Letters

Poland and the Jews

Some days ago the world observed the 25th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, when 40,000 Jews took up arms in a doomed effort to combat the Nazi forces. This was surely one of the glorious chapters in the annals of martyrdom and heroic resistance to tyranny. What irony and tragedy that at this moment virulent anti-Semitism is being revived on Polish soil soaked with the blood of millions of Jews.

The wave of anti-Jewish hysteria in Poland is being whipped up by potent reactionary forces in the regime and exploited as a weapon in a power struggle, a scapegoat for popular discontent, a smokescreen for economic and political ills, an instrument to stifle progressive reforms demanded by the intelligentsia and students. The close link between anti-intellectualism, antiliberalism and anti-Semitism is once again tragically demonstrated.

On March 8 thousands of Warsaw University students demonstrated for freedom of expression, fair trials and an end to censorship. These demonstrations spread swiftly to other universities throughout the country, and were met by police violence and arrests.

Play Suppressed

It is universal knowledge that the outbreak of students' demonstrations was due to the suppression by the authorities of public performances of "Dziady," the masterpiece of Mikiewicz, Poland's greatest poet. Will the music of Chopin be next to be prohibited from being heard in public? The political ideology of Chopin and his friend Mickiewicz was identical.

Since then Poland has been undergoing a massive systematic course of purge and propaganda whose central feature has been its undisguised anti-Semitism.

The Jewish community of 18,000, many elderly or ill, is accused of disloyalty and browbeaten into self-abasement. Dozens of distinguished Jewish academics, artists, writers and intellectuals of international repute are called alien to Poland, charged with being spiritual instigators of the student movement, expelled from the Communist party and dismissed from their positions.

Purge of Intellectuals

Scores of students are arrested. All, intellectuals and students alike, are named and are pointed out as Jews. Many hundreds of others less prominent are also being purged more quietly but not less efficiently.

Most shocking is that all this is being done to the accompaniment of a vast propaganda campaign which has charged the country's atmosphere fearfully. Jews are accused of being "cosmopolitans, national nihilists, members of an international Zionist conspiracy, Zionist lackeys of Western imperialism."

Jewish philanthropic organizations which have poured millions of dollars into the economic and social rehabilitation of war-torn Poland are accused of conspiracy, sabotage and espionage at the behest of international Zionism and Western imperialism.

The moral nadir of this campaign is the falsification and distortion of the facts of Jewish martyrdom at the hands of the Nazis, the obscene denigration of the Jewish victims of mass murder.

This is the brutal lexicon used by Stalin and his anti-Semitic purges of 1948-52 and in the infamous doctors' plot he concocted in January, 1953. It is, tragically, the very language that has been revived in the Soviet Union since the Arab-Israel War last June, in an ominous propaganda campaign against the Jewish people. This is the policy and the propaganda now taken over and carried further by the Polish authorities.

I appeal to the leaders of Poland to cease this outrage. I appeal to world public opinion to rally to the defense of the Polish intelligentsia and Polish Jewry.

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