated in the main building of the Institute, which was closed after a students' sit-in-strike ended on March 23 (cf. Polish Situation Report/25, Radio Free Europe Research, March 26).

The "illegal" meeting which prompted repressive measures against "over 1,000" students of Warsaw University was one held on March 28 (cf. Polish SR/27, RFER, March 29). Further details of the meeting have become available. Western correspondents in Warsaw confirmed that the meeting demanded, among other things, the reinstatement of the dismissed professors as well as the points contained in the resolution of March 13 (Angela Nacken, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, March 30). At least three sources (Reuter, March 29, Bernard Margueritte, Le Monde, March 30; and Jonathan Randal, The New York Times, March 31) reported that the students gave the government until April 22, the day Easter vacation ends, to redress their grievances or face the prospect of further unrest. In addition, as reported by Margueritte, the students decided to declare a week boycott of the press, the dates of April 5 and 10 being cited. They also took a collection for flowers to be offered to the dismissed professors.

The Stand of Religious Bodies

In two consecutive days, March 30 and 31, Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski expressed his admiration for Polish students' "maturity, their awareness of their rights, but on the other hand their moderation," and deplored the use of truncheons against them. In this latter instance, the Cardinal did not refer directly to student demonstrations, but the implication was clear. Preaching to some 5,000 faithful at St. Francis of Assisi church at Okecie (on the outskirts of Warsaw) on March 31, the Cardinal warned against "raising our hand against anybody, particularly with a truncheon, because it is strange that a brother should strike a brother. We have seen that some time ago, looking with pain how this was done to our nation, to our brothers and sisters, by the invaders and occupiers."

Speaking on the preceding day in St. Joseph church in Warsaw, the Cardinal referred to a letter the Polish Episcopate had sent to the government. This letter, signed by "more than 50" prelates, stated that the Polish youth wanted "a little truth, a little love, a little justice," The Cardinal revealed. According to earlier reports (e.g. Reuter, March 24), the letter, prepared at an episcopal conference in Warsaw, was dated March 21, and was read in churches in university towns on Sunday, March 24. "We try to understand and sense the source of this disquiet which is deeply troubling the youth, and which seems to be troubling also the youth of the whole world today," the bishops said. "All matters which

1 April 1968

divide people in the contemporary world should be solved not by means of force but by way of penetrating dialogue," they continued. "Application of means of physical force does not lead to the true solution of tensions between people or between social groups." The letter also revealed that the bishops had addressed in this matter separate representations to the government.

Two small groups of the Roman Catholic clergy registered a different stand. First, on March 26, "spiritual and lay activists" of the Catholic Association Caritas (which for years has been on record as totally subservient to the regime) met at a "broadened conference" of the Presidium of the Main Board of the Association and passed a resolution which may be interpreted as both supporting the regime and, at the same time, dissociating itself from the episcopate's letter. "As Catholics and citizens of the people's state, we feel it to be our moral duty to express our uneasiness over the undermining of the nation's unity, over the creation of unnecessary excitement of minds, particularly with the youth" (emphasis supplied). Another dissenting group was Army chaplains who -- according to Radio Warsaw, March 30 -- sent a letter to the chief of the Main Political Board of the Armed Forces expressing "full solidarity with the stand of the Armed Forces and of the whole soberly and patriotically thinking society." The use of the adjectives "sober" and "patriotic" may well have been deliberately chosen to imply the chaplains' criticism of the stand of the hierarchy.

The Polish Ecumenical Council, representing all the Christian denominations except the Roman Catholic, issued a statement (Radio Warsaw and PAP, March 27) in which the Council -- although "not in a position to explore the sources of or judge these events from the political point of view" -- stressed that "as members of Churches living and acting in the country we cannot remain silent in this situation." Referring to "great achievements" of "socialist" Poland, the Council's resolution stressed that "we can multiply these in conditions of unity, peace and national solidarity. Everything that makes progress on this chosen road difficult we regard as a highly undesirable matter." The Council further stated that "we put trust in the leadership of People's Poland and express the hope that the communities we represent fully share our stand ensuing from our Christian and patriotic premises."

The Main Board of the pro-regime Christian Social Association (headed by Jan Frankowski and represented in the Sejm by three deputies) met in Warsaw (no date given) to draft a letter to Party Secretary Wladyslaw Gomulka "in connection with the recent events," the daily press reported on March 20. The letter expressed "solidarity with the voices of protest against the activities of the circles representing political diversion."

It is rather surprising that the pro-regime Pax Association, always on the alert to "take a stand," has not yet issued any declaration. There should be no doubt, though, about Pax's full support of the regime. The Association's powerful press has been

1 April 1968

as vociferous about "inspirers," "firebrands," etc. as any regime daily or periodical (with the possible exception of the official Trybuna Ludu).

The Znak deputies stand is known from Western news agency reports (cf. Polish SR/23, RFEER, March 22). Needless to say, the regime press can hardly be expected to publish the letter of the five Znak deputies asking -- as early as March 11 -- to stop the "brutal action of the police."

(more)

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1 April 1968

Reaction to Czechoslovak Events

The events in Czechoslovakia have lately received greater coverage in connection with the election of General Ludvik Svoboda as President of Czechoslovakia. Judging by the length and the tune of comments, General Svoboda is "persona grata" in Warsaw and his one-time connections with Poland are being stressed at every occasion.

In his report (March 28) on the Czechoslovak Party's CC Plenary session, Radio Warsaw's Prague correspondent, Czeslaw Berenda, called Svoboda a "legendary general" in the whole country, who played an important role in the liberation of the country and who wears high Soviet, Czechoslovak, and Polish decorations.

Berenda spoke further on the new Czechoslovak Party action program which, he said, has been prepared "extremely carefully" and which will constitute a "truly historic event" for Czechoslovakia.

Speaking about the recent democratization process in Czechoslovakia, Radio Warsaw's correspondent ventured some critical remarks. He said, namely, that among correct and justified demands and suggestions were also some "unbalanced, unrealistic, often demagogical and harmful" statements. It was perhaps for that very reason, said Berenda, that many delegates at recent Party district and regional conferences had expressed fears that some of the proposed changes might eradicate what is most important for the republic, namely, the cause of socialism. Berenda also said that some Western centers had hoped that Czechoslovakia would "abandon the socialist system and loosen its ties with the fraternal [Communist] countries and Parties." This was, however, only wishful thinking, said Berenda.

The latest personnel changes in Czechoslovakia have been reported in a matter-of-fact way without comment.

Polish-Danish Trade Protocol

A Polish-Danish trade protocol for 1968 was signed on March 27 by Poland's deputy Foreign Trade Minister, Stefan Dlugosz, and his Danish counterpart, Hans Christensen, an RFE Special from Stockholm reported on the following day. A spokesman for Christensen's office was reported by the Special as having stressed on this occasion the generally favorable mutual developments in recent years. But he also reminded the Polish delegation that Danish businessmen were unhappy about having to operate on the "compensation" system, whereby they have to buy something from Poland in order to make a sale to Poland.

The Special also stressed that during 1967 Poland overtook the Soviet Union to become Denmark's leading East European trade partner.

1 April 1968

East-West Contacts

Polish Foreign Trade Minister, Witold Trampczynski, arrived in Paris on March 31 for an official visit at the invitation of the French government, Radio Warsaw reported on the same day. Western news agencies speculated Trampczynski would make advance arrangements for a trip by Gomulka to France in September.

Poland is participating in the fourth annual "Southeast Fair" of Karlskrona in southeastern Sweden which opened on March 27, an RFE Special from Stockholm reported on the same day.

Christophe Oeberg, Swedish diplomat reported to be involved in contacts between the United States and North Vietnam officials in Warsaw, flew home on March 27 from another visit to the Polish capital, a UPI dispatch from Warsaw disclosed on the same day.

Representatives of French organizations for standardization arrived on a three-day visit in Warsaw, PAP reported on March 27.

Radio Warsaw reported on March 28 that the visiting Chairman of the US Time-Life publishing firm, James Linen, had been received by Polish Foreign Trade Minister Witold Trampczynski and by Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Jozef Winiewicz.

The French Gerard Phillip Popular Opera Ensemble arrived in the Polish capital for four-day performances at the Warsaw "Teatr Wielki," Radio Warsaw reported on March 28.

Poland is participating in this year's International Short Film Festival at Oberhausen in West Germany, which opened on March 31, Radio Warsaw reported.

A program on relations between "socialist" and "capitalist" countries was broadcast by Radio Warsaw on March 28. The program consisted of statements made by personalities from Holland, Italy, and Turkey.