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THE POLISH PROBLEM

MY TALKS
with
PROFESSOR ADAM PRAGIER

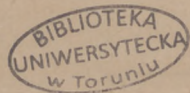
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FOREWORD.

The situation of the Polish nation, on the morrow of the victory of the Allies over Nazism and Fascism, is exceptionally difficult. Though the immense contribution of the Poles to the common victory is not denied by anyone, and though they have suffered perhaps heavier losses than any of the United Nations, the Polish people are deprived to-day of any possibility of determining their own fate. By a series of *faits accomplis*, and against their own will, the Poles have found themselves in the sphere of influence of their powerful Eastern neighbour. This neighbour regards the subjugation of Poland as a reward to which Russia is entitled for the part she has played in the struggle against Nazi Germany. Thus, Poland, the first country to resist the armed onslaught of the Reich, and the principal sufferer of the war, has come to be regarded by the major allies as change money to square their own accounts. Such a position cannot possibly be accepted by the Poles as final, though for the time being they are muzzled and therefore cannot oppose the Polish settlement in their own country.

This unjust and imposed settlement is not an exceptional instance; it is not only Poland that is in this sorry plight; and the wrongs inflicted on some ten nations of Central and Eastern Europe are of ill augury for the peace of the world. The power of the present-day in whose interest these unjust settlements have been imposed is of course anxious to prevent leakage of any information about the situation obtaining as a result of the partitioning of Europe into two absolutely watertight spheres of influence. The power directly concerned is doing its utmost to convince the public opinion of the world that the solution imposed was not the result of power-politics, but, on the contrary, of the will of the peoples involved in **these transactions**. It is in the interests of peace and honesty in international relations



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that these lies should be refuted and the truth exposed and revealed.

There is no case in which the injustice of the solution imposed by the major allies would be more glaring than that of Poland. For that reason alone the Polish question deserves the closest scrutiny and the constant attention of the public opinion of the world. Nor should it be forgotten that a similar injustice meted out in the past to Poland was a source of conflict and a potential danger to the peace throughout the whole of the 19th century. And the untold sufferings of Europe caused by the two great wars of the first half of the 20th century should be a sufficient deterrent to view lightly the prospects of the seeds of yet another conflict being sown by the short-sighted or opportunist politicians of the present day.

In this series it is intended to present the view of Polish socialists who have made a name for themselves in the Polish working class movement, and who, owing to the fact that they reside abroad, are free to express themselves freely. The series begins with the opinions of Prof. Adam Pragier.

Born in 1886, Prof. Pragier studied in the Universities of Cracow and Zurich. He held the chair of Economics at the Warsaw Free College, and wrote several books and pamphlets on economic and social questions. In 1914-18 he fought in the Polish Legions for the independence of his country and rose to the rank of Captain. After the war he entered Parliament as a Socialist and was returned several times between 1922 and 1930, while serving also on the Executive of his party. He firmly opposed Marshal Pilsudski's Coup in 1926, and with several other leftist leaders /Witos, Liberman, etc./ was imprisoned in the fortress of Brześć in 1930.

After the outbreak of the war in 1939, he succeeded in escaping abroad and in 1940 was appointed a member of

the Polish National Council on which he sat until 1944. He sat in several committees which were entrusted by the Polish Government with the preparation of the Polish case for the Peace Conference. He was also active as a writer, and his book *Polish war aims* had several editions in Polish and was translated into several foreign languages. In November, 1944, M. Arciszewski appointed him Minister of Information in his Cabinet.

I trust that his views will find favour with the British public—they should have added weight, too, because they not merely represent the conclusions reached by a mature and erudite mind, but also faithfully echo the opinions held by the vast majority of the muzzled Socialist movement in Poland.

1/ **How do you view the international situation and can you see in it any gleam of hope for a better future for the nations, as ours for instance, which are having such a raw deal now?**

I asked Prof. Pragier.

“The present situation of Poland is even more menacing than the worst of our past ordeals,” he replied. “Our present tragedy is fundamentally due to the causes which were responsible for the partitions of the past. Indeed, when she was partitioned by Russia, Prussia and Austria, Poland was neither aggressive nor dangerous. She was destroyed not because she threatened her neighbours but because her weakness encouraged their violence. Actually the long story of our struggle for independence, from the days of the Kościuszko insurrection up to the 1939 war and the present moment, shows that we always resisted force and fought to suppress violence in international relations. In the past, no less than to-day, our struggle was inspired by our deep faith in the ultimate victory of democracy. In our opinion there can be no lasting peace among nations until violence is eliminated from international rela-

tions and the new order is based on the principle "The free with the free, and equals with equals."

For us, Polish socialists, Poland, her progress and future, were never aims to be considered without reference to other world problems. To-day, of course, we regard it as utterly foolish to expect that any nation or country could survive in isolation from the outer world. Such a country, even if it manages to keep afloat for the time being, is doomed. Tricks and violence cannot achieve any lasting success, though it would be foolish to deny that they are capable of inflicting most grievous losses and wrongs.

A man who is not a patriot cannot become a true socialist. It is foolish to dream of progress for the world and to neglect the cause of progress in one's own country. Polish Socialists were not content to state these obvious truths in their writings; they unceasingly fought for them; they did not believe that Poland could be free or independent while other nations remained in bondage. In this struggle for universal ideals the Polish Socialist Party suffered heavy losses in the 50 years of its history.

Actually the Polish Socialist Movement has been throughout the staunchest ally of those Poles who actively fought for our independence, and, I may add, our comrades abroad have never deserted our cause.

I shall harp on the old theme, that a victory of Socialism is not possible in a world, in which Poland and other nations would be enslaved. All the liberals of the 19th and 20th centuries were fully aware of that. It was one of the fundamental tenets of Marx's teaching that the independence of Poland must be restored.

In spite of all the dark shadows which are now over-casting the international horizon, I remain an optimist. What strengthens my faith in better days to come, is the irresistible advance of socialism all over Europe.

In Britain and France, in Norway, Sweden, Belgium,

Denmark and lately also in Austria, the Socialist parties and principles have won great victories. The result of the last General Election in this country marks a turning point not merely in the history of the British Isles, but also of the many nations, dominions and colonies which are included in the British political and economic system. The rebirth of Socialism in France has become the signal for the rebirth of the whole French nation, a fact of peculiar significance, since French culture plays such a leading part in Europe.

This victorious advance of Socialism cannot overlook the cause of freedom and independence of smaller nations, without betraying the fundamental principles of our Socialist creed. Without political freedom there cannot be any social progress or socialism.

Totalitarianism is no longer an abstraction. It is a social phenomenon which may be both of rightist and leftist origin. Its essential feature is that it puts all the levers of power in the hands of a small and aggressive minority. A totalitarian régime destroys in the end all forms of free public and social life, but weighs most heavily on the life of the working class.

When the working class people cease to be one of the leading social and political forces and become mere "man-power" directed about by the capitalists or the State, their creative abilities must wither and die. It is for this reason that socialists all over the world are so determined in their opposition to totalitarianism, irrespective of the fact whether it is a product of super-capitalistic monopolism, as in Germany, or of the overgrowth of reactionary bureaucracy, as in Italy and Spain, or simply of the single party system.

It is idle to enter into scholastic disputes about "better" and "worse" forms of totalitarianism. Every totalitarianism is evil and harmful. Nor is it permissible to idealize a political system which, though it has contributed to defeat and destroy another totalitarian system, but now repeats all its errors, if even with some slight modification.

We do not idealize the capitalist system merely because it has succeeded in defeating another capitalist country. We know well enough that such a victory usually only strengthens the capitalists grip on the victorious country. With totalitarianism it is the same story all over again. A victorious totalitarianism, even if it has defeated another totalitarian country, is no less of a menace to the world than it was before its victory.

The totalitarian menace is present everywhere where the freedom of the individual is in danger. Our attitude to Russia cannot be determined solely by political considerations. We must take social factors also into account. It is because of their social consciousness that socialists are so violently denounced by Russia and bitterly fought by her, whether inside the U.S.S.R. or in the international arena. Though Soviet politicians often invoke Marxist dialectics /though over-simplified and twisted to meet the immediate ends/ but they are fully aware of the unflinching attitude of the socialists who remain faithful to democratic principles.

The last meeting of the Big Five in London has provided another proof that Soviet policy still opposes the creation of a "Western Bloc." Soviet fears are caused not merely by the obvious reason that such a Bloc would represent greater power than Britain alone. In the recent past, Russia opposed all plans of federation in Europe, also not only on political grounds. The Soviet leaders know well enough that social considerations lay at the root of the timid attempts now made by the democratic nations coalesce or merge into wider "blocs"—that their promoters hope to rebuild a united Europe, based on the solidarity of the workers.

Russia fears less a political bloc than a social one, which could hold forth the promise of a full victory of democratic socialism in the years to come.

Russia thinks she has a monopoly for defining what is democracy and what is socialism. She is convinced that the

social forms created by her are capable of universal application and should be copied all over the world.

It is wrong to assume that Stalin has given up his dream of world revolution. His avowed theory of "the building of socialism is one country" does not imply that he has decided to limit the revolutionary movement to one country only, but that he intends to use that Socialist state as his basis in imposing Soviet ideas and methods on the rest of the world. In contrast to the original Bolshevik concepts of the years 1918-1923, Moscow is not inclined to-day to bank on the spontaneous revolutionary movement of the working classes in various foreign countries. Moscow even mistrusts such genuine foreign revolutionary movements, because she rightly fears that, should they triumph, they would end in creating new centres of revolutionary Socialism, and Moscow might lose her present position of the undisputed Mecca of the Extreme Left. It is this fear which induces Moscow to insist more on discipline than on the revolution and to paralyse every independent centre of socialist thought and action.

The Bolsheviks want to subordinate not only the ideology of the workers' movement all over the world but even their tactics to the needs of the Soviet Union. They demand that all Socialists should regard Soviet interests as the ultimate criterion of all their acts.

But of course such demands have nothing to do with the international solidarity of the working class; they are intended to promote the political hegemony of one power in the councils of the international socialist movement. The immediate and the long-range dangers of such a hegemony to the prospects of a lasting and just peace are readily admitted by every socialist.

M. Leon Blum's latest book *A l'échelle humaine* /incidentally a very brilliant one/ offers an excellent commentary on all these problems. No statesman in Europe has worked so assiduously on bridging the differences between

the Western Democracies and Soviet Russia as Leon Blum. For this reason he was hardly less detested by the fascists than Stalin himself. To-day, in spite of the sad experiences in the years 1939-1941, Blum still favours cooperation with the Soviet Union. But by "cooperation" he certainly does not mean "unconditional surrender" to Russia. Russia has won the war against Hitlerism, not against democracy. Why then should democracy capitulate to Russia?

The British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Ernest Bevin, has already become the true champion of Socialist international policy. By the firm stand he has taken in his speeches in the House of Commons and at international conferences he has forcefully impressed upon the world that an ostrich policy and self-deception are not likely to lead to the peace of the world. Mr. Bevin's policy marks a return to time-honoured principles, which alas have been thrown overboard towards the end of the war: to wit, that modern nations can live in peace only if they share some fundamental beliefs and abide by them. These beliefs include: respect for the freedom of individuals and nations, equality in their mutual relations, and the subjection of particular interests to the common good. Mr. Bevin was not afraid to be dubbed a "romantic visionary" when he chose to make these principles the basic concepts of his policy and to champion them vigorously. He has learned the lesson of the disappointments of his predecessors in office: that it is not safe to build the peace on the shifting sands of popular catchwords and momentary expediency; that it is preferable to build slowly and less spectacularly but on the rock of watertight principles.

Socialism at the helm—as it is now in Britain—and on the road to final victory—as it seems to be in the whole of Western Europe—is a promise of an early return to those fundamental principles of international relations on which the very existence of an independent Poland depends.

2/ Do you see any contradiction between the unbending attitude of M. Thomas Arciszewski's government in all

matters affecting the sovereign rights of the Polish Republic and their readiness /which they expressed on many occasions/ to enter into treaty agreements with Soviet Russia?

—There is no contradiction. Responsible Polish politicians were never animated by hostility to Russia.

It is well known that the news of the downfall of the Tsarist regime were greeted by all Poles with warm approval and high hopes. In the collapse of Russian absolutism we saw a portent of freedom for the Russian people and also for the nations which were formerly oppressed by Russian tyranny.

Unfortunately, ever since the bolshevik party seized power, the course of the Russian revolution progressed along unexpected lines. Various theories were advanced to explain away the nonfulfilment of the early hopes raised by the Russian revolution: it was said that Russian capitalism was still in its infancy, and that consequently the Russian working class was too weak and not sufficiently numerous, that the Russian peasantry was still backward and illiterate, that the country was hopelessly underdeveloped. It was also argued that the bolshevik party, which had to fight the armed intervention of the capitalist powers, had reasons to fear that the achievements of the Soviet Revolution might be endangered again, and thus was forced to leaving nothing undone to keep the country in a state of military preparedness.

The socialists organised in the II International, though averse to Bolshevik doctrines and tactics, were unshaken in their opposition to any attempt at a renewed outside capitalist offensive against Russia. Furthermore the policies of the Soviet Union found an additional justification in the existence of Hitlerism and Fascism. But, of course, no socialist ever regarded the Soviet regime as the embodiment of socialism or democracy. This subject was broached so many times that there is no need to dwell upon it again; our own,

Polish, experiences, both the older ones from the years 1918-20 and those more recent, from the period following the Soviet invasion of Poland on September 17th, 1939, have, I think, finally dispelled the few illusions that may have been entertained here and there about the democratic character of the Soviet Union. Russia's attitude in 1939, and the support she then gave to Germany /it was no mere theoretical support, as in the memorable speeches of Stalin and Molotov who denounced the French and English democracies as "warmongers" and "aggressors", but also active collusion/ dealt a shattering blow to the cause of the socialist world. By her betrayal of all her principles Russia seriously jeopardized the whole Socialist cause.

But the German-Soviet war revived the old friendly feelings of the socialist democratic movement for Russia. It was widely believed that the smashing of the German totalitarian fortress would enable Russia to dispense with her own centralism and police terror who were Russian policies ever since the Bolsheviks seized power in October, 1917.

The Soviet nations—who have had bitter first-hand experience of Nazi barbarism—have made an immortal contribution to the common victory by their heroic sacrifices and huge losses patiently born. Many people thought that these deeds and that devotion would be rewarded by social and political reforms, by the granting of some degree of freedom and the relaxing of the totalitarian grip in Russia. The Stalinist government themselves hinted that the life of the Soviet citizens after the war would differ from its rather grim pre-war pattern. Of course, every such promise of greater freedom inside Russia was hailed and applauded by all the friends of the Soviet Union abroad. We Poles, in particular, fear only one Russia—totalitarian Russia. A Russia, which would be free from the totalitarian shackles, socially free and truly democratic would, of course, be capable of peaceful cooperation with the rest of the world. Towards the Russian people, we Poles have no hatred, and never had any.

Thus, while Russia seemed to progress during the war towards the final goal of her social revolution, the whole world was expectantly anticipating the birth of a new, truly free Russia.

But alas these hopes, the hopes not merely of the Poles but of all democrats and socialists from every part of the world seem to be frustrated, at least for the time being.

The Soviet system, undiluted in all its essential features, is now described as the best possible system of government not merely to meet the emergency of war but to cope with the problems of peace as well. The last "five year plan", just adopted, is the exact replica, in its militaristic tendencies, of the last pre-war /3rd/ five year plan. It does not hold forth any promise of a change in the economic totalitarianism of Russia, nor in her police system.

On the other hand, the glorification of the worst protagonists of Tsarist despotism such as Ivan the Terrible, Peter, Catherine and Suvorov strongly suggest that Russia is not likely to progress along the path of democracy.

We, Polish Socialists, are in a truly difficult situation when faced with the realities of Russia. We are most anxious to avoid even the semblance of becoming partners to any anti-Russian propaganda or agitation. But the Soviet régime, with all its peculiarities can be regarded as an internal problem for Russia only if the Russian State does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. When such Russian interference begins /as is the case now in Poland and other countries adjoining the Soviet Union/ it becomes imperative to explain the reasons why this interference is resented and opposed.

The reason for our opposition is to be found in the fundamental difference between our and Soviet constitutional and social concepts. We believe that economic, social and cultural progress must be based on respect for individual rights, and must rest free from police supervision and administrative pressure. The Bolshevik Party believes that

all progress must be guided and directed by the omnipotent state. We regard democracy as an integral part of the rule of the will of the people, freely expressed. The Bolsheviks reject such a conception of democracy, and their own term of "Soviet democracy" covers only the will and the interests of the ruling party. For us Socialism means not only a planned social economy but also a democratic régime based on the will of the people. In our opinion the attitude of the Bolshevik Party towards democracy, socialism and progress, inevitably invites reaction. The Bolsheviks regard our democracy, on the Western Europe pattern, as another form of Fascism simply because they have become used to denounce under that name every political or social phenomenon which does not meet with their approval. These differences in respect of the very meaning of the term "democracy" come to the fore with peculiar blatancy in central-eastern Europe when every vestige of western European democracy is ruthlessly stamped out by the Soviet occupation authorities who supersede them by their own system of government.

Briefly, to explain the attitude of Poland towards Russia we must necessarily often refer to matters which outwardly may seem to be purely internal Soviet affairs. Then we are violently denounced by the Soviet press. This leads to a vicious circle and, as often is the case, the stronger party seems to get the better of the argument. These disputes could be avoided if the very principle of force were removed from international politics.

3/ **What is the position with regard to Poland's frontiers, and in particular with regard to her western frontier, a subject which, I think, needs clarification inasmuch as Soviet policy in this respect seems to be very ambiguous?**

—With regard to Poland's frontier, it should be recalled that the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line, forcibly imposed upon Poland, was never accepted nor recognised by her. Our

people were, and are, firmly opposed to it not only because it violates our rights and feelings, but also because we are steadfast in our determination to uphold those fundamental concepts of international life which, in this very case, were completely ignored.

The Soviet Government occupied Eastern Poland in 1939, taking advantage of a situation which the whole world rightly viewed as a calamitous menace to the whole of mankind. All that was done then must be undone. Russia attempted—and is still attempting—to justify her 1939 aggression and conquests of Polish lands as a revindication of the rights of the Ukrainians, White-Ruthenians and Lithuanians, though they are alien both in race and religion to none of these nations ever expressed the desire to join the Soviet Union, nor consent to the obliteration of their own nationality. The same aggressive policy is also pursued by Russia in respect of the Baltic States, Esthonia, Latvia and Lithrania, though they are alien both in race and religion to the nations who constitute the Soviet Union.

Actually, when she drew the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line, Russia was not in the least anxious to enable Ukrainians or White Ruthenians to live in a "single national state," but her purpose was that the "Ukranian Question" and the "White-Ruthenian Question" /and also the problem of the Baltic States/ should cease to be an international problem and simply become an "internal Russian Question." Now there is no doubt that this change will not help the national existence of these nations, nor assist their cultural and spiritual progress.

With regard to the question of Poland's western frontier, at least in the form in which it is now presented by the Warsaw Government /which in this obviously follows the dictates of Moscow/ we must first oppose the very principle which is to underly the redrawing of that frontier. The Soviet Government, with the Warsaw Government obediently trotting in its footsteps, claim that Poland is to be given a

large accretion of territory in the west as compensation for the loss of Eastern Poland to Russia.

Poland can never agree to such a formula.

Of all the countries who were at war with Germany, Poland suffered most; while her resistance and her contribution to the allied war effort were so great that she is entitled to compensation from Germany in any case, and her direct claims can never be justified by considerations which have no direct bearing on German-Polish relations.

Thus Poland is justly entitled to claim some German frontier provinces which were inhabited for centuries by Poles, and which were used by the Germans as springboards for attacks not merely against Poland, but on the whole world. This is true, in particular, of East Prussia, Pomerania and Silesia. So far, these Polish claims have not been met. Our eastern frontier has been definitely fixed, while the question of our western frontier is still open, and thus it is still an open field for diplomatic intrigues, power-politics and the playing of one country against another. This is true if East Prussia, where only the seizure of the northern half, including Königsberg, has been sanctioned by the Powers at Potsdam. This is true of the whole Polish-German frontier. This is true even of the Polish-Czech frontier, where the problem of the disputed part of Teschen Silesia is still hanging fire. The formulation of Polish claims in the west by the Warsaw régime shows Poland as an imperialist power to the west, and, at the same time, offers no guarantee that our just claims will be satisfied.

The dangers arising from that situation are made even more formidable by the mass expulsion of the Germans from the borderland. Russia purposely throws the onus of the responsibility for these deportations on the Poles, though it is well-known that in the so-called western Polish territories the administration is not even outwardly Polish; it is exclusively in the hands of the Russian military commanders. These expulsions are carried out by the Russians, their ex-

tent and scope increase or decrease according to temporary shifts in Russian policy, while the Poles are merely the helpless witnesses—or at the most the passive tools—of the policy of the Kremlin.

The German nation ought to pay reparations and make territorial sacrifices to Poland in the full consciousness that this is a just retribution for the wrongs it has inflicted on Poland. This is the only principle on which reparations and territorial cessions can be based. We are entitled to demand, in the name of justice and peace that Germany be punished and deprived of the possibility to embark once more upon a policy of military aggression. But it is not in our interest that Germany should believe that she pays to Poland not merely the price of her own crimes but also a compensation or the wrongs inflicted on Poland by another Power. If such a belief should ever take root in Germany, it would tend to diminish their own sense of justice and would constitute an additional and quite unnecessary menace to the future of the peace.

Without relinquishing her just rights and claims, Poland must now formulate her future attitude to Germany and base it on unshakable and non-controversial foundations. The principle on which the Warsaw Government is now basing its claims in the west may be, sooner or later, regarded as controversial, and not only by Germany.

The Warsaw Government, acting undoubtedly under the pressure of the Kremlin, have recognised, without much ado, the Ribbentrop-Molotov line, as the Eastern frontier of Poland, and they regard the territories which Germany is to cede to Poland as compensation for the loss of the Eastern territories.

If the German policy of the Warsaw Govt. is examined against the background of Soviet policy, its wisdom is yet more open to doubt. Before the war, when the Nazis were already firmly in the saddle, Stalin always spoke of Germany with respect. During the war in the years 1941-5, Soviet propaganda often stressed that Nazism should not be identi-

fied with the German nation. It is also significant that during the war the Soviets attempted to play off /if only temporarily/ a set of imperialistic German Junkers headed by Field-Marshal von Paulus against Hitler. Simultaneously, the Russian-occupied countries bordering on Germany and having a few accounts to square with her are being constantly worked up into a state of anti-German frenzy by their puppet governments? So there is a key to this riddle?

The link which the Warsaw Govt. have established between their new Western frontier and the Ribbentrop-Molotov line in the East, strengthens our suspicions that the Oder line is not meant as the new Polish Western frontier, but rather as the limit of Russia's political predominance. The purpose of the Oder line is to make Poland yet more dependent on Russia, to force her to become Russia's satellite without any possibility to back out.

In conclusion we are firmly opposed to the principle of compensation which lays at the bottom of the Oder frontier, while we remain determined to support Poland's claims against Germany, territorial, political and economic.

4/ **How do you view the Soviet attempt to include Poland in her sphere of influence?**

—What is happening to-day in Poland is an all-round attempt to turn her into an outpost and part and parcel of the East. The very structure of the Polish nation and the essence of its spiritual life are to be refashioned and remoulded on the Eastern pattern. This is indeed one of the most pathetic dramas of history. A nation with a great past, reared for centuries in Latin culture, is now forced to take its cue from the new Byzance. Its fundamental concepts about life, freedom, its own mission and that of the world are now fundamentally changed and adapted to an alien and entirely different model.

The means to bring about this change are the destruction of the existing social order and its superseding by a

Soviet hierarchy of values, Polish only in its outward forms. Within the limits of the Soviet sphere of influence a new Polish-speaking Soviet nation is to be set up.

The real purpose of the changes which are now in progress is still kept dark. Instead the Warsaw propaganda is busy talking about democracy, the struggle against reaction and Slav solidarity. But, actually, the policy of the Warsaw regime aims at transforming Poland into a country of small farmers, and later, a country of kolkhoses. The standard of life in Poland is to be lowered to the Soviet level. The inarticulate subject mass of Poles is to remain passively under the watch and ward of the ruling bureaucracy, the agents of an omnipotent and uncontrolled government. Already to-day the Warsaw regime is a close copy of the Soviet model. The State is already the sole master of literature, art and science. It is the sole publisher of books, and, with a few exceptions, of all periodicals. The citizen has any economic influence in so far as he infringes the decrees in force.

Some ill-informed people may regard such far-reaching changes as something in the nature of a social revolution. But they would be wrong. A social revolution can be made only from below, as a result of the pressure of native social forces. The present developments in Poland are all imposed from above, and their only purpose is to adapt Poland to the tasks set for her by the occupying power.

Like the rest of all the Russian-occupied Central-Eastern Europe, Poland is destined to play the part of a defensive rampart or offensive springboard of Soviet Russia in her game of power-politics with the other Great Powers. One thing is absolutely essential to make all this plan work satisfactorily from a Soviet point of view: that all the nations inhabiting the "springboard area" be sufficiently indoctrinated and Sovietised to be used against the West, should the need arise. And Poland is in a mortal danger that this plan

might succeed. Given sufficient time, the Soviet plan could mature, and then the population of Poland, though probably still Polish-speaking, would think and feel as Soviet people do. This also explains the strength of the resistance which Soviet plans are encountering from the common people of Poland. The Polish people instinctively feel that Poland would lose her very soul if her age-old links with the West were severed.

It is said that Russia's foreign policy was and is subordinated to the needs of the "struggle against reaction". This is a gross misstatement. Russia fought the armed intervention of the capitalist powers in her first, heroic period, but this struggle was imposed upon her, it was not of her own choosing. Immediately afterwards, Russia worked hand in hand with the German militarists and concluded an alliance with a revanche-minded Germany. She also collaborated with Japan and again with Germany in the years 1939-41. To-day, Russia's foreign policy is pure and undiluted imperialism, no different from that of Peter and Catherine. Russia allies herself to every nationalist movement, be it the most reactionary, which threatens the cohesion of the existing political entities. She reawakens, wherever she can, the slumbering separatist tendencies and the racial hatreds which were slowly dying out. She hampers the setting up and the progress of international institutions which are to knit the nations closer together.

The future forms of the world will, however, be drawn by the Western Powers, not by Russia. It is these nations which are truly "fighting reaction," because in spite of the difficulties raised by Russia they are trying to establish a new world order based on a common basis of right and justice. These efforts are not free from hesitation, muddle and even hypocrisy. Nevertheless their trend and ultimate goal are clear enough. Liberal capitalist America and semi-socialist Britain and Western continental Europe share the same liberal and progressive ideals. The Soviet machine still

lives in the world of ideals and concepts of the defeated Third Reich.

Soviet propaganda in Poland spreads a gospel of hatred of the Western world. It constantly harps on the "betrayal of Poland by her allies," and adds that she was ruthlessly taken advantage of, and then abandoned when she was no longer needed. These gross and false oversimplifications are not, however, accepted uncritically by the Poles. They are fully aware that it would be pure folly to "punish" those British and American statesmen whose mistakes are partly responsible for the present plight of Poland by throwing themselves into the arms of the Soviet Union, just to annoy the English-speaking Powers. Likewise, the famous posters representing the ruins of Warsaw and bearing the inscription "England—thy work" which were stuck on the walls by the Germans, failed entirely to impress the Polish people.

During the years of world reconstruction, which period will be longer than expected, Poland must maintain her links with the West at any cost. Britain, France and the U.S.A. will be able to influence her destiny, no less than her immediate neighbour, if only Poland succeeds in maintaining her traditional links with them. The great nations of the West, who for so long have been living in material and spiritual progress, ought to realise the strong bonds which link their own fate to that of weaker nations, oppressed and enslaved. They are in a position to appreciate full well the value of the international appeal of such principles as the brotherhood of nations, and freedom and equality for all. Mankind will know no peace as long as only one country will be subjugated by another, as long as oppression is endorsed or only tolerated in international relations.

One of the chief tasks of the Poles who remain abroad is to maintain these bonds of sympathy between Poland and abroad, as to-day the Poles in Poland have no means to maintain any free contact with the outside world. And this is one

of the greatest services we, the Polish exiles, can render to our country in bondage.

5/ Has the opposition in Poland to the Communist dominated and Soviet-controlled regime any means of political action to-day?

The system of government set up in Poland under the auspices of the Soviet occupation authorities was devised to carry through a number of political and social measures which are to foster Soviet plans not in Poland only but in the whole of Europe, of course. The Soviet rulers are perfectly well aware that the Bierut-Osubka administration does not represent in the slightest degree either Polish interests or the will of the Polish people. Nevertheless, the international set-up has made it possible for the Soviet bosses to maintain their puppet regime in Warsaw. The Soviets will not volutarily withdraw their support from that regime, because it is very useful to them. The so-called reorganisation of the "Polish Government," prescribed by the Yalta decisions in the form of co-opting a few outsiders to Mr. Bierut's select company was, from the Russian point of view, not a compromise, but merely a tactical move. This move enabled the English-speaking powers to pretend that the Polish problem had been solved for the time being and practically withdraw from Central Europe. This withdrawal has led to a tacit recognition of the Soviet monopoly in disposing of this part of Europe.

What this "Yalta compromise" was really worth may best be gauged from the following facts.

1/ The men co-opted to the "government" set up in Moscow were treated not as the representatives of the Polish parties, who led the resistance movement against Germany during the war, but merely as individuals invited *ad personam*.

2/ The true representatives of the Polish underground movement, including the vice-premier and the 3 Polish cabinet ministers who resided in Poland, the chairman of the

Council of National Unity and the Commander of the Polish Home Army and the leaders of the 4 parties who formed the coalition which supported the lawful Polish Government, were not only not admitted to the negotiations about the forming of a new government, but were stealthily imprisoned by the N.K.V.D. and tried by a Soviet tribunal in Moscow at the very moment when, pursuant to the Crimean decisions, conversations were held in Moscow about the forming of this new government for Poland. Russia hoped thus at one stroke to liquidate the Polish independence movement and brand its links with the West as foolish, dangerous and suspect.

The opportunities of political action still open to the opposition parties in Poland should be viewed in the light of present Soviet interests and plans. It would be ridiculous to suppose for a moment that Moscow would be willing to alter her plans even a jot only because they might be opposed by the Polish opposition parties, even if supported by the overwhelming vote of the people expressed in a free election. Not only in Poland but throughout the whole Soviet-occupied Europe, it is not the public opinion of the parties concerned which has a casting vote in deciding the future of these peoples and this area; all decision and authority is vested exclusively in the Soviet occupying forces and in their puppet governments.

It may be asked then why the opposition is allowed to win elections in some countries of the Soviet sphere of influence. These exceptions are made because they suit Soviet policy, which in every case is the only factor that counts. No illusions should be harboured on that account. The existence of overt opposition in a Soviet-occupied country brings, in addition to a few troubles, very clear advantages to the Soviet occupying authorities: 1/ it brings to the surface those political and social forces which could, in hiding, be more dangerous and more effective; 2/ it creates the mistaken impression abroad that political freedom exists in the countries concerned; 3/ it provides an

occasion to throw the onus of responsibility for the administrative chaos and general inefficiency on the shoulders of the "destructive" opposition; 4/ when the situation will be ripe for reprisals, the regime will be able to smash all its opponents at one stroke.

Discontent in Soviet-occupied countries is, however, so strong that none of these considerations holds good: people will go on opposing, though those who believe that they might achieve results are few. This leads to paradoxical situations which would be funny if they were not tragic. Thus the Soviets have decided in some countries one or two parties to carry on as independent bodies; they are practically in the position of licensees. In Hungary this favour was bestowed on the Smallholder Party. Shortly afterwards this Party of peasant-farmers emerged victorious in the municipal elections in . . . Budapest. The general election which followed conclusively showed that the great majority of the Hungarian people are ready to entrust their fate to that Party. But, of course, this will have no effect upon the course of affairs in Hungary which continues to be ruled by . . . Marshal Voroshilov. It has been already been announced that notwithstanding the result of the elections Hungary will continue to have a coalition government.

In Poland, the licensed party is the Polish Peasant Party led by M. Mikołajczyk. It is not generally known that a licence to start this Party was given to M. Mikołajczyk not only by the Warsaw government but also by the highest Soviet authorities. M. Gomołka, who ranks next to M. Osobka in the Warsaw hierarchy, insists, as Marshall Voroshilov insisted recently in Hungary, that at the forthcoming General election in Poland a single list of candidates, agreed upon by the Government, be presented to the electorate. M. Mikołajczyk's part would prefer to go separately to the polls, with its own list of candidates. M. Mikołajczyk hopes that all those who oppose a Soviet Poland will vote for his list; his tactics are indeed similar to those of the Smallholders in Hungary. His chances seem bright as only a few

Poles are willing to come out in support of a Soviet Poland. But it is symptomatic that he not merely demanded a free hand for his own party, but also staunchly opposed the granting of a similar status to any other opposition party. What he wants is a monopoly of independence. When the request of the true Socialist party to be allowed to start political activities independently of the faked (official) Socialist party was debated by the so-called "Home National Council," it was rejected, and the members of M. Mikołajczyk's party voted with the communists and other government-parties against it being granted. Thus, it was unanimously resolved that the true Polish Socialist Party is to be denied the right to exist and to take part in public life.

It is, of course, a curious paradox that M. Mikołajczyk is both vice-premier of the Warsaw Government and leader of the opposition, that he is co-responsible for the policy of the government and at the same time attacked by the Press of that government. His local followers are exposed to much more dangerous villification and attacks (in December, 1945 his chief of staff M. Sciborek was murdered in Łódz by "persons unknown").

The further developments in this tangled play in which M. Mikołajczyk has a part but of which he is not the producer or director depends entirely on the course of international relations. One thing is certain: in no case is the opposition likely to oust the Bierut regime or even impose limits on its tyranny by mere electoral manoeuvres or even by winning the elections. Bierut and his clique rule not because they have any support among Poles, but simply because they are backed by a foreign power.

6/ **From what you have said, it would follow that the Polish people are not free to express their own will or to make it felt in their own affairs. Meanwhile, the public opinion of the world is inclined to blame the Polish people for various measures enforced by the Warsaw administration. What would you say about that?**

—Foreign observers who have visited Poland have brought a good deal of information about the actual state of affairs there. They were unanimous in stating that the Warsaw administration is unable to secure order and security, and that chaos reigns supreme in agriculture, in trade, in industry, in transport. They were no less unanimous in stating that neither personal nor political freedom exists, and that the Warsaw promises of restoring freedom of speech and of the Press have not been kept and lastly, all these observers have declared that it is not the confidence of the people that sustains the Warsaw administration, but that the continuance of the latter in office is due exclusively to the support it receives from the police and foreign occupation forces.

The Polish people were not in any way consulted when the present Warsaw administration was set up, nor do they exercise any control over it: obviously, they cannot be held in any way responsible for it. The Poles were blamed for the brutal expulsion of Germans from the areas which have been allotted to Poland along her Western frontier. The abrupt policies of the Warsaw administration have been unfavourably contrasted with the courtesy and leniency of the Soviet authorities in Soviet-occupied Germany. The dependence of the Warsaw administration on Moscow is too well-known to need much elaboration: actually the behaviour of the Warsaw administration both towards its Polish and its German subjects is dictated by instructions from Moscow.

If, therefore, German nationals are brutally expelled from the Oder area by officials of the Warsaw Government and the same nationals are later well and friendly treated by the Soviet occupation authorities in their zone, we should not fall into the trap of assuming that we are faced here by two divergent policies. The two form a consistent whole, and the alleged differences serve merely as a mask to the true aims of the Kremlin. It is obviously in the interests of

Moscow to throw the onus of the responsibility for the anti-German measures on the Poles, and to make Poles, rather than Russians, the target of German animosity and resentment. These cunning moves to stir anti-Polish feeling among Germans is in harmony with other Soviet moves to create and exploit anti-British and anti-American prejudice in the German masses. The Poles are helpless to counteract these Soviet policies: they have no more influence on what Polish officials are doing in so-called "Western" Poland than on what they are perpetrating in "old" or pre-war Poland. Those who raise the outcry against Polish brutalities to Germans are well aware of where the responsibility lays, but they prefer to attack Poland than Russia, lest she might take offence.

A similar reasoning should be applied to the denunciation of the Concordat with the Holy See by the Warsaw regime. Before the war, views on this Concordat varied, as on every other subject. Thus the Polish Socialist Party opposed it at the time of its ratification, because it held that it did not sufficiently safeguard the interests of the Republic in its relations with the Vatican. Incidentally, it was Prof. Stanislaw Grabski, to-day a supporter of the Warsaw regime, who was the chief negotiator of that Concordat and its chief champion in Parliament and on the forum of public opinion. The Concordat was denounced to-day, not because of its shortcomings, but for the one very simple reason: in a totalitarian regime, the Church ought to be also under strict governmental control. As there is no hope that the Church would ever agree to such control in Poland, the links with the Vatican had to be severed. It is truly peculiar that this break with the Vatican took place again with the connivance of Prof. Grabski, who is M. Bierut's deputy in the so-called Praesidium of the Polish National Council. Another point of interest is that whereas Parliament and the Press could freely express their opinion of the Concordat at the time of its signature, no such freedom was given now; the public were told that the Concordat had been denounced without

the nation having been consulted and without any possibility of redress.

Poles are also blamed for alleged anti-semitic excesses, and various outbreaks of terrorism. Though the police are three times more numerous than they were before the war, there is no order and no security in Poland to-day. Every day brings a crop of acts of terror; the mysterious disappearance of individuals and occasionally of whole groups are daily occurrences. It would be absolutely wrong, however, to lay the blame for these incidents at the door of any illegal bodies of Poles in Poland or any Polish organisation abroad; and all such attempts are made with the sole end in view of distracting the attention of the public from the real murderers. Actually, everybody knows that in addition to the Polish police the Soviet police is also present and active in Poland, and it is this Soviet police which actually controls and directs its Polish sister organisation. These disappearances, individual or in groups, are as a rule the work of that Soviet police. It is also a well-established fact that the "Polish" security police constantly recurs to terrorism and provocation whenever it deals with Polish citizens whose political opinions and political past do not find favour with the Warsaw regime.

There are constant allegations of persecution of the Jews in Poland. But those who are most voluble in making such allegations are prone to overlook that the Warsaw Government has ordered, as yet another instalment of its policy of Sovietisation, the confiscation of all the industrial, commercial and artisan undertakings belonging to absentee owners. This decree has obviously dealt a severe blow to those Jews who went into hiding under German occupation, or were deported for forced labour to the Reich, and also those who were deported by the Soviets to Russia. All these people are now dispossessed and unable to resume their former occupation. It is not surprising that these are now anxious to leave Poland, where they can hardly make a

living; and the Warsaw Government prefer to ascribe their exodus to racial and religious motives than to their own disastrous economic policy. It is a fact that the Warsaw Government do not put any obstacles to the crossing of Polish Jews into Germany.

The policy of the Warsaw Government towards the Jews should be examined against the background of the events in the Middle East. The migration of Polish Jews into Germany gives additional urgency to the campaign, now on foot, for the opening of Palestine to the influx of continental Jewry. Thus the presence of these Polish Jews in Germany is a danger to England, as it is likely to make the pressure on Palestine more acute; and the enemies of England are already busy inciting both Jews and Arabs against her. Not only Polish Jews are secretly encouraged to migrate to Germany, regarded now as a mere halt on the road to Palestine; Soviet Jews are flocking there as well, and by Soviet Jews I mean Jews who have been Soviet citizens throughout, ever since the Bolshevik revolution, not merely since the upheavals and frontier changes which have followed the outbreak of the war in 1939. This latter fact, which has been passed over in silence by the world Press, has attracted a good deal of attention from Russian Socialists in exile; they pointed out that this showed how easy it is for Soviet Russia to alter her policy whenever any advantages might be expected from it, and also expressed their fear, and a well-grounded one, that this exodus of Soviet Jews should be partly ascribed to the rebirth of the old, typically Russian "pogrom" anti-semitism, which in the old days was so closely connected with Russian nationalism and pan-Slav movement, now taken over and fostered by the Bolshevik Party.

Those who make the Polish people responsible for the many misdeeds of the Warsaw Government are themselves well aware of where the true responsibility lay; but they bank on the ignorance of public opinion in English-speaking

countries where such a thing as a government acting against the will of the majority of the people, is unknown and unthinkable. Indeed, in English-speaking countries, the will of the people, constitutionally expressed, is the source of all power and authority. Not so in Poland, where the Warsaw government was set up by the representatives of the Big Three in Moscow. In English-speaking countries the governments are under the strict control of freely elected parliaments, a free press and a free public opinion, which draws its strength from the freedom of speech, of print and of association. None of these freedoms exists in Poland to-day, and as long as Russia will remain in control there, none is likely to see the light of day.

To sum up: the English speaking nations are responsible for their Governments, which they have chosen, while the onus of the responsibility for the deeds and misdeeds of the Warsaw Government must fall on the shoulders of those non-Poles who have set up that Government against the wishes of the Polish people, and keep it in power.

7/ What political tasks are now facing those Poles who refuse to return to a Soviet-occupied and vassal Poland?

—Very simple, though momentous. In essence, our task is to oppose the policy of capitulation which, with the support of foreign bayonets is enforced in Poland, against the will of her people, and propagated among the Poles abroad. This policy ultimately serves only the interests of a foreign power, irrespective of the motives which may actuate those who champion it.

Poles abroad must be unanimous and unshaken in their opposition to the regime which has been imposed upon Poland by force. Every Pole must do his bit. And we must keep in the closest touch with all the progressive forces of the United Nations. Though intransigent, and opposed to all dishonest and uneasy compromise, we must also carefully avoid all that would lead to further complications in the inter-

national situation and all agitation which may be construed as fostering hatred and active resistance.

Furthermore we ought to work hand in hand with the most progressive forces in the world which are likely to lead the world into a new era of international brotherhood and working-class solidarity.

To cope with these tasks, we must have some sort of legal and material security. We must also devise suitable organisational forms which would enable us to work more effectively.

The Polish contribution to the war against Nazism was incomparably greater—if our resources and numbers are taken into account—than that of any other of the United Nations. Our aim was not merely to destroy Nazism but also to recover our independence, political, economic, spiritual and cultural. Though Germany lay defeated and prostrate, our war aims have not been achieved yet. Our allies are facing now a new situation, which they did not anticipate when they entered the war. If, therefore, they are now unable to redeem their pledges and treaty obligations to Poland, they are duty-bound to honour them at least in respect of the Polish exiles, the bulk of whom have fought throughout in the Polish forces at the side of the Western Allies. This means that in all allied countries and also in occupied Germany the Polish exiles are entitled to obtain full social and political rights, the right to work and the right to free political activity. We should not be treated as retired soldiers on the dole, nor as undesirable aliens.

The immense majority of the Polish "refugees" abroad are serving with the Polish Armed Forces, whose contribution to the Allied war effort on land, at sea and in the air has won high praise, both from allies and enemies. These forces fought for 6 years in the hope that they will return, with arms to their independent home country and bring her the amity of the Western nations and further assist her by their intimate knowledge and

experience of the democratic and progressive ways of the West.

We oppose demobilization and demand the continuance of the present organization of the Polish Armed Forces abroad, because—for all of us and especially for our youths—this organization is a substitute of life at home, as long as our country groans under the yoke of an alien occupation. We, Poles, are better aware than any other nation of the horrors of war and we fully realize what a disaster a new war would be for Poland. But we also know that only our armed forces abroad are looked upon by our people as their true, free, national and democratic Army. We oppose demobilisation since it would be tantamount to a new blow against our national cause. But should these plans be carried through and our armed forces liquidated, this will not weaken our will to recover our freedom and independence and to maintain our links with the Western world.

The unity of democratic nations which stood the test of the war against Nazi Germany cannot vanish without a trace, as soon as peace is back again. The principles of common citizenship and equal rights for all allies which were forged during the war should hold good in peace-time. The war has caused human migrations on a vast scale. The ensuing shifts in population cannot be disposed of by mere mechanical formulas. If the problem arising from these migrations would be dealt without due regard to individual rights and democratic principles, this would be tantamount to a return to barbarism.

The Polish exiles (both as a whole and as individuals) should present their just claims to the authorities and public opinion of the countries in which they live and also to international institutions through their own organisations.

It is to be hoped that the countries which will give us hospitality and grant us a minimum of political rights will see in that not an act of mercy but one of justice, serving the

interests of world peace and the cause of the brotherhood of men.

The numbers of our fellow exiles are comparatively so small, and their average moral and intellectual standards are so high, that they should be a great asset in the post-war reconstruction.

The fundamental, nay the only, reason why so many Poles prefer the bitter road of exile to a return home is their refusal to acquiesce into the Soviet totalitarian system which is now in force in Poland and their deep-seated belief that it is in the interests of our country to have a body of loyal sons who will maintain our links with the Western world. While abroad, we must take an active part in the post-war reconstruction. This is the only means by which we can train the specialists which later may be so useful in Poland. We shall all have to work very hard if we want to remind the Western world of its past and present debt to Poland, still unrequited.

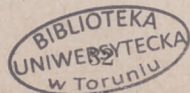
It would be a mistake, if our fellow exiles would rely exclusively on the initiative of their leaders. There is a wide field open to every initiative, be it individual or collective. On the other hand some strong central organisation is needed, and it must be acceptable to those countries which will give us their support.

The harsh treatment meted out to the displaced Poles in Germany was prejudicious not only to the Polish cause but to that of the United Nations as well. The leaders of the Poles in exile have been hampered in their efforts to bring aid to their own people in Germany, in many cases no facilities whatever were open to them. The needs of our compatriots in Germany are to-day our chief anxiety and relief for them is our most pressing task. This subject should be obviously tackled by international relief and social organisations and we, Poles, must have a casting vote in settling these problems.

Work for all of us is a precondition of our existence. All our thoughts must be focussed on this central problem. We must train our boys and girls to work hard and efficiently. We must earn our daily bread before we embark upon the political tasks facing us—the chief of which is the recovery of our independence.

Poland is now passing through a stern ordeal. Our situation would be hopeless if the present international situation were stabilized, and if the political mood prevailing to-day were to last. But it is not likely to last. No one in the world is satisfied with the existing international situation. There is no stability either in the situation of the victors or of the vanquished. Many violent changes will yet take place and many a battle will be fought for political freedom and over new social concepts. Our nation will fight on the side of progress, and against social reaction.

In the past our countrymen have often fallen the prey to despair. After the 18th century partitions, Hugo Kołłątaj, one of our greatest patriots, wrote: "There is no Poland—even the name of our people is now a thing of the past." Another patriot Czacki said: "Poland is erased from the Panoply of nations." But new forces were always brought to the surface by the very magnitude of our disasters. Poland always rises again from her grave, owing to the patriotism of her people and the sacred fire burning in her chosen few. To-day, when our people in Poland must remain dumb and mute, our zeal—of the Poles who though in exile are still free—must pave for them a road to a better future.

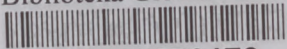


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