

What Has Changed in Poland?

Jewish emigré pin-points issues and problems

By JULIUS KATZ-SUCHY

IT was Sunday, Dec. 20, 1970 that Poles throughout the country learned of the end of the rule of Gomulka and of a new party leadership settling itself in the Party House, headed by Edward Gierek, the powerful secretary of the Silesian district, the richest industrial region of Poland.

Thus, there came to an end the 14 years' rule of Gomulka. Thus came to a conclusion an internal party strife for succession which found its strongest expression in March, 1968 in the deliberately provoked events and in the nationalistic and anti-Semitic purge that followed, which was temporarily

won by Gomulka at the 5th Party Congress.

Although the circumstances remind us of the revolt of Oct., 1956, the differences are basic. None of those who came into power can claim to be a victim of the old regime, or that he opposed its policies. All of them are responsible for the present situation, being co-responsible for the economic plans and industrial management. They were co-authors of the laws suppressing political and economic freedom, abolishing academic and cultural independence, and imposing stricter censorship. They all participated in the nationalistic and anti-Semitic campaign and gave unequivocal support to the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

DR. JULIUS KATZ-SUCHY, former Polish Ambassador to the United Nations and then to India, was Professor of International Law at Warsaw University until he was "retired" in the wave of anti-Semitic actions. Dec. 23, 1969 he was allowed to emigrate "to Israel," but instead went to Denmark, where he is now a university professor in Copenhagen. The present statement was made by Dr. Katz-Suchy as his introduction to a round-table discussion of the Polish developments held on the Danish radio Feb. 2, 1971 and repeated Feb. 3. We publish it with the permission of Dr. Katz-Suchy.

Attempts are being made now to woo the support of the people. The church is being wooed by an appeal to believers and unbelievers, and by granting the title of deed to church property in Western Poland. The intellectuals are being drawn in by the promise of the rebuilding of the King's Castle in Warsaw and publication of some of the withheld books. Workers are being wooed by smiles, kisses and embraces and by highering of the lowest wages and lowering the price of the cheapest sausage. The leaders, however, cannot make any promise as to the

raising of wages or the general lowering of prices.

But not even one man of the new set-up has repudiated what was characteristic of the rule of the old group. No one has dissociated himself from the anti-Semitic campaign, which sent so many into emigration and deprived many of jobs and a livelihood. No one promises the release of Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski, the courageous student leaders lingering in prison, or of other political prisoners. No one has proposed the restoration to their posts of the professors and students dismissed from universities. No one claimed there would be freedom of discussion or the loosening of censorship. No one has promised the curbing of the police system, which has grown like a cancer into a state within a state, with separate political organizations, publications, press agencies, with a spider web of secret agents, with unlimited power.

It is true the economic situation that the new ruling group is facing is difficult. The economy is deteriorating as a result of two years of bad harvests but most of all because of mismanagement, bad planning, low productivity, outdated technology, and misappropriations, and because an ever increasing part of the national income is being consumed by the ruling political and managerial bureaucracy. Only drastic changes of the economic policy, redirection of the investment policy, and of foreign trade, fast technological changes, restitution of workers' participation in management and control of establishments and the lessening of the gap between highest and lowest wages can bring slow results. That means calling upon workers for sacrifices, which they are not prepared to make, as they still mistrust the new leadership, because one cannot play the same

game twice. In 1956 the Poles believed that things are changing and that the leadership will initiate reforms and democratise the country. Today they no longer have such illusions.

Because the present action was not a genuine political revolt. It was rather a palace revolution, of the 1964 type, which replaced Khrushchev, or of the Latin-American type, where leaders of two competing groups, using the situation, created an alliance to replace Gomulka by themselves. The gulf between the rulers and the ruled still exists in spite of some discussion. The events of 1956 were a part of a greater process of de-Stalinization upon which the left all over the world placed so much hope. Since the invasion of Czechoslovakia, it no longer seems possible that there is any chance of basic reforms in the countries of Eastern Europe without substantial changes in the USSR.

Yet, the Polish situation carries many seeds of hope and change. It is for the first time in the contemporary history of Eastern Europe that a party leadership has collapsed under the pressure of revolts of the working class which did not accept that change as sufficient or genuine. The workers came out against bullets and tanks, raising their struggle from economic targets to a political level, demanding socialism with a democratic rule, better management, workers councils' control, a new role of the trade unions and democracy an dright of criticism within the party. This does not fit into the program of the new leadership. So one has to see the changes as a beginning of a process and not the end or a new stabilization. This lesson which the Polish people have learned from the workers' rebellion will be felt not only in Poland but throughout all Eastern Europe. Therein lay some hope for the future and the seeds of tomorrow.