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General Situation in Poland  
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While there has never been any doubt about the complete subservience of Poland to the Communist regime of the U.S.S.R. the political and especially the economic measures introduced in the first two years after the end of the war suggested that it was not the intention to enforce on Poland the same measure of Communism as is enjoyed in Russia itself. On the one hand a variety of political parties was tolerated, and on the other the decrees nationalising industry laid down explicitly that enterprises not nationalised - which represented between 40-50% of the industry and trade of the country - were to be allowed not only to exist, but to expand; moreover, obvious efforts were made to persuade the people that the Government was essentially Polish, and nothing was done to hamper the spirit of nationalism which has always been a dominant characteristic of the Polish people.

It was of course clear that the Government was out to destroy Mikolajczyk's party as being tainted with the influence of the wartime Polish Government in London and of post-war Polish emigrant circles. It was also perhaps evident that efforts were being made to persuade the other political parties in Poland to come into line with the Polish Communist Party, but there was little evidence to show that this was being done by very violent methods. On the economic side the Minister of Industry and Commerce, M.Minc, apparently stood for the continuation of private enterprise, and for the continued employment in executive positions in State controlled industry of pre-war managers and technical men.

This situation has suffered a drastic change since the summer of this year. It may be that the opposition of Yugoslavia to the Cominform's efforts towards that country's further integration into the Communist bloc came as something of a shock to the Committee of the Communist Party in Moscow. Be that as it may, there has undoubtedly been a decision to press on actively with the removal of all elements in the satellite countries which might turn out to be a source of weakness to the Communist regime. In Poland this change of attitude was brought to public notice by the August meeting of the Executive Committee of the Polish Communist Party. At that meeting, M.Bierut, the Moscow appointed President of Poland, harangued M.Gomulka, the Secretary-General of the Polish Communist Party, in a long tirade criticising him bitterly for his "right and nationalist deviations". M.Gomulka in an answering speech admitted these crimes, and he was thereupon replaced as Secretary-General of the Party by M.Bierut himself.

M.Bierut's speech, to which great publicity was given in Poland, was felt by everybody there to be an exposition of the "Party line". It was followed by great activity throughout the Communist Party in Poland, and by a purge which is still in progress of all persons who might be considered to have fallen into the same errors as M.Gomulka. Further, the fusion of the Polish Socialist Party with the Communist Party, which has long been the aim of the Communists, has been brought nearer to realisation by the elimination of the remainder of its important members who had hitherto opposed the fusion. The date for this fusion has now been officially fixed for the 8th December, and thereafter there will, for all practical purposes, be only one party in Poland, namely the Communist Party.

There has been a great speeding up of the communisation of the country in other directions. It was declared that the agriculture of the country must be transformed into



communal co-operative farms - on the Russian model; the larger peasants, i.e. those who employed labour on their farms, were denounced as "kulaks", and an ideological war was started against them as "enemies of the working class". In industry measures have been introduced which spell an early end to private enterprise. In education instructions have been issued by the Ministry of Education for the introduction of new lines of teaching the young, in particular instructions as to the manner in which the traditional Polish nationalism is to be converted into a patriotism owing allegiance to the Communist working classes of the world as opposed to the existing bourgeois, narrow and chauvinistic conception of patriotism towards a single country. In various other fields similar action has been taken.

It is interesting to note that none of these changes is being brought about by specific legislation, either by Laws passed by the Diet or by Government Decrees. The Communist regime has discovered that it can achieve its aims quite effectively by administrative orders, since there is no method by which the constitutional legality of such orders can be questioned. Any Polish citizen brave enough to raise such a question of legality would find himself immediately arrested by the Security Police.

While only a close and continuous study of the development of affairs in a Communist country would enable one to understand the full details of the working of the regime, even a short experience of the daily life of the country throws a good deal of light on how the machine works. In general it may be assumed that the Executive Committee of the Communist Party in Poland, in close association with Moscow, lays down the broad lines of policy, which the various Ministers then carry out. A Ministry works along two lines; firstly through the direct control exercised by it throughout that section of the life of the country which it administers. Secondly it exercises its influence through Communist "Circles", one of which exists in every Ministerial department, and in every industrial, commercial, agricultural, social, cultural or other organisation or enterprise in the country. Where matters of communistic policy are in question, the Ministry does not issue instructions - which might perhaps offer too explicit a picture of what was being done. It sends round to the "Circles" concerned a paper headed "proposal for discussion" and copies of these are circulated to the members of the "Circle". In practice these proposals are regarded by the "Circles" as being instructions of a most definite kind, and they form the basis of the activity of the "Circles" themselves. These "Circles", which correspond to the Russian "Soviets", were formed in every department or enterprise immediately after the liberation of Poland. They were in the first place chosen from among the Communist workers and, enjoying as they have done the support of the Government and its organs, particularly of the Security Police, they have become all powerful in their particular spheres. Since August these "Circles" have been instructed to show an intense activity, particularly in the direction of eliminating both from the "Circles" themselves and from the management and executive of the department or enterprise concerned, such elements as might be considered either actively harmful to the Communist regime, or inefficient at their jobs. Meetings of the "Circles" take place every fortnight, and every member is expected to criticise some phase or other of the work and personnel of the "Circle" itself, and of the enterprise in general. This constitutes a very important factor in the purge, dealing as it does with what may be called the lower levels, and it has already resulted in the



elimination of a very large number of "fellow travellers" and luke-warm Communists from the "Circles" themselves and of employees from the enterprises. A member of a "Circle" who shows little enthusiasm for criticising either his colleagues in the "Circle", or the managerial staff or employees of the enterprise, is regarded as a bad Communist and is turned out of the "Circle". There has consequently been a spate of accusations of all kinds, and many employees of Government controlled Departments or other enterprises have been accused either on account of their bourgeois antecedents, or their political attitude, and charged with incompetence, and have had action taken against them. Already by the end of October the purging action had gone further than was intended, as too many men with pre-war managerial and technical experience were being dismissed, and the Government has had to tell the "Circles" to slow down the process where this particular type of employee was concerned.

In its turn the Executive Committee of the Communist Party have direct influence on the "Circles". Each individual "Circle" elects a member to represent it on a local Committee. The local Committees in their turn elect representatives to the District Committees, which are again represented in the Executive Committee. All these elections are carefully staged, so that in effect it is the Executive Committee which nominates the members of those Committees right down to the "Circles" themselves.

The above described organisation thus gives the Executive Committee of the Communist Party a direct control throughout the whole administration of the country, and since it controls also the Security Police through the Ministry of the Interior, it is able to exercise its will unrestrained.

The method by which the Government proposes to communise agriculture has not yet been officially disclosed. The announcement of the Government's policy was badly received in the countryside, and it is thought that no such direct action is likely to be taken in Poland as was taken in Russia in the early thirties. Rather it is anticipated that indirect action will be adopted, and that the bringing of economic pressure on the peasants by way of taxation will be the method chosen. Sporadic action against wealthier peasants has already been taken, and the success of this method both with these peasants and in cases where the Government has wished to eliminate individual private enterprises suggests that it would be successful in the case of the mass of the peasants also, and that in order to retain any means of livelihood at all these latter will, as time goes on, voluntarily form themselves into co-operatives which the Government will find no difficulty in reorganising into communal cooperative farms on the Russian plan.

With regard to the new policy of eliminating all private industry and commerce, this taxation method is evidently to be the chief method used. The recent announcement of taxation to be applied as from 1st January 1949 shows that any enterprise whose gross profits during the year exceed £3,300 will have to pay 65% thereof by way of income tax, 15% by way of "compulsory savings" which cannot be used for any practical purposes and are therefore merely another form of taxation, and additional charges for trading licences etc., which will bring the total taxation to about 94% of the gross profits; in addition to this the fiscal authorities have shown themselves adept at imposing arbitrary taxation against which there is no appeal. Cases have already occurred where owners of private enterprises, foreseeing that there is no future for them, have begun to liquidate their business but have been informed by the Security Police that they must



continue to run the business as long as they have any assets, under pain of arrest. It is understood that the Communist Party have agreed that private enterprise must be eliminated by the end of March 1949. Whether this is the correct date or not, it is evident that, in spite of official declarations by the Minister of Industry and Trade that private enterprise will continue, its fate is in fact sealed. Owners of such enterprises no longer expect to be able to keep their business alive, and merely speculate as to whether they can last three months longer, or possibly six months or a year.

Another method of attack on private enterprise is by way of administrative Orders issued by the Ministries. These Orders are rarely published and are very often retroactive in effect. Thus the owner of a private enterprise never knows whether or not his business is subject to an Order of which he has never heard. For example, a recent Order gave the Authorities the right to sequester any industrial property which was not actively working for production, and even any individual machine that was standing idle. Since the greater part of privately owned industry is working in one way or another as an auxiliary to State owned industry, the latter has only to cancel orders for materials etc. from a small factory or workshop to render it idle and therefore subject to this Order. Another case noted was where the Central Organisation of a particular nationalised industry sent to all its units a circular instructing them not to use any other than State owned firms for particular services; the private firms carrying out these services thus suddenly lost the whole of their clientele.

The Security Police are also brought in on occasions. For example, the Government having apparently decided to bring the whole of the coal distribution trade into its own hands, recently arrested the owners and some of their staffs of all private coal distributing firms; the number of people involved is said to be about 4,000. These arrests took place in September, and no charge seems to have yet been made against the people arrested. In the meantime Government employees have been put in to run the firms, and they will no doubt in every case find evidence that the private owners have transgressed in some way or other some Regulation or Order. And can therefore be charged with an offence. In the case of a well known pre-war firm of forwarding agents in Gdynia, which had escaped nationalisation, the whole of the personnel were recently arrested.

The position of professional men is also threatened. Thus a week or so ago the Vice Minister of Justice called a meeting of the whole legal faculty of Warsaw at which some seven to eight hundred lawyers were present, and informed them that henceforth they must form themselves into cooperatives; each such group would have a manager who would allocate cases amongst the group, would collect the fees and distribute them to the lawyers, retaining a considerable proportion, for whose benefit was not precisely explained. Quite apart from this, the legal profession in Poland is undergoing a general crisis since private business interests are less and less able to protect themselves against administrative action by appealing to the Courts.

An aspect of life in Poland which cannot but strike the visitor is the extent to which the Communist Party are trying to win over the youth of the country. Through its control of



education in the schools the pupils have been increasingly subject to Communist propaganda, which of course is ethically anti-religious. On leaving school the children are caught up in youth movements and are given many incentives to remain active members of them. They are provided with uniforms, with excellent sports facilities, with excursions and amusements of all kinds. By the time a lad has reached the age of military service he has in most cases imbibed a great deal of Communist doctrine, the more so since in the absence of any anti-communist influences in the Press or publications he has in most cases met with little influence which might encourage him to be critical of Communism. At home his parents are frequently afraid to express anti-Communist views, and there remains only the Church, which although still powerful in Poland, meets with the intense opposition of the regime at every stage. It would probably be wrong in these circumstances to expect that the Polish army in a couple of years time will contain many men who are ideologically opposed to the Communist regime. In this connection it must be remembered that the failure of the Western Governments to prevent Poland from falling under the hated Russian domination left a great deal of bitterness in the country, which the Communists have not failed to turn to their advantage against the West.

A very significant change has taken place in regard to the attitude towards Russia. Up to the events of August this year, Russia was kept very much in the background. Every effort was made to pretend that the Government was a purely Polish Government, and that even if its external policy had to be kept in line with that of Russia, this was in the interests of Poland as a country; it was insisted that Russian influence went no further than this. The month of October this year was announced as being a month of Russo-Polish friendship. The newspapers were filled with articles in praise of Russia and of its role in bringing the blessings of Communism to the world; there were visits of Russian sports teams, meetings at which Russian poetry and music were given, the towns were decorated with Polish and Russian flags, and the portrait of Stalin was exhibited everywhere side by side with that of President Bierut. Although the month of friendship came to an end at the end of October there has been no diminution of the amount of pro-Russian propaganda, and it has to all intents and purposes already been accepted as having a permanent place in the life of the country.

As will be seen from the above, the stage is now set for the complete integration of all aspects of life in Poland into the Russian communist system, and although it may be a long time before Poland becomes a member of the Union of Soviet Republics in name, the process of integration is being pressed on so drastically that a comparatively short time will suffice for the main differences in the political, industrial and social organisations of the two countries to be eliminated.

It will no doubt come as a great surprise to many to learn how rapidly Poland, with its traditional hatred of Russia, and its traditional love of individual freedom, is being lined up in the ranks of Communist countries. It is now held by many observers of events in Poland to be the case that the Polish intelligentsia have shown less resistance to Communism than the mass of the workmen, and especially the peasants. The explanation of this may lie on the one hand in the fact that economic pressure has forced the majority of the Polish intelligentsia into the service of the State



in one form or another, and that they have been forced to find in the insidious "dialectically materialistic" Marxian philosophy as expounded by Lenin and Stalin, a philosophic excuse for this acceptance of service in the Communist regime with all that it entails in surrendering freedom of thought and of conscience. It is a fact that the position of the intelligentsia in Poland has improved considerably during the past year, as opposed to that of the masses of workmen and clerical employees, and this in itself offers them an inducement to see a good side of Communism. That this should be the case at a time when many of the intelligentsia are suffering from the purges above referred to may appear paradoxical; but once a man accepts the philosophical basis of Marxism he also accepts the necessity of purges in much the same way as mediaeval Europe accepted the institution of the Inquisition and the heresy-hunts that went with it.

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