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SITUATION REPORT

* Students: the Warsaw Scene

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In spite of official warnings against any "illegal" meetings, about 2,000 students of the Warsaw University gathered in the afternoon of March 28 "to demand the reinstatement of six dismissed humanities professors," Jonathan Randal, quoting "informed sources," reported for The New York Times (March 29). According to "fragmentary reports," Randal continued, the students also denounced censorship and demanded the release of students arrested or drafted into the armed service because of their participation in demonstrations. "Another student demand," Randal said, "was said to have been reform of the legal code, especially the so-called Small Penal Code." Shortly after 16:00 hours, Rector Stanislaw Turski declared the evening "free time," whereupon university gates were closed, leaving scores of students outside. Militia moved them on to prevent crowds gathering. Three hours later, the gates were reopened and "hundreds" of students left the university grounds. Western news agencies reported that the Polytechnical Institute main gates were also closed and that small groups of students stood outside. Militia patrolled the streets and police cars stood by, but no incidents were reported.

In the morning of March 28, at least two Warsaw dailies warned students against any "illegal" gathering. Trybuna Ludu (mouthpiece of the CC, PUWP) said: "We must seriously and firmly say: stop! An end to inciting, provoking and disorientating colleagues. We have all had enough meetings." Zycie Warszawy (ostensibly "independent") warned that further trouble would lead to suspension of classes and enrollment of

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new students and that "a group of determined firebrands" still wanted to stir up trouble.

Earlier (March 27) UPI, quoting "reliable sources," reported that students were planning further protests against government and Party policies, including a major total strike in all Warsaw schools of higher learning. "Despite police actions against their leaders, students are continuing to meet in small organizational groups to plan this next action," UPI said.

The authorities appear determined to break any further student resistance. UPI reported earlier (cf. Polish Situation Report/25, Radio Free Europe Research, March 26) that a number of students had been called up to military service. In this latter respect, Radio Warsaw (March 29) reported on a conference of the chiefs of military studies of the civilian schools of higher learning which may sound rather ominous to the rebellious students. The conference took place on March 28 and was described as a "meeting of the leadership of the Defense Ministry" with the respective chiefs. The "meeting" was chaired by Defense Minister Marshal Marian Spychalski.

The Party organizations continue to be concerned with the situation. "The repeated meeting of the Warsaw Party aktyf shows that the directives from the headquarters are being implemented already," Radio Belgrade reported on March 28, in connection with "new demonstrations" prepared by students. This meeting was one reported by Radio Warsaw (March 28), at which Jozef Kepa, First Secretary of the Warsaw Municipal Party Committee, presented a report on the "current problems of Party work."

These problems were discussed at a conference of the top Party leadership with first secretaries of the voivodship Party committees on March 26. Presided over by First Party Secretary Wladyslaw Gomulka, the conference was attended by Politburo members Jozef Cyrankiewicz, Edward Gierek, Zenon Kliszko, and Ryszard Strzelecki, and by CC Secretaries and CC department heads. "The current tasks of the Party organizations and institutions were discussed during the debate," Radio Warsaw and PAP reported. In addition, Gomulka "briefed the gathering about the course of the meeting of the representatives of Parties and governments of socialist countries, which took place in Dresden on March 23," the two agencies explained.

Some light was shed on the nature of internal problems discussed at that meeting by Radio Warsaw on March 28 and 29. Reporting on a conference of the Bialystok voivodship Party Executive with the

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voivodship's Party aktif (on March 28), the broadcast quoted a resolution assuring Gomulka of the aktif's readiness to defend the "achievements of socialism against the attacks of our own reaction, revisionists and Zionists, and their imperialistic protectors." The purpose of the conference, Radio Warsaw said, was to discuss "the present problems of Party-political work in the voivodship." A report "on the present situation" was delivered by First Secretary of the Voivodship Party Committee Arkadiusz Laszewicz.

Whatever the Party's determination to end the students' resistance, they seem determined to continue to express their dissatisfaction. What are the causes of that resistance? While the dismissals of professors may certainly be one of the immediate causes, there are more serious reasons for the students' determination. As already pointed out (cf. Polish SR/25, RFER, March 26), they may be traced to the way Gomulka handled student demands but also -- more immediately -- to the nature of the "dialogue" with the students started in the press, radio and television. This "dialogue" started with an article by Wojciech Kubicki (Zycie Warszawy, March 26), who published (in slightly distorted version) the resolution of the students of the Warsaw Polytechnical Institute and argued point by point the regime cause. He repeated the familiar theme of the youth being drawn into "provocative political activity" of a "certain group of people," admitted the initial "lack of sufficient [press] information," but made no promise whatsoever to meet students' demands even half way. Subsequent parts of the "dialogue" -- particularly those over Radio Warsaw -- did not go beyond what Kubicki had said in the slightest. More provocative yet to students must have been an article by Alina Reutt and Zdzislaw Andruszkiewicz published by the Socialist Youth Union weekly Walka Mlodych (March 24). It contained sharp attacks on the members of the student "Club of Controversies," on the writers (names were cited extensively), and narrowed the issue to the intrigue of two former Stalinist politicians, Stefan Staszewski and Roman Zambrowski. (On this occasion, Walka Mlodych revealed in esoteric but unmistakable terms that Staszewski has been arrested. "His present place of work is unknown. He seems to have rather a lot of time," the paper said.)

The students must have by now realized that the two politicians, both totally discredited and deprived of any influence, have been suddenly made into powerful plotters, a myth hardly anybody believed, certainly not cynical operators of the press campaign. The students must have noticed that the names of Staszewski and Zambrowski were not mentioned by Gomulka, which must have confirmed their conviction that the two "Zionists" had been used, and are being used, as a bugbear for the consumption of simpletons. This gimmick of Zionism and the symbols of Staszewski

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and Zambrowski have been intended to confuse the public and to divert attention from the essence of the students' demands: democracy and freedom. It is precisely in the Walka Mlodych article that the slogan of democracy and freedom has been ridiculed as one raised by the "golden youth" to incite others "to anti-state and anti-Party activities." The Polish students must have realized that their noble demands for democracy and freedom have been replaced by the petty symbols of two discredited politicians. This fraud seems likely to generate more bitterness and dissatisfaction rather than peace at the Polish universities.