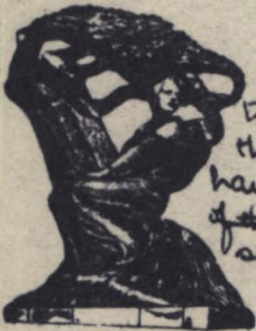


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COMMENTS ON A PEOPLES DEMOCRACY —

POLAND. ~~RF~~ 65



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During six weeks in Poland I have travelled to the Baltic in the north, to the Tatras mountains in the south: I have seen the little school ~~spoken to one of the teachers in the minute village school~~ spoken to Jofia Mistal, a teacher in a village school and to Adam Tarn, an internationally known playwright: I ~~have spent~~ ^{passed away} an evening in a book-keeper's flat and chucked the Prime Minister at a state reception (that was an accident!): I have heard the "system" adversely criticized over coffee in a public café and heard it ~~of course~~ ^{solely} appraised in the corridor of a train. I have spoken to scores of people in English, French and German, but - sorry! - never in Polish. I have asked questions and received replies. ~~Here~~ are some of my comments.

The capitalist press lumps the Soviet Union, China and countries like Poland all together and with wilful inaccuracy dubs them all "Communist", though not even Bulganin claims that Communism has been achieved in the U.S.S.R. I discover, of course, there are great distinctions between the Socialist Soviet Union and the Peoples Democracy of Poland, the two major differences being in the fields of economy and politics.

In the Soviet Union there is only one political party - the Communist: in Poland there are four, viz: - the United Workers Party (a fusion of the old Polish Communist Party and the old Socialist Party): the Peasants' Party: the Democratic Party and the Catholic Party. The United Workers Party is far and away the strongest, thereby ensuring that the principles of Marxism and Leninism are the ^{unchallengeable} foundations of this new state form. The Peasants Party has a Marxist basis, but the Democratic and Catholic Parties, though accepting

new state form
the socialist ~~the~~ premises, do not subscribe to
the ruling ideology. (3)

These parties represent the survival of pre-war Polish parties, ~~and~~ all ^{of them} took part in the first provisional government after liberation and continue to form the Government. The existence of several parties leads to a more complicated electoral system than Russia employs, but the system ensures democratic representation. Incidentally, the Democratic Catholic Parties run party schools and engage in full-scale political activity. Nevertheless, the Marxist parties are confident that as time goes on the need for separate parties to represent sectional interests will wither away, leaving only the Communist Party.

In the field of economy, one finds a mixture of state and private enterprises, the great bulk of industry and commerce, however, being in the hands of the state. At the time of the Revolution all large industries, ^{land and} finance corporations, ~~and~~ were nationalised, leaving only small factories and a number of shops in private hands. Many ~~one-man~~ ~~trades~~ craftsmen carry on privately - e.g. some tailors, jewellers, shoe-menders &c. In addition, many private workers combine into co-operatives, whose ~~the~~ charges and profits are controlled by the state. Again it is anticipated that gradually the purely private ^{section of the economy} ~~businesses~~ will wither away. In the meantime, the private businessmen ~~are~~ remain the "moneyed" section of the population.

As far as agriculture is concerned - absorbing 40% of the working population - ~~to~~ this is largely in the hands of private small-holders, peasants who formerly had no land at all, but who today enjoy their share of it.

expropriated and ~~of the~~ ~~large~~ ³ large ~~estate~~ ³ ~~estate~~ estates. Many small farmers now work collectively, but many do not. There are many state farms.

more significant, I think, than the differences between a socialist country and a Peoples Democracy, are the differences between a popular democratic state and a capitalist state.

The first inescapable distinction is that socialism as found in Poland, releases and effectively utilizes manpower, ~~and~~ natural resources and national productivity in a way which the contradictions of capitalism render quite impossible. Only, I venture to say, under socialism could the gigantic tasks undertaken ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~ fulfilled in Poland in the past ~~years~~ ¹¹ years have been accomplished.

National income, ~~is~~ after the demands of education, health, transport, culture ~~or~~ have been met, is devoted to:

- i. industrialization
- ii. reconstruction of war damage
- iii. defence.

~~These three categories of expenditure~~
~~The industrialization of Poland is an immense project,~~
~~incapable of the task of~~
The industrialization ^{of} a country, which had a ^{hitherto} predominantly agricultural economy, is incomprehensible to people living in highly-industrialized countries. One can imagine the task confronting South Africa, for example, if in 1886 it had ^{as it is today} decided to industrialize ^{from its own capital resources,} the Witwatersrand ^{within a period of eleven years!}
In Poland electric power plants have sprung up; its first motor car factory; a ~~whole~~ completely new city of Nowa Huta, with a present population of 109,000, has been constructed and its steel and machinery are already being exported. Vast strides

have been taken to expand & modernize coal-mining, shipbuilding and textile manufactures. In the world of export trade Poland ranks high among the countries of Europe - not only in agricultural products but in the products of industry as well.

The tourist in Poland, ~~now~~ however, marvels at what he sees and understands with his own eyes - the rebuilding of towns, cities & ports which were almost 100% destroyed by the Nazis. Where, he gasps, have come all the stone and steel and glass and cement and wood for these new cities? Where did they find all the architects, townplanners, masons, plasterers, plumbers, glaziers? And, if he is an Englishman ~~or American~~ he will think ~~of~~ of the comparatively minor amount of war damage his country suffered - ~~which remains~~ and sadly wonder why the ruins still remain. A Londoner will ask what happened to the exciting ~~plan~~ ^{project} of 1944 to re-plan London with parks and playgrounds on the bombed sites! And as he walks down the Henryk Street in Warsaw or the King Street in Gdansk, he probably shakes his head, as we all do, in wondering disbelief.

In the capitalist countries of Britain and South Africa educational facilities are shrinking. In South Africa university courses ^{are} still available only for those who can afford the increasing fees: the Bantu Education Act has meant ~~for~~ a decrease in the ~~quality and quantity of~~ ^{to go African} schooling. In England the building of schools is lagging behind the increasing school population. Young men and women cannot attend the universities for the young men & women who are clamouring for higher training.

In Poland the picture is reversed. Primary schooling is compulsory: despite a much smaller population today, there are 25,000 more teachers than there were in 1938. Today there are 121,000 students in universities, medical schools etc. In 1938 there were 48,000. In 1938 only 13% of the children in school were the children of workers & peasants. Today they represent 61%.

Before the Revolution there ⁵ (5) was a law that every child had to attend school for a minimum of ONE year! But even this degree of "compulsory education" was a myth in the rural areas. But today, aside the building, however inadequate equipment, there are schools for all! I could not help being sadly impressed when I saw Zofia Mistals little two-roomed school. Before the revolution there had been no school at all - now the 67 peasant families in the village had their own school - and the local party secretary ^{was} kicking up hell's delight with the people in Warsaw for not getting more done to improve the school. I was sad, of course, because I thought of what the Bantu Education Act means for our children - ^{the} darkness of inculcated ignorance, whereas here was the light of learning.



Here students at universities and medical schools receive monthly stipends, over and above the free education, meals at college restaurants are practically free, books, by the way, are extraordinarily cheap. ← I think of the almost non-existent school-feeding for African children.

But education is only one aspect of the zealous care with which children are treated. Health services are free: there are family allowances; social trade union social funds to assist large families. Then there are the crèches, Kindergartens everywhere and the Houses of Culture for children's after-school activities: holiday camps and children's sanatoria (free) in the country and the mountains. Children are regarded and treated as valuable individuals, not as herds of animals to be trained only for work.

Other features of this Popular Democracy which I will not elaborate, but which further distinguish it from a capitalist country, are the launch encouragement of all the arts (how my heart aches for to have in South Africa the same).

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conditions for training and working in the theatre...
are found here!). The indigenous culture of the
people - the songs, dances, customs - are diligently
fostered (Polish folk-dancing is most superb and
most exciting); minstrel groups, e.g. the gipsies, have
full equal rights and freedoms: house & flat
rentals are really absurdly cheap, about 4 or 5%
of the ~~earnings~~ wages of only one of the workers in
a family: almost free, sometimes altogether free,
holidays, including travel: cheap tickets for
theatres & bios: security of work, security
against sickness and old-age. Above all,
there is the guarantee, implicit in the socialist
system, that living standards must go on
getting better day by day.

But there are features of life which are
common to both Poland, for example, and
South Africa, for example. The cost-of-living,
for instance, is very high both in Warsaw and
Johannesburg. The African people of Johannesburg,
of course, would not agree with me. They would
say that the cost of maintaining the Warsaw
standard of living was cheap - because, at least,
it is possible. A similar standard of living is utterly
impossible to the Africans in Johannesburg.
To a white South African, however, clothing,
meat and butter, coffee, shoes would appear
very expensive - and the Poles are ~~not~~ aware
of these high prices. Housing accommodation
is still inadequate, so that families
of three, for instance, have only two
rooms. (Incidentally, every flat built since

the Revolution has separate ⁷ kitchen, bathroom and lavatory, and has gas and electricity. Even every block of flats will have free hot water for domestic purposes & central-heating.) If the present rate of building is maintained, however, ~~the~~ ^{expanding} accommodation requirements will be easily coped with in the next few years.

Another common feature ^{to the two countries} is freedom of religion. There are churches everywhere, a great proportion of them having been rebuilt out of state funds; and the churches I have been into have had numerous worshippers. One period a week is set aside in the schools for religious instruction (optional, of course). ~~The~~ A priest visits the school & the children go to the priest. Some schools, however, have no such provision, where the Parents Association decides against ~~the~~ having religious instruction connected with the school. In Warsaw on Warsaw's main streets there is a shop, which, I must confess, struck me as being ^{typical} anachronistic - the British and Foreign Bible Society!

Discontent is to be found in Cracow as in Cape Town. One cause for discontent is the high price of clothes: another one voiced is the difficulty of obtaining a permit to visit another country. (I haven't really found out whether this is a security measure or one to conserve foreign currency, of which Poland is very short). One man is fed up because they want to charge him the equivalent of a month's salary as import-duty on a flute he wants to buy in Switzerland. One married couple I know don't say so, but I surmise the husband hankers for the good old duff, when as a timber-merchant his profits

⑧
were uncontrolled. The wife, a doctor, quite rightly resents the long hours she has to work in order to make in a good wage. (I think doctors here are poorly paid.) One young man merely pined for the past, when his family owned a large estate. Today he is a wages-clerk in a building concern.

yet, when due allowance is made for genuine discontentment, I must agree with a British textile trader, who said at breakfast — to my surprise — that the people who had grumbled to him weren't worth very much as individuals anyway. I have the same impression — the grumblers here, by and large, would be grumbling in France Paris or New York or Pretoria. However, I couldn't help noting the freedom they have to voice their grumbles! [Freedom in Poland means that you can criticize constructively as much as you like — but it is death if you plot to overthrow the socialist system. In England & France you are at liberty to ~~try~~ work for a change of the system — not in Kenya, Malaya, Algeria and Morocco. In the United States it's twenty years in jail. The only criterion to apply is: what conditions are you trying to change into what? Will the changes you contemplate be for the greatest good of the greatest number?]

Finally, I recall a scene which symbolizes the new Poland. We were dining late one night in Cracow. ~~the~~ Couples were dancing. ~~Although not~~ They seemed very happy. But, I thought, so do dancing couples in Johannesburg, or London or Paris. And then I asked myself, "what does tomorrow hold for the dancing couples of Johannesburg? ~~Paris~~ Cracow?" In the case of Johannesburg there is insecurity and fear — health, work, old age, racial strife, rising cost of living. In Cracow there is security and social peace and an ever rising standard of living. "No!", I concluded, "if Eisenhower really tried to 'liberate' these people, they'd shoot him!"

Dear Yvonne

I have finished the article for F.T. which
please find enclosed. ~~My~~ The typing
is not too hot, but I hope it will be
okay for the printer.

On page 8 of the original there is
a paragraph which has been
bracketed and crossed through —
I presumed that this had to
be left out, but if it has to
go in — its place is where

~~I have put a row of asterisks~~
on page 7 of the typewritten copy.
(Okay?).

Could you please check the spelling of the
names of the towns and streets, as I have
never heard of some of them, and
wasn't quite sure of the spelling!

Thanks a lot

What has happened
to "Victor 2"?

Joan

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RECORDS RELATING TO THE 'TREASON TRIAL' (REGINA vs F. ADAMS AND OTHERS ON CHARGE OF HIGH TREASON, ETC.), 1956 1961

TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand

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