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**Fabian International Bureau**

**GOMULKA'S  
POLAND**

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**FABIAN TRACT NO. 316**

***TWO SHILLINGS***



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# GOMULKA'S POLAND

LUCJAN BLIT





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## I. The Post-War Pattern

**T**HERE was no popular revolution in July, 1944, when the basis of a Communist regime was laid in partly-liberated Poland. The so-called Lublin government, formally headed by a Socialist, but controlled by the Communists, was the political organ of the Soviet Army.

The post-war revolution in Poland occurred as late as October, 1956. It was a full-scale, though bloodless, rebellion of a nation against the iniquities of the 1944 regime. It was led by a man, Comrade 'Wieslaw', who, more than any other Pole, helped to establish the Communist regime after the war. 'Wieslaw' Gomulka had been the leader of the Polish Communist Party until 1948. He was soon afterwards expelled from the Party, whose general secretary he had been, and from the government, which he had served as Deputy Prime Minister. He then spent three and a half years in the prisons of the Communist secret police. When, in the autumn of 1956, he became the symbol of the Polish 'October', he was still a Communist. But his experience of the previous twelve years had strengthened his belief that no force in the world can make of Poland a simple duplicate of the Soviet Union.

### *'A Country on Wheels'*

The Poland which emerged in 1945 was in many ways a very different country from that which, on 1st September, 1939, sprang to arms to resist the attack of Nazi Germany. Of the 150,000 square miles which formed the Polish Republic between 1919 and 1939, some 70,000 square miles were incorporated into the U.S.S.R. in 1945. On the other hand, the Potsdam Conference handed over to Poland 'until a final settlement at a peace conference' over 39,000 square miles of former German territory. It had lost some 6 million people as the result of the German and Soviet occupation. Most of them had been annihilated by the Nazis. Direct 'liquidation' (especially of the three and a half million Jews), deportation and exchange, had reduced the population from 35 million in 1939 to a little over 23 million in 1945. By 1958 it had risen to 29 million.

In pre-war Poland nearly 40 per cent of the population belonged to the 'national minorities' (Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Jews, Germans and some smaller groups). Nearly all of them were also non-catholics. Now 98 per cent of the population are Roman Catholics. The remnants of the Jews, Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Germans amount to no more than 1 per cent of the population.

The 'country on wheels', as the Poles with mocking melancholy describe their country, has moved from the East into Central Europe. It



has lost the rich soil of Wolyn and the boggy marshes of the river Pripet. Instead it has acquired the industrial basin of Lower Silesia. This, together with the policy of forced industrialisation since 1948, has largely changed the social character of the country. In pre-war Poland some 60 per cent of the population were occupied in agriculture. Now only 47 per cent are employed as peasants and farm labourers. At the same time the percentage of the population employed in industry, building trades and transport has risen from 17 per cent to 32 per cent.

#### *Political Aftermath of the War*

The Communist-controlled government, established in 1944 in Lublin, found a country in ruins. It is estimated that at least a third of the total capital stock in the form of buildings was lost through war destruction. Industry, transport and, to a slightly lesser extent, agriculture, were devastated to a degree never experienced by occupied countries in Western Europe.

But the political problems facing the Communist government were even more intractable than the economic ones. During the great pre-war purges in Soviet Russia some 20,000 Polish Communists perished in Soviet prisons and camps. Only 5,000 survived Stalin's liquidation of the Polish Communist Party in 1938. They were naturally shaken by the fate of their comrades and by their sufferings at the hands of the Soviet leaders. Until 1941 there was no Communist organisation in German-occupied Poland. After the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union the Polish Communist Party was resurrected. But the underground Polish political stage was not a vacuum waiting for the Communists. Quite the contrary. With the possible exception of Yugoslavia no other occupied country in Europe had such an extensive net of political and combat organisations fighting the enemy as did Poland from the end of 1939.

When the Communists started their comeback in the summer of 1941 they were confronted by a well organised Polish 'underground state' which was in close material and political contact with the Polish Government established in London. The Communists, notwithstanding their treatment by Soviet Russia in the years 1931-38, still completely supported Soviet Russia's foreign policy. This fact prevented them from achieving any popularity with the overwhelming majority of the nation, which still vividly remembered Russia's role in the division of Poland in the autumn of 1939 and the brutal behaviour of the Soviet secret police in the Eastern parts of Poland. Later they remembered too the callous attitude of the Soviet leaders during the Warsaw uprising, in the late summer of 1944, when the Soviet Army stood by across the Vistula while Warsaw and its patriotic population were ruthlessly destroyed by the Germans.

The Lublin government was generally thought of as advocating ideas which were incompatible with the conceptions of a highly patriotic, proudly independent and overwhelmingly Roman Catholic nation.

The pattern of the regime established in Poland with Soviet help and under its strong guidance took a few years fully to develop. The first stage



was characterised by the abandonment of any pretence of an independent foreign policy which would deviate even in the smallest detail from that of Moscow. A little later, in 1947, came the destruction of the independent Peasant Party by direct police terror. Incessant moral and material pressure was used on the weakened Socialist party to bring about its liquidation as an independent political force. Thus were removed the last obstacles to the introduction of the monopolistic rule of one party—the Communists. Finally came the destruction of the Gomulka trend inside the Party. Only then was it possible for the orthodox Stalinists openly to proclaim their aim of building in Poland an economic system akin to that existing in Soviet Russia, with the state as the sole proprietor of all means of production and distribution in the towns, and the peasant forced to give up his independence as a producer and join a collective farm or become a labourer on a state farm.

### *The Compromise*

During the first 2-3 years of the new regime it looked as though Poland was destined to live for a long time in a state of actual civil war, and that the Communists and their fellow-travellers would rule the country from behind a barricade, dependent exclusively on the physical power of the Soviet Army stationed in Poland.

But very soon it became obvious to many non-communist Poles that the outcome of the second world war had changed the balance of power in Europe. The Soviet Union had emerged as a mighty military state. As a result of war operations, Soviet Russia established an absolute domination over Eastern and a large part of Central Europe, which the inhabitants of this region were physically unable to challenge. The western allies of Russia, and especially Britain and the United States, were not ready to question this state of affairs during the closing months of the war, let alone to risk a new, grave conflict amid the ruins of the European continent.

Of course, even now it is true that some Poles are still ready 'to fight geography', but the vast majority of the nation has suffered too much since September, 1939, not to have learned something of the bitter realities of power relations in European and world politics. Stalin's determination to obtain full adherence to Soviet foreign policy had to be accepted as a condition of Poland's existence as a semi-separate state. The first to acquiesce in the realities of the Yalta agreement was the leadership of the Peasant Party, followed by most of the Socialists. It is now generally, if reluctantly, accepted by nearly the whole nation, including the politically minded hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland.

The second goal of Russian policy in Poland, the establishment of a Communist economic system, met with much more open opposition. Neither the peasants, comprising in 1945 the majority of the nation, nor many townspeople, were attracted by a regime based on the wholesale abolition of private enterprise and rigid economic planning. The system of state and collective farming in Soviet Russia has always been most passionately



rejected by the Polish peasants. Even among workers with a strong Socialist and trade union tradition an economic system similar to that in existence in Soviet Russia was very unpopular.

But what united the whole nation, including the overwhelming majority even of the members of the Communist Polish United Workers Party, was resistance to the other major objectives of Soviet policy in Poland: the subordination of the country's economy to the needs of Soviet Russia and the imposition on the Poles of the cultural pattern of their Eastern neighbour. No compromise was possible here.

### *Forcing the Pace*

In 1948 the short period of emergency reconstruction after the war was over. Stalin was not content to have the neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe sympathetically supporting Soviet foreign policy. They had to become full satellites working for the interests of Russia, obedient in every detail. Tito, who refused to conform, was condemned to live in dangerous isolation. Stalin knew that the system he decreed for the satellite nations could be imposed on the Poles only by terror, and the triumvirate of Bierut-Minc-Berman was appointed to do this job. No compromise was permitted between Soviet political or economic interests and the needs of the Poles.

The nation paid a very high price for the years 1949-55. It paid first in material well-being. Until Stalin's death Russia directly exploited the Polish economy by paying only a fraction of the world market price for its Polish imports, particularly for coal, and by making the Poles pay exorbitant prices for goods bought in Russia. The pace of industrialisation forced upon Poland, the lack of co-ordination in spite of paper-plans, the heavy armament burden, the beginning of forcible collectivisation of farming, all resulted in a catastrophic reduction of the standard of living in Poland to approximately two-thirds of what it was in 1938. The uprising of the Poznan workers in June, 1956, was a direct reaction to the misery brought upon the people by the economic policy of the preceding years.

Not much better were the moral and political consequences of the period of terror. The population regarded the ruling group as nothing more than the proconsuls of a powerful and highly unpopular neighbour. During the period of the Nazi occupation pilfering and even stealing were looked upon as patriotic acts. Embezzlement and theft have grown in Communist Poland to a degree which was, and still is, destroying the morale of the nation.

The Polish intelligentsia had been, since the middle of the 19th century, the leading group of the nation. After 1945 they were ready to accept a compromise between their patriotic traditions and the existing realities of power relations in Eastern and Central Europe. Yet they were unable to follow the Byzantine-Stalinist tradition of Moscow, or to accept the cutting of the nation's traditional ties with Latin cultural patterns and with its own past.



During the eight years of the Bierut-Minc-Berman regime the Roman Catholic Church was a target for persecution. The head of the Church, Cardinal Wyszynski, seven bishops and a host of more humble clergy were locked up in prisons and places of isolation. A few morally corrupted or unrepresentative individuals were appointed by the government as church leaders. But, as had happened in the time of the Nazi occupation and many times before, the persecution of the Church made its influence even more all-embracing. In times of past national disasters the Church has always been the spiritual home of the overwhelming majority of the Poles. The Communist dictatorship prior to 1956 again achieved just that.

### *Before the Storm*

Until Stalin's death in 1953 the regime in Poland kept itself in existence not only by suppressing every expression of free opinion in the nation as a whole, but by terrorising even the members of its own party. The rebellion against the system came directly from dissidents within the party.

Two groups were in the vanguard of the rebellion. One was the writers, poets, artists and journalists. Applying the Soviet prescription for art, known as Socialist Realism, the ruling political group demanded that Polish writers, painters and sculptors should become party propagandists. To most of them, party members or not, nothing could be more abhorrent. The journalists were expected to lie about facts which were known to every member of the public.

The other group, which played such an important role in the Polish 'October' of 1956, was the youth, and especially the students. Their number had increased more than threefold compared with pre-war times (in 1937/38, 43,238; in 1956/57, 139,244). The vast majority of them came from homes of workers, peasants and 'working intelligentsia'. The Communist Union of Polish Youth had a complete monopoly in organising all social and political activity among the youth. Large sums of government money were spent and much propaganda energy used to make the youth the Praetorian Guard of the regime. Yet it was this youth which formed the active vanguard of the forces which brought down the old regime during the Polish 'October'. (Until now all the considerable effort to regain an organised Communist foothold, even in its Gomulka form, among the students, has ended in failure. At the moment of writing there are only a few dozen members of the Party's Union of Socialist Youth among the 20,000 Warsaw students. The situation is similar in Cracow and other provincial universities.)

In spite of the Party's control of every printed word and in the face of official censorship, the voice of revolt was breaking through even in 1955. Adam Wazyk's 'Poem for Adults' which appeared in August, 1955, on the first page of the Warsaw weekly *Nowa Kultura*, which was then the official organ of the Union of Polish writers, became the manifesto of the revolt.



The demoralisation of the Bierut-Minc-Berman regime had begun some time before Krushchev's famous speech at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, held in Moscow in February, 1956. But there can be no doubt whatsoever that the Moscow revelations about the Stalin regime gave the death blow to the ruling triumvirate in Warsaw. One of them, Bierut, symbolically died in Moscow during the Twentieth Congress, where he was representing the Polish leadership. His two other colleagues were soon afterwards removed from any position of influence. With the personal participation of Krushchev, who rushed to Warsaw as soon as the Moscow congress was over, a slightly changed leadership with Ochab as First Secretary was established with the aim of assuring the satellite character of Poland in relation to Soviet Russia.

But the disintegration of the old regime could not be checked by small manoeuvres in the Warsaw party secretariat. Whatever moral authority the Communist leaders retained among their followers was fast disappearing as a result of the blow administered unwittingly by Krushchev. Losing its morale, the regime could no longer stabilise the faltering state administration and party machine.

#### *Revolutionary Situation*

In the summer of 1956 the Stalinist faction in the Party's Central Committee started to disintegrate. Ochab himself deserted them. Cyrankiewicz, the Prime Minister, moved away even earlier. The visit paid to Mao-Tse-tung by Ochab and Lange in September, 1956, reassured them of powerful Chinese support in case of a conflict with the Soviet party.

This was the atmosphere which made possible the uprising of the Poznan workers, which lasted for three full days and was paid for with the loss of some hundreds of lives and even more wounded. In spite of advice to the contrary coming from Moscow, the Warsaw leaders decided not to fight but to appease the enraged masses of their people.

The workers' uprising as well as the spiritual rebellion of the writers evoked a strong response among the professional classes and the university youth, and brought to a peak the disarray of the former party leadership. The administration, and especially the police, were disintegrating. The country was on the verge of complete anarchy. The Communists had only one person whom they could ask to save them from utter collapse. This was Gomulka.

He had for some time been living in political retirement after being released from prison in 1954. In the middle of 1956 he was approached by the party leaders and asked to rejoin them. He agreed to do so, but on his own terms. This meant their moral and political capitulation. It meant, too, the removal of the direct Russian representatives from the Polish Politbureau. Of these, the Soviet Marshal Konstanty Rokossovsky was the most conspicuous. This they refused to do. But the Poznan uprising left the leaders without much room for manoeuvring and they hurried to restore to Gomulka his rights as party member in July, 1956.



But the wave of rebellion would not recede. People started assembling to discuss the situation, to hold meetings, to adopt resolutions which were neither prepared nor censored by the party apparatus. Workers demonstrated and struck. The police was helpless. In the army, and especially among the 80,000 strong 'corps of internal security', the demand was to get rid of 'our friends' (as the Russians are ironically called in Poland) from among the higher command of the Polish forces. The press censorship had partly broken down, and some very outspoken criticism of the regime of terror, fear and economic misery appeared in the press. In September Poland was ready for a national revolution.

## 2. The Polish 'October'

**G**OMULKA had been a Communist all his adult life. The son of an oil worker in the south-eastern part of Poland, he was at heart as much a patriot as a revolutionary. The brutal treatment which his party received from the Soviet leaders just before the war and his experiences of Soviet practice between 1939 and 1941 in Lwow, where he worked as a minor trade union official, had, by all accounts, only strengthened his patriotic sentiments.

When, therefore, the bankrupt leadership of the Party asked him in the early autumn of 1956, to save what could still be saved for Communism in Poland, the 95 per cent of the nation who are not Communists saw in him only the Polish patriot who had greatly suffered at the hands of the Russians and their political plenipotentiaries in Warsaw. In October he symbolised the refusal of the Poles—all the Poles—to be docile subjects of the Soviet empire.

The Soviet leaders saw the situation in a very similar way. They ordered, as Gomulka recounted a fortnight later at a conference of the Warsaw Party cadre, 'movements of Soviet military units stationed in Poland's western territories'. Soviet tanks took up strategic positions in the suburbs of Warsaw, Lodz, Poznan and many other large centres of population. Without much warning a plane from Moscow brought a heavy load of top Soviet leaders, among whom were Khrushchev, Molotov, Mikoyan, Kaganovitch and Marshal Koniev.

Twelve hours later the Soviet plane returned to Moscow with all its passengers, except Marshall Koniev who, in the presence of the Poles, was given instructions by Khrushchev to supervise the immediate withdrawal of the Soviet units to their normal bases. The Poles were left free to make any personal changes in the leadership of the party and government they wanted. That meant they were free to dismiss Marshal Rokossovsky from all his positions, which included a seat in the Warsaw Politbureau, the vice-premiership of the Government, and, what was more important, the posts



of the Minister of National Defence and of Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces. This right the new Warsaw leadership exercised at once. Rokossovsky was only the most prominent among the many Soviet 'experts' who were, in the course of days, dismissed from their high positions in the Polish Army, security organs and other key sectors of the state machine and war industry, and sent home to Russia.

At that time both the Poles and foreign observers in Warsaw were convinced that, because of their bad intelligence in Poland, the Soviet leaders had completely misunderstood the situation, and had therefore thought that the presence of Soviet tanks in the suburbs of Warsaw and Lodz would suffice to save the former regime, whose only virtue was absolute servility towards Moscow. They were trying to stop the heretic Gomulka from returning to power. They chose to descend on Warsaw on the very day when the members of the Central Committee of the Party assembled for its Eighth Plenary meeting. The rude behaviour of some of the Soviet leaders, and especially of Khrushchev, towards Gomulka, who only some hours later was formally elected the Party's leader, strengthened the impression that Moscow was seized with panic about the developments in satellite Poland, but, losing its head, it lost also a battle. Confronted with the determination to resist direct Soviet interference in Polish affairs, it had to accept defeat from the hands of the same Gomulka.

There was much truth in all that. Some crack units of the Polish Army, workers and students of the capital and other big cities were ready to fight against a Soviet armed intervention. But the fact that the same Soviet leaders, only a fortnight later, were using guns and tanks against the population of Hungary is a persuasive proof that however unexpected their behaviour in Warsaw on October 19th, they were ready to retreat only on some important conditions. The two decisive ones were: that political power in Poland should not be shared with anybody outside the Communist Party; and that the Warsaw Pact, which assures Moscow the control of Polish foreign policy, should remain in force.<sup>1</sup> In October Gomulka could still promise the fulfilment of these conditions, with a fair chance of success. In November Nagy was no longer able to pacify his Hungarian compatriots with a Soviet pledge of autonomy. The restricted Polish 'October' was possible because the Poles saw in Gomulka the man who had refused to be an agent of Soviet Russia in the days of Stalin's unrestricted reign of terror. A majority of the Polish Communist Committee was prepared to accept the solution, while the Soviet leaders were ready to swallow a moral and personal defeat on October 19th, and to accept, at least for the time being, a heresy inside their church. Both these elements were lacking in the Hungarian tragedy.

Wladyslaw Gomulka has very few political or even personal friends. Neither his natural inclinations nor his intellectual training are such as to make him an original thinker. His knowledge of the outside world, and

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<sup>1</sup> Which implied also the maintenance of Soviet military bases on Polish territory.



especially of Western Europe, which he has never visited, is very limited. On matters which he does not know from his personal experience he will follow his Marxist dogma.

But he knows his people. Commonsense is to him more important than any Marxist-Leninist doctrine. As he said at the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party on 20th October, 1956: 'Even a theory of socialism evolved in the best possible way at any given conditions cannot embrace all the details of life which is richer than theory'.

### THE BACKGROUND OF GOMULKA-ISM

The Polish Communist Party, which was constituted in December, 1918, was very different from most other Communist parties. It had a respectable past. Its father was the orthodox Marxist Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, led by a group of very able intellectuals of whom Rosa Luxembourg was the best known internationally. Its mother was the Left faction of the Polish Socialist Party which, while disagreeing with the more nationalist Pilsudski wing in 1905, yet still was loyal to the traditions of revolutionary Polish patriotism, and this, much more than Marxism, inspired the Polish working class movements. The Marxists in the Polish Communist Party considered themselves the peers of Lenin and Trotsky. Stalin appeared to them as a barbarian. The growing Russian pressure, especially with the ascendance of Stalin, on Polish Communism, to consider Soviet interest as the ultimate criterion for the policies of the international workers' movement, made the Polish Communist Party a hotbed of anti-Moscow sentiment. The party officially protested against the persecution of Trotsky in the early 'twenties, and later on showed much sympathy for the right-wing heresy of Bukharin. Stalin, who never forgave or forgot, officially liquidated the Polish Communist Party in 1938, and physically annihilated most of the activist cadre, among them all the leaders. The liquidation of the Polish Communist Party was heralded by the Soviet ruler as a blow against 'Polish Fascism', which had supposedly penetrated the Polish Communist leadership with their *agents-provocateurs*.

Gomulka survived the massacre of his comrades in Soviet Russia because at the time he was serving a sentence in a Polish prison. When the Soviet Army occupied Lwow in 1939 as agreed with Nazi Germany, Gomulka got a job as a minor trade union official. In June, 1941, when the Soviet-Nazi friendship was broken by Hitler, and Lwow fell to the Nazi armies, Gomulka did not go east with the retreating Red Army, but, instead, went to Warsaw to live, and later to fight, under Nazi occupation. His speedy rise to the position of General Secretary of the newly founded Party was never the result of Moscow's instructions.<sup>1</sup>

From the beginning of the Lublin regime a conflict developed between those Polish Communists like Bierut, Berman and Minc, who were ready

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<sup>1</sup> The Russians made it known recently in Volume 51 (Supplement) of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, April, 1958, that 'Gomulka studied at the International Lenin School in Moscow in 1934-35.' This evidently did not make him a zealous admirer of Soviet Russia.



to accept without protest the role of Moscow's pro-consuls, and the group round Gomulka, who detested many features of the Soviet police system, were frightened by its brutality and would have liked to avoid the more disappointing results of its economic policy, especially in agriculture. It was not a coincidence that practically all the leaders of the Soviet faction in Poland had spent the war years in Soviet Russia and were brought back to Poland by the Soviet Army's Political Administration.

### *Economic Collapse*

It would be wrong to imagine that the collapse of the Soviet regime in Poland, which occurred finally in 1956, and which culminated in the Poznan uprising and the October (VIII) Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist (United Polish Workers') Party, was the result only of the resentment at being ruled by Moscow. Of equal importance was the economic misery of the country. The Stalinist practice of compulsory collectivisation of farming was introduced into Poland, giving, as in Russia, catastrophic economic and political results.

In his speech at the Eighth Plenum (20th October, 1956) Gomulka said that the result of the eight years of collectivisation policy presented a 'sad picture'. He illustrated his pessimistic opinion by quoting the following figures (they concern the year 1955):

	percentage of land owned	percentage of total production contributed
state farms	12.6	8.4
collective farms	8.6	7.7
private farms	78.8	83.1
	percentage of livestock production	value of output per hectare (in zlotys)
state farms	5	393
collective farms	4	517
private farms	91	621

He estimated the value of production lost by Polish state and collective farms in 1955 as 755 million zlotys, and this despite the large government subsidies to 'socialised farming'. This was by way of being his preliminary announcement, as the *de facto* ruler of the country, that all subsidies to collective farms were to be cut off immediately. He added that, 'if, as a result . . . the development of collectivised farming is slowed down, then in my opinion we shall lose nothing from either the economic or political point of view'. He ridiculed the orthodox Communist idea that 'socialism in the countryside can be built on the basis of misery and the decline of peasants' holdings'. Before 1956 was over 80 per cent of the collective farms went into liquidation.

In industry the guiding principle was that the present generation must suffer for the sake of building heavy industry. No less than 40 per cent of the national income went into investments and stock. With the exception



of Warsaw, very little was devoted to the building of accommodation for the millions who either went from the villages into the towns or who were moved from the lost eastern territories into the newly won western parts of Poland. The consumer goods industry was left last in the queue. After 1948 it was the Communist policy in Poland to destroy even the small artisan units which for centuries had played an important role in providing the people with many products for personal use. The result was to make even worse the poverty of the population, especially in the rapidly growing towns. After 1950 the situation got still worse because of a large re-arming programme imposed on Poland by the Soviet planners.

As in matters of external relations, so in economic affairs, the Polish Communists, at least after 1948, were completely dependent on Moscow's wishes. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (the economic Comintern, whose headquarters are in Moscow) supervised and guided the Polish economy in Russia's interest. The Poles had not only to sell cheaply and buy dearly from Russia, but had to gear their weak economy to the needs of the much more powerful Soviet one. Large industrial combines were built for which Poland had neither the raw materials nor the skilled labour nor the home market. They could work only as part of the Soviet industrial machine. They became useless as soon as Soviet industry found a better and cheaper way of satisfying this particular need.

#### *Unbalanced Planning*

The Polish Communists were bad and expensive planners. They not only over-estimated the power of endurance of the people, and especially of the workers, in a situation where the most elementary technical means were refused to them (especially in the coal-mining industry), they were also not able to construct a balanced economic plan for Poland, as part of the overall Soviet plans. Gomulka described thus the results of the last six-year plan (1949-55): 'The practice in implementing the six-year plan was that on certain selected sectors a maximum of investment outlays were concentrated without taking into consideration other fields of economic life. And yet the national economy constitutes an integral whole. It is impossible to favour excessively certain branches of the economy at the expense of others, for the loss of proper proportion brings harm to the economy as a whole.'

During the five years 1951-55 investment in the armament industry amounted to 11 per cent of total industrial investment, or more than the investments allocated to the light industries during the whole period.

In spite of the fact that official statistics were reporting an annual rate of growth of about 13 per cent of gross industrial output (and since 1955, 9 per cent) the situation of the workers was getting worse and worse. Their standard of life, low even before this, was evidently falling rapidly, spreading a general demoralisation, which took the form of bad work, absenteeism and stealing. According to the *Economic Bulletin for Europe*, published by the U.N. Economic Commission for Europe (Vol. 9, No. 3,



November, 1957): 'To maintain a family (in Poland) on slightly more than a bare subsistence standard an income of about 600 zlotys per adult member of the family per month is needed, so that a family of two adults and two children would need some 1,800 to 2,000 zlotys. However, statistics of wages for 1956 show that the share of employees earning more than 2,000 zlotys per month was only 6.4 per cent of the total.'

### 3. After 'October'

ALREADY in 1955 the prestige of the Party was crumbling. (The government became the executive organ of the Politbureau in 1947 when the genuine Peasant and Socialist parties were destroyed or castrated.) The dreaded secret police started disintegrating because of the defection of some of its chiefs to the West. The editors of many papers and their most important contributors, although Party members, lost all faith in the official party line. But the shock given by Krushchev's revelations of the tyranny established by Stalin in Soviet Russia was repeated even more strongly when Gomulka and his closest friends lifted the curtain hiding the more grisly side of the regime which had persisted in Poland until 1956.

The greatest political achievement of the 'October' events in Poland was the emergence of a vociferous public opinion. The secret police has never since recovered or been rebuilt to the extent of being able to terrorise the people out of expressing their frank opinions about any action contemplated or taken by the Party, the Government, or even Soviet Russia. There are now virtually no Poles imprisoned for their opinions. As some 85-90 per cent of the population can be classified as opponents of Communism, and as the Poles are not known as exceptionally meek people, the opinions expressed freely and loudly in Polish towns and villages are, by the nature of things, often more violently anti-Communist than one hears in a Western country. This is the only political liberty which exists in Gomulka's Poland, but it is an important freedom.

#### *Setting the Limits*

Soon after Gomulka's return to power in the autumn of 1956, it looked as if Poland would be the only country in Europe ruled by Communists where the sphere of freedom would embrace to a great extent the printed word, and to a lesser extent the freedom to hold meetings at which non-communist opinions could be freely expressed. This was not to be. In the autumn of 1957 some freedoms won in 1956 were curtailed. The censorship of the press and books has recently become more stringent. Some magazines which had a great influence (like *Po Prostu*, the students' organ) were suppressed. In others (like *Nowa Kultura*) the editors and important members of the staff were removed and sometimes even banned from journalism altogether. A projected monthly magazine (*Europa*) which was to be devoted to reporting and discussing literary and philosophical developments in the West, was in 1958 prohibited from appearing. (In



protest against this suppression a group of the most talented Communist poet and writers broke publicly with the Party.) A few dozen books, approved for publication and already printed, were withheld from circulation. But even so, writers in Poland have still a much better chance of expressing their ideas than in any other existing Communist country, Yugoslavia included.

The hopes of many people in Poland, among them some leading Party members, that the Sejm (Parliament) would be able to act as a representative of national opinion, and thus influence the regime's policy, have not been fulfilled. But a small independent group of M.P.s, mainly progressive Catholics, and the Committees of the Sejm which meet in private, have some influence on the government's administration, though none on its policies.

### RELATIONS WITH THE CHURCH

The expatriation of the Polish Ukrainians and Byelorussians to the Soviet Union, of the Germans to the West, and the massacre of the Jews (less than one hundred thousand of the pre-war three and a half million are still living in Poland) has immensely increased the influence of the Roman Catholic Church among the present population of 29 million. Its 5,952 parishes, served by 12,000 priests, the 3,000 monasteries and convents and the two higher theological colleges are the most potent and effective national organisation in Poland. Strictly hierarchical by its nature, it is ably led by Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, a man of the same age as Gomulka and, like him, of humble origin.

The Roman Catholic Church in Poland has achieved an unrivalled position in the life of the people as the most trusted national organisation while linking the Poles with the West, at least with the Latin part. The years first of Nazi and then Communist persecution have not only not weakened but have mightily strengthened the hold of the Church and clergy on the nation. There can be no doubt that even in the cities, where the influence of religion has been waning in this century under the impact of rationalist ideas, the Church has in the last 20 years won back many lost positions.

#### *Achieving a Modus Vivendi*

When Gomulka returned triumphantly to power in October, 1956, he knew that to be able to stabilise the situation he needed help from the spiritual leaders of the nation. One of his first acts was to free Cardinal Wyszynski from his place of detention and to hand back his official residence in Warsaw. But this was not enough to move the Church from an attitude of hostility to one of friendly neutrality. In November, 1956, a special commission was formed on the initiative of the Party, which was composed of the representatives of the Government (these were nearly all Party members of high standing), and the episcopate, with the aim of achieving a *modus vivendi* between the political rulers and the religious guides of the nation. On 15th December, 1956, the agreement was signed



and published. Its most significant part was the introduction of religious training into all state schools in Poland. It is true that the teaching of religion is on a 'voluntary basis' dependent on the wish of the parents. But in practice it means the religious training of 98 per cent of the nation's children. The religious instruction is given by priests or nuns. The Government pays their salaries and covers all other costs connected with it.

As a *quid pro quo* Cardinal Wyszynski called on Roman Catholics to vote in January, 1957, for the list of the National Front, which automatically secured for the Communist Party a majority in the Sejm which was then elected.

Since then relations between the Communist government and the Church have had their ups and downs. The attempts of the Church to ignore the press censorship for some of its publications were suppressed—not without some police brutality. On the other hand, some more fanatical priests, especially in smaller parishes, are using their authority to ostracise non-believers. Recently a few Roman Catholic priests were sentenced to prison terms of up to four years for being too outspoken against the regime in their sermons. The truce between a regime which is committed to a materialistic, anti-religious *Weltanschauung*, and the most dogmatic of all Christian churches is not easy to keep. Yet it is a fact that the new and unique situation in which a Communist government hands over the nation's children to the Church, and a Prince of the Roman Catholic Church publicly supports a Communist dictator, has better survived all the changes which Poland has undergone since 1956 than almost any other achievement of that upheaval. There are no signs that either partner to the agreement is contemplating repudiating it in the near future.

### THE PEASANTS

No less than 45 per cent of the Polish population works in agriculture. Of the approximately 12 million so employed only between 3 and 4 per cent (all figures include the dependent members of their families) are labourers. At least 96 per cent are property-owning peasants, and most of them have very small farms. (In 1954, 61.5 per cent of all farms in Poland had less than five hectares, and a further 28.9 per cent had between five and ten hectares.<sup>1</sup> Since then the situation in this respect has probably changed very little.)

The Polish peasants, conservative by temperament and in politics, have always shown a grim determination to stick to their farms. On Sunday morning they go, men, women and children, to church. For the rest, they live with their crops, their hogs and their cows. The most fanatical Communist planner was unable in the years of intimidation and terror to induce more than a handful of them to change their status as independent producers into that of 'kolchozniks'. The economic measures undertaken by the Bierut regime, aimed at breaking the resistance of the peasants to the

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<sup>1</sup> One hectare = 2½ acres approximately.



prescribed forms of 'collectivisation', resulted in such a fall in agricultural production that the towns were permanently half-hungry and the government was forced to import foodstuffs for the population. The figures which Gomulka made public in October, 1956 (quoted on page 12), show finally that not only politically and socially but also economically the 'collective' and state farms were a very costly failure. As the *Economic Bulletin for Europe* (Vol. 9, No. 3, November, 1957) says: 'It is a noticeable feature of developments during the years since 1950 that, for practically every crop, yields on state farms have fallen despite the preference given to them in supplies of materials, chemical fertilisers, etc., while yields on private farms rose even though they were subjected to various forms of adverse discrimination' (page 28).

The Gomulka regime not only benevolently approved of the disbanding of 80 per cent of the collective farms, but directly encouraged the peasants to increase the size of their farms by deciding to sell at once half a million hectares of land belonging to the state. The government's official aim is to help to build up private farms to the size of 15 to 20 hectares and thus make them more efficient and profitable. Obligatory deliveries of milk have been abolished, and other deliveries greatly diminished. While investment in 'socialist economy' is kept at the level of 1956, investment in agriculture was planned to be increased by 20 per cent, and the whole of the increase until 1960 is expected to go into private farms.

Recently Gomulka has spoken several times about the time when agriculture in Poland will also join the 'Socialist sector' of the country's economy. But there is no sign that he contemplates a practical change in the situation which has obtained since 1956. The price of land is constantly rising and in the southern districts (Cracow, Kielce, Katowice) has reached the figure of 55,000 zlotys (£900 at the official rate of exchange) per hectare of good land. The laws of a partly free market are permitted to operate among half the population. There can also be no doubt that the standard of living of the peasant population has appreciably risen since the beginning of 1957. It is true to say that this is the only social group in Poland which has substantially improved its material position thanks to the political changes which occurred in Warsaw in October, 1956.

### THE WORKERS

The uprising in Poznan was the most dramatic demonstration which the Polish workers staged against the pre-Gomulka regime in Poland. It was a protest which matured on the soil of extremely low wages but which was set off by the contempt shown by the rulers to the practical needs of the working classes. The trade unions, as in every other Communist country, were a part of the government machine and their official purpose was to extract from the workers the highest possible productivity and to discourage them from making any moves in defence of their rights and needs. The trade unions had also been given the function of providing some social security and of looking after the leisure activities of their members. But



these, too, were used as rewards or punishments according to the docility or otherwise of the workers *vis-à-vis* the managers, the Party and the state. The workers usually protested against this state of affairs by absenteeism, slackness at work and strikes. They still do so.

A few days after Gomulka's return to power in the Party, the former leaders of the trade unions were physically removed from their offices by Warsaw workers. New leaders were installed. But the fact that the country's economy at that time was in a state of complete exhaustion and that the new regime had at once to announce a complete wages freeze, killed any reforming zeal which the new trade union leaders may have brought with them. They had again to accept the role of the Party's and Government's representatives on the shop floor. But now they sometimes bring to the notice of the political leadership the more worrying aspects of their members' experience.

### *Workers' Councils*

The more revolutionary elements among the workers, who played a very important role during the October events in Warsaw (the leaders of the Zeran automobile factory were their spearhead), spontaneously developed a movement for Workers' Councils, which would introduce democratic control into production. These were rejected by Gomulka as soon as he felt that his position was stabilised. In May, 1957, Gomulka publicly put these severe limits to their activities: 'The Workers' Councils are not organs of political power of the working class . . . They are not a form of collective ownership of an industrial establishment. We (the Party) have rejected as unrealistic the idea of constructing some sort of hierarchic pyramid over the Councils. [At that time half of all industrial undertakings in Poland had their Workers' Councils.—L. B.] The Workers' Councils do not and should not have any funds to cover their activities. The Councils do not and should not have any state positions.'

The obvious lack of sympathy expressed by Gomulka for this form of working-class organisation was mostly political in origin. The new Communist leaders saw in it, and rightly, an autonomous revolutionary movement, which might one day challenge the Party's claim to be the only representative and leader of the Polish working classes. The existence of Workers' Councils, functioning in the way they had done in October, 1956, when they armed the factory crews, organised political meetings and demonstrations (in support of the same Gomulka) and generally acted outside the normal political framework of a Communist state, was full of dangers for the monopolistic position of the Party. When Gomulka attacked them (in May, 1957) he accused them of being a 'favourable ground for the infiltration into its ranks of influences alien to the working class, and frequently even hostile to it'. If one accepts the Leninist conception that the Communist Party is the only legitimate working-class organisation, then any deviation from it can be described in the way Gomulka has done here. The fact is that the Workers' Councils were generally led by Party members, mostly of the younger generation. But it is also true that many of these



working-class leaders were deeply disillusioned with the Party and were looking to other forms of political organisation which would help Poland towards a democratic socialist transformation.

In 1958 the Workers' Councils were merged by Party and government decree (duly adopted by the Sejm afterwards) into a new body called 'Workers Self-Management'. This consists of three elements: (a) Councils elected by the workers employed in the undertaking, (b) official delegates of the trade unions, and (c) representatives of the Party committees. The dream of many Polish workers of developing a kind of industrial democracy has thus been thwarted by Gomulka. The main function of the Workers' Councils is to decide how bonuses should be divided among the employees. On every other aspect they have only the right to be consulted or to make recommendations to the management.

As to the standard of living of the workers, it is still extremely low. The wage freeze was only partly effective in 1957, and even less so in 1958. Unrest, sometimes strikes, huge absenteeism and low productivity forced the government to adopt a more flexible wages policy. According to an official announcement (by the Minister of Finance), wages in 1958 rose by 14 per cent. Prices have officially risen in the last 12 months by nearly 6 per cent. On the basis of published government statistics it is very difficult to assess the rise in real wages, and even more difficult to assess how far the worst paid workers (in textiles, transport, etc.) have benefited. Corruption and theft in industry are still not only a social but also an economic problem in Poland. As long as the standard of living of the workers does not improve to a greater extent than has happened in the last two years, illegal means of supplementing the income of many working-class families in Poland will go on, despite all official appeals to the contrary, to the great detriment of the morale of the whole nation.

## THE PARTY

In 1948 the only political party left in Poland was the Communist-controlled United Polish Workers' Party. The Polish Socialist Party, which after the war was led predominantly by fellow-travellers or opportunists, was forcibly absorbed into the Communist party. The independent Peasant Party was destroyed, mainly through police action, and its leaders arrested if, as in the case of Mr. Mikolajcyk, they were not successful in escaping to the West. There remained a Democratic Party and a Peasant Party which were allowed to form the National Front 'under the leadership of the working class'. They were, and to a great extent still are, Communist 'front organisations', void of any independent political personality. But this does not mean that among their members there are not many who are not Communists.

The Communist liquidation of independent political organisations between 1945 and 1948 was to a very great extent the achievement of the then General Secretary, 'Wieslaw' Gomulka. But soon the axe came down upon him too. After 1949 the Party was dead. It was as much a tool of terror



as it was terrorised itself by the department of the U.B. (Security Police). Membership of the Party was a condition for climbing any ladder in politics, in the economic life of the country or anywhere where privilege was to be had. But it also presupposed a deadly conformity with the current views of the Stalinist leadership. The membership then reached the figure of one and a half million.

After the refreshing days of October, 1956, it looked for a moment as though the Party too might rediscover a living soul in its breast. People were no more afraid to leave the Party, and many did. At the end of 1957 the Party had 1,300,000 members. Only 13 per cent of them were peasants. More than 44 per cent of the villages had no Party cells. The workers amounted to 39 per cent of the membership, only one per cent more than the white-collar group which consisted of the employees of the Party, managers in industry and government officials.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Rank-and-Fife Apathy*

After Gomulka and his friends had been expelled from the Party in 1949 and the slightest sympathy for their opinions was treated as a criminal offence, complete apathy engulfed the rank and file, and the obedient Party bureaucracy was enough for the tasks the Stalinist leaders delegated to it. The loyalty of the apparatus was ensured not because there were many very fanatical Communists in it. Nor was it due only to the terror of the secret police. But Poland is a very poor country. Membership of the Party apparatus gave power, often uncontrolled, over the rest of the population, and important material privileges.

After October, 1956, the Party apparatus found its very existence endangered. Hence, most of its members, and it consists of tens of thousands of people, of whom many have no other profession, instinctively gathered round those few among the leaders of the former regime who had the courage to stick to their belief that a good Communist is, as Stalin said, he who 'without argument, unconditionally', defends the interests of the Soviet Union. Bierut was already dead. Berman and Minc capitulated without a fight. The rest of the loyal Stalinists, the so-called Natolin<sup>2</sup> group, were tough but were intellectually feeble and morally discredited. Yet for a very long time after Gomulka's return to power they had the passive if not the active support of the majority of the Party's apparatus.

Because of this, the Party even under Gomulka has never been revitalised, and the more revolutionary working-class members tried to build a parallel semi-political organisation in the form of the Workers' Councils. The liberal thaw of October, 1956, made the apparatus so uncertain (and this *is* the Party) that Gomulka had twice to postpone the date of the Party congress. Before the delegates could be trusted to vote for a Party leadership completely devoted to Gomulka, the apparatus had to be purged or won over.

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<sup>1</sup> The remaining 8 per cent was made up of old age pensioners, housewives and soldiers.

<sup>2</sup> After Natolin, a district near Warsaw where the group was secretly meeting.



## 4. How much Freedom?

SOON after Gomulka took over the political leadership of the country, to the genuine enthusiasm of the workers, students and radical intelligentsia, he tried to come to terms with the Party apparatus. He even sacrificed some of his most ardent supporters who were especially hated by the apparatus. He kept one of the leaders of the Natolin faction as Deputy Prime Minister. He may have done this to take away from the Soviet leaders one more reason for direct military intervention in Poland. But during his visit to Moscow in November, 1956, he promised to remain in the Soviet bloc and to secure the Communist Party's absolute control of political power in Poland, and after that he was in fact free to dispose of his more stubborn enemies from the former regime.

Yet he never really struck at them. The practical reason may have been the fact that, as the new head of the Party apparatus, he was afraid to hurt too much the organisation he now controlled. But the deeper reason was that before he could have destroyed his tormentors of yesterday he was even more endangered by his most energetic, enthusiastic and intelligent allies of to-day. The 'to-day' in this context is October, 1956.

In 1956 Gomulka was the symbol of opposition to the many wrongs committed by the former regime. He was their victim and a martyr. He had shown courage and came out with an unbroken spirit from the dungeons of the secret police. He would rejoin the Party, but only on his own terms. He would save the country from threatening anarchy, but only after he was allowed publicly to condemn the most outrageous crimes and blunders of his predecessors. This strength of character made him the hero of October, 1956.

### *Resisting Soviet Pressure*

Gomulka was ready to break with much of Communist mythology, especially as it had developed in Soviet Russia. In 1947 he wrote in the Party's theoretical journal that Poland was building not just a replica of the Soviet system but a 'democratic and social order unprecedented in history' and that his country 'can proceed and is proceeding along her own road'. Soviet leadership of the 'Socialist camp' was not even mentioned. Again and again he repeated his intention of defending Poland's independence even against her 'closest friends'. There can be no doubt that Gomulka was honest when he expressed such patriotic sentiments. Though undoubtedly under great pressure from Krushchev, he yet described the development of the Bolshevik Revolution as 'a path of thorns', which, as he said, was the result of 'Russian backwardness'. (At the Central Committee of the Communist Party, May, 1957). He publicly refused to accept the model of the Bolshevik Revolution as 'a necessity for other nations



which are or will be building socialism'. He said, and this was widely publicised by the Polish Party press, that the Soviet experiment was not only 'not at all necessary (to be followed) but not useful to other nations'.

Gomulka maintains relations with the Soviet leaders on the basis of bilateral agreements. In December, 1956, he refused to give in to Krushchev's suggestion that a new Comintern or Cominform should be created to avoid such upheavals inside the Communist bloc as had just occurred in Hungary. A year later, during the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution in Moscow, it was again only Gomulka who refused to join a new Cominform and thus frustrated the Soviet move to strengthen its leadership of the non-Chinese Communist movements.

But for all that, Gomulka's heresy has never gone further than to demand some Polish autonomy inside the greater Communist empire. Basically he shares the power philosophy of the men in the Kremlin. He believes, as they do, that by definition the state is superior to the rights of the individual citizens. He believes, as they do, that only one political group, the Communist Party, understands the laws of history and is therefore appointed by fate to lead and govern the nation. By temperament he fits well into the role of the sole leader.

#### *The Liberal Revisionists*

But most, if not all, of his intellectual allies of the October days in Warsaw supported the upheaval not merely for a change of government. They wanted a change of the system. To them it was to be the beginning of a bloodless revolution which would not only recover the nation's independence, but give freedom to the individual. Kolakowski, one of the leaders of the 'liberal revisionists', who grew up in the Party and is still a member of it, wrote that the individual Pole wanted to be freed from state and party dogma and wanted to regain the right to judge political and social phenomena in his country and in the world, only on the basis of reason and conscience. The censorship in Poland and the ever-watching eye of Russia forced the leading Polish revisionists to concentrate at least in public mainly on questions of philosophy and ethics. But by questioning the very essence of Marxism-Leninism, they cut away the basis on which a Communist system finds the rationalisation of its practice. The Polish revisionists reject the Leninist idea of the Party's permanent dictatorship in the State. As one of them (Professor J. Hochfeld) wrote: 'There is no socialism without democracy. . . . Many acclaim socialist democracy as against bourgeois democracy. It is difficult to resist the impression that this alleged division has been used simply as a defence for the methods of police dictatorship. . . . A society deprived of political parties, lacking their collaboration or competition . . . becomes atomised, helpless, and its political and economic life becomes completely dependent on a monolithic group of managers'.

The liberal revisionists are Socialists and have no doubts about the superiority of a system in which society owns the most important sources



of raw materials and means of production, and plans its economy. But they dread a repetition or prolongation of the economic misery which was the result of tyrannical planning; they abhor the moral and political terror which is the weapon used by a dictatorship to break a nation's opposition to an imposed system.

Gomulka, no doubt, is a devoted Pole, who prefers the means of persuasion to that of physical terror. But he is also determined to preserve the dictatorial political power which he will yield to nobody. He therefore, even if it is against his personal inclination, has used censorship to silence the voices of the most radical revisionists, and the dullness of conformity is again forced on most Polish journalists. Disillusionment and apathy have replaced the feeling of a great upsurge of October, 1956.

But the revisionists, silenced in politics, still resist the Party strait-jacket in many other spheres of the nation's spiritual and intellectual life. Some of them have left the Party in protest against the growing tendency to diminish their limited liberties. Others still belong to the Party, and yet do not capitulate. The Polish Djilases are not in prison. Some of them teach a new generation.

#### FOREIGN POLICY

In the last twelve months a variation on the theme of disengagement became known under a Polish name, the Rapacki Plan. Since 1945 it is the first time that a move in foreign policy, made by a country of the Soviet bloc, had an imprint other than that of Moscow.

The revised Rapacki Plan, announced at a press conference in Warsaw on 4th November, 1958, is designed to decrease the amount of arms and armies in that part of Central Europe consisting of both parts of Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. This thinning out would proceed in two phases. In the first phase a complete ban on the production of nuclear weapons would be established for the whole zone. Armies in those areas which do not already possess such weapons would be forbidden to acquire them. The agreement would also prohibit the completion of installations for nuclear weapons. The second phase foresees the agreed reduction of conventional armies which would be carried out simultaneously with the removal of existing nuclear weapons. Both phases of the Plan would be subject to proper control measures.

It would be naive to think that Gomulka could contemplate a radical move concerning the whole status of Central Europe without full consultations with, and indeed approval from, the Soviet leadership. Warsaw never made such a claim. But there can be no doubt that since Gomulka returned to power Warsaw has once or twice, instead of waiting for Soviet decisions, made suggestions on questions of foreign policy to Moscow. What is more, in 1957 and 1958 Poland asked for and received loans from the United States, though in Soviet eyes this was a great political mistake and even a crime. While it is debatable if the Soviet leaders really fear a re-armed Germany, there can be no shadow of a doubt that four partitions of Poland have left a clear imprint on the mind of every Pole. The western territories,



acquired as the result of the Potsdam decisions in June, 1945, are, additionally, a source of great political concern to the Poles. On these matters they have only one interest—the stabilisation of the existing frontiers and a non-aggressive German neighbour—and, while Soviet Russia can manoeuvre in this context, the Poles cannot. An assurance coming from the West, and if possible from Western Germany, that no radical changes of Poland's frontiers will be demanded, would remove the strongest ideological reason for Poland voluntarily to lean on Soviet Russia.

#### *Conditions of Survival*

But it would not greatly change Polish foreign policy. The country is surrounded by Soviet Russia in the north and east, and by Communist Czechoslovakia and East Germany in the south and west. In such conditions, even a non-Communist government would have to follow the Soviet lead in foreign affairs in every matter of importance.

There are people in the West who hope that controlled disengagement in Central Europe would not only decrease the danger of a local explosion, which would at once involve the nuclear powers, but could also result in a radical change of the regimes in Eastern Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland. But it would be wrong to count on Gomulka as a leader in the direction of a parliamentary social democracy, with free political parties.

Gomulka is a Communist. He may regret that the mightiest Communist state is Russia, which every Pole considers backward at least in the sphere of intellectual, cultural and spiritual development.

He would undoubtedly prefer Tito's greater independence in foreign affairs, though he is critical of recent Yugoslav actions. It is doubtful whether, in condemning Nagy, and recently also Tito, he did so only under Soviet pressure. Gomulka is no dreamer and he knows that the Communist regime in Poland can only survive in the shadow of mighty Russia. Only the fact that Soviet Russia would physically destroy a Poland that shook off Communist control makes the overwhelming majority of the Polish people accept his political dictatorship. In foreign affairs Gomulka's Poland is bound, sometimes reluctantly, to support Soviet policy.

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Since October, 1956, the Poles have lost many hopes and many illusions. Yet they have gained important changes in the treatment of peasants and the Church, and some improvement in the economic situation of the working population. And, above all, they have until now preserved the precious right of expressing their opinions on all matters including their Communist rulers. They cannot do so from public platforms. But the fear of the security police has vanished in Poland. Communist propaganda, discredited completely in 1956, has lost every hold on even the closest circles to the Party leadership. Disillusionment with the new regime has made many people politically apathetic. Yet the spirit of questioning, of non-conformity, of spiritual independence is still strong enough among the intellectuals and youth to make Poland a unique Communist state in Eastern Europe. It is a dictatorship without totalitarianism.



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