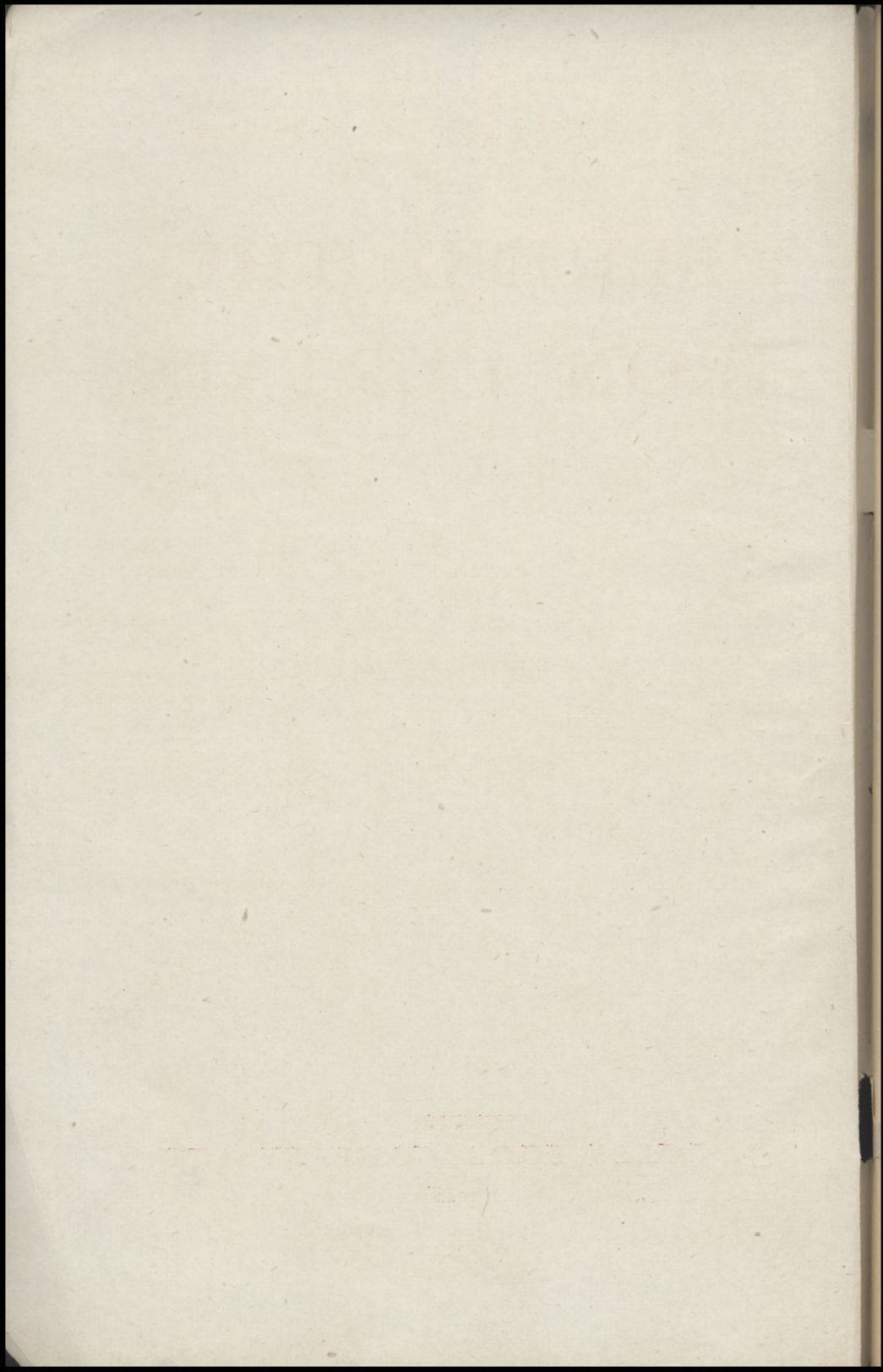


# BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

By KAROL PODDEBSKI

LONDON :  
J. ROLLS BOOK COMPANY LTD.

1946





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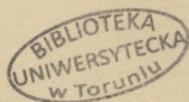
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This pamphlet is a collection of articles about Poland by Karol Poddebski. The author travelled during the last few months of 1945 through the greater part of Poland, afterwards managing to get out of the country.

Poddebski's descriptions have not been written with an eye to literary style or political bias. They simply describe the present situation in Poland as it appeared to him.



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## INTRODUCTION

I WAS never an enemy of Russia. On the contrary, I appreciate the heroism of the Red Army, and sincerely admire her sacrifices and achievements in the fight against Hitlerite Germany.

Being interested in all social changes and in the fate of the under-dog, I deeply feel the need of reforms to secure social justice and favourable conditions for common prosperity. Not a Communist myself, I expected, however, that maybe Communism would bring some changes—some progress by reducing the number of miserable people.

The observations and impressions in this book have been collected, not for propaganda purposes, but to satisfy my personal curiosity and to form my own opinion on matters which I had previously only known from theory and propaganda.

The reality which I came up against was a crushing blow to my expectations. Russia and the national Communism she has brought up, Russia in the behaviour of the Red Army, Russia in her economic and cultural system, this Russia, which entered Central Europe in 1945, presents quite a different picture from the imaginary one formed by her foreign friends. Previously the world could only see the rosy colour of the iron curtain, but nothing behind it. To-day Russia marches forward. The first stage in her progress is Central Europe. Examples of every-day life in Poland, Hungary or Jugoslavia show that it has the same pattern and direction everywhere, though the policy and propaganda is slightly modified to fit local conditions.

For over a year this new life has been the fate of millions and millions of people in Europe. These people and their fate are a kind of guinea-pig for all those who, in the future, will probably live in the same way unless the direction of the present evolution changes.

This book is an attempt to vivisect the guinea-pig, to try and find out the cause of its disease. It is possible to die of cancer without knowing that there is such a thing or what it is. In order to be cured it is necessary to observe the symptoms of the sickness, understand its present course and its probable future developments. The Western world is not entirely healthy, but it is not so sick as the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, which have been submitted to injections of the Communist virus, so painful in its consequences. The field of observation is sufficiently wide to enable certain conclusions to be drawn before the same sufferings become the fate of those not yet infected. If it is necessary for this guinea-pig to suffer, let its sickness be at least generally known, and let it serve to the advancement of medicine by assisting those who work for health and prosperity in the world.



The purpose of this book is to present the results of the observation of the every-day life of a human being living under the new conditions in Central Europe, or rather in Poland. I tried to get a cross-section of the lives of ordinary people, and did not concern myself with doctrines, propaganda or "high politics" in which the human being is lost, being treated as a commodity—the man, the twentieth-century slave, whose fate is decided by auction at a conference table. I was interested in all the changes brought by the new conditions to the every-day life of the ordinary people of the wide masses who do not take part in politics. My observations were based on facts and experiences. They are free from all ideological assumptions and their accompanying prejudices and sympathies. They are not viewed through any glasses which colour facts according to personal beliefs.

The instrument of observation is not emotion, but the senses of sight and hearing—and common sense which assembles the facts observed into one picture. It is certainly not a full picture, but it is a true one from which all propaganda has been eliminated. Propaganda sees only the good or the bad side of Communism. It puts vigilance to sleep or else rouses the passions.

In every present lie the roots of the future. It is necessary to dig down to them in order to learn what kind of tree will grow from them and what kind of fruit it will bear. The kind of life we shall lead to-morrow depends upon what tree overshadows us: freedom or slavery, levelling up to common prosperity or down to common misery, progress in destroying culture or progress in spreading, developing and generalizing it.

*London, April, 1946.*



## CHAPTER I

### THE RED ARMY

#### *The entry of the Red Army into Poland*

DURING the month preceding the Red Army's winter offensive, the Germans started a man-hunt, particularly against people from Warsaw, which greatly exceeded anything of the kind that had gone before from 1942 to 1944. In Cracow alone, at the end of December 1944, and the beginning of January 1945, 7,000 people were caught in a few nights. The Germans managed somehow to deport the greater number of them to forced labour in the Reich. In such conditions the news of the opening of the Red Army offensive was generally received with relief, because it brought the hope of respite from an unbearable situation—the hope of some change.

To this hope a belief was attached that nothing could possibly be worse than the German occupation. This psychological reaction of the Polish people, the result of a longing for something new to come, was to be a very valuable trump in the hands of the Lublin Committee. In spite of it, however, there was a certain feeling of uneasiness, based on memories of the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland in 1939-41, but in general this gave way to optimism founded on confidence in the Anglo-American Allies. The people deeply believed that the Allies would not allow any harm to be done, that they would certainly influence Russian policy in Poland and that, therefore, this policy would be bound to have a different shape from that in 1939-41.

The impatient anticipation of the Red Army's arrival was further increased by the unbearable economic situation which developed at this stage. Its entry into Poland was preceded by a wave of rumours that the currency of that time was to be annulled. These rumours put a complete stop to the circulation of money. To get flour, bread or fat, it was necessary to offer clothes or underwear in exchange.

The position of the people expelled from Warsaw became particularly difficult, and large numbers of them were faced with starvation. It was therefore hoped that, with the entry of the Red Army, the currency, economic situation and distribution of food would quickly be stabilized.

In one of the south-western towns of Poland, for example, the flight of the German civilian authorities, a few days before that of the Wehrmacht, created a vacuum in the administration, which the local population did their best to fill by electing a mayor and establishing a civilian police force. The first task of these police, in spite of their being unarmed, was to stop the looting, which had already started, of the houses left empty by the Germans.



At last the day has come when the remaining German columns straggle through the town. The glare of the blazing warehouses and stores, which are being ransacked by the population, and the detonations of bridges and the power station being blown up, mark the end of Hitler's occupation and show that the town is to be undefended. In the afternoon and night a deathly silence falls over the town, and next morning the same town presents a completely different appearance.

The first meeting in a side street: a civilian in a cap decorated with a red star, in jack boots, a belt with holsters for ammunition and a tommy-gun. He is completely drunk, sways, and sings at the top of his voice. I get out of his way and go on to the main street. Here, right in the middle, a huge Mongol is riding on a very small pony, his feet almost touching the ground. A Cossack, leaning over one side of his saddle, followed by a second, third and fourth, goes galloping past the carts of supplies in the middle of the street. I arrive at the Post Office, before which, in the middle of the square, a Russian officer has just been buried. The grave is covered with pine branches, and somebody puts a stick on top of it with a red star and a slip of paper bearing the officer's name. Afterwards I was to see similar cemeteries in the streets and squares of all towns I visited.

From one side I hear a very peculiar and sinister chorus. An infantry unit appears. The soldiers look better in the column than individually. First of all they are sober. They wear lined trousers and jackets, overcoats and caps with flaps covering the ears. They march in fours with a slow, swinging step. Their faces are sad and unintelligent, often savage and stern. The second part of the unit consists of women—soldiers in uniforms and skirts. The majority of them are as ugly as sin, with wide, flat noses predominating.

Two flags, one red, the other white and red, are flying over both the Post Office and the Town Hall. In front of the Town Hall a group of people surround a Soviet N.C.O. with an intelligent expression, who is delivering a speech in broken Polish on the liberation of Poland from Fascist shackles. He does not mention the Germans, only the Fascists. One of the women near me in the crowd loudly voices her doubts to her neighbour: "But, my dear, I've never seen any Italians on this front!"

A little further on I meet a whole group of civilians with tommy-guns, their caps decorated with red stars. Some of them are sober. They are accompanied by Polish civilian police, who were established before the entry of the Russians. I hear that they are chasing German soldiers who have not had time to withdraw. A few hours later I actually see the sinister spectacle of such a prisoner being lead, or rather dragged along the street, with his face horribly mutilated by rifle-buts. It is not a face any more—just one great wound. A peculiar thing: in spite of all their sufferings and



hatred of the Germans, this Polish mob's reaction is mainly sympathy and revulsion at the sight of this humiliated human being. I do not know whether to condemn this as Polish weakness, or to be glad that we have not become beasts ourselves, in spite of being surrounded for six years by German bestiality.

One of the ex-German administrative buildings, previously occupied by the Nazi Party, is taken over by the Polish Workers Party—a Communist party created in Poland in 1941-2, and one of the four parties officially recognized after the entry of the Russians. The building is rechristened "The People's House." On the flagstaff hangs a red flag bearing the initials of the Polish Workers Party, which, after a week—how characteristic—is replaced by the white and red Polish one. The emergence of the local Workers Party was connected with the establishment, in the People's House, of a political and administrative centre, working in the closest collaboration with the Soviet Military Commandant of the town.

On some private houses Polish flags appear. This, I notice, makes a big impression on the population, who, after looking only at flags with swastikas for five years, can at last see the Polish national colours displayed freely. This puts the people into a state of excitement. I noticed the same reaction during the first days of the Warsaw Rising.

#### *The behaviour of the Red Army*

In the afternoon the Soviet officers and soldiers start finding billets for themselves in private houses, not according to any organized plan, but each man on his own initiative. This generally starts with a hammering on the door with a rifle-but, followed by a categorical demand for vodka. The next stage depends on whether there are any young women in the house. In general the people apply false defensive tactics, imagining that by giving vodka they will appease the Bolsheviks. Often they yield to the demands, when threatened by a revolver. Such tactics lead to complications in the form of erotic aggression, rising in direct proportion to the amount of alcohol consumed.

If there are no young girls within reach, this aggression may even be directed against sixty-year-old women. During the first few nights of the new occupation, until the Soviet Army moved further West following the front line, the inhabitants of houses in which Red soldiers were billeted went through a very violent and unpleasant experience. Numerous acts of violence and robbery—particularly of watches and rings—were committed. In most cases the young women tried to hide themselves. When that was unsuccessful, the manner in which the Soviet soldiers approached them created a defensive reaction, followed by a chase, struggles, and the threatened use of firearms. I know of a case where a fourteen-year-old girl was pursued with a knife, and finally seriously



wounded. In one of the convents on the outskirts of the town a Soviet officer, apparently well-behaved, wearing gold epaulettes—the sign of high rank—and speaking French, noticed one of the nuns. The conversation, which started in a society manner, soon deteriorated into a physical fight, and ended by the shooting of the victim so that the bullet passed through one eye, smashed her nose and came to rest in the other eye. In other cases such acts did not always have quite so tragic an ending.

Nevertheless, it soon became obvious that there was no difference in the behaviour of the Red Army from that of the Russians, Ukrainians and Mongols of General Vlasov's Army—the voluntary corps which fought with the Germans against the Soviets. Especially in three respects: the same attitude towards women, watches and jewellery and alcohol. General Vlasov's Army, acting under German orders, showed its true colours by "taking care" of the civilian population escaping from Warsaw during the rising.

From nine of my personal acquaintances on whom Soviet soldiers and officers were billeted, I know of two actual instances of rape, and five successful escapes from attempted rape. Not a single one of the officers and men billeted was sober, and in seven cases out of the nine something was missing from the house after the visit. There were three instances of robbery in broad daylight, when watches were taken under the threat of physical force or firearms. There is no difference in the behaviour of the officers and the soldiers of the Red Army.

Several weeks later I managed to get away from this little town, and made tiring journeys throughout Poland. Then I could see things in wider perspective, proving that, wherever the Red Army set foot, looting and acts of violence were equally common. Particularly was this so outside the main towns, in outlying districts where the hand of N.K.V.D. discipline was less in evidence. This plague was especially virulent in the Poznan area and Pomerania. People travelling in lorries on side roads—the main ones being blocked with military traffic—came to look upon such sinister occurrences as commonplace.

In June 1945, I was travelling to Pomerania in one of the first trains on the line from Nowy Targ to Cracow, and had to change trains at Chabowka. During the journey I made the acquaintance of a doctor's wife from Czestochowa, and was waiting with her at Chabowka for the train to Cracow. Our conversation was so agreeable that it diverted our attention from the train, which we missed and had to wait four hours for the next. Because of the very fine weather, we decided to fill in the time by bathing in a nearby river, where we found a number of other people doing the same thing. In a while a group of Russian girls appeared on the opposite bank in Red Army uniforms. Apparently they never used bathing costumes, because they stripped without the least hesitation. I must admit that in this state they looked much more interesting



than in uniform. Though their faces were ugly, their figures could not be criticized.

"What are you looking at?" said my companion when, at this new sight, I stopped talking.

I explained that I was occupying myself with the study of foreign customs. This reply, however, did not meet with the understanding and approval of my companion.

After a few minutes some Russian soldiers arrived on our bank of the river. To my surprise they did not show any interest in the bathing girls. One of them, however, turned his attention to my companion, and, to our alarm, approached us. He was wearing an N.K.V.D. cap with a blue band. His face was heavily pock-marked, his eyes were small and cunning, and his bare chest was tattooed, so that, from a distance, it looked like a map of quarrelling Europe. Instead of a bathing costume he was wearing long under-pants, rather carelessly buttoned. He had a boot on one foot and a sock on the other.

He came towards us quickly, though swaying slightly. He started the conversation with my companion by catching her breast. The woman pushed him away as hard as she could. I got up and shouted to him that I would not allow my "wife" to be treated like that. My intervention was only successful because it diverted the soldier's attention from her, and in the meantime she picked up her clothes and ran away. The Bolshevik turned to me therefore. Luckily I was dressed, and was wearing my watch, not on my wrist, but under my sock on my ankle, a method of concealment which I had already found successful. Thanks to it I saved my watch on several occasions. In this case I was only in danger of a beating, and the soldier was unarmed. The circumstances of the meeting were rather in my favour, for the soldier was slightly drunk and rather unsteady on his feet.

"She's not your wife," said the Bolshevik in a tone as firm as mine.

To stop the conversation on this so controversial subject, I asked the soldier :

"I can't understand why, when you have so many graceful and nice friends from the Red Army, like those bathing over there for example, you want to take our women away from us."

"We're fed up with Russian girls. You can have them," he replied. "You can do anything you like with them. We're only interested in Polish women, and we have full right to them as we liberated them from the German oppression."

"And I'll tell you a Polish proverb," I said. "The important point is that affection must be mutual. Polish women are not interested in you because your attitude towards them is not what they're used to. They want to have the right to choose for themselves."

"We know that they don't want us because they've been brought up in a bourgeois and undemocratic way. That's why we take them by force—to teach them," replied the Bolshevik in a soothing



tone. He looked around, and noticed with displeasure that my companion had run away. "Oh, you cunning Poles," he said sadly, "so you've cheated me! Maybe you've got a bottle of vodka," he asked. "For a bottle of vodka I'd give you a watch. I've got three."

"Pity, but I haven't any vodka," I answered, "but I've got some cigarettes." I took out my cigarette case.

The soldier grabbed all my cigarettes, sadly shook me by the hand and slowly staggered away.

On the other bank of the river a new group of Red Army girls appeared, but I no longer felt in the mood to continue my "studies" and quickly left this dangerous place. With difficulty I found my companion, hidden in the bushes. The danger was over.

The general practice of the Bolsheviks is that relationships between men and women in occupied countries are based on physical force and threats of armed violence. But as this rouses an identical reaction in all conquered countries, it would seem that the main difference between Eastern and Western culture is based on this phenomenon. The number of rapes in the part of Germany occupied by the U.S.S.R. is even greater than in Poland, for the simple reason that there is a greater number of Red Army officers and soldiers there.

The strange thing is that these rapes sometimes bring about a cultural alliance against the Red Army between formerly antagonistic peoples, in spite of differences of language. Soldiers of the Warsaw Government's Army, who returned from the Reich, told me that the German population asked for their protection against the Bolsheviks. "I myself succeeded in saving two German women from being raped," said one of them to me.

These rapes are connected with something far more dangerous: the results of venereal diseases which are carried by the Red Army. Judging by the great number of cases reported in 1945, this epidemic covers a huge area. The whole situation is particularly dangerous because of the serious difficulties of treatment, caused by the lack of adequate medical supplies and the fact that the epidemic is mostly spread in rural districts far from medical centres.

Witnesses of the Russian invasion of Poland in 1939-41 agree that at that time few Russian soldiers were seen drunk. One gets the impression that the exhaustion of the army after the 1941-44 struggle forced the Soviet High Command to stimulate the men by means of alcohol. This has led to such unparalleled drunkenness, that to-day it seems to be out of control. There are also signs that the Red Army was encouraged into battle by the hope of loot, which would explain why the progress of the offensive was accompanied by the High Command's entire tolerance of all criminal excesses. The Red Army was actually encouraged to such "displays." For example, Gdansk and Olsztyn were burned after being occupied by Russian troops.



Such excesses are going on up to the present day in the areas on the banks of the Oder, which have been prepared for colonization by being reduced to an almost total desert. Though conditions in Opole Silesia are fairly settled, those which greet the colonists migrating into Lower Silesia and Western Pomerania are like a front line. It very often happens that the cars of high officials of the so-called "Polish Administration" are confiscated, and the passengers thrown out on to the roads. The authority of this Administration only exists in the columns of the Warsaw Government's Press. The Mayor of Breslaw (Wroclaw), Dr. Boleslaw Drobner, well known for his idealistic communist opinions, took a flat in the part of the town which had not been bombed. On returning from a journey on duty, he found it occupied by Soviet soldiers, and in such a state that it looked more like a cow-shed than a human habitation. Dr. Drobner went to the Russian Military Commandant of the town and demanded punishment for the men, but in reply only got his face slapped and was thrown downstairs. After that he handed in his resignation, and the appointment of a new Mayor was recorded in the Polish Daily of Cracow merely by a three-line announcement, just beside the road accidents.

In May, 1945, groups of Polish administrative officials entered Lower Silesia. They arrived in the new territory in organized groups, protected by units of Polish police. After their arrival it was found necessary for security reasons to organize a sort of Polish ghetto, surrounded by barbed wire, which Polish officials dared not leave for fear of being shot. Night after night inadequately armed defensive units had to fight regular battles with attacking Bolsheviks. A number of the attackers were captured and handed over to the N.K.V.D., after having been disarmed. Thus the Poles acquired a sufficient number of automatic weapons, and so in time the attacks became less frequent. N.K.V.D. discipline only takes action in the Western terrains when a disarmed Bolshevik is brought before the Commandant of the town. The only penalty is death. But the N.K.V.D. do not take any preventive action against the excesses of the soldiers in the lands on the banks of the Oder.

Everything left by the Germans in the territory transferred to Poland is considered as war-booty for the U.S.S.R. That, of course, gives legal grounds for public robbery, such as the removal of all machines, tools, farm implements, furniture, clothing, etc., by an organized system, and also creates an atmosphere which encourages individual soldiers to loot all the private property they can lay hands on.

At the same time the Colonizing Authorities import from Central Poland peasants unaware of the real conditions awaiting them at their destination. These conditions are represented in the Press, on the radio and on advertisements in the most glowing colours. The colonists arrive and—become victims of robbery.

I myself talked in Central Poland to a peasant who, crying and



cursing, told me that he had just returned from the Oder area. He came from the Rzeszow district, about eighty miles east of Cracow, which was over-populated, and where a recruiting campaign for migration to the West is going on. The Authorities promise fantastic prosperity in Silesia to those who give up their property in the Rzeszow district to the Government. So the peasant moves with his whole family and all his movable possessions, of which the main item is the cow, and goes to Opolian Silesia where the conditions are more settled than in Lower Silesia. The journey takes ten days. On arrival he finds an administrative muddle reigning. There is a complete absence of any care for the colonists on the part of the Polish Authorities, who, being specially chosen, only take interest in so-called "trade" on their own private account.

After great difficulties, the peasant, by his own initiative, manages to occupy an empty farm, and the very next day his cow, which feeds the whole family and which he had brought with him, is requisitioned as "ex-German property." Then the deceived, robbed and ill-used peasant returns with his whole family to his previous domicile. It is doubtful whether he will get his property back there, after having given it up. But even if he does get back his house and land, who will return his cow to him, and who will reimburse him for the burden of the difficult and useless journey?

Who will compensate the several hundred foresters, recruited in Poznan to work in East Prussia? Their journey from Poznan to Olsztyn lasted nine days in a "special" train, during which time they were twice given a plate of soup. Immediately after arriving, they had to return to Poznan on foot, because it turned out that there were no lodgings in Olsztyn, which had been burned to the ground. Neither was there any food, as all railway equipment had been removed to Russia. Besides, there were no jobs, for the foresters' houses and the forests were occupied by groups of armed Soviet deserters. And certainly an official employment card would not be an adequate weapon against them.

I could produce sufficient similar examples to fill two large volumes. Anyone travelling in Poland, who can listen to the conversations in railway compartments and other public places, can confirm this and other accounts. A railway carriage is the best place to collect observations which give a true picture of all conditions of every-day life in Poland to-day. No pronouncements of the politicians, who look at everything through the tinted glass of their political views and doctrines, could possibly give this picture, which can only be gained by impartial observation of the facts and incidents in real every-day life.

For safety in transporting property, night travel should be avoided, particularly in carriages with two doors to each compartment. Such journeys are commonly accompanied by very unpleasant incidents. Soviet officers have acquired a peculiar



habit of entering the compartments from the platform, without luggage, and leaving it immediately afterwards on the other side with all the luggage they can carry. Railway police try to stop this practice, which is greatly facilitated by the congestion and darkness. Normally, however, any shots fired on these occasions are entirely useless.

Several of my acquaintances and friends, who managed to escape from the Soviet occupation of Lwow and Wilno in 1939, 1940 and 1941, to Warsaw, told me their observations on Soviet soldiers. I confess that I did not believe them, and considered the stories as jokes. I did not believe it when I was told that Russian soldiers used to buy big egg-shaped capsules of bath salts at chemists and eat them straight away as sweets. Now that I have observed them myself for several months, I know that they do the most incredible things. With my own eyes I saw a Soviet captain with an alarm clock tied to his right wrist with a piece of wire. "The larger the smarter!" Another case I know shows a different aspect of this. A watchmaker with whom I am personally acquainted was visited by a Soviet officer who asked him to convert a large clock into ten watches. He considered the watchmaker's refusal as reactionary sabotage, which infuriated him so much that he slapped the man's face and said as he was leaving: "You Polish rabble! We shall teach you to obey the Soviet Authorities!"

In addition to drunkenness, violence and robbery, the fourth characteristic feature of Red Army soldiers and the Russian population driven into Germany for forced labour is a universal aversion to returning to Russia. On a number of my train journeys I had the opportunity of talking with Russian women labourers, who complained that they had wanted to stay in Germany—"We were so much better off there"—but that the Authorities had ordered them to return. They were carrying huge bundles of loot, and were well-dressed. They had been told, however, by Russian soldiers, that all booty would be requisitioned on the Russian frontier—i.e., the line of the rivers San and Bug, the so-called Curzon Line. This is probably the explanation of the great quantity of goods, particularly clothing, which is sold in Polish markets by Red Army soldiers returning from the West.

This is a conversation overhead in a goods truck on the railway from Jaroslaw to Przemysl between a Red Army soldier and a Russian labourer returning to Russia.

"Why are you going back?"

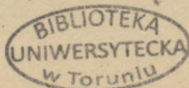
"Because I've been ordered to."

"Got anything to return to?"

"No. Not a soul in the family. Father died, Mother was killed, sister in the army. But I'm keen to get back to my own district."

"Do you know what's waiting for you there? You may be going straight to gaol, because everyone who's been working and

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collaborating in Germany has to clear himself before the Authorities.”

It has been proved that all “compulsory collaborators” and prisoners returning from German camps are treated very harshly by the Russian Authorities. This is not, however, the only reason for their aversion to forced return. This reluctance is equally shown by officers and men of the army who cannot be suspected of collaboration or treachery and who can have no fear of investigation and punishment. A great percentage of them desert to stay in countries with a higher cultural and living standard.

The opening of the gate from Russia to Europe enabled the Russian masses to take a deep breath of the fresh air of freedom and to get drunk on the life of victors. The contrast between twenty years spent in a Soviet cage and their present life outside the Russian borders is too great. Naturally it causes a reaction against their previous restriction in the tight frame of slavery. The return to Russia means a return to that frame. To stay outside Russia, even as a fugitive in the woods, means freedom, so long as they have arms.

Every impartial observer is struck with the fact that between 1914 and 1917 the Russian Army behaved immeasurably better. The inclination towards drunkenness among the Russians always existed, but never before reached such proportions. The number of acts of violence and robbery in territories occupied between 1914 and 1917 did not in proportion exceed those committed by the German and Austrian armies. If there was such a disparity between Eastern and Western culture in Tsarist times, and if the Russian peasant always existed on a very primitive level, then to-day, judging by the Red Army, the disproportion is even greater. The technical progress of Soviet Russia and the advancement of the State’s military power has not been accompanied, as we can now see clearly, by corresponding social progress. The ordinary citizen has not been raised to a higher cultural level. On the contrary, the methods of education and the way of living in the U.S.S.R. have pushed the individual down to such a state of degradation that the average Western mind can hardly grasp it without actual contact with the “pupils” of the Soviet system.

#### *The Red Army’s political outlook*

No less illuminating than the Red Army’s morals and behaviour is its political outlook. Information received on this subject from Soviet officers and men during the first days of their stay in the town where I was living was most interesting. The plague of billeting them in Polish homes had one good side : that, during the first part of the “visit,” before the “guest” had had time to get drunk—if he was not already in that condition on arrival—he was very ready for social conversation. In such discussions, if there is no “friend” from the Red Army to witness him, the Red



Army soldier is generally frank. Fear of the N.K.V.D. restrains his tongue and excesses only when this institution can actually control and watch him. When the soldiers are spread over a wide area, and find billets on their own initiative in newly occupied territories, where the local population has not yet been brought under the spying net of the N.K.V.D., the Russian soldiers do not weigh their words and usually say what they think.

The percentage of soldiers and officers making active communist propaganda is negligible. If the old slogans are heard, it is usually when you talk, not with one, but with two or more of them. Then each one is in fear that another will denounce him. Questions like "What will come next?" get the answer that, in the opinion of the Red Army soldiers and officers, war will not finish with the victory over Germany, but will only end when all Fascists and capitalists in the world have been liquidated.

The deep impression made by anti-British propaganda is obvious. Their aggressive disposition towards Britain is accompanied by open fear of America's might. America impresses the Bolsheviks immensely, shadowing their victorious faith in world conquest. "If I ever have to fight the Americans, I shall give myself up . . . they are not like the Germans : they don't kill their prisoners, but in fact feed them jolly well." This sentence was produced by a Red Army lieutenant a few days after his arrival.

I heard of other similar viewpoints in conversations between Red Army soldiers and Polish people. On two occasions I was told, though in careful language, that the present Russian victories are not built on solid foundations.

A few weeks after the occupation I was visiting some friends who had a flat on the ground floor. Above them lived a young married woman, who was being run after by an N.C.O. of the N.K.V.D.—the Russian secret police. A few days before my visit he had chased her all over the house, until finally she barricaded herself in the loft. By coincidence he arrived to have another try when I was there, and, as the girl was not in, he started searching for her in all the other flats, arriving at last at my friend's. He greeted everybody, and started a social conversation, showing particular interest in one of the ladies present. In an effort to divert his attention, I managed to change the subject, and was informed that the war would not be over with victory over Germany, though the Red Army was already tired. Because of her conquests, he said, Russia had a right to demand certain services from the peoples of occupied countries who had not fought. Poles in particular would have to perform certain tasks, as yet undefined, in repayment to Russia for their debt of gratitude to her for liberating them.

Members of the military N.K.V.D. usually show great restraint in their conversation on the subject of the Allies. On the other hand they never restrain themselves at all when speaking about Polish



matters. A high officer of the N.K.V.D. said in Bielsko, a town in Silesia : "You have your independence, you've got your own State, but still you're not satisfied, which means that you are Fascists and so must be liquidated." Another characteristic statement is : "Only 10 per cent. of all Poles are good. The remaining 90 per cent. consist of Fascists who should have been destroyed." These are typical opinions of N.K.V.D. officers.

From other statements it can be gathered that there is a careful scheme to re-educate the Polish nation and to destroy "Fascism" entirely, in the form of a five year plan. Among the N.K.V.D. officials and the Polish communists imported from Russia there are, however, supporters of re-education in a much shorter time, and by most radical methods. A dislike and even hatred of everything Polish is easily noticeable among the Russians, particularly those who are politically conscious. Some of them have been made officers in the armed forces in Poland under the command of General Rola-Zymierski—an officer who was cashiered and imprisoned before the war on a charge of graft.

During scuffles between Poles and Russian soldiers such threats are often heard as : "Just wait! You'll have to learn! We'll teach you!" A kind of superiority complex of victors over vanquished is apparent in all this, and the complex seems to be a sort of compensation for the Russian feeling of cultural inferiority, easily understandable in people who have just emerged from a twenty-year imprisonment and are now for the first time witnessing living conditions the like of which they had never dreamt before.

Four months after the "liberation" of Cracow, on the corner of Slowacki and Krowoderska Streets, I witnessed the following incident : a Soviet soldier bought a packet of cigarettes from a woman selling them in the street. He put the packet in his pocket and wanted to pay for it in Russian currency, which has no value in Poland. The woman objected, and wanted her cigarettes back. The soldier, however, refused to return them, intending to take them without paying. A soldier from Zymierski's army stood up for the woman, joined in a little while by several of his friends. They tried to take the Russian to the Police Station, but he refused to go, even when threatened with a revolver. "You Polish prostitutes," he said in Polish, and then continued in Russian, "it's not you who give orders here, but I. You're in the majority, and I'm alone, but you cannot do anything to me. You're obstinate now, but when we meet a year hence you'll fall on your faces before me. We shall show you!" The incident finished when an N.K.V.D. lorry which was passing stopped, and all the soldiers, Russian and Polish, were taken off to the Police Station.



## CHAPTER II

### NEW AUTHORITIES

#### *First steps*

WE have just taken a glimpse at the Red Army, but let us now return to our little town and have a look at the events accompanying the introduction of the new Administration.

The Military Commandant of the town started off by issuing an order that all arms and wireless sets must be surrendered, and that the entire population of the town and surrounding area must register. This registration was organized by the local police, called the Militia. Its date was postponed several times, and in the end the whole thing was cancelled. General registration was replaced in due course by registration according to profession.

The Militia, which had been organized before the entry of the Red Army, was put under the command of the Russian Military Commandant, who, in agreement with the Polish Workers Party made a number of radical changes in its personnel. As in several other places, members of the People's Army and the Peasant Battalions—both entirely communist organizations—were put into the Militia. It was also joined by a number of the local population noted for their criminal past. These changes made a very bad impression on the population, and increased their suspicions, which had already been aroused by the Red Army's behaviour. The command of the Militia was taken by several officers who appeared in pre-war Polish Army uniforms, thus making a strong impression on the inhabitants. The headquarters of the so-called "Polish N.K.V.D.," where those officers worked, was decorated with Polish flags and emblems. This institution, together with the Militia, was concerned with hunting down the *Volksdeutsche*, while the Russian N.K.V.D. arrested several local social workers, among whom was the Mayor elected before the entry of the Russians. Some of them were released, but the Mayor was deported and never heard of again. This caused great despondency, because he was a very popular man.

#### *The establishment of local Councils*

As early as the third day after the entry of the Red Army, placards appeared inviting the inhabitants to a great meeting to elect the local Council to establish the "trends towards a new life." About 700 people from all classes of society took part in that



meeting, organized by the Polish Workers Party. A few communists delivered speeches, some of quite a high standard. One of them, who used to work in the Underground Government of Poland during the German occupation, attacked the Polish Government in London, accusing its members of only furthering their own careers. The attitude forced upon the meeting was expressed in attacks on the Warsaw Rising, as directed against Russia, upon the Polish Government in London for being responsible for the Rising, and upon Poland's pre-war policy.

The aim of the meeting was to create an atmosphere of collaboration with the new Regime in order to help in the rebuilding of "our beloved country." The speakers from the Polish Workers Party pointed out the immediate necessity of breaking of relations with the Polish Government in London, and of supporting the Lublin Committee. This Committee, they said, represented the only real solution, backed as it was by the mighty Eastern Ally with the most friendly feelings towards Poland.

To the surprise of the organizers, two speakers from the audience clearly stated the opinion that no immediate decision should be taken to submit to the Lublin Committee. It would be better, they said, to wait and see the results of the Lublin Committee's actions. These statements were quickly criticized and ridiculed by the official speakers, who warned the audience in very serious tones of the danger of the return of Fascism and reaction. "This is no time for consideration," they shouted. "The hour has come for Poland to act! Whoever hesitates to do so is an enemy of the people." This warning ended the discussion, and the board of the meeting proposed the election of the Council and of the Mayor. A few names of candidates, mostly unknown, were submitted, with the proposition of a vote by acclamation. Hand-clapping and shouts were heard at the back of the hall, after which the board decided that the Council had been formally elected. In the next item of the agenda it was announced that, in order to enlist every able-bodied citizen into the great task of reconstruction, there would be a registration of all the inhabitants, according to their professions. This registration was to be the starting point for the local Trade Unions. Finally the board started up several patriotic songs, after which the meeting was adjourned.

Afterwards the list of members elected to the Council was published on placards. During the meeting it had been obvious that the candidates were just nominees of the Soviet Authorities, but on the placards they suddenly appeared as representatives of three Polish political parties—the Socialist Party, the Peasant Party and the Workers Party. The first two of these parties, together with the Democratic Party are newly-created, sham political parties, which have taken the names of popular pre-war ones, and which in reality are little more than branches of the Workers, or Communist Party.



A few weeks later I met a twenty-year-old workman on the street, who had once repaired something in my flat. After a short conversation on general topics, he told me that he was now working in "politics."

"How did that happen?" I asked.

"Oh, that's a very funny story! I can't help laughing myself," he replied. "During the meeting in which the Council was elected, Mr. X. of the Workers Party, one of the main organizers, called me aside and said: 'Listen John! From now on you will work in politics.' 'But,' I answered, 'I've never had anything to do with them. I've never joined any political party, and wouldn't know what to do.' 'Never mind,' said Mr. X. 'Now you'll work on the Council, and you'll represent the Peasant Party.' And so I was elected, and since then have been working in politics. I am organizing the Rural Councils in our district."

In fact I did find the young man's name in the group representing the Peasant Party, among a number of others unknown to me. The County, District and Rural Councils form a substitute for the usual local authorities, and act as a local parliament and administration combined. The method of setting up these bodies was everywhere the same as the example I have related. The newly elected Mayor replaced the previous one, who was arrested by the N.K.V.D. soon afterwards. But the new Mayor did not enjoy his position for more than a few days, for he had to hand it over to a new man, a representative of the Workers Party, nominated by the County Authorities. All district and rural offices were occupied by members of the Workers Party, a few minor officials of the previous administration were recalled, and the rest of the employees consisted of people with a strong party background.

#### *First registrations*

The day after the first meeting of the Council, an absolute craze for registration started. Formally the Council, but in fact the Workers Party, nominated one organizer for each Trade Union. Every organizer issued a communique summoning all the workers of their particular trade or profession to register on a certain date in the appropriate "Trade Union." This action was accompanied by a whispering campaign on two main lines.

First a rumour was spread that anyone who failed to register and was left outside the Trade Unions might expect to meet with unpleasant personal complications—in other words, political persecution.

Secondly it was whispered that, in view of the grave food situation, the Unions were going to supply their members with food, and that work was to be allocated according to qualifications.

The Union of Writers received the greatest support, because it really did supply its members with some assistance in the way of



food. The remaining Unions, in spite of their noisy proclamations, were not able to do this.

On the other hand, however, it was not difficult to get work, though in most cases it was unpaid. Those who were working were allowed a plate of soup a day, an insufficient ration of bread—two pounds twice weekly—and the right to receive payment.

Salaries were not paid for a long time, because there was no money in the offices, and after a certain time a small part of their back pay was issued to the workers. After conditions were stabilized it became clear that neither the workers nor the people in offices could live on their salaries, as usually a month's pay was barely sufficient for a week.

The registration in trades was undoubtedly the first step in the establishment of detailed political supervision. For example, in order to get a police permit to leave the town, it was necessary to produce a Trade Union certificate confirming that the person applying was a registered member of the Union. To move about without such a permit was very dangerous because of the military N.K.V.D. control on the roads and in the trains. People caught without permits were arrested, afterwards disappearing without any trace.

This N.K.V.D. control was performed for the alleged reason of looking for Germans. It was particularly dangerous for all Poles who had the misfortune to have been born in Kiev, Moscow, or any other place in Russia. There are a considerable number of these, as thousands of Poles were deported to Russia in Tsarist times, when, from 1794 till 1918, about two-thirds of Poland was occupied by Russia. If anybody who was born in Russia is now found outside the Russian frontiers, that is taken to mean that he, or she, escaped during the Revolution, and must therefore be a counter-Revolutionary or the child of one. The same applies to all people who, since 1939, have left the territories in Eastern Poland which have now been taken by Russia. Such people are treated with great suspicion, and if the N.K.V.D. takes an interest in them they may have great difficulty in proving their friendly feelings towards Russia.

The second document necessary to acquire a permit to travel for people born between 1911 and 1926 and for doctors and regular army officers is a certificate of military registration. This registration was announced at the same time as that in trades, and preceded the conscription of those born between the above-mentioned dates. Applications for permits to travel by persons who come under this military registration were frowned on by the authorities, and normally led to very suspicious investigations. According to an order issued by the Chief of the County Civil Administration, such persons should not leave the place where they are registered without a special military permit. Very often this rule is disregarded, causing a lot of trouble for the people concerned if their personal



documents are checked. This procedure usually takes place in the waiting rooms of railway stations. Frequently, however, people are stopped in the streets. I myself witnessed an incident when an agent of the secret police stopped a man in the street and searched his brief-case and pockets.

Besides compulsory military registration, voluntary enlistment to cadet schools has been announced, and, as can be seen plainly from the placards, candidates are required to prove their "political loyalty."

Access to the schools of political education was granted only to "politically tested" people. These schools are an original invention of the Soviet Regime, and serve to produce sworn followers of the communist ideas, opening the way to the best careers for the pupils.

*The Administration's care for the ordinary citizen*

After the new Authorities had taken possession of the Administration, they turned their activities in two directions.

First numerous registrations to enlist every individual and fit him into his allotted place in the new framework, and at the same time to build the foundations for the political observation of the whole population by the police.

Secondly they started a far-reaching economic penetration into the lives of the people. The first form this took was the requisitioning by the State, directly or through co-operatives, of all food stores, wholesalers' stocks, bigger industrial establishments and all public and private ex-German property. The Army requisitioned all reserves of flour left after the German occupation destined for the civilian population, and no objection to this was raised by the Authorities. Beside these stocks there was no other supply of flour.

The position for the ordinary citizen, which was already very hard, soon became tragic. Excursions from the town to the country to exchange clothing for food became less and less fruitful, for the country was being stripped by the Army. In fact they became actually dangerous, because of the Red Army soldiers roving about.

The Council of Social Welfare, the only existing organization of its kind, was quite unable to cope with all the needs of those who had neither stocks of food nor clothing to exchange. During the German occupation the Council had helped the poorest with money and food. But, because the money lost its value, and the food stores were requisitioned, the Council's ability to help became negligible. The situation was worsened by the fact that hundreds of people who had not previously needed assistance began to face the spectre of famine.

The Council of Social Welfare was soon taken over by the Town Administration, all its employees were dismissed and replaced by "Commissars" and a few young girls supplied by the Workers Party. Needless to say, none of these new people had the faintest idea of



the character of their work. But, even before this, the Council had lost its power to help, because for a few thousand people they only had about thirty pounds of bread every second day, and the right to endorse applications for milk for infants.

One communist woman, whom I knew personally, who took part in the liquidation of the Council, when asked the reason for this action, replied that it was necessary because the Council was a pro-German organization.

The woman in charge of the Home for Aged People, which had been subsidized by the State before the war and all through the German occupation, went to the District Commissioner to apply for her usual three months' quota of supplies. The new Commissioner—a local tailor—was not yet in his office at 10 o'clock in the morning. As the case was very urgent, the woman went to his house. The Commissioner told her frankly that he had been asked by the County Authorities to state how many public institutions subsidized by the State there were in his area, and how much money he would need for them. As he had not known the right answer, not having the faintest idea how much his office had previously spent on such things, he had named a sum quite inadequate for the purpose. This sum had afterwards turned out to be about one-tenth of the actual money needed. The mistake could not be rectified, because the County Council had already distributed all the funds at their disposal.

#### *Changing the currency*

At first this administrative chaos could have been explained by the appalling conditions and by the difficulty of finding the right men for the jobs. When leaving the town after two months of life under the new Administration, I hoped to find more order and stability in the County offices. It turned out, however, that the muddles there were just as bad. Such were the results of the preponderance of people with political qualifications over those with moral and professional ones.

Month after month life became harder, and conditions seemed even worse than during the period of German occupation. One thing only emerged clearly from the mists of chaos: the purpose of the new political system. It was not only the lack of competence among the official personnel which dragged the nation down. One could hardly classify the numerous acts of state policy, which were performed in the same method, not only in Poland, but also in Rumania, Hungary, Jugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, as merely due to human inefficiency. Those acts were inspired by centres above the Governments of all the "liberated" countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The change of currency was one of the most mysterious and incomprehensible actions of the Polish Provisional Government. It can only be compared to the destruction of the Council of Social



Welfare at the exact time when its help was most needed. About ten days after the entry of the Red Army, the Provisional Government issued an announcement dated a month back, annulling the zloty currency. The date for the exchange of the new currency was fixed for the tenth day after the announcement. The exchange itself lasted only three days, and took place in three institutions.

People started queueing from five in the morning, but in spite of the enormous length of the queues, one-third of the town's population—that is, about 6,000 people—did not have time to get their money changed. The official Press explained afterwards that there was not enough money, because the number of notes had been calculated per head of the population (nobody knows how this figure had been arrived at), and people who exchanged—illegally—more than their estimated share had left none for the others. There were illegal methods of exchange, usually through members of the Workers Party who, by ways known only to themselves, could change currency, taking 80 to 90 per cent. of the sum for themselves, and returning the remaining 10 to 20 per cent. to the rightful owner.

Only 500 zlotys could be changed on production of an identity card. The identity cards of people under eighteen were not valid for the exchange. This meant that the mother of three children could only exchange 500 zlotys—equal to fifty lbs. of potatoes, three lbs. of fat or fourteen lbs. of bread. Any of the old currency left over had no value at all.

The announcement, however, ordered that anybody with more than the 500 zlotys must deposit the rest. This deposit, according to the announcement, was supposed to be returned in monthly instalments. The greater part of the population fulfilled this order, but afterwards I never met a single person who had received any part of their deposit back. Bank and savings accounts were not included in this arrangement, but became entirely worthless and ceased to exist.

Public funds were not included either. Thus the Council of Social Welfare in Cracow lost 12,000,000 zlotys, which had come mostly from benevolent subscriptions and donations.

This exchange was an economic and social catastrophe. It equally ruined the general economy of the country and the private individual. The only property which was saved from the disaster was that which was kept in the form of foreign currency.

#### *Agrarian reform*

The agrarian reform was carried out at the same time as the change of currency, and with the same peculiar hurry. The large estates were divided up, mainly among their previous employees and poor peasants from the neighbourhood. The amount of ground per head depended on the number of candidates. Theoretically it should have been 5 ha., or about 12 acres—an area



which cannot support a peasant's family under Polish conditions. Actually, however, most people applying got an area of about 3, 4 or 6 acres, because such was the result of dividing the land available by the number of applicants. The land was given without livestock or implements and, most important of all, without the right to build on it. The marking of the boundaries was left to be settled by the people concerned.

The functions of the administrative officials who carried out the reform consisted mainly of organizing a meeting, producing a propaganda speech and distributing the title deeds. The agrarian reform, carried out in such a way, became another disastrous blow to the economic foundations of the country, beside the change of currency.

Poland is, or was, 70 per cent. an agricultural country. The reform destroyed the bigger estates and medium-sized farms, without creating suitable conditions for equal agricultural production based on the new 12-acre farms. The ban on building on the newly-parcelled land and the entire lack of livestock and equipment makes these farms a mockery. The people who received the land cannot live on it and are unable to cultivate it. Widespread propaganda about sowing and the political duties of the "citizen peasant" cannot replace technical equipment and professional advice.

Undoubtedly the result of agrarian reform will be famine in the towns on the one hand and the necessity of creating collective farms on the other. With one stroke it impoverished not only the estate owners, who were thrown out without compensation and with only 20 lbs. of luggage, but also that section of the peasantry who, by the liquidation of the big farms, lost their employment or payments in kind. The reform gave them the land instead, it is true, but without the possibility of keeping and cultivating it. As a result it is very unpopular among the peasants, who do not believe that such a state of affairs can possibly last long.

Beside the deterioration of the already faulty agrarian structure, the reform led to the loss of valuable art collections in the manor houses, such as antique furniture, pictures, china, carpets, etc. Priceless books were destroyed by the mob, who used them as fuel in their stoves.

As well as the owners of the manor houses, thousands of refugees from Warsaw who had found shelter there were turned out without warning. These people were deprived of a roof above their heads for the second time, and again expelled to face horrible privation. They could not go to the towns which were still standing, because these were already terribly overcrowded by people from the ruined ones and those expelled from the Eastern part of Poland. The difficulty of finding lodgings in the towns is enormous, and further complicated by the newly-established Housing Authorities. This problem will be dealt with later in greater detail.



*The looting of cattle and the devastation of production*

The third blow at the foundations of the country's economy is the mass exportation of livestock, factory equipment and stocks of goods to Russia.

The devastation of production was accompanied by a stagnation of private enterprise. The owners of businesses were afraid of the coming nationalization without compensation. In several cases nationalization led to the complete disorganization of production owing to the fact that the management appointed had no qualifications and the positions of directors were filled by people who had no experience in the trade.

*The policy of inflation*

If we sum up all the actions of the so-called "Polish Government" against this background, we shall be able to form a clearer picture of the change of currency. This change was part of a general plan, carried out with determination, which could be seen clearly through the chaos. The plan of this exchange was based on a similar one in Soviet Russia. Its results were even more disastrous in Poland, because of the poverty of the population, ruined by the war, robbed by the German occupation, devastated and looted of all their goods by the Red Army.

The Government's propaganda showed the exchange as a kind of "heroism" on the part of the Authorities, who had decided to carry it out in spite of their knowledge that it would be unpopular. This decision was supposed to be dictated by the necessity of remedying the confusion on the money market caused by the inflation of the currency used under German occupation.

In reality, however, there is no doubt that as far as the payment of state expenses and obligations is concerned, the Government has itself adopted a policy of inflation. This can easily be proved, because the amount of money in circulation doubled during April, May, June and July of 1945. As has already been mentioned, the exchange of currency left a great number of people who had not managed to get any of the new money at all. A few days later well-dressed men appeared round the country with suitcases full of the new money, offering a very low rate for foreign currency and gold. This was doubtless done by unofficial Government agents, in order to provide the Government with the greater part of the gold and foreign currency available in the country.

Because of the entire ruin of private enterprise, and the nationalization and stagnation of industry, the income from taxation has fallen steadily. The only thing the government could do, therefore, to cope with its expenses, was to issue new money. The only limit to the amount of notes issued is the output of the firm where they are printed in Moscow. That is why,



in spite of the inflation, the Government sometimes meets with financial difficulties.

The results of inflation normally appear in two ways : a general rise of prices and a quick circulation. The increase of prices can easily be checked by a system of rationing by coupons. The present situation in Poland shows that the coupon system is only theoretical, and that food prices in particular are climbing steadily. There is practically no circulation of money, because it was materially destroyed, and the Government's economic policy, by cutting off private enterprise, prevents it being rebuilt.

During the German occupation there was a slow but steady rise of prices, accompanied, however, by a corresponding increase in wages, due to the building up in Poland of a large armament industry.

Now, on the other hand, only the Government is in the position of having enough money to meet its needs, as the wages of private individuals are not keeping pace with the rising prices. The disproportion between the cost of living and the people's wages is enormous and is still growing. The only way to meet those expenses is by selling belongings, such as furniture, clothes and so on. People who have exhausted their stocks of property have to face misery and starvation.

There is, however, a privileged caste who do not fear any shortage—those who are "red" enough to be considered by the Government as worthy of high salaries.

Under the heading "fight against the black market," the Provisional Government has started a campaign which can best be explained by the following example. During the German occupation the official price of a cigarette was 20 groszys—about 2d.—and, owing to the scarcity, the black market price was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  zlotys—about 1s. 6d. When the Provisional Government took over the entire tobacco industry, they fixed the price per cigarette at the black market one—1s. 6d. Thus if the difference between the official and the black market price previously went into the pockets of private individuals, now it goes to the official black marketeer. From the consumer's point of view the situation has become much worse, for a private black marketeer can always be prosecuted by the law, but it is absolutely useless to try to pursue a black marketeer who also makes the law, and employs the whole police force.

As regards food, the whole collecting and distributing apparatus was taken out of private hands and given to a semi-official co-operative society—"Spolem"—which was supplied with several lorries to serve the whole country! This institution, after several corrupt cases, became the object of attacks from the government-controlled Press, which in the end stated that the whole responsibility for the incidents was due to sabotage by reactionary elements.



*The nightmare of starvation*

The fight against the black market could be successful if the rationing system were organized as it is in Czechoslovakia and in the British and American zones of Germany and Austria. A good system of rationing at least ensures the fair distribution of all the most necessary goods. The Polish Provisional Government has shown great ability in destroying all previously existing organizations, without, however, creating anything at all in their place. The present allocation of bare necessities is about one-fifth of the essential minimum. If people tried to rely on the present rations without taking advantage of the existing black market, they would quickly starve to death. Exceptions to this would be the members of the Workers Party, who enjoy "special" rations in co-operative societies, inaccessible to the ordinary citizen.

The nightmare of starvation hangs over the country for the following reasons :

1. the destruction of the newly-sown crops and livestock by the war ;
2. the stripping of the country by the Red Army ;
3. the export of machinery to Russia, and
4. the impossibility of earning a living wage.

The Government's policy can be seen more and more clearly through the smoke-screen of propaganda. It is leading to the entire economic destruction of the country. The only explanation for this must be that the Government's aim can only be realized through the creation of suitable economic conditions. This aim is the entire victory of the State over the individual citizen. The object of this fight is to produce such conditions of life that the citizens, driven to despair and misery, will become slaves of the State.

General impoverishment and degradation is one way of levelling all social and cultural differences between individuals and classes, but it is also the straightest and quickest way of breaking the strong resistance of the nation against the imposition of the sinister Eastern culture, with which the Polish mentality will never agree. As we shall see further on, this general impoverishment is closely connected with compulsory work, and the latter is one of the forms of compulsion and political education of the people in harmony with the spirit of the Regime.



## CHAPTER III

### CITIZEN OR SLAVE

#### *Compulsory work*

As is generally known, there are two media of social upbringing in the U.S.S.R. : the general downward equalization of the people and a system of slavery in their work.

During recent months the beginning of this second method can clearly be seen in Poland. Pressure is being brought to bear all over the country to force people to work for the State, in government offices or State-controlled organizations. During the German occupation, the duty to work for the "benefit of the General Gouvernement and the Reich" was easily avoidable by producing a certificate of other employment. Nowadays, however, that is impossible.

Under the German occupation the system of rationing was equal for every member of the population. But now the ration coupons are only available to people who work under government control and to those who have the right not to work, i.e., old people and children. Any other kind of work, such as trade, does not authorize the issue of ration books. It is not surprising that in such conditions the black market flourishes, particularly of foodstuffs, and gives employment to a great number of able and cunning people.

A great many people have to work for very low wages in offices and factories in positions which do not correspond with their qualifications. There are also many who, in spite of every endeavour, cannot get any work at all.

Unemployment does exist in serious proportions, paradoxical though that may seem in view of the great economic needs of the country, but, for propaganda reasons, it is never mentioned. It is particularly prevalent among the educated class and the semi-skilled workers, with the exception of doctors. In spite of the fact that the number of technicians and engineers has been substantially decreased during the war, a great number of those who remain are unable to find work. In 1939 Poland had 22,000 engineers with university degrees, and 7,000 of them recently registered in the Trade Union. Every newspaper contains a large number of advertisements by engineers in search of jobs. The difficulty in finding employment in industry is connected with the fact that much of Polish industry was devastated during the war, and that, for propaganda purposes, the managing positions in those firms which remain have been taken over by workers.

The fact that only people employed by the Government are able to get rations is not, however, so important as it might at first seem,



because the amount of the rations is only, in the best case, a quarter of the family needs. It is, therefore, impossible to live on rations.

It is much harder, though, to do so without lodgings. Here again only people who are working are authorized to occupy rooms, and this is the main weapon by which the Government can force people into compulsory work. Those who work in government offices and factories are considered as working for the State, and only members of some professions, such as doctors, can belong to the same privileged category. Lawyers, craftsmen, tradesmen, etc., on the other hand, are only considered "useful" by the State if they belong to the appropriate Trade Union or to one of the four official political parties. These parties always act according to the will and policy of the State Authorities.

#### *Control over private life*

The control over the citizen's private life starts in the house in which he lives. This is a political control performed by a so-called "House Committee." This committee is the lowest cell of the police supervision over the people on the one hand, and a part of the Government's propaganda machine on the other. Officially the task of its members is to issue government papers to the other people in the house, but in fact they have to spy on their neighbours and give all information to the police. According to an official statement, these committees have to look for people who have not registered, and are thus suspected of being *Volksdeutsche*. Normally the nucleus of the committee consists of members of Trade Unions who live in the house, usually members of the Workers Party, often introduced into the house by the Government under the new scheme of allotting lodgings.

To facilitate their duties, a regulation was issued that at the entrance of every house there must be a list of all the inmates. The committees check whether those lists correspond with the registrations. In particular they find out where each inmate works, and what he or she lives on. They check all particulars of every person's life. The House Committees are subordinate to Street Committees, and the latter to the District Police.

Thus every citizen is always under political police investigation, and has his dossier in the police files. In which file he is placed depends on how he earns his living. If there is any doubt as to how he does this, he immediately becomes the subject of closer observation and, not only in his house, but wherever he goes will be followed by agents. The office which allots lodgings collects information through the committees about all citizens who are not in State employ, and evicts them, introducing "privileged" people in their place. In the best cases they may not be turned out altogether, but merely forced to share their rooms with those "privileged" people, who will show their gratitude by supplying the police with further information.



The allotment of lodgings and rations are not the only methods of encouraging people to work for the State. People who are travelling are very often rounded up on the roads and railway stations and ordered to produce their personal papers. The lack of a certificate of employment and the registration of an address is sufficient cause for arrest.

Another factor in this pressure into state service is the fear of being conscripted into Zymierski's Army. This fear can only be compared to that of being deported for forced labour during the German occupation. In Zymierski's Army, which is commanded mainly by Russian officers who ill-treat the Poles, the conditions of life are similar to those in the German labour camps. The soldiers are underfed, and strong political espionage is the basis of the slave discipline. There is always the fear of being sent to Russia for "additional training."

Members of the intelligentsia are admitted to the cadet schools, but only with a bad grace, because their upbringing gives them a greater power of resistance against political education. On the other hand there is practically no difference in Zymierski's Army between the living conditions of officers and men. The only privileged class are the political officers, whose duty is to supervise the political education of the pupils. Few people, however, aspire to this position, and, of those who do, not all are accepted.

The best way of avoiding conscription is to work in a State office or factory. This is therefore another factor contributing to the "mobilization of all forces" under State control.

Under present conditions it has become a necessity of life to be employed by the State, because this liberates you from police investigation, eventual arrest and conscription into the Army. State employment, however, does not generally mean that you have enough to live on, and merely fills the time which could have been spent more profitably in some trade, such as repairing clothes, baking cakes, etc.

In Poland to-day, compulsion to work means compulsion to conditions of misery. When faced with the alternative of earning their living freely but dangerously and State employment, most people choose the latter as the lesser of the two evils. The efficiency of a forced State employee is negligible. As he is occupied all day by his official work, he is forced to try to augment his meagre earnings by working in the evenings and at night, or by accepting bribes and committing petty thefts.

Demoralization and corruption in the offices, thefts in the co-operative warehouses, stealing of raw materials and machine parts in the factories—these are the results of the "mobilization of all forces" for the great work of reconstruction and the benefit of the State. Under such compulsory conditions, everybody becomes a slave of the State. The most important obligation is not efficiency, but political loyalty, in other words, self-restraint from expressing



personal opinions about the present situation. This has become an "obligation" because of the overgrowth of secret investigation, tapped telephones and other similar methods used by the personnel departments which employ a mass of informers, spies and agents, mainly members of the Workers Party.

#### *Control of political views*

The personnel departments control above all the political loyalty of the employees, as expressed not only in their conversations with friends and superiors, but also in their participation in social work.

"Social work" means regular attendance of all meetings of the Unions, where it is not advisable to express personal opinions, or show any kind of initiative. The duty of a participant of a meeting is enthusiastic applause of all party speakers, and "spontaneous" voting by acclamation. The resolutions produced at such meetings are usually of two kinds: protests, or assurances of humble loyalty to the Authorities. The latter are usually passed by order of the said Authorities. Such resolutions are later used as material for propaganda when the Government wants to issue unpopular regulations, which they describe as "initiated by unanimous public opinion." Descriptions of such meetings and manifestations occupy the greater part of the columns of the Government Press.

Members of the Unions are driven to the meetings, and their presence there checked, for the sole purpose of producing evidence of the "will of the people," led by the Government and the Workers Party. In one office in a Pomeranian town, I saw a list of people who had failed to attend a meeting the previous night, summoning them to explain their absence and produce medical certificates.

Of course, under such conditions of constant investigation by the secret police, there can be no question of strikes or any other action by the employees and workers as far as their wages and hours of work are concerned. Nobody would dare to start any sort of agitation, for fear that such a "reactionary and anti-State move" would lead to immediate disciplinary action by the Security Authorities. It must be emphasized, however, that the arrests of the "Fascist elements" among the workers, who show their discontent of the starvation wages, are made very quietly.

The Trade Unions are a sort of lower cell in the organization of the political parties. Their method of recruiting members is exactly the same as that used in organizing meetings, i.e., compulsion. To get a site for a shop or workshop, a man has to produce a certificate that his application is supported by one of the four official political parties. The best thing, of course, is to have a certificate from the Workers Party. If two people apply for the same site, one supported by the Socialist and the other by the Workers Party, the latter will always win. To be accepted as a member of the Workers Party, the application of the petitioner must be signed by two members of the Party, who have to guarantee



that his political past is known to them and does not present any objections. This past, furthermore, is checked by the Security Authorities, and if a person known as having been anti-communist applies for membership, the result is immediate arrest.

If, on the other hand, a well-known person applies for membership, in spite of having previously held different views, he will probably be accepted, for propaganda reasons, on condition, of course, that the character of the "convert" is sufficiently soft to obviate the possibility of double dealing.

Such cases of "conversion" to the Workers Party are very rare. A milder form of conversion is the joining of the Socialist Democratic or Peasant Party. This, however, brings lesser material advantages. In fact, the allotment of ex-German flats and property is only made to members of the Workers Party, who, in this way, cash in on the merits of their previous political actions. In several cases, a member of the Workers Party managed to collect a chain of shops and restaurants. Still more frequent were cases when a single distinguished member was given an ex-German furnished flat consisting of several rooms, thus gaining the possibility of selling a greater part of the furniture.

The inhabitants of the towns, with the exception of members of Trade Unions and doctors, are in a much worse position than peasants in the country. The latter enjoy more economic independence from the State. The Government is making great efforts to weaken this independence by putting higher and higher taxes on agricultural products; every farmer is furthermore obliged to deliver a certain proportion of his produce—a so-called "contingent"—to the State.

The peasants try their best to avoid this, and it is generally known that a fight with the stubbornness of a peasant is not an easy one. Thus the process of impoverishment is not confined to the towns, but merely progresses more slowly in the country.

Similarly the communist political pressure meets with greater difficulties in the country than in the towns. Political "education" in the country is conducted by local organizations such as Village Councils, Village Committees of the Peasant Party, and above all of the Workers Party, and the so-called "Self Help" of the peasants. All these correspond to the Trade Unions in the towns. Political investigation by the police exists in the country, but it is not so thorough as in the towns.

#### *The selection of political leaders*

When referring to the methods used by the Government to soften the resistance of the citizen by impoverishment and complete dependence on the State, we must not omit to mention the building up of ideological "unity" between the four official political parties. These four parties, the Workers Party, the Polish Socialist Party, the Peasant Party and the Democratic Party, have been created



from entirely new elements, and have no connection with the pre-war Polish parties except the same names. Admission to the top of a political party is quite different from that into the rank and file.

In May or June 1945, Mr. Stanislaw Radkiewicz, communist head of the Department of Public Security, answering a question by one of the members of the Polish National Council, who asked why certain well-known members of the Socialist and Peasant Parties had been arrested, said that both these parties should be grateful to the Government, which was cleansing them of all Fascist and reactionary elements. Those elements, he said, were leading to the decomposition of national unity from the inside, as represented by the agreement of the four main parties. The Government, he continued, protects this unity, maybe by unpleasant, but certainly indispensable police action.

That was the explanation given officially after the arrest of left-wing political leaders, who, being unable to agree with the fake political parties using the names of the proper ones, decided not to work for the benefit of the present Regime. Mr. Radkiewicz also admitted officially that some political leaders who agreed with the *fait accompli* and joined the new parties had been arrested as well, because the Government thought it advisable "in any case!"

A Press communique issued before the 1st May 1945, announced that all previous party membership cards were no longer valid, but only those issued by the present Authorities. When the old party members reported to receive the new cards there were a number of arrests of those no longer considered "suitable." The admission to the new parties of people previously engaged in politics depends entirely on how their past records are considered from the communist and Russian point of view.

There is, however, a mass recruiting to the rank and file of the new parties, because their duty is merely to obey and applaud. On the top recruitment is replaced by careful selection, in order to eliminate unsuitable people.



## CHAPTER IV

### SETTLED AND FLOATING POPULATION

#### *Management of the housing problem*

A PARTICULARLY painful problem which affects the settled population is the State management of the housing situation. The Housing Authorities issued an order based on the Soviet example that every room must have at least two occupants. The allocation of large flats to privileged people causes much discontent among those living in overcrowded lodgings. The Housing Authorities do not pay any attention to human problems, but may, for example, force four families to share a four-roomed flat and all use the same kitchen.

Indescribable bureaucracy and corruption reign in the Housing Offices, which work in the closest collaboration with the Security Authorities. These offices are the dread of the people, who have no chance of legal defence against their abuses. The officials have almost dictatorial powers and, without their previous consent, nobody is even allowed to sublet a room or register a new inhabitant. The failure to fulfil this duty of registration within three days means certain arrest because of denunciation by the House Committee. If the owner of a flat wants to sublet a room to a friend or relative, he must first report in the Housing Office that he has a room to let. Taking advantage of that, the Housing Authorities issue a permit for the room to be let to the person chosen by the owner, but at the same time they introduce one of their own protégés by order. Such people are either members of the Workers Party or those who managed to bribe an official.

#### *The fate of the population from Eastern Poland*

The most characteristic example of the State's policy with regard to human needs and freedom is the action of transferring the population. The tragedy of the continually deteriorating conditions of life, and the uncertainty of existence of the settled population seem a paradise compared with the sufferings of those who are compulsorily transferred. The conditions they suffer are even worse than those under which the civilian population was evacuated by the Germans after the Warsaw Rising. Those chiefly affected are Ukrainians being expelled into the Ukrainian Republic of the U.S.S.R. and the surviving Polish citizens from East of the Curzon Line—survivors from numerous arrests, and deportations to Siberia.

In January, 1945, there were no less than thirty-two prisons in Wilno. They were situated, according to the Soviet system, in



cellars. In those prisons there was a very high death-rate during the winter because the inmates had to sleep on the stone floors, because they were underfed and because of the cold and epidemics spread chiefly by insects.

It is impossible to give exact figures of the number of Poles deported to Siberia from the North-Eastern part of Poland during the second Soviet occupation—that is, from 1944 onwards. But, to judge from the number of survivors, the loss must be enormous.

The situation of the Polish population in the South-Eastern areas was even worse. Soviet arrests were on the whole less numerous than in the North, but the slaughters organized by the Ukrainians exterminated even greater numbers than perished in the North.

Recently this area, and particularly Lwow, is being rapidly colonized by Mongols and Russo-Mongols transported from the depths of Russia. There are also serious indications that the entire Ukrainian population will soon be deported to the East.

The Polish survivors may, according to the Polish-Russian Agreement, apply for permission to return to Poland. The granting of such requests takes a long time, because the Soviet Security Authorities thoroughly check the applicants' personal records in order not to let anybody go who is politically suspect from their point of view. In a number of cases the demonstration of too much anxiety to leave the district leads to arrest before the intended departure. Theoretically, after the receipt of an exit permit, the person concerned can pack his belongings and leave, but in practice there is no transport available. All movables become impediments, and there is no alternative but to sell them for the Russian currency which has no value in Poland. More enterprising people try to travel on Red Army lorries going from Russia to Western countries to collect loot. With the help of vodka it is possible to get on to such lorries, but only if you can first reach a place where they pass, which is not always so easy as it may sound. The system of communications East of the Curzon Line is much worse than in Central Poland.

Most people who have the misfortune to rely on official repatriation are forced to wait in transit camps amidst cold, hunger, insects and diseases for mass transport in cattle trucks. Their misery and suffering are beyond description. The death-rate during transport and their appearance after arrival testify to the conditions. The fate of these unfortunate people after their arrival in Poland is equally hard. In spite of the noisy propaganda in the Press, the present Polish Authorities take no serious interest in alleviating this misery. The repatriates have nothing to live on, they are physically worn out, and they have nobody to rely on because, even if they have any relations in Poland who are not either dead or missing, they are probably in an equally desperate state. The Authorities concerned with social welfare take far less interest in the repatriates than the Security Police. After having



already overcome so many difficulties, and finally reaching the goal they had dreamed of, they are spied on, interrogated and often arrested at the end. These arrests are to prevent anti-Soviet propaganda by eyewitnesses, who naturally talk about their experiences and the conditions in Eastern Poland.

An iron curtain, even more impenetrable than that between Poland and the West, exists between Poland and her former Eastern territories. The people who managed to escape the persecutions and extermination of everything Polish by the N.K.V.D., the Ukrainians and the Lithuanians, finally fall victim to the lack of information about present-day conditions in Poland. And so a large number of these survivors end their tragic migration to the "liberated" country in gaols exactly the same as those they left in Russia.

Under the German occupation the families of arrested people at least knew what became of them. Relatives knew where the prisoners were kept, could apply to send them parcels, and were sometimes informed of the prisoner's death. But to be arrested by the Russian-controlled Polish N.K.V.D. means to disappear into a cellar or a Siberian camp without leaving any trace at all, or the slightest possibility of any communication. Sometimes only, through people who collect and send the cards thrown from the Eastbound trains, a family may get news of a relative doomed to slow death in a Siberian camp.

#### *People returning from German labour camps*

Beside compulsory transfers, there was another wave of migrating people in Poland. Those were the prisoners coming back from labour and concentration camps from the area in Germany occupied by the Red Army. Return from North Germany was easier from the point of view of transport, but from Saxony and German Silesia they were forced to travel on foot. These travellers usually met with great hostility from the Red Army, who treated them as German collaborators, and stripped them of all their belongings. On arrival, tired and impoverished, they received no help from the State, which had not taken any steps to provide relief. They were left to their fate to support themselves by their wits, without food, lodging, or the possibility of getting work and earning money.

In one Polish town I visited a transit camp for people returning from Germany, and personally I should prefer to sleep on the frosty street—which is impossible anyway because of the curfew and the dangers of "night life"—than to stay in that dirty shed, whose walls and floor were crawling with vermin. It was supposed to be a resting place for people who had walked hundreds of miles!

In the camp I talked to some of the repatriates, who had returned through Czechoslovakia. They could not find words to express their gratitude for the hospitality and care they had received in that country from the Czech social organizations. They talked



with exasperation of the entire lack of it in their own country—less hospitable than a foreign one. This is the result of the liquidation of the Council of Social Welfare, which was taken over by the State Authorities. The present so-called “Committees of Self Help” are nothing but bureaucratic and propaganda organizations of fictional social welfare.

The Polish Red Cross was reorganized to a lesser degree than the Council of Social Welfare, and, thanks to that, is still able to work, though, without State support, its activities are severely curtailed.

Beside the Red Cross, only one Department takes special care of the repatriates—the Security Authorities, who started detailed personal records of all people returning from Germany. This, of course, involves delaying them for a long time on the border, waiting their turn for investigation before entering Poland. During this period of delay they suffer similar conditions to those previously described in the transit camp.

According to a press communique, the pretext for this police control was to safeguard against an influx of German elements into Poland. This motive does not require any comment because everybody can realize that, considering the policy of the Authorities, no German would ever dream of settling in Poland. The greater part of the German population in Eastern Germany were running Westwards from the Red Army. Under the propaganda heading “checking the German influx,” the real purpose of the Authorities was to start a file of all the repatriates’ dossiers on which further observations and the results of political controls could be recorded.

### *Security and Terror*

This frontier control and that of the House Committees are nothing but a continuation of the system of personal investigation, which was already started previously under the German occupation by the “observation posts” of the N.K.V.D. In this way the territory was secretly prepared beforehand for the present open activity. Members of these secret Russian observation posts even managed to worm their way into the Polish Underground, and that is why so many of the Polish Underground leaders, whose identities had always been closely guarded secrets, were quickly rounded up by the N.K.V.D. after the Russian entry into Poland.

Such observation posts even operated in the German prison camps. One of the officers returning after his “liberation” told me that, when the N.K.V.D. were investigating and checking his political views and attitude towards Russia, he was confronted with a record of everything he had said on the subject whilst still in the German camp.

Generally speaking, the attitude of the Polish Authorities towards the population which has been compulsorily transferred and to those forced to migrate voluntarily is far less sympathetic and favourable than might be imagined after reading the cordial



invitations to return frequently issued by Government propaganda. It would seem that economic degradation and the wearing down of the population is the intention of the Government's policy.

Luckily there is still no compulsory transfer of Polish population to the deserted lands in the West. Up to the present only naïve elements have been fooled into settling in those territories. Their fate is still worse than that of the people returning to Poland from Germany. Therefore a large percentage of these settlers return from their quest of the promised golden fleece, worn out and disillusioned.

It must be taken into consideration, however, that the colonization of the newly-acquired Western lands is bound to become compulsory in the future. Undoubtedly administrative and police pressure will be accompanied by propaganda about the patriotic importance of the "Colonization" of the "centuries-old Polish Western lands." This argument will explain the necessity of breaking down the "reactionary" dislike of this colonization, a dislike which will be natural because of the conditions of life in the incorporated territories where the Red Army rules supreme, and where the Polish Administration is merely a decorative fiction of propaganda designed to fool people at home and abroad.

This new phase in the transfer campaign may easily become another painful medium to increase the misery of the people by forbidding them to remain in their old homes. The more a man suffers in his private life, the more he is physically worn out and materially ruined, the greater are the chances of breaking his psychological resistance to the new system.

In present-day Poland there are two Departments of the Government which work efficiently and have big funds at their disposal: Security and Propaganda connected with Political Education. The heads and the greater part of the personnel of these Departments have been trained in Russia. The medium and higher cells of the security and propaganda apparatus were organized in the rear of the Red Army.

The Provisional Government's preliminary monthly budget for May and June 1945, foresaw the expenses of "Security" with a sum of 182,000,000 zlotys (i.e., 2,000,000,000 zlotys in a year), while at the same time the expenses for food supplies were equal to 24,000,000 zlotys (i.e., 290,000,000 zlotys in a year). Before the war the police force in Poland was 35,000. To-day, on the smaller territory, and for a population reduced by more than one-third, 110,000 people work in "Security."

In spite of this increase of the police apparatus, robberies and thefts multiply, and the State does not protect the citizen against them. Observation shows that this increase of the Security Service is being used for another purpose than to fight against crime. Its purpose is political. The totalitarian system forces its serfs into compliance by police methods. Police interference becomes



greater the more the Regime and the social system clash with the attitude, customs and wishes of the people.

During the period between the 1st February and the 1st July 1945, i.e., five months, more than 100,000 people passed through a prison in Lublin alone. There are many other similar prisons in Poland, without speaking of the gaols in private houses. Beside that, concentration camps exist in bigger numbers than during the German occupation, and people are transferred to them from prisons and gaols. On some occasions people are freed. A probably incomplete list of the known camps consists of 28 places: 1—Krzeslin, near Siedlce; 2—Wesola; 3—Skrudow, near Lubartow; 4—Krzesimow, near Leczna; 5—Glusk; 6—Kraczewice; 7—Matwy, near Inowroclaw; 8—Legnow, near Bydgoszcz; 9—Zimne Wody, near Bydgoszcz; 10—Potulice; 11—Mielecin; 12—Starogard; 13—Lipno; 14—Poznan, Sloneczna Street; 15—Ciechanow; 16—Czynow, near Lodz; 17—Wieliczka; 18—Myslowice, in Silesia; 19—Sosnowiec-Radocha; 20—Strzemieszycze; 21—Swientochlowice; 22—Katowice, in Silesia; 23—Janow Podlaski; 24—Brzesc on Bug; 25—Majdanek, former German concentration camp near Lublin; 26—Naklo; 27—Pila; 28—Rembertow, in reorganization.

Beside the security and propaganda, on which strong financial and organizing pressure is brought to bear, all the remaining branches of the Administration seem to have been improvised, and are staffed by indigenious communists and accidentally chosen employees, mainly without any professional qualifications. Nevertheless, in all spheres of the Administration except Security and Propaganda, a clear plan can be seen underneath the chaos. Every Department has its "Grey Eminence," usually not a Pole, but with a newly-assumed Polish name, who directs the planned actions. The lower the moral level of the officials, the smaller their qualifications, the greater the destructive result of their work.

The chaos is only a screen which covers the plan of devastation. The rights of the human being are lost in the forest of "citizens' duties," or rather, the duties of a slave of the State. The cheapest thing in this system is the individual, who is no longer the subject of the State's care, but of universal exploitation. Through economic misery, compulsory work and police terror, the ordinary man is driven into a cul-de-sac and caught in the vice of political education. This aims at making the older generation harmless, and shaping the younger one in harmony with the spirit of the system. The essence and object of this system seems to be the compulsory adoption of a strange culture which leads to the reshaping of the man, so that he will fit into the prearranged pattern of an "average citizen." He has to become inert, apathetic, without individuality, completely obedient to the will of the State. The State's plan is to change the citizens into a mass of slaves driven entirely by the whip.



## CHAPTER V

### CULTURE AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

#### *The old and the new privileged class*

ON account of the methods used to weaken the people's psychological resistance against the new "style" of life, and of the worsening of living conditions in both town and country, there is general discontent in every class of society. But there is no outlet for this discontent, because all means of influencing public opinion are monopolized by the Government. To allow a semblance of freedom of the Press, this monopoly allows the publication of a Catholic Weekly, which, however, in the interests of its own existence, dares not print free opinions. Every criticism is considered not only as a reactionary act, but also as an anti-State one.

Beside the Catholic Weekly a few other non-communist papers are allowed to be published. They are of minor importance, and out of a total of 287 newspapers and periodicals, 280 are in the hands of Government propaganda, whose influence is becoming clearer and clearer, even in the Catholic Weekly. The non-communist papers and the Catholic Weekly have a very small circulation, since their allotment of paper is greatly limited.

On the other hand, the Government Press has no limit set to its circulation, for it gets any amount of paper. This Press tries to create the impression that it is impartial, by printing attacks on offices and institutions which are not functioning well. These criticisms, exactly like those in the National Council, do not attribute all misfortunes and inefficiency of the State apparatus to faults in the system, but to sabotage by reactionaries.

To speak of general discontent would not be strictly accurate. Beside the huge mass of miserable peasants, workers and intelligentsia, a new privileged class has emerged. Its members, as opposed to the general public, do not feel any worsening of their material situation, but on the contrary an improvement. They are mainly communists who belong to the Workers Party, or members of the Peoples Army during the occupation. The latter was a communist group organized in Poland by Russian agents during the German occupation. Together with the new element imported from Russia, they form the new leading caste, who, regardless of their qualifications, occupy all important positions in the State, Administrative and Co-operative Offices. They are entrusted with the management of all the nationalized industries. They have priority in getting shop licences. They develop a system of mutual support, greatly helped and protected by the State, and further augmented by the secrecy of some newly-issued regulations.



The execution of some of these regulations is considered by the public as acts of lawlessness. An outstanding example is the searching of houses by the Militia, usually carried out on their own initiative, and used as an opportunity for common theft.

The more the access to this privileged caste is reserved for politically and ideologically tested people, the more the State can rely on their loyalty and obedience. The moral level of this "élite," which is not very high, has caused, in a number of cases, the necessity of placing them above the law. The State has to tolerate this because it depends on their faithfulness, which, in turn, depends on receiving personal privileges. Certainly there are exceptions among these people, idealists who really believe in Communism, such as the top members of the Government—Bierut, Gomolka and Osubka-Morawski. But the much larger majority are self-seekers, who seized their opportunity with both hands, and now, by serving and upholding the system, are defending the source of their own prosperity. The Government favours them because they help to establish the foundations of the system.

Beside them there is a slightly lower, but still privileged class, consisting of people previously engaged in politics, who will support any party for their own advancement. Also in this group are those who, without changing their political opinions, sold their well-known names to the Regime's propaganda for the price of a comfortable existence.

#### *The Government and writers*

Some social groups, above all the leading intellectuals, are put under very strong Government pressure, in order to win over as many supporters as possible from among them. University professors, writers, artists and journalists are definitely favoured in comparison with other professions. They earn better wages, and enjoy a number of priorities. In addition to these advantages, however, the Government does not forget to classify them into those who are politically loyal and those who are not. This selection is carried out by the appropriate Trade Unions—of professors, writers, and so on. Those who are self-seeking enough to volunteer to serve the Regime in its cultural propaganda are considered politically loyal. Writers who work for the Government at present are extremely well paid and get wide publicity. We are witnessing how new "geniuses," such as Przybos, Wlodek, Kott, etc., are suddenly produced by propaganda. They have unlimited possibility of publishing their works, regardless of their level and value, as the Government controls all printing. The selection of the writers depends entirely on whether their work corresponds with the views and needs of the Regime. This does not apply to writers with established reputations, but chiefly to young talent, some of whom are supported and given publicity, while the others have no opportunity for recognition and development.



In 1945, when Mr. W. Rzymowski was Minister of Culture, the known literary critic, Kazimierz Czachowski, was appointed as Director of the Department of Literature. This Department started by dealing with all writers, regardless of their views and past records. To convince the public that the Government supported the development of culture, a special fund was set up to provide money prizes for literary works written during the war. When distributing those prizes, the Ministry of Culture awarded one to Artur Gorski, but this soon raised a scandal, because Dr. Boleslaw Drobner published an article in one of the newspapers accusing the Ministry of Culture of Fascist tendencies. A quotation from one of Gorski's pre-war books was given as proof, in which he criticized the Russian Government. Since everything opposed to Russia and her Regime is now called "Fascism," this quotation proved that Gorski was a Fascist, and, as he had been awarded a prize by the Ministry of Culture—for quite a different book—it must therefore follow that the Ministry is headed by Fascists too.

Mr. Rzymowski, being responsible for an "anti-State act" carried out by a State Department, found himself in a very difficult position. He got out of it by publishing a Press communique accusing his personal friend, Mr. Czachowski, Director of the Department of Literature, of the Fascist tendencies, as he had submitted the suggestion of Gorski's award. Of course the suggestion received Mr. Rzymowski's signature in approval. The Press communique informed the public that Mr. Czachowski had been suspended from his duties, and his case submitted to a disciplinary court.

The Union of Writers in Cracow published another communique, objecting mildly to the accusation of Fascism against Czachowski, on account of his well-known democratic and progressive views. This did not help Czachowski in the least.

Altogether this merely proves how easy it is to fall from the class of privileged people down to the one where all "enemies of the people" live in misery. Such people, not well looked on by the Government, are constantly subjected to investigations in their Trade Unions, and eliminated by arrest under the accusation of "collaboration with the Germans" or "Fascism."

#### *Science under political control*

A general clean up of reactionary elements is expected among the university professors. The composition of this group of people does not satisfy the Government, in spite of the fact that a large number of them offered their loyal collaboration by enlisting in one of the four new political parties, mainly in the Democratic Party. But this is not enough. If science as well as literature is to serve the State's political purposes, it is obvious that scientists must be carefully selected. Such intentions have been clearly



shown by the Government propaganda, but the Authorities carefully avoid taking too many unpopular steps at the same time. The resistance shown by the protests of students after the removal of several professors from Cracow University warned the Authorities that such a clean up of professors might interfere with the mobilization of intellectual elements into the Regime.

So the political selection of professors has been put off for the time being, but this does not prevent the Press from attacking the universities, accusing the atmosphere among students and professors of being "Fascist and reactionary." These attacks became particularly strong when university circles protested against the cancelling of the Matriculation Examination as a condition for entry to a university. Without a doubt some radical propaganda is already being prepared on this subject, but the time has not yet come for it to be put into practice. The professors are still a privileged class, though nobody knows how many of them will remain in their present positions. Serious changes of personnel are going on already. Although the old professors are not being thrown out yet, the vacancies created during the German occupation are being filled by those of the younger generation who proclaim their entire agreement with the ideologies of the new system, and thus enjoy very good prospects of promotion. Several meteoric careers have taken place during 1945, of people who were known before the war for their pro-communist sympathies, and also of communist ideological neophytes.

In exchange for a career, these new professors become the representatives of the reigning ideology in scientific circles, thus gradually subordinating science and its sources to politics. This is hardly noticeable as yet, however, because the Government, by creating a number of new ephemeral schools and faculties, is creating the impression that it supports culture. We are witnessing decorative fictions which screen the subordination of culture to the State and politics.

There is no paper for scientific publications, although there is an unlimited supply for political propaganda. The estate which belonged to the Academy of Science before the war, and which provided funds for many scientific publications, now does so no longer, having been nationalized.

The Government is using three methods to win the collaboration of intellectual and cultured people. These methods gain their object by claiming idealistic motives, which means more to some people than any personal privilege.

The first method is the use of anti-German feelings, which have naturally grown up in many people as a result of experiences in concentration camps and sufferings under the German occupation. Such people are strongly inclined to over-estimate the future danger from Germany, and so go to the other extreme in seeking support for Poland from her powerful Eastern neighbour. This



feeling, fed by propaganda, lays a foundation for Poland's new foreign policy and orientation. By backing everything which is Soviet, it influences the internal policy which supports the friendship with Russia and her cultural expansion in Poland.

The second method is to create the illusion that there is practically no difference between social progress in Western countries and that brought by the expansion of communism.

The third method takes advantage of the dying out of the hope that there is any possibility of clearing up the present situation. It persuades people to accommodate themselves to this situation and, in order to salvage as much as possible, to work within the limits of the system which has been forced upon them from the outside. In this hope many people express, and sometimes even exaggerate, their loyalty to the system, in spite of the psychological resistance which it causes.

By these methods quite a number of older professors and social leaders have been drawn into the orbit of the new Regime's political education. They have made speeches and written articles, either on their own initiative, or on the invitation of the Government when State policy required.

The Government aims to make science and the universities gradually into a branch of political education. All obstacles are being pushed aside slowly, but the care with which this is done makes it hardly noticeable. Sooner or later, however, we shall face a *fait accompli*, which is now being prepared for by propaganda.

In summer, 1945, a plan was proposed in a Government newspaper to introduce compulsory hostels for all university students, where there would be a tutor to every twenty students to give them lectures on political ideology. Nobody knows whether the requisitioning of buildings for the accommodation of students which is now going on is not the first step towards the realization of this plan.

All forms of political education, including that used in Zymierski's Army, are based on Soviet examples.

Polish youth, delayed in their education by the years under the Germans, are anxious to study and go to the universities. In spite of the creation of a number of new schools, the possibilities of studying are difficult and limited by the increase of general impoverishment, which forces them to become wage-earners. The first necessity is to live, learning has to take a second place. Text-books are very scarce because of the lack of paper, which is used entirely for numerous propaganda publications. The Provisional Government's care for education and culture is strongly publicized by propaganda, but in practice it is obvious that this care does not aim at raising and spreading the level of culture, but rather at the using of the cultural apparatus as an instrument of political education. The Government's propaganda about the provision of education for the children of peasants and workers is not accom-



panied by any system of scholarships or bursaries. The democratic spreading of culture is mostly accomplished by lowering the level of education in the universities and officers' schools. As scientific personnel is lacking, the establishment of new universities is only propaganda. Primary and secondary schools are much more needed than universities, but in this sphere of education the conditions are catastrophic. Not only is there a lack of buildings, about which little is being done, but there is a scarcity of teachers. The allowance for education is only 13 per cent. of the State's budget. The greater number of the primary and secondary school teachers are starving, and so drift into other professions. The only teachers who enjoy a good material position are those who take part in the activities of the Workers Party, thus having the advantage of extra earnings supplied by political propaganda and security.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE BROTHERHOOD OF NATIONS

#### *Gratitude and ingratitude to Russia*

THE arrest by the N.K.V.D. through trickery of the sixteen leaders of Poland's underground struggle against Germany caused general dispendency among the people.

On this occasion the Provisional Government issued a communique through Polpress Agency, which showed clearly that the Government was no more than a Russian puppet. The communique stated approvingly that the Russians had done very well in arresting "persons who had been carrying out diversionary activity in the rear of the front line," that the Red Army was fully entitled to do this, and that the step did not affect Polish sovereignty in the least. The Government stated that it considered the arrested leaders as traitors to the Polish nation, because their activity had been aimed against the Russo-Polish Agreement. The Polish Provisional Government further stated that, after they had served their sentences for crimes against Russia, they were to be returned to Poland to face charges of high treason there.

This servility of the Provisional Government caused a lot of ill-feeling among the population. It was considered as the plainest demonstration of the Government's loyal service of Russian interests. This is not by any means an isolated instance of this subservience, because, wherever the Germans had named squares or streets after Hitler in Polish towns, the old nameplates have now been replaced by new ones bearing the title "Stalin Square," or "Stalin Street." Furthermore, portraits of enormous proportions of Stalin and the Soviet marshals decorate the squares in Polish towns, giving the impression of altars of a religious cult.

The official propaganda is ceaselessly and sickeningly drumming gratitude towards Russia into the people for their "liberation," trying to convince them that it was entirely to the credit of the Red Army and that the part played by the other Allies was practically negligible. The Trade Unions and political organizations forced the people to take part in celebrations in honour of the "liberating" Red Army which were organized all over the country. The most beautiful Polish squares have been changed into cemeteries for the officers and men of the Red Army. The first task of the new Town Authorities was to build monuments in gratitude to the Russians with public funds.

This persistent pro-Soviet propaganda has quite the opposite effect on the people, who show aversion to the robberies and acts of violence of the Red Army. In reaction to this propaganda there are frequent incidents. For example, in Czestochowa a monument was erected representing a Russian soldier standing on a tank



with his hand outstretched. Some unknown person placed on this outstretched hand a bicycle frame, an empty vodka bottle and an old alarm clock, to represent the booty most sought after by the Red Army. In addition, there was a card bearing the inscription in Russian: "Now that you've taken what you came for, get out!"

Beside the propaganda of gratitude there is a corresponding policy, shown by the lack of any kind of counter-action by the Government against the devastating of Poland by the Russians. In some cases, such as the removal of the cranes from Gdynia harbour, the Government even approves the obvious robbery. This policy of gratitude facilitates the Russian exploitation of Poland, and is considered by the Government as the payment of moral debts for "liberation." All Poland's foreign trade and those branches of production whose machines have not already been carried off to Russia are burdened with those debts. A number of trade treaties with countries other than Russia were agreed upon, not in Warsaw but in Moscow, by representatives of the Provisional Government, after their details had been settled with the Soviet Authorities. From the economical point of view Poland is as much a colony as Manchuria, Bierut the Viceroy on Russia's behalf, and the Polish Provisional Government the local Administration, carried out among others by natives—Polish people.

The object of this colonial exploitation is not only the remainder of the material goods in the country, but also the human being, the slave, representing, *sui generis*, war booty.

This is how debts of gratitude have been changed into chains. Propaganda serves the purpose of lulling the suspicions of this nation of slaves just at the moment when the chains are being put on, and as a political and social apparatus to keep them on. But let us not be unfair. Russia does not only take, she also gives. Beside "liberation," Poland has received three gifts from her: first, "independence" together with the Provisional Government; second, security against the German menace; third, territories in the West up to the rivers Oder and Neisse. These three gifts are the price of the purchase of Poland. The question is whether the buyer will pay with real or counterfeit money.

#### *The play on patriotism and tradition*

The reserve with which the Polish people awaited the entry of the Red Army was closely connected with the fear of Sovietization, the inclusion of Poland into Russia as the seventeenth Republic. The fact that it did not happen caused a great feeling of relief. The Provisional Government, seeing its opportunity, took advantage of this, and is now trying to build up and support the impression that the new State organization is entirely Polish. For this purpose its propaganda utilizes all the obvious symbols of Polish tradition, thus flattering the national pride of the masses.



During the German occupation, all demonstrations of national feeling were forbidden, and naturally the people were longing to give expression to it in all its forms. That is also utilized by the propaganda. The national flag is not a red one with a hammer and sickle, but a white and red one with an eagle, though without its former crown. The army uniforms are the same as before. The words "nation" and "national" decorate numerous institutions, such as "The District National Council," "The County National Council," "The National Council," "The National Bank of Poland," and so on. "The Polish nation," "the motherland," "independence," "the rosy future," and similar empty patriotic phrases are inseparable from all official speeches and propaganda articles. The National Anthem and other national songs are heard ceaselessly from loudspeakers in the streets, until everybody feels sick.

The propaganda is trying, sometimes very obviously, to create the impression that the present "independence" is a continuation of that of 1939. It is generally known that, as a result of their unfortunate history, one of the characteristics of the Poles is the cult of sacrificing their own blood. Consequently a kind of tradition grew up that the shortest way to fame and glory is by "armed struggle," thus giving military people the best opportunity of gaining popularity. After the death of Marshal Pilsudski in 1935, the reigning Regime, taking advantage of this psychological trait, nominated General Rydz-Smigly as his successor and made him a Marshal, thinking that this highest military rank would provide him with sufficient authority for a leader. To-day the Provisional Government is using the same method, by making Michal Rola-Zymierski (an officer cashiered from the Army before the war and imprisoned for fraud) into a new symbol of heroism and leadership, complete with all the traditional emblems—Marshal's rank, the highest order of *Virtuti Militari*, and so on.

Similar propaganda is trying to create the impression that Mr. Bierut, appointed, nobody knows how, President of the National Council, is really President of the Republic. The public are being accustomed to the idea by, for example, the following means: at public ceremonies cries are always heard of "Long live the President of the Republic, Citizen Bierut!"; he appears officially with all the emblems of presidential rank; he even lives at Belvedere, the President's residence. The only difference from former Polish Presidents is that he never wears a top hat.

So Poland has a "President," a "Marshal," her white and red flag, the same National Anthem, her national feasts. Every ceremony, including the "launching" of a new tramcar, is blessed by a priest, and ends with the National Anthem. In other words, all external signs show that she is as independent as she was before, but much better now, because she is "democratic."

With the help of propaganda, the present State is now being



identified with the nation. Everybody who is against the Government is against the State, and if he is against the State he is an "enemy of the people."

#### *The play on anti-German feelings*

The utilization of anti-German feelings is another method of the Government propaganda. This is a play on racial hatred, for which in general Poles have little inclination. By propagating national feelings directed against the Germans, common enemy of Poland and Russia, a brotherhood of Slav nations, fighting against the eternal Teutonic foe, is being created. "Everyone against Russia is for Germany." "Everyone who opposes the State and democracy is a Hitlerite." As a result, anybody who can see through the cheap effects of the Government propaganda is an enemy not only of Russia but of Poland.

If the hatred of Germany is not connected with strong pro-Soviet feelings, it is considered as "Fascism." The Underground Movement during German occupation is not judged from the Polish but from the Russian point of view. Any Polish conspiracy against the Germans which was not at the same time pro-Soviet, is considered as a crime and treachery against the nation. The only work which is appreciated is that within the organizations sponsored by Russia, such as the Workers Party and the People's Army, which prepared the ground for the Sovietization of Poland after the collapse of the Germans.

During the first period of confusion, while the people still trusted the Government, thanks to its carefully built up patriotic façade, the hunt for *Volksdeutsche* became a smokescreen for that of Poles unsuitable from the Russian point of view.

#### *The Volksdeutsche and the former Underground Army*

For a long time many people did not see through this smokescreen, until the blatant propaganda identified the *Volksdeutsche*, Hitlerites, and Fascists with the soldiers of the Underground Army. It became particularly obvious when the sixteen leaders of underground Poland were arrested by the N.K.V.D. as "criminals against the Polish nation and Russia." The wide-spread hunt for the remainder of the Underground Army, which went on during the first three months of the Soviet occupation, was carried out under the pretext of arresting hidden *Volksdeutsche*. After several thousand of those soldiers, who had been caught around Warsaw, had been deported to Siberia from the camp at Rembertow, the public was informed that they were *Volksdeutsche*. At this time placards appeared with the slogan "Sweep out Fascism!" and an added explanation that not only members of the Hitler Party and *Volksdeutsche* were Fascists, but also the soldiers of the Underground. This was because the Underground had served not Russia but Poland, and its sacrifices were for true independence. They



fought for a Polish State which would not allow Russia to enslave the people and devastate the country.

When, during various meetings organized by the Communists, peasants and workers protested against this persecution of the Underground Army, the Government changed its line of action. Without stopping the arrests, it directed the weight of the Press attacks against the Headquarters of the Underground Army in London, and justified the continued persecution as a fight against the National Armed Forces, a right-wing military organization. All assaults and banditry by the numerous deserters from the Red Army were honoured by being described as political revolution, and blamed on to the National Armed Forces. Every political murder committed by agents of the Polish N.K.V.D. was attributed to Polish Fascists and members of the above-mentioned right-wing military organization.

While ceasing its propaganda against the Underground Army, the Government did not give up its intentions of hunting down the remaining people who belonged to the anti-German resistance movement. It only changed its tactics and, after all the more active and outstanding people had been caught, it announced that a registration would take place of all the people who had taken part in the fight against the Germans, allegedly in order to issue material help to them. Influenced by a few known members of the Underground who had been won over to the Government, a number of Underground Army soldiers did register. It is feared, however, that this registration was nothing but a trick, and that after a time those soldiers already in the police files will be arrested and charged either with collaboration with the National Armed Forces or with Anti-Semitism.

The tactics are very flexible, but not the aims. The registration made the task of the Security Police so much easier. It saved a lot of unnecessary effort in cleansing the "Fascist" elements. The aim is to annihilate all the people who fought for Poland's genuine independence.

The most suspicious elements, the young and active men, are rendered harmless by conscription into Zymierski's Army, which is still going on and is justified by propaganda about "another future German attack on Poland." To anyone who has seen the extent of the devastation in Russian-occupied Germany, the flimsiness of this pretext is obvious. In the shadow of this German danger, the Provisional Government is forcing the people to new sacrifice and self-denial, while continually referring to "the benefit of the Motherland," and "the rosy future." Because of this imaginary German danger, Poland has to shut her eyes to the cultural menace from the East, and capitulate in order to appease Russia and not rouse her suspicions.

The play on the German menace is not a monopoly of the Polish Provisional Government. All Governments in Central and Eastern



European countries show the same attitude. This is done in order to divert attention from the external and internal pressure of the U.S.S.R., and thus facilitate the process of Sovietization of the Central and Eastern European nations.

*Poland's Western frontier and its propaganda value*

One condition of the existence of every totalitarian system is territorial expansion. Some external purpose has to be dangled before the eyes of the downtrodden people to satisfy their national vanity. By directing their interest towards conquests and territorial annexations, the totalitarian system diverts their minds from internal conditions, at the same time justifying the necessity for sacrifices, political persecution and police terror as essential for higher State purposes.

The autocracy of the Tsars lasted for such a long time because it was based on the tradition of imperialistic expansion, led by the religious mission of the Orthodox Church. The power of Hitler and Mussolini was founded on territorial conquests, building up the victorious and heroic leader in the eyes of the masses. The spell of the leader lasts as long as his victories. Recently such examples of totalitarianism combined with territorial imperialism only appeared in Fascist States, but to-day we can witness the same phenomena in Red Fascism, which, fighting against the other form, exhibits exactly the same features of autocracy and nationalism.

It is very interesting to observe Russia's policy of territorial conquest, and her support for the expansion of her buffer States, such as Poland. The case of Poland's Western frontier is illuminating in understanding the aims and political methods of Russia. In spite of Mr. Churchill's reproach, this is not a mistake on Poland's part, but an act of Russian policy. Its purpose is not only to divert Poland's attention from her losses in the East, but to satisfy her national pride by territorial compensation from Germany. The claims of the Polish Government in London with regard to the Western frontier were modest and reasonable, therefore Russia took quite the opposite attitude, and the Polish Provisional Government's propaganda emphasized the contrast between their territorial achievements, thanks to the U.S.S.R., and those claimed by the "Polish emigrés in London."

The direction of the public's interest on to the Neisse-Oder frontier serves to divert their attention from their present biological and cultural existence.

The best proof of Russia's political purposes is the fact that she has changed into a desert the Western lands that Poland acquired, thanks to her. The lack of all tools and the devastation of all facilities of production, makes the colonization of these formerly rich lands a mere fiction. If, however, the colonization is carried out in spite of this, it will only be to create on one hand an illusion of exterior expansion to screen the internal devastating action, and



on the other to increase the disorganization and impoverishment of the people by their migrations backwards and forwards.

The propaganda of Polish expansion to the West is closely connected with the nationalism fanned by the Soviet policy. The new frontier which, in fact, is just a mirage of compensation for Germany's historic crimes against Poland, was calculated as a trump in Russia's world policy. In the first place this frontier serves to fight down the pro-British orientation which competes with the Soviet one. The Polish population is repeatedly told that Britain is pro-German, and therefore objects to the new frontier. At the same time anti-Polish feeling is stirred up in Britain by accusing Poland of territorial imperialism.

Polish nationalism is being roused, firstly for use as propaganda in home policy, and secondly to offend Britain so that she will lose interest in Polish affairs. In this way the Provisional Government will be able to do anything they like in the country without Western interference.

#### *The policy towards the German population in Poland*

Besides the frontier question, the second wedge which is being pushed by propaganda between Poland and Britain is the attitude of the latter towards Polish displaced persons in the British zone and to the German population. The trial in Paderborn was a very good opportunity to incite people in Poland against the British, by pointing out that the German population in the British zone are treated better than the Polish displaced persons. On the other side, British dislike for Poles is stirred up by the expulsion of the German population, which is widely advertised in the British Press as done by "barbaric Poles." In support of this accusation, photographs are shown of miserable looking German children, refugees from the East.

In fact the whole case has a completely different aspect. The German population ran away in their thousands during the fighting in face of the Red Army's advance. The greater part of these refugees did not manage to get further than the areas of Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig, where they were caught by the Red Army. Neither the Polish population nor even the Provisional Government can be held responsible for the fate of these people, and it is well known that the Red Army hardly treats them with great kindness. As previously mentioned, the accounts by Polish soldiers of Zymierski's Army, who had to defend German women against rape by Russian soldiers, testify to this.

How, on the other hand, does the situation look for those Germans who returned to the territories annexed to Poland, or who failed to run away to the West?

Polish citizens who, during German occupation, admitted their German nationality, in other words, *Volksdeutsche*, were in most cases arrested by the Security Authorities and used for forced



labour on the spot or deported to the East. The treatment of these *Volksdeutsche* in prisons and camps was generally better than that of Polish political prisoners. The attitude of the Polish Authorities towards the German citizens in Western Poland, Pomerania and Upper Silesia was different. The majority of those Germans proclaimed themselves as *Freideutsche*—German Communists—and appeared in red armlets. The Russian Authorities gave them preferential treatment to the Polish population. Normally if a *Freideutsche* returned to find that his house had been allotted to a Polish settler, he would go and find a Russian soldier and, with his help, turn the Pole out. Such a state of affairs naturally roused great indignation among the Polish people, especially as the tone of the propaganda was continually inciting them against the Germans. The widely advertised announcements about the transfers of population did not seem consistent with the attitude of the Government and the occupying Soviet Authorities. Their policy seemed to be, as opposed to the announcements, in favour of keeping a mixed population of antagonistic Polish and German elements in Western Poland. This appears to be done in order to promote unrest, thus continually enabling the Russians to act as arbiters. With such conditions on one hand, on the other the Government emphasizes in all its pronouncements that Poland is to be a country of one nation only, and accustoms the people to the idea of transferring the Germans.

As far as the so-called "deserted lands in the West" are concerned, there are hardly any Germans left there, for the conditions are such that nobody is safe. In Opole the German population rose against the Russians in February 1945, and as a result they were all massacred.

The biggest number of Germans is left in Western Pomerania and Breslau (Wroclaw), where they are frequently incited by the Russian Authorities against the Poles. In a number of places Germans are enlisted into the local Militia, which enables them to revenge themselves on the Polish newcomers. Apart from the danger from the Russians, the Germans in the Militia and Administration make the lives of the Polish settlers unbearable and finally force them to leave again.

#### *Polish-Czech relations*

It might seem that the fostering of Polish-German hatred and the driving of the wedge between Poland and Britain would lead to laying the foundation for an Eastern European bloc of nations, to uniting all Slav countries into one, since they are all threatened by the German danger and, to quote Warsaw, by the other enemy favouring the Germans: Britain.

Polish-Czech relations are the best example of the error of supposing that the Eastern European nations are on their way to closer political co-operation. In spite of the difference of the



treatment suffered by Poles and Czechs under the Germans, the common misery of their five years of occupation created a psychological bond between them. This bond, as far as the feelings of the people and not of the politicians were concerned, could have been the means of ironing out all differences between them. The weakening of the national antagonism was best shown by the friendship, kindness and generous hospitality with which the Czech population received Poles returning from Germany.

Nevertheless, the Czech and Polish Governments, both leaning on Russia and taking their orders from Moscow, started with great energy to stir the Czechs against the Poles and the Poles against the Czechs respectively. The best opportunity for this was the traditional bone of contention—a few districts on the Polish-Czech border. "Marshal" Zymierski went to Teschen and made a highly patriotic speech, full of the usual propaganda slogans. The public, who had been driven to hear it, gave him a "spontaneous" ovation. The only result of this was to give the Czech Press grounds for attacking Poland, and for the Czech Government to apply reprisals against Poles in those districts. The Polish Communist Press attacked Czech nationalism and vice versa. The case of Teschen and its surrounding districts will probably be used for a long time to come to rouse this national antagonism, which could already have been forgotten.

#### *The Polish-Ukrainian question*

The Polish-Ukrainian question looks very much the same. In the Eastern areas, the Russians made no attempt to prevent the murders carried out by the Ukrainian nationalists, because this antagonism suited their purposes. On the other hand, the Lemki, a Ruthenian tribe in the sub-Carpathian area, who were quiet and interfered with nobody, were expelled and deported to the Ukraine. This action, which took place with much brutality, was carried out with the help of the lowest type of Polish Security Police, and had two purposes: first to create anti-Polish feeling among the Ruthenians, and second to give the Foreign Press cause to blame the "barbaric Poles" for their treatment of minorities.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE STATE OF MIND OF THE POPULATION

#### *Varieties of realists*

CAREER-SEEKING and opportunism of weak characters often appear under the propaganda heading "political realism." This slogan serves to drape radical changes of political views, dictated by entirely egoistic motives.

There are two kinds of realism : one, accommodation to reality, and the other, resistance to it. Common sense would recommend the avoidance of physical resistance which leads to new senseless sacrifices, sufferings and victimization. On the other hand, realists of the first category should be judged by the benefit their work has given to Polish society. In the first place are those who, while furthering their own careers, do not forget to help their compatriots as much as possible. Regardless of whether their political calculations will prove right in the future or not, they must be judged by the positive value of their present social service.

People, however, particularly dislike those who base their allegiance to the Regime on favours, benefits and privileges received to buy their more or less known names for propaganda purposes. Those who turn a blind eye to the sufferings of the majority of the people, lick the Government's boots for their own interest and take an active part in its propaganda deserve the severest condemnation.

#### *The slogan, "Constructive Work," in theory and practice*

At the time when the Russian occupation replaced the German one, there was a strong natural foundation among the Polish people for the same reaction that took place after the uprising against Russia in 1863. This was an inclination to replace conspiracy by open and lawful activity—bloodshed by constructive work. The Warsaw Rising was based on a peculiar Polish psychological feature : that the cult of self-sacrifice by bloodshed is the only method in a political struggle. In the end this heroism overstepped itself, and in general the people are tired of making sacrifices. Particularly the intelligentsia, after enduring the most terrible losses and hardships for five years, are tired out. The consciousness that all their sufferings have been in vain leads to a change of attitude towards life, and they are seeking different solutions.

The obvious one is "constructive work," but the tragedy of this is that, under present conditions, the problem cannot be solved in accordance with public interest. After the uprising in 1863, the economic conditions of the country favoured this kind of work, and the individual pursuit of prosperity was to the advantage of the whole country. To-day, however, in face of the general impoverishment, the individual faces three alternatives.



Firstly, it is possible to build up personal prosperity by being a sworn supporter of the Regime, thus being able to make a fortune under the protective hand of the Authorities.

Secondly, he may live in miserable slavery as a workman or low-grade official.

Thirdly, he may not take any part in politics or work for the State, but earn his living by activity which is considered illegal by the Government, such as "black market," speculation and "anti-State sabotage." For people who do not belong to the "privileged class," a legal livelihood is absolutely impossible.

In such conditions, so-called "constructive work" has far less opportunity for development than after 1863. The slogan of reconstruction is just an empty phrase. In the beginning people rushed to look for work according to their qualifications, but it soon became obvious that the possibilities of getting a job were limited to a bare minimum, in glaring contrast to the needs of the devastated country and the lack of man-power.

The ministerial anti-rooms are still crowded with thousands of skilled and qualified people, full of initiative and enterprise, applying for jobs, hoping to harness their social usefulness with the earning of a living. Such people leave with empty hands, unless they have strong party recommendations. It is obvious that there is no work for people with university degrees, because their places are occupied by party members—with or without qualifications.

At the same time, Government propaganda is urging the people to start "constructive work" on the "deserted farmlands," from which everything has already been removed. It urges them to work on rebuilding the ports, from which the cranes and installations are being exported to Russia. It urges them to rebuild industry, when all the machines have already been carried off to Russia. It urges them to rebuild Warsaw, from which the Russians have even pulled out the electric cables.

For propaganda purposes, Russia offered Warsaw thirty trolley-buses and several prefabricated Finnish houses to accommodate the workers who are rebuilding the capital. What a pity that those houses were dismantled by Russian soldiers during the first night for firewood! For the same purpose those soldiers are even cutting down the telegraph poles. Another example of "Russian help" is the sight of factory machinery standing in the rain in open fields near Bydgoszcz station together with looted German pianos, waiting their turn to be taken to Russia.

During the first period after the "liberation," when the Polish Underground came into the open, it seemed as if any Government would receive popular support, so long as it was legally Polish. At this time the slogan of "collaboration" (with Russia, of course) was quite strong, and a number of respected people held this opinion and tried to take up positions in the Administration and in economic life. Not all of them succeeded, however. Those who



were accepted soon discovered that their possibilities of acting for the benefit of the country in the position of, say, the Director of a Government Department, were very limited. Their actions were sabotaged by their subordinates, who were picked by the Personnel Department according to their political loyalty. Their actions were also paralysed from above by the policy of the "ideological" Ministers, or by a Grey Eminence with unrestricted influence to direct the "decorative" Ministers. Besides, the minds of these officials are preoccupied by their own worries, as, except in the Security and Propaganda Departments, their salaries are inadequate, and so they are forced to look for additional earnings, thus pushing public interest into the second place.

Being unable to save the ship, everybody tried to save his own person, and so the idea of constructive work in the social sense went bankrupt when confronted by reality. In practice the attitude "grasp all you can" became predominant.

After every war morals become relaxed. This phenomenon appears to be stronger in Poland than anywhere else, not only as the result of the German occupation which weakened respect for the law, but also because necessities of life are stronger than ethics. The demoralization started from the top down, from the entirely corrupt bureaucratic administrative and industrial apparatus and the political parties. All the more enterprising people, who do not want to become miserable slaves of the State, have no opportunity for constructive work, but are forced to deal in the black market instead, the only remaining source of livelihood.

#### *The swing over to Romanticism*

Against the background of these absurd conditions, which are steadily worsening, the great majority of the Polish people are living under the conviction that such a state of affairs cannot be permanent. These hopes fall into two categories.

Firstly, some people believe that the present situation is only a transitory one, that Poland is on her way to full independence which will be achieved by internal effort. This optimism is in turn based on two assumptions: that Polish culture is stronger and higher than the Eastern one and will in time dominate it, and that Russia has no intention of Sovietizing Poland with the aid of the Warsaw Government. The romantics who hold such opinions shut their eyes to the real trend of the Government's policy, which is obviously leading to Sovietization. Believing in a future which corresponds with their optimistic wishful thinking, they do not want to draw the obvious conclusions from observation of the present conditions. These dreamers of a rosy future for democratic Poland think that when the Polish Army returns from the West it will be received by the Government with open arms, and that this Army will be strong enough to force the Government to consider its opinions and change the line of policy.



The second category of hopes common among the Polish people to-day can be described as the "Western orientation," and this is strongly fought against by Government propaganda. The supporters of this view do not believe in the sincerity of Russia's political intentions. Feeling the power of the pressure from the East in the form of planned Sovietization, their hopes for change are based on the belief of the strength of cultural ties between Poland and the West. This belief is the source of the widespread pro-British and pro-American feelings which persist in spite of the political disappointments caused by those countries. People who trust Britain and America are always looking for some facts to justify their belief. This Western optimism, like the Eastern one, is based more on emotions than on logic. The hope of salvation from the West is built on confidence in the soundness of British policy and on American might. They believe that it is against British interests to allow the conquest of Europe by Russia, which would merely mean the replacement of one hegemony by another. Poland's political disaster, by causing a decline in faith in her own strength among these people, has led them to rely entirely on help from the West.

Beside this hope and the conviction that Polish interests are concurrent with those of the Western democracies, there is a general fear that the differences between the West and the East will lead to another war. People are afraid of new and greater persecutions by the Russians and wholesale conscription into an army which would have to fight by the side of the Soviets. Cases when soldiers of Zymierski's Army were massacred after having been sent out against the Germans without any support and even without automatic weapons encourage people to think that this Army would be used on the bloodiest parts of the front. If Russia showed such malice as an ally, what will happen if she becomes an open enemy conscious of the feelings of the people forced to fight on her side?

Under such circumstances it is easy to imagine the strength of the fear of a new war and its probable results in present political conditions. The optimism that a solution will be found by the influence of the West on the East without a new world war is further increased by this fear. That is why the masses, with the exception of political circles, accepted the Yalta Agreement with a sigh of relief, much as the British public did the Agreement of Munich, because the danger of war seemed to recede thanks to the compromise achieved. The people did not dream that the Yalta Agreement would become a screen for a Russian monopoly in ruling Poland, but thought that the collaboration of the three powers would make this monopoly impossible. The highest desire of the vast majority of Polish people was to see Poland occupied by three Allied armies, and free elections supervised by the three powers. Rumours of British and American units entering



Poland to counterbalance the Soviet ones strengthened the belief in such a solution for some time.

The next food for the hope that the situation would change by the influence of the West on the East was the arrival in Warsaw of Mr. Mikolajczyk, former Prime Minister of the Polish Government in London. This was commonly considered as one step forward in the realization of the Crimea Agreement, and altogether it corresponded with the Polish people's expectations. Mr. Mikolajczyk had a propaganda halo, and was said to enjoy the confidence of the Anglo-Saxon world and popularity in Western countries. The enthusiasm with which he was greeted formed a glaring contrast with the unpopularity of the "President" Bierut, and the Prime Minister, Osobka-Morawski. When, after returning from Moscow, Bierut was going to give a speech from the balcony of a Government building, he was unable to do so because of shouts for Mikolajczyk.

The people believed that Mikolajczyk's position in the Warsaw Government, as the man who enjoyed the confidence of Britain and America, would be strong in proportion to the appreciation of the might of those two powers by the U.S.S.R. The general hope was that Mikolajczyk would become the instrument of Anglo-American pressure, which would counterbalance the Russian domination over the Warsaw Government protected by the bayonets of the Red Army.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE YALTA AGREEMENT AND LIFE IN POLAND

AFTER Mr. Mikolajczyk had been back in the country for a certain time, the enthusiasm for him suffered a sharp decline. This became obvious on the day when the list of the members of the Polish Provisional Government, created after the Moscow compromise, was published. Mr. Mikolajczyk became Vice-Premier and Minister of Agriculture, thus having to take on his shoulders the whole weight of the peasants' discontent over the disastrous agrarian reform and the "contingents" they had to deliver to the State. The disillusion was further augmented by the fact that Mr. Kiernik, who enjoyed general respect and confidence, did not become Minister of the Interior, but Minister of Administration, while the Ministry of Security, with all its former personnel, under the leadership of the hated Mr. S. Radkiewicz, remained unchanged.

The sharp drop in Mr. Mikolajczyk's popularity was closely connected with the activities of Mr. Stanczyk and Mr. Grabski, who, after their return from London, started making speeches in entire agreement with the Warsaw Government's propaganda and political outlook. The people expected pronouncements promising a change for the better from the politicians returning from England, rather than advice to accept ideals totally opposed to their feelings. Mr. Stanczyk made a particularly irritating impression and, after several of his speeches, his intelligence and moral stature were strongly criticized, even in working class circles.

Considering the general unpopularity with which the Provisional Government was received, the country was shocked by its speedy recognition by the Western Allies and by the liquidation of the Polish Government in London. This had only been expected after free elections, which, owing to this step on the part of the Allies, are no longer considered as a possibility. The people believed that the Polish Government in London would be kept as a reserve in case Russia should break the Yalta Agreement. The existence of such a reserve would have goaded the Warsaw Government into carrying out those elections. The fact that the Western Allies failed to use this weapon, however, was considered in Poland as a sign that they were no longer interested in the fulfilment of the Yalta Agreement by the Soviet and Provisional Polish Governments. The de-recognition of the Polish Government in London was also taken to mean that the propaganda of the Warsaw Government, acting as a branch of the Soviet one, had achieved complete victory by destroying the only political centre which could have neutralized its activities. Everything was thought to depend on how much this loss would be compensated by gains expected from Mikolajczyk's entry into the Warsaw Government. People asked themselves whether the slender opportunities left to him in Osobka-Morawski's



cabinet would enable him to defend the nation's right to existence.

The legalizing of two new political parties, in addition to the four already in existence, also gave some hope, though a slight one, of better conditions to come.

*Between the devil and the deep sea*

A few months after the establishment of the Government of National Unity—the one which was recognized by the Western powers—it became obvious that neither Mikolajczyk's inclusion in it nor the creation of the two new parties would stop the Government's persistence in carrying out its plans to impoverish the people, tighten up police control and political education.

The two new parties had no real influence on the Government. The present Regime uses political parties on the one hand as a propaganda screen for the non-existence of democracy, and on the other as an additional instrument for influencing the masses according to its will. There is no room for opposition.

The people's hopes of a change for the better became concentrated in the person of Wincenty Witos, the aged leader of the pre-war Polish Peasant Party, whose high-minded personality and attitude towards the present Government was generally known. In 1945 he became the most popular person in the country. The respect and flattery with which he was treated by Government circles led people to expect that it would be possible to build up an anti-communist opposition round his person on a peasant core, and that in this way the opposition would find a legal outlet. It was hoped that thus the opposition might be able to work openly.

Mr. Witos's illness prevented him from taking an active part in the political life of the country, and so the people's hopes were transferred to the far less popular person of Mr. Mikolajczyk. As Vice-Premier and Leader of the Peasant Movement, the latter found himself in a far more difficult position than Mr. Witos, who did not belong to the Government. In other words, Mr. Mikolajczyk found himself between the devil and the deep sea—between the governing system and the people. He knew he could not possibly follow the people's will without incurring the Government's disfavour, while on the other hand he knew that, by serving Communism, he would lose the confidence of the peasants, the workers and the middle classes. He was not the real symbol, but Witos, and so he had only inherited authority by force of circumstances. The importance of this heritage was enhanced by the growing dissatisfaction of the people in the face of the Government's communist activities which gained force daily, by the steady progress of police, propaganda and administrative organizations.

The people's hopes were transferred from the present to the future, which, through elections, may enable the two new political parties to take a more active and effective part in the Government.

Let us now have a look at the situation from the viewpoint of the Workers Party and the Government circles representing it.



*Four parties or six parties*

The legalizing of the two new parties—the Polish Peasant Party and the Christian Labour Party—was not convenient for the Government, because it menaced the carefully planned system of the Communist Mono-party. Under this system, with all its compulsory methods which have already been described, it would have been easy for the Government to hold so-called “free elections” in order to sanction the present state of affairs in the eyes of the world as the “will of the people.”

Such elections would not involve any risk for the Government. Whichever party gained the majority, the candidates elected would always have been nominees of the Government in agreement with the requirements of the Communist Party. Any such majority, decorated with a few known names, would continue the loyal obedience of the present National Council, which was nominated and enlarged by some secret method still unknown to the public. Such elections would have been entirely secret and fair as far as the technique of polling is concerned, for the simple reason that “reactionaries” and “enemies of democracy” could only vote for the nominees of the Government, willy nilly, or abstain from voting altogether. Even if the Workers Party were to have a minority after the elections, its power would not be reduced in any way, since it controls and directs the policy of the remaining three. Thus, in any future Parliament, the Communists of the Workers Party would have exactly the same overwhelming influence as if they had won.

The creation of the two new parties has muddled the Government's plans, because some concessions have to be made to them. At present these concessions are only formal, and the future alone will show whether or not they will become reality. Meanwhile, the Government, finding an obstacle in its way, is losing no time in trying to remove it. The object is to reshape them so that they will be an asset to the Government instead of a liability.

The two new parties will be an asset if they can be used as a screen to convince Western opinion that an evolution from the mono-party to the multi-party system is taking place in Poland. They will, however, be a liability if in the coming elections they gain the votes of all discontented elements, at present the great majority of the people.

The Government is trying to minimize this danger by introducing “faithful” groups and elements into their lower ranks in order to convert them into its own instruments.

While the Government is trying to disintegrate the lower ranks of the new parties by introducing their own men, richly equipped with propaganda material, the selection of their leaders is being carried out by the same methods with which Mr. Radkiewicz, Head of the Secret Police, succeeded in “saving” the false Socialist, Peasant and Democratic Parties from an influx of opposition



elements. The arrests by the Security Authorities of the leaders who are not in favour of the Government will disorganize and sterilize the new parties before they have even had a chance of showing political activity.

In order to exterminate the outstanding figures of the genuine Peasant Party, there have already been arrests and also murders which are attributed to "reactionary elements," though, in fact, carried out by the Security Police. There will be an ever increasing vacuum round Mr. Mikolajczyk, who will become an island surrounded by daily more scared and less outstanding people. The more that waves of terror strike that island, the more easily will the leaders of the two new parties submit to the suggestions and directives of the Workers Party, and their policy will just become an extension of that of the Mono-party.

#### *The elections in perspective*

The holding and the date of elections in Poland will depend on how the Government succeeds in conquering the two new political parties. If it does succeed, due to the vacuum created round their leaders, their candidates will have to be nominated in agreement with the Workers Party. The people will vote for them, not knowing that under the trusted façade the interior has been completely changed.

The date of the elections has been put off, so that such conditions can be prepared in which it will make no difference which party wins, because they will all submit only candidates nominated by the Communists. If, however, the elections are not held at all, it will mean that the action is meeting with difficulties, rather in the lower ranks who are not so easily deceived. This second alternative is the more probable, in spite of the weight of lies and technical means at the disposal of the Regime's propaganda monopoly.

#### *Naïveté and artifice*

The belief in free elections and their power to effect a radical change in the situation still has some, though not many, adherents. These people think that, by using her own strength, Poland could find a way out of the difficult controversy between East and West. Time will show whether those forces are over-estimated, or whether the persistently applied methods of terror are under-estimated. The more the romantics do not believe, or do not want to believe, that there is artifice in "free elections," the better the smokescreen of "democratic," "sovereign" and "independent" Poland will cover the purpose hidden behind it.

Many people help to create this smokescreen without knowing it, simply because they believe in the propaganda illusions which correspond to their optimistic wishful thinking. Some of them have umbrellas to shield their heads from the hail falling from the dark clouds which hang above the present and future of Poland. By spreading those illusions they are taking a heavy responsibility



on their shoulders, and they lead people astray who do not understand the present situation in Poland or have no means of doing so. But those umbrellas of privilege will not last for ever, and will vanish as soon as their owners are no longer needed to help in building the propaganda screen.

Has Poland outlived her usefulness? This seems to be the position to which she has been consigned after the Yalta Agreement by her Allies, who took full advantage of her blood in their service when it was needed. The Polish people believed in the promises of the Western Allies so strongly that even after they have already been broken they still trust them.

*Where is the Polish train going?*

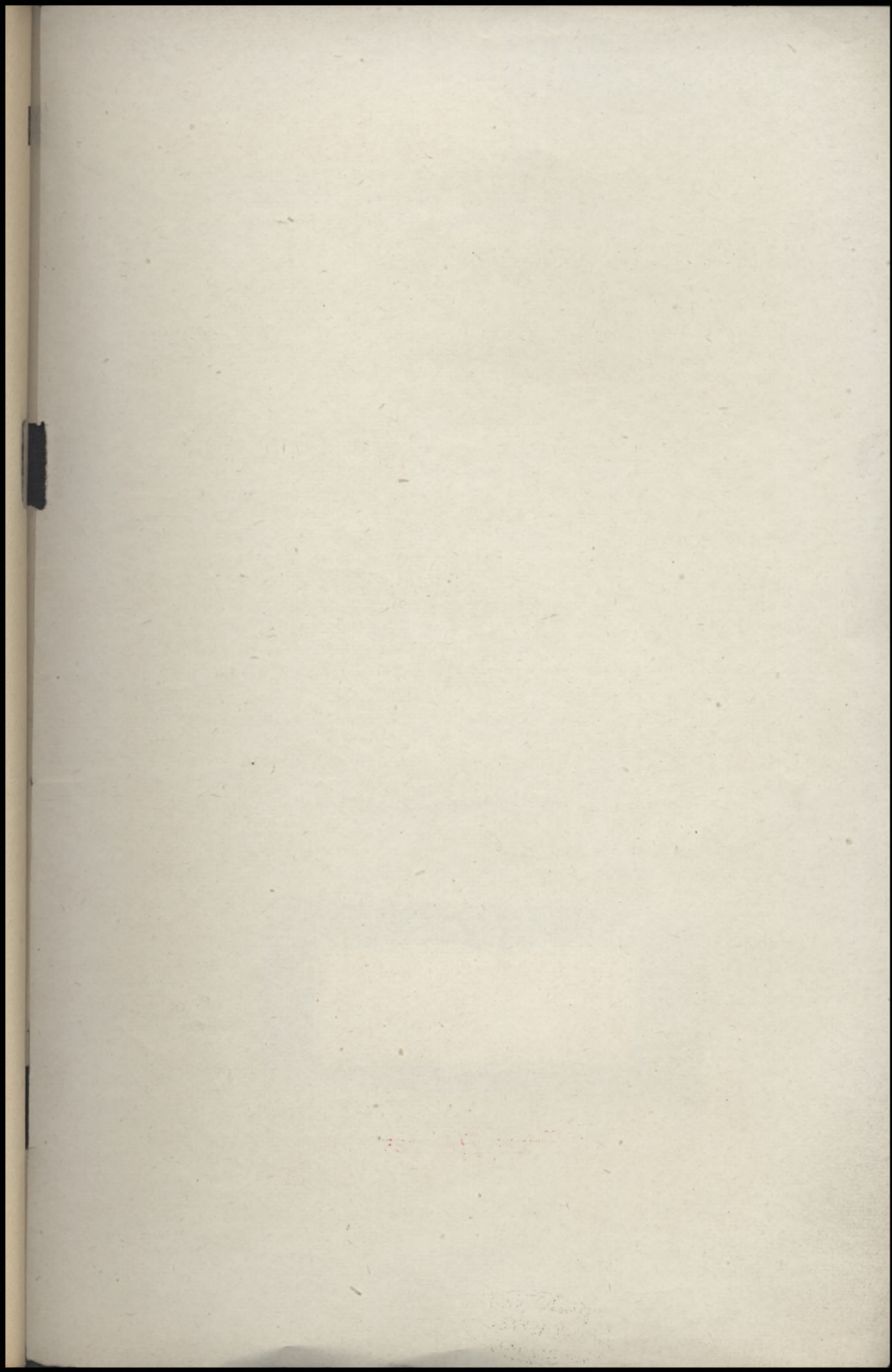
During the Moscow Conference Dr. Henryk Kolodziejski, whose decisive influence led to the agreement between Mr. Mikolajczyk and Mr. Bierut, gave an interview to the Warsaw journalist, Mr. Borejsza. In this interview he said that the Poles have a tendency to be late for the train of history. And now that the train is standing at the platform, Poland is still wondering whether to get in or not, because the next one might be better. Dr. Kolodziejski considered this attitude to be wrong, and advised Poland to accept the invitation to board this historic train, whose driver lives in the Kremlin.

And so, as a result of the Moscow Conference, the Polish nation got on to this train, or rather was led by the hand into a cattle truck attached to it which, from the outside, looked like a normal carriage. To-day the train is already in motion, and the passengers, who have no say as to its destination, and who have not even got windows to look out and see where they are going, are becoming seriously worried.

They are not only worried because the journey is uncomfortable, but also because they can remember a Russian film which was shown in Poland. In this film German prisoners-of-war were seen, being loaded into cattle trucks by the N.K.V.D. The scene took place on a small station, and the railway line vanished over the horizon of an apparently limitless flat country. There lay the destination of that train. The picture ended as the train moved off, and on the screen appeared the words: "So shall we deport Fascism from the whole of Europe."

Remembering the mass deportations into Siberia of people from Eastern Poland and soldiers of the Polish Underground Army from the camp in Rembertow, we know what "Fascism" means. This word is applied to everything which is not Soviet, but belongs to the culture and way of living of the Western world, entirely contrary to the Eastern one. We understand the deep and terrible significance of that announcement. At the present time no deportations are taking place to Siberia from Polish territory—yet. Nobody knows, however, how soon the "softness" of the present policy will change when it becomes obvious that the methods in use are not sufficiently effective.







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