

THE POLISH WORKERS' PARTY AND THE
OPPOSITION TO COMMUNIST POWER
IN POLAND, 1944 — 47

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at the London School of Economics and Political Science

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the development of the internal political situation in Poland from the formation of the Polish Committee of National Liberation in mid-1944 to the consolidation of communist power at the turn of 1946/47. It concentrates in particular on the way the organisations and political strategies of the Polish Workers' Party and the main non-communist forces: the Polish Peasant Party, the Polish Socialist Party, the Catholic political movement and the anti-communist underground evolved during these years.

Chapter One describes the re-establishment of the Polish communist movement from 1941 and the shaping of its strategy of the national front during the period until the Soviet liberation of eastern Poland in 1944. Chapter Two examines the relationship between the communist-led 'Lublin Committee' and the underground movement loyal to the Government-in-Exile in London. It identifies the hardening of the Polish communists' stance towards the underground from October 1944. Chapter Three looks at the political and economic situation in Poland following the liberation of the country in early 1945. It examines the factors which caused the communists to moderate their line in May 1945. Chapter Four considers the impact of the legal opposition movement which arose around the Polish Peasant Party following the formation of the Provisional Government of National Unity in June 1945. Chapter Five describes the increasing polarisation between the communists and the opposition in the first half of 1946 and examines the unsuccessful efforts of the Polish Socialist Party to restore national unity. The political offensive launched by the Polish Workers' Party and its allies against the opposition at the time of the elections in late 1946 and early 1947, and the consolidation of the communists' hold on power are described in Chapter Six.

The thesis argues that the national front strategy which the communists followed between 1942 and 1948 underwent a series of major modifications. These modifications were in response not only to external pressures, but to a very considerable degree to developments in the internal situation in Poland. Ultimately the communists were able to achieve the objectives of the national front strategy only to a very limited extent. In particular, they were unable to achieve a broad base of popular support for their vision of Poland's future and had instead to rest it on force and the state-Party apparatus.

For my father,
Robert James Reynolds (1919 - 1984)

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ABBREVIATIONS

AK	Armia Krajowa	Home Army
AL	Armia Ludowa	People's Army
CBKP	Centralne Biuro Komunistów Polskich	Central Bureau of Polish Communists
DSZ	Delegatura Sił Zbrojnych	Armed Forces Delegation
FAO		Food and Agriculture Organisation
GOP	Grupy Ochronno- Propagandowe	Defence-Propaganda Groups
KBW	Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego	Internal Security Corps
KC	Komitet Centralny	Central Committee
KPP	Komunistyczna Partia Polski	Communist Party of Poland
KRN	Krajowa Rada Narodowa	Homeland National Council
MO	Milicja Obywatelska	Citizens' Militia
NKVD	Narodowy komisariat wnutrich dyel	Soviet People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs
NOW	Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa	National Military Organisation
NPR	Narodowa Partia Robotnicza	National Workers' Party
NSZ	Narodowe Siły Zbrojne	National Armed Forces
NZW	Narodowy Związek Wojskowy	National Military Union
ORMO	Ochotnicza Rezerwa Milicji Obywatelskiej	Citizens' Militia Volunteer Reserve
PKWN	Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego	Polish National Liberation Committee

PPR	Polska Partia Robotnicza	Polish Workers' Party
PPS	Polska Partia Socjalistyczna	Polish Socialist Party
PS	(Organizacja) Polskich Socjalistów	Polish Socialists
PSL	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe	Polish Peasant Party
PZPR	Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza	Polish United Workers' Party
RPPS	Robotnicza Partia Polskich Socjalistów	Workers' Party of Polish Socialists
SD	Stronnictwo Demokratyczne	Democratic Party
SDKPiL	Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy	Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania
SL	Stronnictwo Ludowe	Peasant Party
SL'ROCh'	Stronnictwo Ludowe 'Ruch Oporu Chłó- pów'	Peasant Party 'Resistance movement of the Peasants'
SN	Stronnictwo Narodowe	National Party
SP	Stronnictwo Pracy	Party of Labour
UB	Urząd Bezpieczeństwa	Security Office
UNRRA		United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
UPA	Ukraińska Powstańcza Armia	Ukrainian Insurrectionary Army
WIN	Wolność i Niezawisłość	Freedom and Independence
WRN	Wolność, Równość, Niepodległość	Freedom, Equality, Independence
ZMK	Związek Młodzieży Komunistycznej	Union of Communist Youth
ZPP	Związek Patriotów Polskich	Union of Polish Patriots

ZSch	Związek Samopomocy Wiejskiej	Peasant Self-help Union
ZWM	Związek Walki Młodych	Youth Union of Struggle

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CHAPTER ONE

FROM THE KPP TO LUBLIN (Background to July 1944)

About 1 a.m. on 28 December 1941 six parachutists landed in fields at Wiązowna, near Warsaw. Despite the loss of a radio transmitter and the awkward fall of its leader, Marcei Nowotko, who broke his leg, the First Initiative Group of the Polish Workers' Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza - PPR) landed undetected. A week later in a sympathiser's flat in Żoliborz, a suburb of the capital, the Party was formally established.¹ Some three years after Stalin's purge and disbandment of the Communist Party of Poland (Komunistyczna Partia Polski - KPP) in 1938, the Polish communists once more had a political vehicle which enjoyed Soviet confidence.

In several respects circumstances seemed to favour the new Party's growth. Uneasy though their alliance was, Poland and the Soviet Union were linked in the common struggle against Nazi Germany. In time it became apparent that the Red Army and not the Western Powers would drive the Germans from Polish territory. For the first time in their history the communists were able to combine their loyalty to the Soviets with Polish national interests and sentiments. This opportunity was enhanced by the flexibility and lack of dogmatism which characterised the political line of the Soviet Union and the international communist movement from 1941 until the late 1940s. Secondly, the military regime which had ruled Poland after 1926 had been destroyed by Poland's crushing defeat in 1939. The liberal democratic government in exile under General Władysław Sikorski which took its place had the support of all Poland's major political parties and the great majority of the population in Poland. However its distance from Poland and dependence on the Western Powers, which placed

1 M. Malinowski Geneza PPR (2nd edition, Warsaw 1975) pp. 362-63.

higher priority on peaceful relations with the Soviet Union, were ultimately to prove fatal disadvantages in the struggle for power in postwar Poland.² Thirdly, as elsewhere in Europe, the experience of war and occupation weakened traditional allegiances and radicalised important sections of the population.³ The communists were optimistic that they could achieve a new and broad appeal based on the yearning of the Polish nation for liberation and the popular desire for radical reform and reconstruction. The communists believed that the prestige and unity of Poland's wartime underground state, which had the support of almost all political groupings from far left to far right, would crumble as the end of the German occupation approached and conflicts of class interest heightened. In this situation the Party would be able to win allies on the left and centre and isolate its diehard opponents. The PPR would thereby avoid the political isolation and eventual fate of the KPP. Such was the thinking behind the strategy of the national front which, following long discussions in Comintern circles prior to its departure, the 'Initiative Group', placed at the core of the new Party's outlook.

However, the two-and-a-half years from its formation until its assumption of power in Lublin in July 1944 were years of failure as far as the Party's strategy was concerned. The premises on which the national front strategy was based were correct only in broad geopolitical terms, that is in relation to Poland's likely place in the postwar international order. Domestically, its assumptions proved false. The Party was quite unable to escape the legacy of the KPP. It had very little success in harnessing radical

2 See A. Polonsky (ed.) The Great Powers and the Polish Question 1941-1945 (London, 1976) pp. 13-48. Polonsky makes the point that 'As Churchill repeatedly told Mikołajczyk, the Western Powers were not prepared to go to war with the Soviet Union over Poland. The essential fact was that control of Poland was seen as vital by the Soviet Union, as it was not by Great Britain or the United States'. See p. 47.

3 See A. Korboński Politics of Socialist Agriculture in Poland 1945-1960 (New York and London, 1965), pp. 38-40.

forces or placing itself at the head of the struggle for national liberation. It was unable to expand much beyond the political base of the prewar communist movement, while the underground camp remained solidly united in its hostility to the PPR and had little difficulty in keeping it isolated. The prestige of the traditional political forces remained high, while anti-Soviet feeling, projected onto the PPR did not abate but was fuelled by such factors as the revelation of the Katyn massacres in 1943⁴ and the Soviet claim to much of pre-war eastern Poland. In sum, the fundamental weakness of the communist movement within Polish society remained a constant between 1942-44 while the military victory of the Soviet Union over Germany propelled it into government.

The movement was separated into two far-flung sections: the circle in Soviet emigration and the clandestine PPR in Poland itself. The failure of the PPR in Poland was not shared by the Polish communists in the USSR who had considerable success in enlisting the co-operation of the Polish emigration in the USSR which had no other route to return to Poland and was able to participate in the Soviet victories of 1943-44. Strongly influenced by Soviet foreign policy requirements, the leading communist group adhered closely to the national front strategy worked out in 1941. They attributed the difficulties encountered in its domestic application to what they saw as the ineptitude and sectarianism of the underground Party rather than to any objective obstacles. In contrast the PPR was preoccupied with these obstacles and convinced of the need to modify the national front strategy to meet them. The original line of 1941: 'the national front without traitors and capitulators' had by 1943 reached a complete impasse. For many months during

4 In April 1943 the Germans announced the discovery in a mass grave at Katyn in Byelorussia of the bodies of 4,000 Polish officers and troops. There is little doubt that the Poles were prisoners of war captured in September 1939 and murdered by the Soviets in 1940. See further J.K. Zawodny Death in the Forest. The story of the Katyn Forest Massacre (London, 1971).

1943 the underground leadership seemed directionless until at the end of the year, largely on its own initiative, it adopted a more radical 'democratic national front' and set up its own political centre, the Homeland National Council. This did not solve the problem. The Council won almost no support beyond the Party itself and its formation generated a sharp, three-way debate amongst the communists over strategy which persisted right up to the moment of liberation in July 1944. It would be no exaggeration to say that the path of the PPR from its foundation to power coincided with the steady erosion of its political strategy by internal realities.

The KPP legacy

The KPP - the Communist Party of Poland - was formed in 1918 when the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy - SDKPiL) merged with elements from the left of the Polish Socialist Party. The KPP existed for two decades until 1938 when the Comintern, claiming that the KPP had been overrun by 'provocateurs', disbanded the party, and much of its leadership and aktyw fell victim to Stalin's Great Purge.⁵ The PPR specifically disassociated itself from what were seen as the errors and false traditions of its predecessor. In 1947 Gomułka affirmed that '... it would be incorrect to define the PPR as a communist party. We are not a continuation of the former Communist Party of Poland. The first Congress of our Party confirmed that "the Polish Workers' Party is a new party..."'.⁶

However, especially during the war, the legacy of the

5 For the dissolution of the KPP, see further: J. Kowalski, Komunistyczna Partia Polski 1935-1938 (Warsaw, 1975) Chapters XI, XII; M. Malinowski Przyczynek do sprawy rozwiązania KPP z pola walki 1968 nr 3 (43) pp. 3-24; A. Litwin Tragiczne dzieje KPP (1935-1938), Zeszyty Historyczne 36 (1976) pp. 215-231.

6 Narada informacyjna dziewięciu partii (Warsaw, 1947) pp. 22-23.

KPP weighed heavily on the PPR.⁷ This inheritance had its root in long years of mutual rejection. On the one hand, for much of its existence, the KPP had been at war not only with the Polish state, but with its entire body politic, including the legal opposition parties of the left. On the other, in the eyes of the great majority of Poles, the KPP was a foreign, subversive agency of Moscow, bent on the destruction of Poland's hard-won independence and the incorporation of Poland into the Soviet Union. Labelled a 'Soviet agency' or the 'Jew-Commune', it was viewed as a dangerous and fundamentally un-Polish conspiracy dedicated to undermining national sovereignty and restoring, in a new guise, Russian domination.⁸

The KPP for most of its existence had little in common with those mass Communist Parties which operated in the open elsewhere in Europe. From its earliest days the KPP had been illegal. Party activists often spent more time in prison than at liberty. In 1932 when government repression was fierce, over 10,000 people were detained and nearly 7,000 were put under arrest for communist activities.⁹ Amongst the future leadership of the PPR, Bierut was imprisoned for six years, Gomułka for seven, Józwiak and Aleksander Zawadzki each for eleven.¹⁰ The Party

7 In a message from the KC PPR to the CBKP dated 12.1.1944 Gomułka admitted that 'despite the fact that the political line expressed in its programme in no sense resembles that of a communist party, the PPR is considered to be one not only by conservative and reactionary elements, but also by the working class' W. Gomułka Artykuły i przemówienia Vol. I (Warsaw, 1962), p. 61.

8 'In Warsaw there were slogans in every street, on every house: PPR-enemy, agent of Moscow... The PPR is an enemy... A large part of society believed in this and also that the KRN was inspired by Moscow, that everyone involved in it was rolling in money and the expression 'Jewish work' became generally accepted' Gomułka quoted in J. Borkowski Pertrakcje przedwyborcze między PPR PPS a PSL (1945-6), Kwartalnik Historyczny R. LXXI z. 2 1964 pp. 429-30.

9 J. Kowalski Trudne lata problemy rozwoju polskiego ruchu robotniczego 1929-1935 (Warsaw, 1966), p. 295.

10 See further W. Ważniński Bolesław Bierut (Warsaw, 1976); N. Bethell Gomułka: His Poland and His Communism

operated underground. Much of its elite resided abroad permanently and congresses were normally held outside Poland. Party officials led an undercover existence with false identities and constant changes of address, ever-wary of informers and infiltration. Government repression prevented any true test of the Party's electoral appeal. However even in its best year, 1928, when the KPP 'fronts' polled respectably in Lodz, Warsaw and the Silesian coal-field, its vote amounted to only 2.5% of the total, very much less than its neighbouring German and Czech counterparts.¹¹

Membership data bring out more vividly the narrow base of the KPP. Kowalski has estimated that the membership of the KPP in 1935 was between 7,400 and 8,200.¹² Membership in the 1920s had been less - about 3,500 in 1928-29.¹³ Of the 1935 membership total, approximately a quarter were Jewish and no more than about 1,500 were factory workers.¹⁴ Although the Ukrainian, White Russian and youth sections of the Party supplemented its strength, these figures indicate clearly its failure to win mass support amongst the Polish population.

The other side of the Party's isolation was the way in which the communists distanced themselves from the political institutions and forces of the Polish Second Republic. This sprang to a large degree from the ideological stance of the Party, its analysis of Poland's likely revolutionary development and its attitude to Polish statehood.

contd...

(London, 1972); H. Rechowicz Aleksander Zawadzki. Życie i działalność (Katowice, 1969); Z. Jakubowski Franciszek Jóźwiak "Witold" (Zarys działalności politycznej i państwowej) Z pola walki 1974 nr. 2 (66) pp. 225-68.

11 The German Communist Party received 17% of the votes in the November 1932 elections. The communists received 13% of the votes in Czechoslovakia in November 1925, coming second.

12 Kowalski KPP... op. cit., pp. 69-70.

13 Kowalski Trudne... op. cit., p. 61.

14 Kowalski KPP... op. cit., p. 61.

The KPP did not pursue the moderate and gradualist line adopted later by the PPR. Only in 1922-23 at the time of the second Congress of the KPP, and again from 1934/5 when the anti-fascist 'popular front' was adopted by the international movement did the KPP seek to construct alliances with parties from the mainstream of Polish politics. Even so, significant sections of the rank-and-file appear to have been unreceptive to calls by the leadership for moderation during these intervals.¹⁵ For the most part, the KPP pursued a radical, ultra-leftist line which Gomułka later described as its 'abstract revolutionism'.¹⁶ This assumed that the Polish revolution would not be generated from within, but would follow a revolution spilling across the whole of Europe from the Soviet Union or Germany. In Poland it would take a classic Bolshevik course. Armed insurrection would be followed by the dictatorship of the proletariat, exercised by a tightly-disciplined, Leninist cadre-party, the KPP, through councils of workers, peasant and soldiers. The revolutionary party would dismantle the bourgeois state and commence the construction of a socialist state directly, without any transitional stages. The internal class-basis of the revolution would be the proletariat, poor peasants and oppressed national minorities. The KPP considered that collaboration with the bourgeois parties and particularly with the parliamentary left (the Socialists and Peasant Party) was superfluous and would weaken the revolutionary commitment of the masses. In 1918-21, 1924-5 and 1929-34 the European revolution was judged imminent. Accordingly, Party activity was aimed not at cultivating wide support inside Poland. Instead, it gave priority to preparations for the seizure of power.

15 J. Holzer Mozaika polityczna drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (Warsaw, 1974), pp. 231, 515. Resolutions were passed at both the IV (1936) and V (1937) Plenums of the KPP criticising sectarian and ultra-leftist elements in the Party for failing to correctly understand the Party's new line. See Kowalski KPP... op. cit., pp. 209, 339-40.

16 Przemówienie tow Wiesława na plenarnym posiedzeniu KC PPR w dniu 3 czerwca 1948 roku Zeszyty Historyczne 34 (1975), p. 60.

Attempts were made to arouse the working-class through militant strike tactics and the national minorities through terrorist attacks on the Polish authorities and maximum support was given to the international movement.¹⁷ The priority the KPP gave to furthering the international revolution and, in particular, to assisting the much larger Communist Party of Germany, led the KPP to support the demands of the German minority in Poland. This may or may not have assisted the German communists, but it was certainly highly damaging to the position of the KPP within Poland.¹⁸

In this scheme activity within the bourgeois state or in alliance with the mainstream parties could take place only on a temporary, tactical basis, when the prospect of the international revolution had for the moment receded and when it was felt that the bourgeois right or fascism constituted a real threat to the Soviet Union and the communist movement. In such circumstances the use of defensive tactics, including support for non-communist democratic opposition was regarded as justified. It was such argumentation which led to the KPP lending Piłsudski its support in 1926 at the time of his coup against the right-wing Peasant-Christian National government, a move which was rapidly condemned as the 'May Error'.¹⁹ At no point, however,

17 Holzer Mozaika... op. cit., pp. 226-33, 512-33.

18 Gomułka wrote in 1948 that 'from 1925 to 1935... the KPP either questioned the right of Poland to Upper Silesia and Pomorze, or employed the slogan of the right of these territories to secede from Poland, since they had been annexed by Polish imperialism. This was without doubt a misuse of the slogan of the right of national self-determination... the application of the right of self-determination in those areas would without doubt have implied the negation of Poland's independence.' Wyjaśnienie sekretarza generalnego KC PPR Władysława Gomułki w związku z jego referatem i projektem rezolucji biura politycznego, Zeszyty Historyczne 34 (1975), pp. 81-82.

19 Polonsky, Politics in Independent Poland 1921-1939. (Oxford, 1972).

did the KPP abandon its detachment from the Polish political system and work within it for an internally-based revolution.

Closely related to the Party's ultra-leftism was its position on the 'national question', the matter of Polish statehood. Apart from its brief periods of moderation in 1922-23 and the later 1930s, the KPP, in Gomułka's words, adopted a position on Polish independence 'which did not even arouse any doubts, since it stood either for the organic integration of Poland as a soviet republic into the Union of Soviet Republics, or put forward the slogan of an independent Soviet Poland, stating at the same time that "for the KPP there can be no defence of the independence of bourgeois Poland"...'.²⁰ This open hostility to Polish statehood was a huge handicap in winning the support of a strongly nationalistic population which had only very recently recovered a precarious independence after more than a century of foreign domination. Nationalism was a force amongst the working-class as much as any other stratum. In consequence, the influence of the communists amongst organised labour trailed behind that of the Socialists, the National and Catholic workers' movements and even the Sanacja.²¹

During its early years, especially, the position of the KPP on the national question was strongly influenced by the revolutionary internationalism of the old SDKPiL. In 1920, during the Bolshevik advance on Warsaw, the communists had formed a revolutionary government in Białystok and gave active support to the invading Red Army.²² During this

²⁰ Wyjaśnienie sekretarza generalnego... op. cit., p. 81.

²¹ In 1935 membership of the major trade union federations in Poland was as follows: Związek Stowarzyszeń Zawodowych w Polsce (mainly PPS) - 283,000 members; Związek Związków Zawodowych (Sanacja) - 147,000 members; Zjednoczenie Zawodowe Polskie (NPR) - 129,000 members; Chrześcijańskie Zjednoczenie Zawodowe (Catholic) had 78,000 members in 1933. The Lewica Związkowa (KPP) had 51,000 members in 1933. Kowalski Trudne... op. cit., pp. 251-3 and PPR Rezolucje, odezwy, instrukcje i okólniki komitetu centralnego VIII 1944 - XII 1945 (Warsaw, 1959), p. 62.

²² See N. Davies White Eagle, Red Star. The Polish-Soviet War 1919-1920 (London, 1972), especially pp. 150-59.

period the Party's position was defined in the most uncompromising internationalist terms. One of its declarations stated that 'for the international camp of social revolution there can be no question of frontiers'.²³ In later years it was less the "Luxemburgist heritage" of the SDKPiL than the Party's subordination to the Comintern and Soviet foreign policy which accounted for its anti-national stance. This un-Polishness was self-reinforcing. Because of its unattractiveness to the Polish population and Polish parties, the KPP turned instead towards the national minorities. The disproportionate number of Jews amongst its membership and even more amongst its leadership was one reflection of this.²⁴ Another was the Party's relative success in winning support within the Ukrainian and White Russian communities in the 1920s.

In practice the Party's internationalism took the form of unquestioning loyalty to the Soviet Union. Though the leadership struggle in Moscow during the 1920s was reflected in the faction fights inside the KPP, this did not undermine the Party's enthusiasm for the first socialist state. However Stalin's purge and disbandment of the KPP was a great trauma for the survivors. For some, like Gomułka, who had deep reservations about the character and line of the KPP, it confirmed the importance of a fresh start with a more nationally-based Party which would be less dependent on the Soviet Union. Others, with deeper attachments to the KPP, did not revise their ideological outlook fundamentally and seem to have drawn the conclusion that Polish communism must rehabilitate itself, avoid the disunity which had plagued it between the wars and regain Stalin's confidence.²⁵

23 Holzer Mozaika... op. cit., p. 226.

24 For the connection between the stance of the KPP on the national question and the extent of its membership amongst Polish Jews, see for instance W. Bienkowski Motory i hamulce socjalizmu (Paris, 1969), pp. 45-46.

25 See for instance A. Zawadzka-Wetz Refleksje pewnego życia (Paris, 1967), pp. 43-44 on Bierut's attitude.

Some features of the KPP inheritance were more in evidence in later years when the PPR had already come to power, but three were felt deeply during the years of the occupation. The first was the persistence of the solid front of the entire political spectrum against the communists. Even in 1942-43 when the Polish and Soviet governments maintained diplomatic relations with one another and the PPR platform was at its most moderate, the Party was unable to gain the trust of any significant section of the underground camp, not least of its far left. Efforts to form alliances with other groupings, whether with the leaders or rank-and-file, produced almost no result right up to mid-1944. The PPR at no stage came near to emulating the success of the Czech communists who were able to build on their prewar role within the Czech political system to enter and play a major part in the wartime anti-German coalition. The second factor was the continuing narrowness of the communists' base. Because of its lack of popular support the Party was unable to command the attention of the underground state. Nor could it follow Tito's example by creating an alternative underground movement capable of supplanting that of the bourgeois parties. Despite its claims to be a new party and its national slogans, KPP veterans and sympathisers provided the bulk of PPR cadres.²⁶ In January 1943 its membership was said to be 8,000,²⁷ about the same as the KPP. Its estimated strength of 20,000 in mid-1944²⁸ was

26 In a telegramme to Dimitrov (12.1.43), Finder estimated the proportion of KPP veterans in the PPR at one third. Depesze KC PPR do Georgii Dymitrowa (1942-43) Z pola walki 1961 nr 4 (16), p. 178. One historian commenting on this estimate has suggested that the non-KPP members of the PPR were drawn from former trade unionists, 'united front socialists' and other 'left-wing anti-fascist forces', as well as the peasant movement, but that 'the former KPP... formed the basic cadre in rebuilding the party...', J. Naumiuk PPR na Kielecczynie (Warsaw, 1976), pp. 75-76.

27 Depesze KC... op. cit., p. 178.

28 N. Kołomejczyk PPR 1944-1945 (Warsaw, 1965), p. 275.

clearly of a very different order than that of the 'London' underground with its 350,000 Home Army troops,²⁹ although both claims should be treated cautiously. Partly because of its continuing isolation and weakness, the PPR displayed a third characteristic of the KPP - its sectarianism and disunity. The sectarianism took the form of a persistent lack of consensus on the nature of the national front line. While some saw it as a radical departure from the strategic thinking of the KPP, others viewed it rather as a tactical variation on the old line, necessitated by international circumstances. Rank-and-file distaste for the liberalism of the new line and disputes in the leadership over how to implement it reflected this divergence.

'The National Front Without Traitors or Capitulators'

Following the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941, the Comintern rapidly abandoned its assessment of the war as a conflict between rival imperialisms and harmonised its line with the Soviet Union's new international alliances. The formula of the 'anti-Hitlerite national front' was adopted and regardless of the PPR's formal independence of the Comintern, this line was accepted by the Polish communists during the second half of 1941 as they prepared the Party's launch. The national front strategy in this, its broadest form, was maintained until 1943 in Poland and amongst the Soviet emigration in essence right up to liberation in 1944.

The strategy had two aspects. First it accepted the political structure and leadership of the underground state and the Government-in-Exile and attempted to gain entry to this coalition as an equal partner alongside the four other major parties. At this stage the communists seem to have hoped to form a powerful and united working-class party including the Socialists,³⁰ which would play a

29 Polskie Siły Zbrojne w Drugiej Wojnie Światowej vol. III (London, 1950), p. 123.

30 PPR statements in January-February 1942 spoke of
contd...

prominent rather than a dominant role in the coalition. The formula employed was that 'a united and coherent working-class' would 'fight in the front ranks' of the underground movement.³¹ Second, it aimed at constructing a coalition 'from below' around a platform of active armed struggle against the Germans. From the first weeks of its existence the PPR began to organise guerilla units at a time when 'London' for tactical reasons avoided offensive measures of this kind. To capitalise on the grassroots support it was thought the guerillas would generate, the Party set up a network of 'National Committees of Struggle' (Narodowe Komitety Walki).

In both its aspects the 'national front without traitors and capitulators' failed abjectly and illustrated how far the communists had exaggerated the factors working in their favour and wildly underestimated the problems they faced in winning support and overcoming the hostility of the mainstream parties. Although talks were held in February 1943 between the PPR and representatives of the leadership of the 'London' underground they only served to demonstrate how unbridgeable was the gap between the two sides and how widespread the opposition within the London camp to collaboration with the communists, even of the most limited kind.³² For 'London' the PPR was a political nuisance to be neutralised and isolated. Its patriotism was never taken seriously and it lacked the military or organisational strength to attract interest as a potential partner. Reporting in 1944 to the Moscow Poles, Spychalski admitted that 'the first attempts of the PPR to achieve a national front in struggle with the occupant produced almost no result. Quite simply, all the parties felt so strong in comparison with our movement that they did not consider

contd...

'putting an end to the split in the Polish working-class see W. Góra (ed.) Kształtowanie się podstaw programowych PPR w latach 1942-1945 (Warsaw, 1958), pp. 13-16.

31 Ibid., p. 13.

32 A. Przygoński 'Z zagadnień strategii frontu narodowego PPR 1942-1945 (Warsaw, 1976), pp. 103-15.

opening negotiations with our party expedient'.³³

Attempts to create a united working-class party fell on stony ground. The strongest political organisation amongst the working-class, 'Freedom, Equality, Independence' (Wolność, Równość, Niepodległość), known as WRN. The majority of active members of the pre-war Polish Socialist Party supported WRN which continued the adamant hostility to the communists of its predecessor. Although modern Warsaw historians stress the significance of the left-wing Socialists who remained outside WRN and formed the Organisation of Polish Socialists (Organizacja Polskich Socjalistów - PS), one has admitted that the left 'was at this time so weak that it could only dream of substantial influence amongst the working-class'.³⁴ Besides, even the Organisation of Polish Socialists did not accept the PPR as a genuinely Polish party. At its 1942 Congress it defined its attitude thus: 'In relation to the PPR which is a new form of communist organisation in our country, the PS do not have confidence in the sincerity of its ideological platform, or in the autonomy of its political line and do not see the possibility of its participation in the democratic understanding'.³⁵ It was only after a succession of splits that the PPR succeeded in winning over a small splinter of sympathisers from the Socialist left at the turn of 1943/44.

The campaign to build up popular support 'from below' around the guerilla units was equally fruitless. The communists' lack of local support, particularly in the more remote rural areas suited to guerilla warfare, severely hindered the PPR's military plans.³⁶ As a modern Party

33 M. Spychalski Informacja przedstawiciela KC PPR na zebraniu komunistów polskich w Moskwie 8 czerwca 1944 r Z pola walki 1961 nr 4 (16), p. 184.

34 T. Sierocki PPR-owska koncepcja jedności ruchu robotniczego w latach 1942-48 Z pola walki 1976 nr 4 (76), p. 6.

35 F. Baranowski Z dziejów nurty lewicowego powojennej PPS Z pola walki 1974 nr 3 (63), pp. 26-27.

36 M. Spychalski Wspomnienia o partyjnej robocie (1931-44) Archiwum ruchu robotniczego vol. II (Warsaw, 1975), p. 296.

historian has observed, 'in spite of great efforts... the National Committees of Struggle failed to develop extensively in the terrain and in reality did not get beyond a conception of activity. A variety of reasons accounted for this... the weakness of the Party's own organisation, which was just in its initial period of activity, the effectiveness of the counter-action of the London underground as well as the unfavourable situation on the eastern front'.³⁷

Instead of rapidly gaining influence within the underground movement as it had expected, the PPR leadership soon became embroiled in internal disputes. Party historians are divided over the extent of sectarianism amongst the KPP militants recruited into the PPR, but it is plain that the leadership did encounter resistance to the new line in some quarters.³⁸ Objections which had been raised already in the preliminary discussions on the new Party programme among the Polish communists in the Soviet Union recurred. For some the new line was too minimalist and retreated too far from that of the KPP.³⁹ Ideological considerations were behind disagreement over the Party's name. Those who wished to stress its broad base preferred the label 'Polish Worker-Peasant Party'; those on the internationalist wing of the movement considered 'Workers Party of Poland' more appropriate than Polish Workers' Party.⁴⁰ Some ex-KPP activists would have nothing to do with the PPR, objecting to its 'non-class' character and the absence of public endorsement by the Comintern. Others demanded explicit commitment to socialism.⁴¹ Despite the

37 Przygoński op. cit., p. 83.

38 Malinowski Geneza... op. cit., p. 463. Przygoński op. cit., p. 49-51 suggests that Malinowski exaggerates the problem.

39 Malinowski Geneza... op. cit., p. 360.

40 Ibid., pp. 351-52, 361n.

41 Ibid., p. 463; Przygoński op. cit., p. 49.

attention the leadership gave to reassuring such doubters⁴² the criticism continued. In July 1942, a full seven months after the Party had been established, Nowotko reported to Dimitrov that 'the greatest difficulty is to break the sectarian frame of mind, especially among former members of the KPP, for whom everyone who is not a communist is an enemy', and went on to complain about the Party's inability to broaden its base and national composition.⁴³ In late 1942 and into 1943 London intelligence reports pointed to continued internal divergences in the Party where 'once again to a marked extent disputes between the leadership of the PPR and KPP aktyw have appeared'.⁴⁴ In January 1943 the Central Committee felt the need to warn its members 'Every group/faction: this is the influence of alien class elements on the party; it is the disruption of the party... we must strengthen order and intra-party discipline'.⁴⁵

This warning may have been a reference to events within the leadership itself which in late 1942 took a dramatic turn. Against the background of strains between the political (Nowotko) and military (B. Mołojec) chiefs of the Party which had been evident as early as 1941,⁴⁶ and a wave of arrests by the Gestapo which extended to their respective families and intensified mutual suspicions, on 28 November Nowotko was murdered on the orders of Mołojec, who was himself subsequently executed on the decision of a Party court of inquiry. The episode remains shrouded in mystery, but it was perhaps symptomatic of a certain demoralisation at the top of the PPR as a result

42 See Góra Kształtowanie się... op. cit., pp. 27-31.

43 Malinowski Geneza... op. cit., pp. 465-66.

44 Ibid., pp. 465-66.

45 Góra Kształtowanie się... op. cit., p. 79.

46 Malinowski Geneza... op. cit., p.357n, 361, 356.

of its lack of success in the political sphere.⁴⁷

Despite these setbacks, the new leadership of the Party under Paweł Finder persevered with the formula of the 'national front without traitors and capitulators' for most of 1943. However, as the months passed its line became increasingly blurred. Externally developments were encouraging. After Stalingrad in early 1943 the military balance on the eastern front began to shift in favour of the Russians and following the halting of the Germans' final great offensive at Kursk in July 1943, the Red Army began the westward advance which was to bring it to the frontiers of Poland in 1944. At the same time the position of the Polish Government-in-Exile in the Alliance was weakened in April when the Soviet Government suspended diplomatic relations over the Katyn affair. Immediately the Soviet Government began to form the Union of Polish Patriots (Związek Patriotów Polskich - ZPP) and a Polish Division amongst the emigres in the USSR. In July the Government-in-Exile suffered a further blow when Sikorski was killed in an aircraft accident at Gibraltar. His successor as prime minister, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, leader of the Peasant Party lacked the prestige which Sikorski enjoyed in emigre political and military circles and amongst the leaders of the Allied governments.

However, the isolation of the communists within Poland intensified. The rift between the Soviet and Polish governments buried for the time being any chance of further talks between the PPR and the London Delegation. In any case, by this stage the underground leadership had shifted

47 See further: Spychalski Wspomnienia... op. cit., pp. 296-98, 314-19; Przygoński op. cit., p. 84; M. Malinowski Marceli Nowotko (Warsaw, 1976), pp. 82-85; Bethell op. cit., pp. 51-53; Polski Słownik Biograficzny vol. XXIII/2, p. 297; P.T. O tajemniczej śmierci M. Nowotki i B. Mołojca Zeszyty Historyczne 59 (1982), pp. 210-20; W. Jabłoński Wyjaśnienia i uzupełnienia do artykułu "O tajemniczej śmierci M. Nowotki i B. Mołojca" Zeszyty Historyczne 62 (1982), pp. 234-36.

to opponents of any compromise with the communists.⁴⁸ In the aftermath of Katyn the Party found it more difficult to win support and had to contend with an increase in anti-communist propaganda as well as violence from the right. In August the National Armed Forces (Narodowe Siły Zbrojne - NSZ) launched a campaign to 'cleanse the terrain of subversive and criminal bands', declaring that 'the PPR, People's Guard and various red partisans must vanish from the surface of Polish territory'.⁴⁹ At the same time 'London', which the communists claimed tacitly supported NSZ violence, began preparations for its assumption of power in postwar Poland, plans from which the PPR was excluded. In August the 'Home Political Representation' (Krajowa Reprezentacja Polityczna) was set up as a half-way house to a full underground parliament. This was formed in January 1944 in the shape of the Council of National Unity (Rada Jedności Narodowej). The four main political parties, the Peasants, Socialists, Party of Labour and National Democrats issued a joint declaration defining an agreed programme of post-war reconstruction.⁵⁰ 'London' also stepped up the organisation of the future infrastructure of power, establishing a secret network of local government and police and expanding the Home Army (Armia Krajowa - AK).

In January 1943 the Central Committee of the PPR met to review progress over the previous year. While reaffirming its pursuit of a 'broad national front of struggle without traitors and capitulators', it was clear that the leadership was looking for a way to escape the impasse it was in. Impressed by Tito's success and the armed resistance by the local peasants to German colonisation in the Zamość region, the Party turned for a while to the idea of

48 Przygoński op. cit., pp. 110-11.

49 Z.S. Siemaszko Grupa Szańca i NSZ Zeszyty Historyczne 21 (1972), p. 12.

50 S. Korboński Polskie państwo podziemne (Paris, 1975), p. 102.

a national insurrection.⁵¹ However, it was aware of the difficulty it faced in breaking 'London's' monopoly of the patriotic platform. As an alternative, the PPR began to introduce new notes of social radicalism into its statements of policy and began to employ the slogan of a post-war 'democratic Poland'. These ideas were further developed in a programme issued in March.⁵² Although internal pressures prompted such modifications of tactics, external considerations prevented the leadership from departing from its original strategy. The result was a blurred and somewhat incoherent line. Thus although the attempts to form the National Committees of Struggle were abandoned in mid-1943 and the Party withdrew recognition of the Government-in-Exile, Gomułka later stated that 'for several more months (from the end of April - J.R.) we did not change our basic political line towards the Delegation and the whole "London camp"; we were far from burning our bridges'.⁵³ As long as the possibility of a rapprochement between 'London' and Moscow existed, the PPR could not move over to radical opposition to the underground mainstream. It was not until after the October conference of foreign ministers in Moscow that the Central Committee decided that a resumption of Polish-Soviet relations was unlikely and began to clarify its line. All the same no bridges were burnt until the Teheran conference (28 Nov - 1 Dec) had apparently confirmed the leadership's analysis of Soviet intentions.⁵⁴ By this time direct communications with the Russians had been broken.

51 Przygoński op. cit., p. 97.

52 Ibid., pp. 96-103; Góra Kształtowanie się... op. cit., pp. 58-63; 66-81; 93-96.

53 W. Gomułka Polemika z 'Archiwum Ruchu Robotniczego' Zeszyty Historyczne 39 (1977), p. 4. This article was first published in the Paris emigre journal Zeszyty Historyczne. It was subsequently published in Poland in Archiwum ruchu robotniczego vol. IV (1977).

54 Z archiwów polskich komunistów List KC PPR 'do tow. D' z 7.03.1944r Zeszyty Historyczne 26 (1973), p. 187.

The Polish communist emigration in the USSR, much closer to Soviet thinking and free of the obstacles faced by the PPR in forming a broad national front, adhered much more consistently to the original version of the front. In its 'ideological declaration' of June 1943, the ZPP conformed closely to the 'anti-fascist front' line. The aim of the ZPP, it stated, was to 'unite for the duration of the war all Poles residing on Soviet territory, regardless of differences in political, social or religious views, in one camp of struggle with Hitlerism'.⁵⁵ As Przygoński has noted, this was the line 'from which the PPR in Poland had already at this time begun to depart, putting forward the concept of a democratic front'.⁵⁶

The Democratic National Front

Thus in late 1943 the line of the PPR underwent its first - but no means last - distinct modification. This shift from the 'anti-fascist' to the 'democratic' national front was principally a response to the failure of the existing line to meet internal Polish realities. There is no evidence that Soviet prompting lay behind the shift. Indeed, the PPR seems to have strayed ahead of Soviet and emigre communist thinking in 1943, with the result that in early 1944, when informed of the 'turn', the emigres received it very critically.

The essence of the 'national front without traitors and capitulators' had been the communists' acceptance of the political framework of the underground state and attempt to gain entry to its leadership. The Party made no overt claim to a leading role in this coalition and was prepared to work with any group, from left to right, committed to armed resistance to the Germans.

The 'democratic national front' was less broad and

55 I. Blum (ed.) Organizacja i działania bojowe ludowego Wojska Polskiego 1943-45. Wybór źródeł vol. IV Działalność aparatu polityczno-wychowawczego (Warsaw, 1963), pp. 57-61.

56 Przygoński op. cit., p. 20.

more radical. It rejected the legitimacy of the 'London' system and aimed at constructing a rival political camp, led by the PPR, by detaching 'democratic' elements, in particular the Socialists and Peasants, from what was viewed as the 'reactionary' leadership of the 'London' underground. The basis of this alliance would be a common programme combining national liberation with radical reform and its organisational expression would be a new political centre, the Homeland National Council (Krajowa Rada Narodowa - KRN), a secret parliament of the parties which joined the front.

The idea of establishing some such organ was first mooted in PPR circles in early 1943, but Gomułka seems to have taken the decisive initiative whilst drafting a new version of the Party's programme in September. After discussions between Gomułka and Finder, the Secretary of the Party, the proposal was put to the Central Committee and decided in principle on 7 November.⁵⁷

The leadership did not decide what form the new centre should take at this meeting. There were in fact two differing conceptions of the purpose of the KRN, and by implication, of the character of the 'democratic national front'. Gomułka envisaged the KRN as a 'centre of political concentration', in other words as a point around which to gather a broad range of groupings which accepted its common programme, the manifesto.⁵⁸ The manifesto was to be the key element determining the area of co-operation with potential allies. The KRN would serve to dispute the monopoly of the London camp and loosen its hold on the 'democratic' parties which the PPR regarded as potential allies. Later he was to describe the KRN as a 'sort of coup d'etat' in the underground,⁵⁹ in other words it would

57 Gomułka Polemika... op. cit., pp. 5-6.

58 For the KRN manifesto (15.12.1943) see W. Góra (ed.) W walce o sojusz robotniczo-chłopski. Wybór dokumentów i materiałów 1944 - 1949 (Warsaw, 1963), pp. 7-9.

59 Gomułka Polemika... op. cit., p. 5.

act as a catalyst to bring about a regrouping in Polish politics. From this standpoint the structural details of the KRN were of secondary importance, though Gomułka preferred to avoid a model which would fuel accusations that the PPR was intending to 'sovietise' Poland. As soon became clear, Gomułka saw no advantage in being specific on the form of the KRN and he was quite prepared to alter its character if this would assist the construction of a broad democratic front around the KRN manifesto.

Bolesław Bierut, on the other hand, led the group in the leadership which viewed the KRN rather as an 'organ of power', the cornerstone of a rival underground state firmly under the Party's control which other groups would in time accept. For him the structure of the KRN was non-negotiable. If it proved an obstacle in the way of forming alliances, the Party should wait until the other side gave way. In the meantime cosmetic alliances with splinters of the main groupings would suffice. The risk that the Party would be suspected of aiming at the 'sovietisation' of Poland did not worry Bierut who insisted that the KRN should be underpinned by a network of local national councils.⁶⁰

While Gomułka represented the current in the PPR which wished to rest power on a broad front of the communists, Socialists and Peasants, Bierut was concerned above all with securing state power and was opposed to compromising on this point in order to widen the front. The two conceptions were fused untidily during the second half of November 1943. This was a disastrous time for the Party; on 14 November Finder and another experienced member of the leadership, Małgorzata Fornalska, were arrested. Since they were responsible for communications, contact with Moscow was broken and not restored until early January. Within hours of the arrests Gomułka, Bierut and Franciszek Józwiak, who now constituted the top leadership of the Party, went ahead with a pre-arranged meeting to decide the form of the KRN. Bierut's scheme of a local network was

60 Ibid., pp. 6-8.

accepted without enthusiasm by Gomułka who, as he later recalled, did not wish to waste time and viewed the issue as secondary.⁶¹ However, nine days later, unknown to the Soviets and emigres, Gomułka was elected secretary in preference to Bierut and Józwiak.⁶²

This outcome meant that the differences of view within the PPR leadership were not resolved in favour of either the Gomułka or Bierut-Józwiak conception before the KRN was inaugurated on New Year's Eve 1944. The timing of the inauguration was governed by tactical considerations: the imminent entry of the Red Army into pre-1939 Polish territory and the Party's desire to pre-empt the transformation of the London Home Political Representation into a Council of National Unity. From the point of view of its political base, the establishment of the KRN was premature; at this stage very little progress had been made in winning over Socialists and Peasants.

The Socialist left had undergone considerable regrouping during 1943, but remained aloof from the PPR. The Organisation of Polish Socialists had split in April 1943. Some of its members had joined WRN, but the left-wing, anti-London faction had formed a new body, the Workers' Party of Polish Socialists (Robotnicza Partia Polskich Socjalistów - RPPS). With at most 1,500 members, the bulk of them in the Warsaw area,⁶³ the RPPS was, as Gomułka admitted, 'minute', though it was thought by the communists to have a potential for growth.⁶⁴ Despite its very radical social programme and opposition to 'London', at its Congress in September 1943 the RPPS had characterised the

61 Gomułka Polemika... op. cit., p. 5.

62 Spychalski Wspomnienia... op. cit., p. 335.

63 B. Syzdek PPS w latach 1944-1948 (Warsaw, 1974), p. 49n; A. Reiss Z problemów odbudowy i rozwoju organizacyjnego PPS 1944-1946 (Warsaw, 1971), pp. 26-28.

64 Gomułka Pismo KC PPR do CBKP w ZSRR z 12.1.44r, Artykuły... vol.I, op. cit., p. 61.

PPR as 'representing Soviet influence' and by a large majority voted against collaboration.⁶⁵ In December, however, the RPPS agreed to talks, but rejected the communists' concept of a 'democratic national front' around the KRN, proposing instead the idea of a 'popular front' of the Peasants, communists and itself based on the new political centre which it had begun to form a few weeks before.⁶⁶ In the end, only a small faction of the RPPS, active in the Warsaw co-operative movement with whom Bierut had old contacts, entered the KRN. This tiny group of Marxists led by Edward Osóbka-Morawski and Stanisław Szwalbe represented the total outcome of two years of communist effort to win Socialist support.⁶⁷

The Party's failure to secure backing for the KRN from the Peasant Party (Stronnictwo Ludowe - SL) was even more striking. A formal invitation to the SL leadership did not even receive a reply. The communists' hopes of recruiting at least a few SL activists 'from below' also came to nothing. In the end the Party had to make do with Władysław Kowalski, a veteran KPP peasant activist, again brought in by Bierut.⁶⁸

It has been suggested that Gomułka deliberately stayed away from the inaugural sitting of the KRN to express his dissatisfaction with the extremely narrow range of its

65 B. Drukier (D.K.) Na marginesie polemiki Gomułki, Zeszyty Historyczne 43 (1978), p. 215; Przygoński op. cit., p. 172n.

66 Przygoński op. cit., p. 199, 201; Syzdek op. cit., pp. 45-46.

67 Bierut knew both Szwalbe and Osóbka-Morawski well before the war. See Ważniewski op. cit., p. 39; H. Rechowicz Bolesław Bierut 1892-1956 (Kraków, 1974), pp. 20, 24, 55.

68 Kowalski had been an activist on the radical wing of the 'Liberation' Peasant Party (PSL "Wyzwolenie") in the early 1920s and was later one of the leaders of the pro-communist Independent Peasant Party (Niezależna Partia Chłopska) and the Peasant self-help movement (Samopomoc Chłopska). He joined the KPP in the late 1920s and worked for the Agricultural Section of the Central Committee. He was in regular contact with the PPR from its formation in 1942. See further: Polski Słownik Biograficzny t. vol. XIV/4 z. 63 pp. 575-77; Z. Hemmerling Władysław Kowalski (Warsaw, 1977).

membership. He later however denied this emphatically.⁶⁹ Nonetheless he was very critical of the way in which the KRN fell so far short of his original conception. In a message to Dimitrov in March 1944 he wrote 'we did not want to form this representation on our own, but at the very least with the CK (Central Committee, i.e. the majority - J.R.) of the RPPS'.⁷⁰ In his memoirs (1975) he stated plainly, 'I did not want the KRN to be a synonym for the PPR at all. The KRN was intended to be quite different'.⁷¹

For those like Gomułka who had envisaged the KRN as a centre of political consolidation for a broad democratic front, its failure to attract support beyond the PPR was a major disappointment. Others who viewed it rather as an embryonic organ of power were much less disturbed by this fact. As we shall shortly see, this divergence of outlook grew sharper in early 1944 as the failure of the KRN to escape its isolation became apparent.

The Communist Emigration in the Soviet Union

The size of the wartime Polish emigration in the Soviet Union is uncertain. Estimates by the ZPP put it at between 500-700,000 in 1940-41. 'London' sources suggested a million or more.⁷² Only a relatively small part of this total was evacuated to the West in 1942 in the army commanded by General Anders: about 84,000 troops and some 30,000 civilians.⁷³ The communist emigration was tiny - at most a few hundred people⁷⁴ - and until 1943 it was unorganised

69 Gomułka Polemika... op. cit., p. 16; Drukier Na marginesie... op. cit., p. 217.

70 Z. archiwów... op. cit., p. 187.

71 Gomułka Polemika... op. cit., p. 31.

72 F. Zbiniewicz Armia Polska ZSRR (Warsaw, 1963), p. 13.

73 E. Duraczyński Wojna i Konspiracja wrzesień 1939 kwiecień 1943 (Warsaw, 1974), pp. 270-73.

74 Thus the total numbers of ex-members of the KPP who had been drafted into the political apparatus of the Polish Army by the first half of 1944 was just 350, Zbiniewicz op. cit., p. 58.

and dispersed. Some communists were active in journalism, some in the Red Army or Comintern apparatus, but many others found themselves in labour brigades or camps. When the ZPP was formed some of these communists were given positions in its leadership but most were assigned to the new Polish Division, chiefly to work in its political apparatus. They included a considerable number of the top figures in the postwar Party: Berman, Minc, Radkiewicz, Zambrowski, Ochab, Zawadzki, Jaroszewicz and many other second-rank figures.

The Polish communist group in the Soviet Union inevitably had a different perspective on political strategy than the Party at home. Until 1944 their contact with the PPR was indirect, sporadic and provided only a very incomplete picture of the situation in Poland. Their thinking was much more closely geared to Soviet policy. Without any local rival for the patriotic cause it was relatively easy for them to recruit the non-communist emigre masses into a broad front to struggle with the Germans. The principal problem which they faced was that of moulding these masses into a military and political force to place at the disposal of a future communist government. These differing vantage-points influenced the character of the debate on strategy; in Poland the PPR leadership had to defend a broad, liberal line, which was not producing results, against criticism from its own left. Within the emigration the communists were almost over-successful in widening their base and feared that the nationalistic and militaristic forces they had harnessed might overwhelm their influence in the army.

The strategic discussions amongst the emigres were above all concerned with which element would play the key role in liberated Poland, the communist Party or the communist-led army. There was much greater agreement on the kind of issues which divided the PPR. The debate over the role of the political and military factors in postwar Poland was bound up with a struggle for dominance within the emigration, between civilian communists in the

Presidium of the ZPP and the military men in the command of the Polish Division. The communists in the army political apparatus were inclined to occupy a middle position. In late 1943 this rivalry shaped discussions which were held to define more precisely the political aims of the emigration. Each of the three factions put forward its own 'theses'. Those of the Army command, dubbed 'theses number one', were drafted by Major Jakub Prawin, but identified with the divisional commander, Gen. Zygmunt Berling and his deputy, Włodzimierz Sokorski; Minc and Zambrowski wrote 'theses number two', reflecting the outlook of the 'politruki', while the view of the ZPP Presidium was embodied in 'theses number three', largely written by Alfred Lampe.⁷⁵ The debate has been described elsewhere in some detail,⁷⁶ so here we shall confine ourselves to saying that its outcome was a clear victory for the ZPP Presidium and its conception of Party control of the army, rather than an independent political role for the military. This victory was consolidated with a series of personnel changes to strengthen the army political apparatus,⁷⁷ and the establishment in January 1944 of the Central Bureau of Polish Communists (Centralne Biuro Komunistów Polskich - CBKP). This organ for the first time provided the communist emigres with a unified leadership and a channel through which PPR communications with Moscow were increasingly directed.

During the debates on the 'theses' certain common assumptions amongst the Polish communist emigration had emerged quite clearly.

75 For the texts of these 'theses', see Blum Organizacja... op. cit., pp. 98-100. (Number one), pp. 110-20 (Number two). A slightly different version of Number one is cited in W. Sokorski Polacy pod Lenino (Warsaw, 1971), pp. 98-100. Number three is in Góra Kształtowanie się... op. cit., pp. 474-87.

76 Zbiniewicz op. cit., pp. 149-73.

77 Ibid., pp. 167-68.

First, the emigres took a very sanguine view of the feasibility of forming a broad coalition on the platform of national liberation. While the Party at home had already limited its goal to a front extending only so far as the 'democratic' wing of the London camp, and had had in practice to make do with the very narrow base of the KRN, the emigres remained convinced that a much wider 'patriotic front' was within their grasp. Prawin's 'theses' had declared that 'all, without regard to their political past who loyally and honestly stand on the ground of the political programme presented will be admitted to (the government) camp'.⁷⁸ 'Theses number two' insisted that 'the creation of a movement linking in a harmonious whole the homeland and the emigration is entirely realistic',⁷⁹ while Lampe viewed 'national solidarity' as a prerequisite of his conception of Poland's development towards socialism.⁸⁰ As became apparent in early 1944, the emigres could not understand why the communists at home had failed to win wider support, or why they had felt the need to radicalise their platform. They tended to ascribe this failure to what was seen as 'sectarianism' in the PPR.

Secondly, while the 'political' communists insisted that the Party should have a leading role, they did not mean by this that the underground PPR should exercise that function. Lip-service was paid to the formal subordination of the emigres to the Party at home and the CBKP was thus conceived as 'an organisation of the PPR abroad on Soviet territory'.⁸¹ However, in practice the emigres viewed the PPR as too weak and too out of touch with Soviet thinking to take the lead. 'Theses number one' had been criticised for undervaluing the part to be played by domestic forces, but Minc and Zambrowski too wrote of the need to create a

⁷⁸ Blum Organizacja... op. cit., pp. 98-100.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 110-20.

⁸⁰ Przygoński op. cit., pp. 145-46.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 212.

'unified leadership', arguing that 'the responsibility for achieving the task of consolidating Polish democracy falls on the ZPP and the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR, to which the course of events has granted immeasurably opportune and favourable scope for activity'.⁸² As for Lampe's 'theses', they were intended as the basis for the programme of a Polish National Committee which the Presidium of the ZPP was preparing to launch in early 1944. This initiative, on which there was no consultation with the PPR because of the break in contact, was halted when news of the establishment of the KRN arrived. Otherwise the political hub of the communist camp would have shifted decisively abroad. It is worth noting that although special attention was devoted to ensuring that representation on the Committee would be given to right-wing opinion,⁸³ only a quarter of its seats were reserved for the homeland, compared to half for the Soviet emigration.⁸⁴ For the emigres it was self-evident, formalities apart, that they rather than the PPR held the key to Poland's future. They took the view that their success in bringing the broad 'patriotic national front' strategy to fruition and in building an army 30,000-strong by the end of 1943 and 100,000-strong by mid-1944,⁸⁵ entitled them to the deference of the PPR rather than vice versa.

The 1944 Strategy Debate

The proximity of power in early 1944 did not lead to any final crystallisation of strategy by the communists. Three different variations of the national front vied with one another right up to the moment of liberation and it was the unexpected rapidity of that liberation rather than any coming together of minds which shaped the Party's

82 Blum Organizacja... op. cit., pp. 110-20.

83 Przygoński op. cit., pp. 209-11.

84 Ibid., p. 226.

85 Zbiniewicz op. cit., pp. 186, 324.

course during its first weeks of power.

The lack of consensus within the leadership of the PPR over the intended character of the KRN and more generally over the nature of the 'democratic national front' became increasingly evident in the first months of 1944. At the same time the divergence between the 'patriotic national front' of the emigres and the 'democratic national front' of the underground communists became apparent.

The gap in thinking between Warsaw and Moscow was revealed once radio contact was re-established in early January, but the subsequent correspondence did little to diminish it. Gomułka's first message (12 January) provided a survey of political forces and the internal situation which Moscow had requested. The tone was optimistic. He claimed that a favourable transformation in public attitudes to the Soviet Union had occurred and that the possibility already existed of gathering 'considerable democratic forces' around the KRN.⁸⁶ The reply sent by the CBKP in February has not been published but it is clear that it contained extensive criticism of the changes which the line of the PPR had undergone since autumn. This emerges from the response of the PPR Central Committee in a letter of 7 March. This time the tone was decidedly defensive. Its assurances that 'the idea of the KRN has found general support amongst the broad masses' and that 'a strong foundation of support for the KRN is growing from below', were, as we shall see shortly, highly exaggerated and were contradicted by the Party's reply to CBKP charges that it had failed to mount a broad coalition where other communist parties had succeeded. The Central Bureau had seen PPR ultra-radicalism as the obstacle, but the Central Committee blamed factors beyond its control:

86 Gomułka Pismo KC PPR do CBKP w ZSRR z 12.1.44 Artykuły...vol. I op. cit., pp. 61-76. Published in translation by A. Polonsky and B. Drukier (ed.), The Beginnings of Communist Rule in Poland December 1943 - June 1945 (London, 1980), pp. 193-202.

'The fact that up to now the PPR has not succeeded in achieving the creation of a national front in Poland on the pattern of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia or France results neither from sectarian political positions of the Party nor from our weakness, but from the attitude of our Party to Poland's eastern frontier question'.

The emigre implication that a more tactful approach might improve things was scorned: 'If Saint Anthony's brotherhood stood for revising the eastern frontiers of Poland, it too would be branded by the reaction as a Moscow agency'.⁸⁷

This defence did not satisfy the Central Bureau which in a note written, it seems, in May, repeated its criticisms and in effect told the PPR to abandon the 'democratic national front' and return to the broad 'patriotic national front' it had strayed away from in late 1943. The note gave a somewhat delayed welcome to the initiative of forming the KRN, but raised the same criticism that Gomułka had made of the structure which Bierut and Józwiak had insisted on. The CBKP considered that conceived as an 'organ of power' rather than a 'centre of political concentration', the KRN 'hindered winning over wavering elements'. But the Bureau's critique extended to the KRN programme which Gomułka had framed and to the very concept of a 'democratic national front'. According to Moscow, the programme paid insufficient attention to establishing 'a broad political concentration (original emphasis - J.R.) which would be capable of drawing behind it or neutralising part of the bourgeoisie'; it was not 'the programme of a front but amounts to a narrowed national front...'. The underground leadership had got out of step. It 'had not taken enough account of the complexity of the international situation. From this point of view (its radical) slogan of People's Poland is unacceptable as it is in conflict with the general political line'. But the CBKP implied

⁸⁷ Z archiwów... op. cit., p. 189. Lengthy excerpts from this letter were published in Przygoński op. cit., pp. 227-33, 258-59. See also Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 203-7.

that the PPR had also misjudged the internal situation and advised the Party to take advantage of what the Central Bureau saw as a 'ferment' amongst the London parties. The watchword should still be 'a Provisional Government with a wide democratic base which will embrace alongside the KRN all groups standing sincerely for struggle with the Germans in alliance with the Soviet Union'.⁸⁸

This advice did little to resolve the differences inside the PPR. On the one hand, however critically and reservedly, the Moscow communists had endorsed the KRN. On the other, they had demanded a new drive to win over a broad coalition of allies. The emigres did not see any contradiction between these two aims, and did not therefore address themselves to the issue which divided the underground leadership, namely how far should it be prepared to compromise on the structure of the KRN in order to win allies and broaden the national front.

As the correspondence between the PPR and CBKP reveals, the PPR leadership was reluctant to reveal its differences to the emigres and appeared united in its defence of the KRN. Internally, however, strains increased. The Party's efforts to broaden the base of the KRN were fruitless despite the growing certainty that the German occupation of Poland would be ended by the Red Army and not the West. Although it proved easier to construct a network of provincial and local national councils beneath the KRN than had been the case with the National Committees of Struggle in 1942-3, this reflected improved Party organisation rather than any marked widening of support for the national front. The national councils were based on the PPR itself and the small groups linked with it and there was relatively little progress in detaching activists of the Peasant and Socialist movements 'from below'. The Party leadership blamed this on the 'sectarianism' of local organisers, but the continuing solidity of the

⁸⁸ Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 212-13.

London camp was perhaps the chief obstacle.⁸⁹

Little advance was made in expanding the tiny RPPS and Peasant groups which had joined the KRN. In January Osóbka-Morawski set up a pro-KRN central committee and began to campaign among the RPPS cells. However, only a few cells seem to have disowned the existing anti-KRN central committee. Indeed, as we shall see, the results were so limited that by May the communists were divided over whether it was worth maintaining Osóbka's RPPS at all. Gomułka and his group in the leadership thought it might be wiser to liquidate it and concentrate their efforts on the 'old' RPPS, with which they conducted negotiations through February-March.⁹⁰ Overtures were also made to the leadership of the Peasant Party without result.⁹¹ Meanwhile, an attempt to generate an internal opposition in the SL was mounted in February around Władysław Kowalski and a few other leftist peasants who had thrown in their lot with the PPR. This group took the name of the newspaper, "Wola ludu", which they began to publish. However, this was a very cosmetic venture and it was left to the communists to print, distribute and even, to a large extent, write the paper.⁹²

By spring 1944 it was clear that the KRN, though operative as an embryonic state apparatus, which could be used if the PPR found itself installed in power by the Red Army without having gained entry to the existing underground state, was quite useless as a means of rallying support and indeed actually alienated potential allies such as the 'old' RPPS.⁹³

89 Przygoński op. cit., p. 272.

90 Ibid., pp. 228, 255-58.

91 R. Halaba Stronnictwo Ludowe 1944-1946 (Warsaw, 1966), p. 18.

92 Gomułka Polemika... op. cit., p. 34.

93 J. Pawłowicz Z dziejów konspiracyjnej KRN 1943-44 (Warsaw, 1961), p. 75; Przygoński op. cit., pp. 254-59.

For Gomułka and others in the PPR leadership, notably Aleksander Kowalski, Ignacy Loga-Sowiński, Władysław Bienkowski and Zenon Kliszko, the priority was to achieve the broadest possible front which would embrace in particular the Socialists and the Peasants and not only cosmetic splinter groups from the Marxist fringe of these movements. Such a front would provide a genuine political base for a communist-led government after liberation. Otherwise any new government would have only the meagre resources of the PPR and the KRN at its disposal and would be forced to rely very heavily on Soviet support to keep the London camp, still united, at bay. In the eyes of Gomułka and his supporters this was the rationale of the national front strategy and accorded clearly with the guidelines sent by the Central Bureau from Moscow in their recent messages.⁹⁴ Apart from general strategic considerations, Gomułka and the others interpreted recent diplomatic moves as indicating the possibility of a resumption of relations between the Soviet and Polish Exile Governments and were anxious to pursue tactics at home in line with this scenario.⁹⁵

Bierut, Józwiak and Hilary Chełchowski, a more junior Central Committee member, saw in this a threat to the character or even existence of the KRN, which they feared would be sacrificed - along with Osóbka's RPPS and "Wola ludu" - in order to achieve a deal with the London groupings. They considered that the question of power in liberated Poland could be solved by the PPR itself with the active political support of the Soviet forces and that to make premature concessions to win Socialist and Peasant backing was undesirable. Writing three decades later,

94 In February the emigres had advised the PPR 'to take steps to expand the KRN's political base. These should take the form of an appeal to members of the PPS, SL, ND (National Democrats - J.R.) and other military and civil bodies. The aim should be a broadly national front', Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 203.

95 Gomułka Polemika... op. cit., p. 28.

Gomułka made it clear that he regarded this stance as sectarian and as a fundamental retreat from the conception of a broad national front as the basis for mounting a broadly-based government on liberation. According to Gomułka the Bierut group:

'did not claim by any means that they excluded the possibility of a resumption of diplomatic relations.... They treated the matter as irrelevant. Their position amounted to this: that I underrated the possibilities which the liberation of Poland by the Red Army opened for us; that with its help we would settle the problem of government in Poland as we liked; that at the same time I was underestimating the strength of our party, which in the new circumstances created by the Red Army's liberation of Poland would become the object of attention from the other parties...'⁹⁶

Bierut, characterising Gomułka's attitude in 1948, said much the same:

'During the creation of the KRN some comrades in our Party did not appreciate the true configuration of class forces and the special importance of the co-operation of these forces in the struggle for political power with the armed might of the USSR, as a revolutionary, liberating force, as a class force, and not simply as the military force of an ally.' (My emphasis - J.R.)⁹⁷

For Gomułka's group the imminence of the Soviet liberation of Poland dictated an intensification of efforts to create a broad front; for Bierut and Józwiak it provided an opportunity to escape the constraints imposed by this strategy and establish a more radical and communist-centred government.

The dispute came to a head in May when the 'old' RPPS put forward the proposal that the KRN link up with

⁹⁶ Gomułka op. cit., pp. 30-31.

⁹⁷ Nowe drogi 1948, nr. 11, p. 20.

the Central People's Committee (Centralny Komitet Ludowy) or Centralizacja as it was called, a body comprising little more than the RPPS and the left of the Democratic Party (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne - SD). The two would then attempt to enter the 'London' Council of National Unity as a joint-opposition. On May 19 the PPR telegraphed the Moscow communists asking their opinion of this scheme. The reply, which arrived a few days later and may well have been influenced by Osóbka-Morawski who had recently arrived in Moscow, expressed the view that the plan was a manoeuvre designed to subordinate the KRN to 'London'.⁹⁸

Presumably this message had not been received when the Central Committee met (23 May) to discuss the plan. Wide differences were revealed in a sharp exchange of views. Bierut argued that the PPR should not collaborate politically with the Centralizacja because of what he claimed was its 'favourable' attitude to the London government and the difference between its ideas and those of the PPR on which forces would take power in liberated Poland. Józwiak saw the Centralizacja as a rival to the KRN which ought to be eliminated and he accused the Gomułka faction of overrating its importance and underestimating the strength of the Party. Gomułka overruled these views and came down in favour of serious talks with the Centralizacja as the first step towards approaching the London 'democrats': 'We should do everything in order to link up and approach the SL (and) WRN together'.⁹⁹

The next sitting of the Central Committee (29 May) was still more heated and brought out clearly the gulf in strategic thinking between the two sides. By this time news of Moscow's attitude to the merger plan and the reception by Stalin of Osóbka-Morawski and the other KRN

⁹⁸ Przygoński op. cit., p. 261.

⁹⁹ Dyskusje w PPR w sprawie zjednoczenia sił demokratycznych (Notatki protokolarne z posiedzeń KC PPR maj - czerwiec 1944 r), Archiwum ruchu robotniczego vol. II op. cit., pp. 156-57. See also Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 214-15.

representatives (22 May) had reached Warsaw. This perhaps encouraged Bierut and Józwiak to stick to their guns. However, Gomułka and his colleagues were determined to persevere with the Centralizacja plan. They took the view that Stalin's public welcome for the KRN delegation was intended to reinforce British pressure on the Government-in-Exile to come to terms. Both sides claimed that they adhered to the national front philosophy and recognised the need for 'national consolidation', but the course of the argument revealed how differently they conceived this strategy. Bierut saw alliances with other parties and groups not as desirable in themselves, but as tactical devices to isolate and destroy the 'reaction'. As he put it consolidation was required 'not because "we love each other", but in order to intensify the struggle'. Aleksander Kowalski, for the other side, expressed an altogether more conciliatory spirit and was read to pay a considerable cost to achieve national unity: 'we should be ready to give up certain preprivileges, among others: exclusive representation which alone will form the government'. For Gomułka, the Party's objective was to merge the KRN, Centralizacja and 'London' Council of National Unity, purged of 'fascist elements' in 'one domestic, national representative body'. In other words he aimed to achieve the kind of broad coalition between the PPR, the left Socialists and the London 'democrats' which was finally formed in June 1945. Józwiak, by contrast, not only rejected a deal with 'London', but regarded the Centralizacja as an unsuitable ally, arguing that it should be broken up and that only its 'democratic' wing could be trusted. In his opinion the KRN alone could exercise power and the national front should be extended only marginally beyond its present limits. The meeting concluded messily with Gomułka insisting on proceeding with talks with the Centralizacja over Bierut's protestation that there had been a change of Party line.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Dyskusje w PPR... op. cit., pp. 157-60. See also Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 216-20.

On June 10 it seems that Bierut sent a secret message to Dimitrov accusing Gomułka of political vacillation 'from sectarianism to opportunism', departing from 'collective work' and forming a faction in the leadership. He asked Moscow to step in to rectify matters.¹⁰¹

In other circumstances such a conflict of outlook would very likely have led to the expulsion of the minority - in this case Bierut, Józwiak and Chełchowski¹⁰² from the leadership. But in conditions of conspiracy, with power almost in their grasp and the attitude of the Soviets still very ambiguous, the conflict was left unresolved to await the further development of events.

At the next Central Committee meeting for which we have a record (18 June) the rift was still apparent. Bierut played for time, arguing that 'at the moment it is not possible to assume that an understanding will not be made on the basis of the KRN... we ought to be cautious and not make commitments'. He and Józwiak agreed however to Gomułka's formula by which any talks would deal first with a joint political programme and only move on to the role of the KRN in the future power structure when agreement had been reached on the programme. Such an agenda would defer the question of the exclusivity of the KRN and would give wide scope for delay. However Gomułka tried to put the issue beyond doubt in his summing-up, concluding that 'we shall not reach unification from above around the KRN and ought if the KRN proved an obstacle in the way of a political understanding, give up the name KRN'.¹⁰³

Some days later, on 1 July, a leader article written by Władysław Bienkowski appeared in the PPR organ "Trybuna

101 W. Wąsowicz i L. Socha Z archiwum Bolesław Bieruta Krytyka 8 (1981), p. 76.

102 Membership of the Central Committee was as follows: Gomułka (secretary), Bierut, Józwiak, Aleksander Kowalski, Ignacy Loga-Sowiński and Hilary Chełchowski.

103 Dyskusje w PPR... op. cit., pp. 161-63. See also Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 223-26.

Wolnosci", presenting the majority view as the official position of the Party. It is most improbable that such an article could have appeared without Gomułka's prior approval. The statement brought the line of the PPR substantially into harmony with the 'patriotic national front' stance of the emigration and in fact the Central Bureau had called for just such a declaration in its April message. It spoke of the urgent need for 'a consolidation of all the forces of the democratic camp' and 'a broad national front embracing everything which stands for the struggle to liberate Poland'.¹⁰⁴ The Party was back to the broad front formulas of 1942-43 and its objective, so the article implied, was once again the reconstruction of the Government-in-Exile rather than its replacement by the KRN. Indeed the statement made no mention of the KRN as a possible base for a new government bloc, an omission which, at least formally, fitted in with the Central Committee's decision to place the question of agreement on policy in the foreground. However, it also suggested a flexibility on the future role of the KRN which ran counter to the intentions of Bierut and Józwiak. In the leadership crisis of 1948 they were to cite this 'document of shame' as crowning evidence of Gomułka's abandonment of the KRN,¹⁰⁵ and as the first signal of his 'right-nationalism'.

Meanwhile the Moscow line continued to cut across the divisions at home. On 1 July, the same day that Bieńkowski's article appeared, the emigres finally announced their formal recognition of the primacy of the KRN. This decision had been taken by the ZPP a week earlier in response to Stalin's directive that the KRN should be the base of the future provisional government.¹⁰⁶ However, as a letter sent by the Central Bureau to the PPR on 18

104 See M. Malinowski (ed.) Publicystyka konspiracyjna PPR 1942-45. Wybór dokumentów vol. III (Warsaw, 1967), pp. 299-308.

105 Nowe Drogi 1948 nr. 11, pp. 20-23, 46, 95-97.

106 Przygoński op. cit., pp. 280, 283. The ZPP declaration was published in 'Wolna Polska' 1 July 1944.

July makes clear, the CBKP insisted that this should be accompanied by mounting of the broadest possible front. The Bureau bluntly stated that Soviet backing for the KRN would depend on an early broadening of its base and that this was an immediate priority. It also expressed dissatisfaction at what it saw as the continuing narrowness and 'inconsistencies' of the PPR line. It was worried by examples of the PPR's excessive radicalism, which it feared would alienate the peasantry and prevent the new government gathering the support of 'the majority of the nation'. The emigres regarded this ambitious goal as not only possible, but imperative if the 'formation of a powerful reactionary underground, possessing a significant social base' was to be avoided. In what might be taken as a definitive statement of the philosophy of the broad national front - and no doubt of Soviet policy in mid-1944, the Bureau formulated its strategic objective as being 'the creation of such an internal balance within which we shall be able to smash the reaction with our own internal forces'.¹⁰⁷

The Polish Committee of National Liberation

In the end geography and the speed of events at the front decided the relative influence of the different strategic conceptions on the Party's line during its initial assumption of power. In mid-June when Bierut had argued for a waiting-game and Gomułka was preparing the ground for a deal with the London 'democrats', the Soviet-German front was for the most part stabilised well to the east of the River Bug; five weeks later Red Army troops reached the Vistula. The unexpected extent and rapidity of this advance altered the whole context of the debate within the PPR and in effect decided the issue in Bierut's favour. The Party would take power not in alliance with a broad national front of Peasants, Socialists and other

¹⁰⁷ Przygoński op. cit., pp. 290-93.

groupings, but instead on the back of the Soviet army and within the framework of the KRN.

It was the emigre line nevertheless which had the most profound influence on the Party's strategy in the first weeks of power. While the PPR leadership awaited the Soviet advance in Warsaw, in Moscow the emigres put the final touches to the arrangements for assuming power. Messages from Moscow to Warsaw in July hinted that these preparations were getting underway but it appears that the PPR was only informed of the details by radio post factum.¹⁰⁸ Formally, in line with Stalin's instructions, the homeland was to form the core of the new government.¹⁰⁹ However, only seven representatives of the domestic wing of the national front were present in Moscow to participate in the discussions. Of these, three (Osóbka-Morawski, Rola-Żymierski and Spychalski) were second-rank figures in the KRN leadership, while the others were of no importance whatsoever. Not one of the top Party leadership was available and Spychalski, the senior PPR spokesman, had left Warsaw in March and therefore knew nothing of the more recent debates in the Party.¹¹⁰ The Poles were inclined to await the expected arrival of further representatives of the KRN. However, these did not materialise and the Russians were anxious to finalise agreements. In meetings with Stalin and Molotov on 17-18 July the Poles were urged to go ahead with the immediate formation of a Committee of National Liberation to administer the liberated territories.¹¹¹

108 Extracts from accounts by Franciszek Józwiak (Franek, Witold) to the PZPR Central Committee (AZHP 8516, delivered 2 and 6 September 1959), p. 452. Polonsky and Drukier, op. cit.

109 Przygoński, op. cit., p. 283.

110 In fact, conspiratorial security was so tight that Spychalski was not even officially told the identity of Gomułka and Bierut before his departure for the Soviet Union. Spychalski Wspomnienia..., op. cit., pp. 355-56.

111 J.S. Haneman U progu Polski Ludowej Z pola walki 1969 nr. 2 (46), p. 144.

However, the Poles decided on 18 July to propose instead the creation of a 'KRN Delegation' to fulfil this role and the next day Stalin accepted this solution which at least formally embodied the supremacy of the KRN. On 20 July the new body held its first and only session at the end of which it was announced that Stalin had changed his mind and now insisted on his original conception of a Committee of National Liberation. The Poles had little choice but to accept this volte-face and, adding the word 'Polish', voted the Committee of National Liberation (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego - PKWN) into existence. Presumably Stalin had decided on reflection that to give such prominence to the KRN might provoke the allies and hinder a deal with 'London' which was still in the offing. In terms of structure the change made virtually no difference.¹¹²

The political platform of the PKWN, its manifesto, was produced in Moscow on 21 July and was very much a Moscow product. Based on the draft declaration which Lampe had prepared the previous December for the abandoned Polish National Committee, it closely followed the emigre concept of the 'patriotic national front'. The manifesto called for 'national unity' and promised the restoration of all democratic freedoms, excluding only 'fascist organisations' from the legal political spectrum. It confined its criticisms of 'London' to its military strategy and the alleged illegality of the Government-in-Exile but refrained from broadening this into a general attack on the political profile of the underground. The KRN was recognised as 'the

¹¹² K. Kersten Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego (Lublin, 1965), pp. 37-39; Przygoński op. cit., pp. 283-87; T. Żeńczykowski Geneza i kulisy PKWN, Kultura 1974 nr. 7-8, pp. 138-69. The minutes of the Presidium of the head office of the ZPP for 15 and 18 July 1944 were published in Protokoły prezydium zarządu głównego Związku Patriotów Polskich w ZSRR (czerwiec 1943-lipiec 1944r), Archiwum ruchu robotniczego vol. II, pp. 63-153. See also Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 21-22, 233-44.

only legal source of authority in Poland', but the manifesto toned down several of the more radical statements of the PPR. For instance the pledge in the KRN programme to nationalise heavy industry, transport and banks was dropped. Instead the PKWN undertook to restore ownership to Poles expropriated by the Nazis.¹¹³ The Central Bureau had explained the thinking behind such moderation in its letter of 18 July, where it had argued that the use of such radical slogans as 'People's Poland' and the nationalisation of industry were 'not calculated to bring about fragmentation in our opponent's camp or to draw wavering bourgeois elements away from reactionary influence or to neutralise parts of the bourgeoisie'.¹¹⁴

The PKWN manifesto which served to define the Party's strategic aims in its first weeks in power was thus largely framed by emigres who had been out of Poland for five years and who regarded the assessment of the balance of forces at home by their underground comrades as mistaken. In line with Soviet thinking, the Moscow Poles believed that a mild social programme and a platform of national liberation would bring about the broad coalition of forces which had eluded the PPR since 1942. The summer months of 1944 would show that this faith was not well-founded. By October the communists had no choice but to fall back on the Bierut-Józwiak conception of a cosmetic national front, based on the Party itself and sustained by Soviet armed might.

¹¹³ Manifesto PKWN (Warsaw, 1974). A significantly different version of the text of the manifesto is given in T. Żeńczkowski Geneza... op. cit., pp. 164-69.

¹¹⁴ Przygoński op. cit., p. 291.

CHAPTER TWO

"LUBLIN" AND "LONDON" (July to December 1944)

The Polish communists took power in summer 1944 isolated and numerically weak. Speaking to the first gathering of Party activists in liberated Lublin on 5 August, Gomułka admitted that the wartime efforts of the PPR to form a national front had failed to produce a result.¹ Twenty years later he returned to the subject of the internal balance of force in 1944: '... the London crew had a great preponderance over us, a vast apparatus of cadres and material resources at its disposal. We had to rely on our own modest resources!'.²

This of course left Soviet resources out of the calculation. In order to avoid total dependence on Soviet might, Party strategy looked to the long-awaited regrouping of political forces which it assumed would now take place as Poland passed indisputably into the Soviet sphere of power and the burden of the war against the Germans moved from the 'London' underground to the Polish Army fighting alongside the Russians. The expected disintegration of the London camp and the gravitation of its more pragmatic and radical components towards the Lublin regime would provide the PKWN with the internal base it lacked and enable the communists to isolate and eliminate their die-hard opponents. The plan was set out authoritatively in the letter which the CBKP sent to the Central Committee of the PPR on 18 July.³ The letter argued that the objective

1 Protokół zebrania delegatów PPR z Lubelszczyzny, 5.8.1944
Pierswsze kroki PPR po wyzwoleniu, Archiwum ruchu
robotniczego vol. I (Warsaw, 1973), p. 355. A translation of the minutes of this meeting is in Polonsky and Drukier, op. cit., pp. 258-65.

2 Speech to XII Plenum KC PZPR, 9.7.68, W. Gomułka Z kart
naszej historii (4th ed., Warsaw, 1970), p. 455.

3 List Biura Komunistów Polskich w ZSRR do KC PPR z dn.
18.VIII.44r, Z archiwów... op. cit., pp. 191-94. See also extracts published in Przygoński op. cit., pp. 290-91 and translation in Polonsky and Drukier, op. cit., pp. 230-32.

of establishing 'a genuinely national government gathered around itself the majority of the nation' could 'be fulfilled only by the determined and consistent realisation of the national front policy: the working-class under the leadership of our party will capture the leading position in the struggle for national liberation, achieving at the same time the maximum fragmentation of reactionary forces'. It continued: 'translating into class terminology, this means the struggle to destroy monopoly capital and great land-ownership, a struggle led by workers, peasants, intelligentsia, the petit-bourgeoisie, who will lead after them part of the middle bourgeoisie, neutralising its majority. At the same time a national front conceived in this way must guarantee the popular masses the maximum possibility of achieving their demands, while creating a favourable point of departure for the march towards changes in the political system'.⁴

Reality failed to conform to this scheme. No significant regrouping of parties took place until mid-1945. The dividing line between London 'reactionaries' and 'democrats' proved less easy to draw than the communists had expected and was in any case less in evidence than the divide separating 'London' from 'Lublin'. Moreover, faced with the problem of translating strategy into practice, the communists came up against the fundamental dilemma which was to dog them for years to come. The kind of broad coalition bloc required to achieve the defeat of their opponents by political means demanded far-reaching compromises on policy and a relaxation of the Party's hold on positions of power. In view of Party's acute lack of reliable manpower the danger existed that it would be swamped in such a block and thus lose the hegemonic role which it considered essential. On the other hand, a narrowly based front which embraced little more than the communists and their client parties on the radical left would preserve the Party's leading role but at the cost of

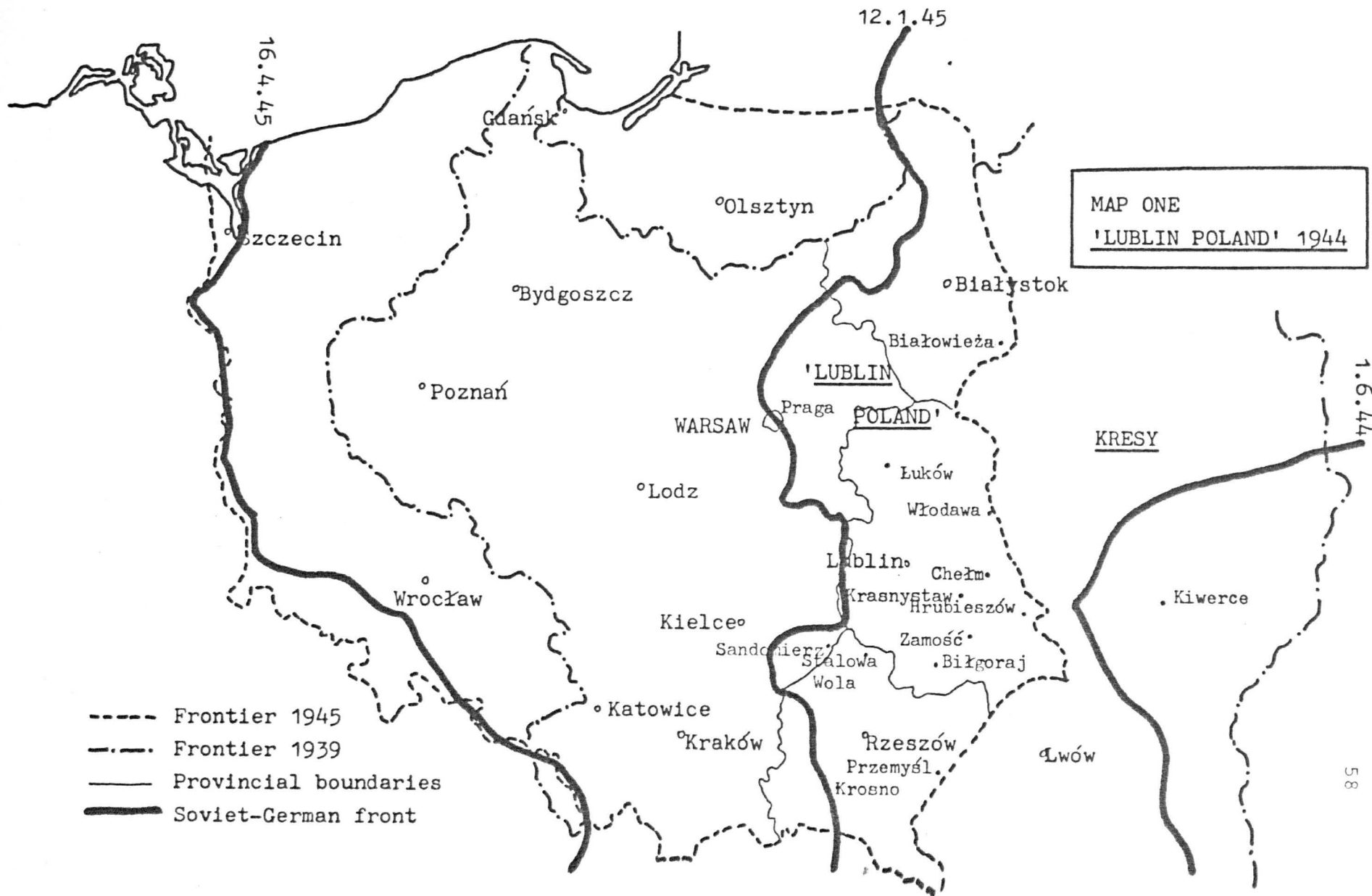
⁴ Z archiwów... op. cit., p. 191.

depriving it of the internal resources needed to defeat the opposition politically. Such a solution would lead the Party with little alternative but to resort to police and bureaucratic methods and the direct application of Soviet power to deal with its opponents. Throughout its history the PPR was caught within this dilemma, never more so than during its first year of rule in 1944-45.

The unreality of the assumptions on which the July version of the national front rested was revealed within a couple of months. In October the Party line hardened distinctly and by spring 1945 the momentum of this turn had swept it far adrift from the precepts of the national front. In May, the leadership facing a worsening political crisis and the loss of its authority within the governing apparatus, executed an abrupt volte-face, restoring in its essentials the general line from which it had departed the previous autumn.

The Lublin Coalition

Despite its narrow base the administration installed in Lublin displayed, particularly in its first weeks of existence, many of the characteristics of a coalition. At its core lay the communists, rarely occupying the more public positions, but dominating the key posts in the army, security forces, mass media and central government departments. The Party itself was a coalition, between the emigres and underground activists, between the old generation of KPP stalwarts and the younger ex-partisans, between idealists and pragmatists. Such differences in background and outlook were compounded by the differences which stemmed from the variety of vantage points from which the political situation was viewed. The top leadership, keenly sensitive to shifts of mood in Moscow, the international picture and the broad balance of internal forces, saw things very differently from the activists sent out into the countryside to establish the rudiments of party organisation and local government from nothing. A security man with orders to prevent hostile infiltration and uncover



'reactionaries' differed in perspective from a political officer in the army given the task of winning the allegiance of fresh conscripts with five years of loyalty to 'London' behind them.

This heterogeneity was at its most evident in 1944 as the Party made the transition from conspiracy to government. In one of its first circulars the leadership warned cadres of the problems that this process would involve: '... we have become a legal party, co-governing and therefore jointly responsible for all deficiencies, shortcomings etc.... On our work and activity, on our organisational skill in overcoming post-occupation chaos, on our correct party line at this crucial historical moment depends our success in winning over the majority of the nation.... Our party must learn how to govern...'.⁵

The first organisational task was to form a unified leadership. This did not take place immediately. Although Gomułka addressed the first Party meeting in Lublin on 5 August as secretary, it was Bierut who the same day arrived in Moscow for talks with Stalin and Mikołajczyk on the creation of a coalition government.⁶ The Politburo seems to have been formally constituted on 29 August. Its membership comprised Gomułka and Bierut, but not Józwiak, from the underground Secretariat of the PPR and Berman, Minc, Zawadzki and Radkiewicz who were 'co-opted' from the Central Bureau.⁷ This apparent imbalance illustrates

5 Okólnik komitetu obwodowego PPR w Lublinie o zadaniach partii w organizowaniu władzy ludowej (sierpień 1944r.), Z pola walki 1959 nr.2 (6), p. 120.

6 Kersten PKWN... op. cit., p. 49. Bierut appears to have consistently handled top level contacts between Lublin and Moscow in 1944-45. The first visit by Gomułka to Moscow of which there is evidence was made in June 1945.

7 J. Gołębiowski and W. Góra (eds.) Ruch Robotniczy w Polsce Ludowej (Warsaw, 1975), p. 405. However, there is some doubt if Radkiewicz was a full member, Przygoński op. cit., p. 316 and Pierwsze kroki... op. cit., p. 362 omit Radkiewicz's name. Gomułka states that the membership of the Politburo was decided at a meeting in Lublin attended by himself, Bierut, Zawadzki, Berman, Minc and Zambrowski. Gomułka nominated Józwiak, despite their political differences. However, Bierut opposed his
contd...

both the seniority of the Moscow group and Gomułka's weak hold on the leadership: none of the other members were his adherents. However Gomułka may have found it easier to work with the new Politburo than the old underground Secretariat, where he was outnumbered by Bierut and Józwiak.

During August and September the work of establishing a centralised organisational network for the Party to replace the decentralised underground structure was completed. Provincial and district committees were formed everywhere except in the remoter parts of Białystok province where the PPR had had no wartime organisation whatsoever. At this stage, with local cells still few in number and the Central Committee apparatus at an embryonic stage (in September it had only 24 political workers), the district committees remained the focus of Party activity.⁸

The membership of the Party east of the Vistula in the final phase of the occupation has been estimated at about 5,000. It is claimed in addition that some 20,000 troops of the People's Army (Armia Ludowa - AL) were deployed in the Lublin region, though this figure may well be exaggerated.⁹ In August and September it was primarily from this source that expansion of Party membership took place, from 4,633 (1. September) to 8,960 (1. October). Distribution was uneven: over 70% of members were concentrated in Lublin province, compared with about 12% in

contd...

nomination and Józwiak was not elected. Gomułka Polemika... op. cit., pp. 35-36. Zambrowski and Spychalski became members in spring 1945.

8 Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., pp. 22-23.

9 Ibid., p. 20. The national strength of the AL in mid-1944 is generally estimated by Party historians as between 50-65,000. This figure includes not only partisans, but also non-combatant support. The combined strength of AL guerrilla units (July '44) seems to have been between 6-8,000 troops. 20 lat LWP. II sesja naukowa poświęcona wojnie wyzwolenczej narodu polskiego 1939-45 (Warsaw, 1967), p. 142.

Rzeszów and only 2% in Białystok.¹⁰ Even allowing for the exclusion from these statistics of some communists in the army, the shortage of Party cadres with which to govern a population of approaching six million was apparent. The scope for increasing membership was limited by the social structure of the liberated territories: apart from a few pockets of industrialisation (Praga, Białystok, Lublin, Stalowa Wola), the region was overwhelmingly agricultural. At the end of 1944 as the factories began to resume regular production, the total industrial workforce was only about 85,000.¹¹ Moreover, especially in the towns, some Party officials doubted the wisdom of expanding too fast, fearing a loss of political cohesion.¹² These doubts ran contrary to leadership policy which favoured a rapid growth. On 15 September the Politburo approved organisational instructions which relaxed recruitment requirements, 'opening wide the gates of our party for all who acknowledge the principles of the PPR programme'.¹³ By the end of the year membership had risen to 21,649, thanks in part to the campaign staged around the parcellisation of the great estates. However, there remained an acute lack of cadres. The influx of poor peasants and agricultural workers, who with other rural strata constituted at least 65-70% of PPR members by December,¹⁴ could not compensate

10 Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., p. 275.

11 Ibid., p. 40.

12 Ibid., pp. 41-42. See also B. Hillebrandt i J. Jakubowski Warszawska organizacja PPR 1942-1948 (Warsaw, 1978), pp. 216-17.

13 Instrukcja organizacyjna KC PPR dla organizacji partyjnych na wyzwolonych terenach Polski (10.9.1944), PPR... viii 1944-xii 1945, p. 27. The instruction was drafted by Gomułka and approved by the Politburo meeting on 15 September. The minutes of this meeting published in Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 280 record only that the matter was discussed.

14 Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., pp. 45, 275.

in the short term for the absence of educated, politically sound activists.

The other elements in the Lublin coalition: the Peasants, Socialists and the army and security forces could only marginally alleviate the Party's shortage of manpower.

The Peasant Party was by far the largest political movement in Lublin Poland, where nearly 85% of the population lived in rural areas.¹⁵ Although the SL was very weak in Białystok province; Lublin, Rzeszów and the liberated parts of Kielce and Warsaw were amongst its strongholds. The strength of the Peasant Battalions, the armed wing of the SL, stood at about 50,000 men in Lublin province alone.¹⁶ The communists saw the Peasants as an obvious and indispensable ally. As Gomułka told delegates at the first Party meeting in August, 'the Peasants are our natural ally, and though in many cases their ideology and structure is different, we shall try to collaborate with them. The Peasants represent a serious force and without them nothing can take place'.¹⁷

The SL "ROCh" was a continuation of the prewar peasant movement, and embraced the overwhelming bulk of politically active peasants within its rather loose ranks. It constituted the largest element within the London camp, providing about half of the strength of the Home Army,¹⁸ and occupied many posts within the apparatus of the underground state. The choice of Mikołajczyk as premier of the Government-in-Exile reflected the importance of "ROCh" within the resistance movement. During August and September 'Lublin' had high hopes of winning over "ROCh" in its entirety or at

¹⁵ Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁶ R. Buczek Stronnictwo Ludowe 1939-45 (London, 1975), p. 175.

¹⁷ Protokół zebrania delegatów PPR z Lubelszczyzny 5.8.44, Pierwsze kroki... op. cit., p. 356.

¹⁸ The strength of the Bataliony Chłopskie and associated units as of 30 June 1944 has been estimated as 173,000 troops. Buczek SL... op. cit., p. 172.

any rate detaching a substantial section. While negotiations with Mikołajczyk were held in Moscow in early August and again in October, the authorities operated a relatively mild policy towards members of "ROCh" and the Peasant Battalions. On 5 September "ROCh" leaders held an illegal conference in Lublin itself. Several participants were arrested, but on indicating their readiness to co-operate with the PKWN were released and made their escape.¹⁹ In fact the conference had reaffirmed its support for the London government and boycott of the PKWN declared in circulars issued at the beginning of August. Members working with the Lublin authorities were threatened with expulsion as 'traitors to the peasant cause'.²⁰ Although initially some "ROCh" activists did find their way onto local national councils or into the Militia, the boycott became more effective later and only a small proportion of the movement left the conspiracy to throw in its lot with the PKWN.²¹

This group, which formed a rival 'Lublin SL' in August and September, were led by Peasant members of the PKWN: Andrzej Witos and Stanisław Kotek-Agroszewski. The 'Lublin SL' was not a serious rival for "ROCh". Its membership in December, by which time a local network had been established, is estimated at no more than 5,000-6,000.²² It did however provide a significant source of manpower in

19 Minutes of the PKWN (extracts), 4 October 1944 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 295. The incident appears to have assumed considerable significance in shaping the policy of 'Lublin' towards 'ROCh'. Stalin was highly critical of the decision to release the 'ROCh' delegates. Minutes of the PPR Central Committee (extracts), 9 October 1944 ibid., p. 300. Gomułka returned to the incident at a meeting of the leadership of the PPR and PPS in September 1945 as evidence of the unwillingness of 'ROCh' to co-operate with the PKWN in 1944. Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., p. 131.

20 Ibid., pp. 40-42.

21 Ibid., pp. 42, 51.

22 Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., p. 34.

local government: in early November incomplete data show that the SL and Peasant Battalions constituted some 36% of the membership of commune and district national councils as against 11% for the PPR and 4% for the Socialists and Democrats.²³ These figures probably underestimate the role played by the Peasants and in some districts such as Biłgoraj and Kraśnik they constituted as many as 80% of councillors at the lowest tier.²⁴ The SL wielded considerable influence at higher administrative levels too. For example, Witold Jedliski, an SL member, was placed in charge of establishing administration in Rzeszów province. In this position he pursued an independent line, attempting to restore the prewar elective local government system until he was removed on 29 September.²⁵ But it was Witos as vice-chairman of the PKWN and head of its Department of Agriculture and Land Reform, who could most affect policy. Until he was sacked in early October, one of the central planks of the PKWN programme, agrarian reform, was his responsibility.

In spite of its small size and separation from "ROCh", the 'Lublin SL' proved an unsteady partner for the communists. There were divisions over the leadership - no less than five candidates stood for chairman of the central committee at its September Congress²⁶ - as well as policy. An important section of the party opposed land reform in the shape forced through by the PPR, and inclined towards a compromise with "ROCh" and Mikołajczyk. Many members of

23 Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., p. 61.

24 Ibid., p. 60.

25 Kersten PKWN... op. cit., p. 61; E. Olszewski Początki władzy ludowej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1944-47 (Lublin, 1974), p. 98; Resolution of the KRN Presidium, 11 September 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 279.

26 Report on Kotek-Agroszewski (undated), ibid., p. 354. The candidates were S. Agroszewski, A. Witos, S. Janusz, J. Maślanka and J. Czechowski, Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., p. 47.

the party, reflecting the strong agrarian current in the Polish peasant movement, openly rejected communist claims to hegemony and demanded a decisive say for their party.²⁷

The Socialists, outside a few pockets of strength such as Lublin, Zamość and Krosno, had never been a significant force east of the Vistula. During the war the WRN had organisations in Lublin and amongst the oil-well workers of Krosno. Apart from groups in Biała Podlaska there appear to have been few traces of RPPS or left Socialist activity in the region.²⁸ Osóbka-Morawski and Bolesław Drobner began talks with other Socialists in Moscow on re-establishing the PPS even before the PKWN was set up.²⁹ However, within the PPR there were doubts about the wisdom of encouraging the emergence of a 'Lublin' socialist party, which might fall under the influence of the WRN. It was also feared that such a Socialist party might develop into a competitor for the PPR in working-class areas. However, the PPR leadership decided that the balance of advantage lay in reviving the PPS. Gomułka stated its position in his 5 August speech: 'If we were to absorb certain elements from the PPS that party would be destroyed while we are after co-operation and it is in our interest that the partner organisation is strong so that it attracts those masses which we are not able to win over by ourselves'.³⁰ Locally however the situation was often confused. In Sandomierz, for instance, a 'Lublin PPS' branch began activity on 20 August with the approval of the Soviet military authorities. A few days later its entire membership joined the PPR, which took over the branch

27 Ibid., pp. 48-49, 53; H. Słabek Polityka agrarna PPR (Warsaw 1st ed., 1967), pp. 212-15.

28 Reiss op. cit., p. 51; T. Sierocki Warszawska organizacja PPS 1944-1948 (Warsaw, 1976), pp. 62-64.

29 Ibid., p. 63.

30 Protokół zebrania delegatów PPR a Lubelszczyzny, 5.8.44, Pierwsze kroki... op. cit., p. 358.

headquarters. The Socialists were co-opted onto the district PPR committee, where they constituted a majority of the members. It was not until October, that the Socialists split away from the PPR and re-formed their own organisation, on instructions from the PPS executive in Lublin.³¹

Within the leadership elected at the PPS Congress held in Lublin on 10/11 September there were three distinct currents of thought about the party's future. The group led by Stefan Matuszewski, the secretary-general, like many of the communist leaders, envisaged a very limited role for the PPS. According to one modern Warsaw historian, Matuszewski saw the PPS

'... not as an independent political factor, but as a useful "label", which was supposed to neutralise the influence of the PPS-WRN as well as isolate the right-wing of the Foreign Committee of the PPS (i.e. the Socialists in London - J.R.), both in its relations with Poland and with the Socialist parties in the West. At the same time the political authority of the PPS and its traditions, known to wide circles of Polish society, would make possible the widening of the narrow social base of the PKWN.... For these aims the existence of the PPS was necessary, but its organisational growth seemed superfluous, especially as it might become - as indeed it did in the following years - serious competition for the fast expanding PPR organisation'.³²

Matuszewski was amongst those who favoured the early merger of the two parties. In an article published on 9 November, he wrote: 'If today the PPS is consolidating its ranks, if today it is uniting all those who are scattered and those who were led astray or were disorientated, tomorrow

³¹ Naumiuk PPR... op. cit., pp. 202, 217. In Mielec (Rzeszów province) PPS activists formed the core of the PPR organisation set up there in 1944. See the speech by W. Zawadzki to the Party conference held in Lublin on 10-11 October, Pierwsze kroki... p. 373.

³² J. Bardach O dziejach powojennej PPS, Kwartalnik Historyczny R. LXXIX z.3 1972, pp. 686-87.

work will begin on achieving unity of the workers' movement'.³³ Such an attitude on the part of the man who was in charge of the organising of the party was one of the reasons for the shortcomings evident in this area. As Bardach has observed: 'the conditions were not created for the growth of the party in the localities, limiting it to traditional PPS areas... (Because of) the conviction that the organisational unification of the workers' movement was imminent... the growth of the PPS, by activating former cadres linked in part during the occupation with the WRN, was deemed undesirable'.³⁴

Boleslaw Drobner, chairman of the party's Supreme Council, emerged as the spokesman for those who wished the PPS to play a much more positive role by recruiting actively among the party's traditional supporters including the rank-and-file of the WRN. This stance was popular with the activists, a large proportion of whom were formerly linked with WRN. Drobner's statement at the September Congress that 'the party offers a fraternal hand to the WRN-ites, let them return and join our ranks', was greeted with loud applause.³⁵ Drobner was also ready to praise the traditions of the prewar PPS and assert the party's independence of the PPR.³⁶ At the September 1944 Congress he made the startling claim that the PPS throughout its history had 'stood steadfastly on the position of Poland's independence, in accordance with the theories of Marx and

33 Barykada Wolności 9.11.44 - cited in Syzdek op. cit., p. 379n.

34 Bardach O dziejach... op. cit., p. 687. See also Reiss op. cit., pp. 63, 69-70. The PPR was also concerned to put pressure on the leadership of the PPS to take a harder line against former WRN elements in the party, see Minutes of the Politburo of the PPR Central Committee, 3 December 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 391.

35 Sierocki Warszawska... op. cit., p. 64.

36 Letter from Julian Finkielsztajn to Comrade Pukhlov, 10 October 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 304-5.

the views of Lenin and Stalin'.³⁷

Osóbka-Morawski, as chairman of the PKWN and of the Central Executive of the PPS, was the most influential figure in the party. He shared Drobner's ambitions for the PPS, but was more circumspect in expressing them than his voluble comrade, who it seems often tried his patience. According to Drobner's deputy at the Department of Labour, Social Services and Health of the PKWN, Feliks Mantel, 'it was difficult to endure being with Drobner and more difficult still to work with him... he continually provoked Osóbka, preventing him from dealing with important problems. He denigrated the communists and the Soviet Union constantly...'.³⁸ Osóbka, again according to Mantel's account, 'was not a puppet of the PPR, he did not give way to them.... Without personal ambition, he had nevertheless party ambitions. He was determined not to allow the PPR to push him to one side'.³⁹ This is borne out by other sources. In November Osóbka complained to Bierut that he was being treated like an 'accessory' (*doczepka*) and a month later the two clashed again, Osóbka exploding at Bierut: 'You have bandits and Sanacja men in your ranks, so purge yourselves and not our party'.⁴⁰

Osóbka's advantage in the infighting within the leadership of the PPS and in his dealings with the communists lay in his access to Stalin and the favour he found in the Kremlin. For example, in December after a visit to Moscow, Bierut informed the Politburo that Stalin's attitude to Osóbka-Morawski was favourable and that he had suggested that the PPR should rely on the Morawski group.⁴¹ However

37 Sierocki Warszawska... op. cit., p. 62.

38 F. Mantel Szkice pamiętnikarskie Zeszyty Historyczne 7 (1965), p. 129.

39 Ibid., p. 118.

40 Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee, 9 November, 14 December 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 364, 395.

41 Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee, 14 December, 17 December 1944, *ibid.*, pp. 394, 397-98.

Osóbka seems to have been reluctant to use this Soviet support openly as a weapon against his rivals in the PPS. Thus he did not take advantage of Stalin's proposal that Drobner might be appointed PKWN representative in Moscow or Kiev which would have effectively removed him from influence within the PPS. Osóbka also spoke up in defence of Drobner when he was criticised by Bulganin at a meeting in the Kremlin.⁴²

While the PPS was not in a position to dispute PPR hegemony in the way that it did after mid-1945, neither at central nor local level did it tamely subordinate itself to the communists. For example, Hillebrandt and Jakubowski writing about the Praga suburb of Warsaw, state that 'full confidence between the Praga PPR branch and the PPS group was lacking for a long time... Socialist activists frequently organised events - as a rule the same as those of the PPR - but separately, on their own initiative. In general PPS members showed more energy and discipline (in their own events) than in those staged jointly with the PPR.... Unhealthy rivalry also occurred. For a long time the PPS did not want to admit the PPR to some milieu, including working-class communities (e.g. the railway workers)'. The situation in Praga improved only after widescale changes in the PPS leadership there in late November.⁴³ A report by the Warsaw provincial committee of the PPR for the period 15 November 1944 to 1 January 1945 complained that 'according to the information available 70% of the PPS aktyw is waiting for "London" to return, or as they put it "suitable cadres must be ready for when London arrives". Like the SL, they direct their work to this end. They are trying to build up their organisation, fill responsible positions and take as little part as possible in joint activities. When we call them out

⁴² Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee, 14 December 1944, ibid., p. 395.

⁴³ Hillebrandt and Jakubowski op. cit., pp. 230-31.

they send representatives or greetings, but do not take an active part in campaigns and show little interest in political matters, at any rate on the outside...'.⁴⁴

There is also evidence of tension between the communist and Socialist elites. We have mentioned Osóbka's clashes with Bierut and Drobner's continual 'readiness for sharp debate'. More than once the PPS simply ignored PPR attempts to curb its influence. For example, it went ahead to form its own youth movement despite pressure from the PPR to submit to an all-party youth organisation.⁴⁵ In November, Osóbka and the PPS arranged a Co-operative Congress in secret, with the result that the Socialists were able to re-establish their dominant position in the leadership of the Co-operative movement.⁴⁶ According to Edward Puacz, an emigre historian who obtained access to normally classified documents, there were some thirty meetings between Lublin representatives and Stalin during the second half of 1944. Their purpose was either to present joint PPR-PPS proposals to Stalin or to ask him to arbitrate between the two parties when they were in disagreement. This suggests that the Socialists were in a position to exert considerable influence and Puacz even argues that it was PPS pressure, culminating in an appeal to Stalin, which forced the subject of aid to the Warsaw uprising onto the PKWN agenda in mid-September.⁴⁷ Osóbka also implied in an article published in later years, that Stalin

44 Sprawozdanie Warszawskiego Komitetu Wojewodzkiego PPR z działalności w okresie 15.11.44 - 1.1.45r, Pierwsze kroki... op. cit., p. 387.

45 Gomułka Sytuacja obecna i zadania Partii Referat wygłoszony na naradzie PPR w Lublinie 10.10.1944r, Artykuły... vol. I op. cit., p. 117. The PPS leadership had revived its youth section (OM TUR) a couple of days before, see Reiss op. cit., p. 65.

46 Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee, 9 November 1944 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 364.

47 E. Puacz Powstanie warszawskie w protokołach PKWN, Zeszyty Historyczne 10 (1966), p. 178.

overruled objections from Bierut and others to the immediate return to Warsaw as capital in early 1945, supporting the stand of the Socialists, Osóbka and Trojanowski.⁴⁸

Such influence that the Socialists exerted sprang from their prominence in the top echelons of the PKWN rather than any organisational weight. The boycott operated by the underground WRN against the 'false PPS' was generally effective, particularly as far as experienced activists were concerned.⁴⁹ The hostility of such local Socialist leaders, Matuszewski's inactivity in the central secretariat and the absence of a strong PPS tradition in the region seriously restricted the growth of the party. At the end of 1944 it had perhaps 7,-8,000 members.⁵⁰

When the Soviet advance crossed the Bug, the First Polish Army numbered just over 100,000 men.⁵¹ Initial plans for expansion envisaged, quite unrealistically, that the army would be quadrupled to some 430,000 men, organised as three armies of five divisions apiece.⁵² Mobilisation began at the end of August and during the next two months, 66,000 recruits were conscripted, chiefly into the Second Army. It has been estimated that this draft fell short of the total liable for the first stage of conscription by between 20-40%. To fill this gap it was decided to call up a further 46,000 men from the next classes.⁵³ The

48 E. Osóbka-Morawski Pamiętniki ministra Polityka (1973), nr. 42.

49 Reiss op. cit., pp. 51-52; Sierocki Warszawska... op. cit., p. 65.

50 Ibid., p. 66; Syzdek op. cit., p. 80 says the membership was about 5,000; Reiss op. cit., pp. 67n, 69 gives a figure of 7,663.

51 W. Jurgielewicz Organizacja LWP (22 vii 44 - 9 v 45), (Warsaw, 1968), p. 381, gives the strength of the First Army as 107,810 on 1 August 1944. M. Plikas (ed.) Mała kronika LWP 1943-73 (Warsaw, 1975), p. 484, gives a figure of 100,777 (20.7.1944). Zbiniewicz op. cit., p. 324 says 107,000.

52 Kersten PKWN... op. cit., pp. 96-97.

53 Ibid., p. 104.

role of the London boycott of the mobilisation will be considered presently, here we are concerned with the army as a political asset of the Lublin administration.

Though results fell short of the ambitious targets originally set, the creation of an army which by the end of the year numbered about 172,000 trained men⁵⁴ (plus 100,000 more undergoing training)⁵⁵ represented a major success for the PKWN and seriously weakened both the organisation and authority of 'London'. This is not to say that the new recruits necessarily switched their allegiance. In very many cases the decision to submit to conscription indicated only a readiness to fight the Germans, rather than an endorsement of the Lublin regime. In a report written at the end of June Mieczysław Mietkowski, the head of the political apparatus of the First Army, described the political mood amongst recruits. These were conscripts from the eastern kresy, the main source of expansion of the army during the summer. However, it is unlikely that the mood of those called up in Lublin Poland differed greatly.

'... A number of problems crop up amongst the new (recruits) in a form significantly sharper than among the old soldiers. The Ukrainian question... the frontier issue ("Lwow is a Polish city from long ago...")...

It is worse in the formations stationed in the Przebrz-Kiwerce region. The local Polish population there is almost entirely under the influence of London propaganda.... The London government has immense authority amongst them. They imagine the future Poland basically as before. Attitude to the Soviet Union cool, with some hostile.... At first they looked on our army with great suspicion after coming into contact with officers who spoke Polish poorly or not at all...

... newly arrived units completely lack any political training apparatus... the human

54 Kersten PKWN... op. cit., p. 110.

55 Przygoński op. cit., p. 319.

element is totally raw, remaining under the influence of London propaganda. Our propaganda does not get through to them. (Their) attitude to our army is full of distrust. Statements are made that it is "a Polish mass run by the Jew-Commune" or that it is "the Red Army in Polish uniforms". Hatred of the Ukrainians is very great, generalised to the whole nation. Anti-Semitic feeling is fairly common...'⁵⁶

The value of placing this mass under military discipline and political influence was indisputable. However, in the short-term the army demanded reliable cadres rather than providing them. This was apparent during the scare in October and November 1944 when the Party feared it might lose control of its troops and the flow of political officers into administration and security had to be reversed.

The use of the army for civil purposes was necessarily circumscribed by the uncertainty over its allegiance. This was illustrated by the problems which arose in the use of troops to collect contingents from the peasantry. During September-October crack soldiers from the Special Storm Brigade were used for this purpose, but this unit - the forerunner of the Internal Security Corps (Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego - KBW) - was only 1053 strong in August and had grown to a mere 2195 by November, when it was switched mainly to operations against the underground.⁵⁷ In its place ill-equipped and poorly-trained supply regiments consisting largely of Ukrainian and White Russian peasants were employed (presumably Poles were not regarded as suitable). These units proved both inefficient and insensitive.⁵⁸ About 600 officers and men were used to more positive effect during the parcellisation of the

⁵⁶ Blum Organizacja... op. cit., pp. 234-38. Report dated 30.6.1944.

⁵⁷ M. Turlejska (ed.) Z walk przeciwko zbrojnemu podziemi 1944-47 (Warsaw, 1966), p. 77. See also J. Czapla KBW w latach 1947-65, Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny, 1965, nr. 3.

⁵⁸ Kersten PKWN... op. cit., p. 118.

great estates, when they participated in the distribution of about one quarter of the total land involved and provided much needed support for the Party's civilian land reform apparatus.⁵⁹ Even this limited contribution was invaluable in view of Lublin's shortage of manpower, but the army was able to alleviate the problem only marginally.

The security forces: the Citizens' Militia (Milicja Obywatelska - MO) and Security Office (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa - UB) were throughout 1944 still in the process of formation and like the army their political dependability was often suspect. In the first months the security apparatus was given priority over the army in the allocation of ex-AL partisans and specially-trained army officers. However, the speed of its expansion inevitably involved relaxing recruitment standards. The UB had 2,500 officers by December 1944⁶⁰ and the MO had about 13,000 by early October.⁶¹ The poor quality, lack of equipment and training, and low morale of these forces was discussed repeatedly in the Politburo and PKWN. In October the communists decided on a drastic purge of the Militia, transferring 50% of its members into the army and filling the gap with soldiers.⁶² Nevertheless two months later Józwiak, who had been appointed to command the MO, reported that 'the MO numbers about 14,000. The purge has shown that 7,000 needed to be dismissed'. He added that the 50% transfer had not yet taken place.⁶³ But even these measures were

59 H. Słabek Dzieje polskiej reformy rolnej 1944-48 (Warsaw 1972), p. 80.

60 Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee, 17 December 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 398.

61 Minutes of the PKWN (extracts), 4 October 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 295.

62 Minutes of the PPR Central Committee (extracts), 9 October 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 302.

63 Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee, 17 December 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 398. Other sources give a figure of 12,934 for the strength of the MO in December 1944, J. Czapla (ed.) W walce o utrwalenie władzy ludowej w Polsce 1944-47 (Warsaw, 1967), p. 221.

unavailing and in May 1945 the MO and UB were once more subject to heavy criticism and further large-scale purges continued into 1945-46.

To sum up, by October 1944, the Party east of the Vistula numbered perhaps 10,000 members. Its allies the 'Lublin' Socialists and Peasants, according to official figures, had together about 10,000 members. However, as Gomułka admitted neither were very active, while 'the Democratic Party in general is not worth considering'. He added, 'our party is the real force'.⁶⁴ Apart from one or two thousand special troops, the army could not be trusted with assignments of a political nature. Work on organising the Militia and UB, had only just begun. In many areas, the manpower of the security forces overlapped to a considerable extent with the membership of the Party.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, these forces were regarded as being in need of a drastic purge. 'Lublin' could not rest its rule on these narrow resources. The failure of its efforts to broaden the national front into the London camp, would leave no choice but to fall back on the Soviet factor and use more deliberately and extensively some of the 2.5 million Red Army troops massed on Polish territory.⁶⁶

The Party and the Underground

The Party's line towards the AK in the summer and early autumn of 1944 was shaped by its broader commitment

⁶⁴ Minutes of the PPR Central Committee (extracts), 9 October 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 300.

⁶⁵ W. Zawadzki told the 10-11 October 1944 PPR conference that in the urban areas of Rzeszów province the bulk of Party members were in the Militia. In Jarosław district for instance, of 100 PPR members, 45 were in the Militia and 20 in the UB, Pierwsze kroki... op. cit., p. 373.

⁶⁶ M. Turlejska (ed.) W walce ze zbrojnym podziemiem 1945-47 (Warsaw, 1972), p. 12. According to one estimate an average of almost 35,000 Red Army or Polish Army troops were deployed in Lublin Poland for each 1000 sq. km. of territory, Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 103.

to the achievement of a national front. A discriminating policy was to be adopted towards the underground. As Radkiewicz, in charge of Public Security, later put it, 'we tried to differentiate between elements in the AK - fighting above all the NSZ, the most fascist, then the Piłsudski-ite, Sanacja core of the AK, while towards the Peasant Battalions we were very moderate'.⁶⁷ By stressing the need for national unity and the defeat of Germany, the communists hoped to detach a large part of the rank-and-file of the AK, which would be used as the basis for a big expansion of the Polish Army under Soviet command, leaving the 'reactionary' sections of the AK officer corps and the right of the London camp isolated.

The total strength of the AK in the territory of Lublin Poland in mid-1944 is impossible to estimate with any precision. The strength of AK units regularly based in the region a few months before was claimed to be between 100 to 150,000 troops.⁶⁸ However, the movement of units from the eastern kresy as the Red Army advanced, recruitment into the Polish Army and Soviet round-ups had greatly complicated the position by July 1944.

As we have seen, during 1944 the underground state increasingly turned its attention to the problem of power in postwar Poland. As the likelihood grew that the Soviet army rather than the Western Allies would liberate Poland the question of how 'London' should respond to the advance onto Polish soil of the troops of a power with which it

67 Minutes of the PKWN (extracts), 4 October 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 294.

68 The strength of the AK (including affiliated formations such as the Peasant Battalions) was probably about 40,000 - 60,000 in Lublin okręg; about 18,000 - 30,000 in Białystok okręg; about 19,000 - 24,000 in Rzeszów province; about 5,000 in the Sandomierz-Opatów bridgehead; and perhaps 20,000 in the liberated parts of Warsaw province, see Polskie Siły Zbrojne... op. cit., vol. III, p. 123; I. Caban and Z. Mańkowski ZWZ i AK w okręgu Lubelskim 1939-1944 vol. I (Lublin, 1971), p. 81; H. Majecki Białostoczczyzna w pierwszych latach władzy ludowej 1944-48 (2nd ed., Warsaw, 1977), p. 12; Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 103; P. Matusek Ruch oporu na ziemi opatowsko-sandomierskiej 1939-45 (Warsaw, 1976), p. 230.

now had no diplomatic relations became extremely urgent. The right-wing nationalists of the NSZ argued that the underground should prepare to continue its war with the occupant, whether Nazi or Soviet, by destroying pro-Soviet and communist forces operating in conspiracy. However, this strategy was not one which the Government-in-Exile and the AK could adopt if it was to maintain any standing with the British and Americans or keep open the possibility of an accommodation with the Soviet government.

The tactics of the AK and the civilian organs of the underground towards the advancing Soviet armies as set out definitively in General Bor-Komorowski's order of 20 November 1943 were therefore to mobilise and offer assistance to the Red Army, in this way presenting the Soviets with the dilemma of either de facto recognising 'London' as an ally, or repressing 'friendly' AK units, thereby risking friction with the Western Powers. The basic objective of operation 'Tempest', as the plan was code-named, was encapsulated in the following passage of Bor's order: '... I have ordered commanders and units, which will participate in fighting the retreating Germans, to reveal their presence to the Russians. Their task... will be to manifest through their action the existence of the Republic'.⁶⁹ These tactics were not intended to assist the Russians, whose aim, Bor wrote, 'is the destruction of the independence of Poland, or at least its political subordination to the Soviets',⁷⁰ but as a means to bolster the Polish cause amongst the Western Allies. As he put it, 'by giving the Soviets minimal military help we are creating political difficulties for them'.⁷¹

'Tempest' began in January 1944 when the Red Army crossed the prewar frontier, but reached its peak during the huge Soviet offensive which began in late June and

⁶⁹ Polskie Siły Zbrojne... op. cit., p. 556.

⁷⁰ Armia Krajowa w Dokumentach 1939-1945 nr. 709 Bor to Sosnkowski, 22 July 1944, vol. IV (London, 1977).

⁷¹ J. Ciechanowski The Warsaw Rising of 1944 (Cambridge, 1974).

swept rapidly across the eastern kresy and during the second half of July into the territory to the west of the Curzon line which Moscow recognised as Polish. AK units were mobilised in German-occupied areas with instructions to capture towns shortly before they fell to the Russians and establish Polish administrations there; they were then to welcome the advancing Red Army as hosts and reveal their forces to the local Soviet command. The tragic culmination of this plan was the Warsaw uprising, launched on 1 August in the expectation of the imminent Soviet entry into the capital.

In fact the commitment to revealing AK detachments to the Russians, though extensive, was not total. Bor, in the report he sent to Sosnkowski, the Supreme Commander in London, enclosing his order of 20 November, had added that 'in case of a second Russian occupation, I am preparing in the utmost secrecy the skeleton command network of a new clandestine organisation... it will be a separate network unconnected with the AK organisation, which has to a large degree been uncovered to elements in Soviet service'.⁷² The new clandestine organisation received the cryptonym 'Nie', and according to Party historians was responsible for a number of the attacks on supporters of the Lublin Committee which occurred the following autumn.⁷³ Not only 'Nie' remained underground; large sections of the AK were critical of the policy of leaving the conspiracy and reporting to the Russians. This was especially true of units linked with the National Party, on the anti-Soviet right of the 'London' spectrum, belonging either to the National Military Organisation (Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa - NOW) or that part of the NSZ which had been merged into the AK. These formations retained a good deal of autonomy inside

72 Polskie Siły Zbrojne... op. cit., p. 556.

73 T. Walichnowski U źródła walk z podziemiem reakcyjnym w Polsce (Warsaw, 1975), p. 119.

the AK and widely opted out of 'Tempest'.⁷⁴ Finally, the extreme-right, National Radical wing of the NSZ, which had remained outside the AK, was, as we have seen, pursuing its own private war with the communists.

Under the 'Tempest' plan, the Polish underground forces were to offer co-operation with the Red Army, but insist on retaining their identity as an integral part of the Polish Armed Forces loyal to the London government. The AK and its civilian network were, moreover, to negotiate solely with the Russian military authorities and hold aloof from any direct dealings with Lublin representatives. It was on these points that 'Tempest' came into collision with the national front strategy of the communists.

Already in the eastern kresy 'Tempest' had set into a pattern of failure.⁷⁵ The Russians, unwilling to accept the political conditions implicitly tied to the co-operation proffered by the AK, had presented the Poles with the ultimatum of either joining General Berling's largely Soviet-officered Polish Army or disarming and dissolving their units. The advance across the Bug into territory recognised by Moscow as Polish and the priority given to broadening the base of the PKWN, which now for the first time became directly involved in the confrontation, nevertheless made what happened in the Lublin region something of a test-case.

Lublin city itself was captured from the Germans in fighting between 23 and 25 July. Once shooting had died down, the AK and the Government Delegate for the city, Władysław Cholewka, began, in accordance with 'Tempest', to take over the local administration. Proclamations were pasted up, the town hall occupied, State Security Corps (the underground's police force) patrols stationed in

74 See I. Caban and E. Machocki Za władzę ludu (Lublin, 1975), pp. 53-55 for the position in Lublin province; Turlejska W walce... op. cit., pp. 220-21 for the situation in Rzeszów province.

75 Ciechanowski op. cit., pp. 190-211.

the streets and recruitment offices for the 'Lublin Battalion' of the AK opened. On 25 July the first PKWN representatives arrived, led by Edward Ochab, and the next day General Berling and Aleksander Zawadzki arrived at the head of regular Polish units. On the same day attempts were made, by Radkiewicz it seems, to open talks between the PKWN and the 'Londoners', who in line with 'Tempest', refused to enter negotiations with anyone except the Soviet military authorities. On 27 July a meeting took place between General Kolpaczka, commander of the Soviet sixth army, Cholewa and Colonel Tumidajski, the area AK commander. Kolpaczka issued the usual ultimatum: the AK forces had either to join the Polish Army fighting with the Red Army, or lay down their arms. The 'London' representatives followed their instructions and chose the latter alternative, adamantly refusing to recognise the PKWN.

It is worth noting that this meeting lasted until 29 July, whereupon Cholewa and Tumidajski were allowed to leave, though under surveillance. Apparently Radkiewicz and the Russians had not yet excluded the possibility that the underground leaders might revise their position. If this was the case, there hopes were entertained for only four or five days as the process of disarming AK units in the region got underway. On the one hand the 'Londoners' were alarmed by reports of arrests and deportations of AK officers and the internment of units, while on the other, PKWN security officials became convinced that the AK was handing over only a proportion of its arms and disbanding only a part of its network. In both cases these fears were probably well-founded.

The 'Nie' organisation has been mentioned, and in February instructions were issued which spoke of a 'second subsidiary network of civil and military leaders... which will remain underground, trying to establish contact with the Polish authorities and informing them of the fate of revealed representatives...'.⁷⁶ There were besides

⁷⁶ Ciechanowski op. cit., p. 188.

numerous AK units, particularly those linked with the nationalist front, which disagreed with the 'Tempest' strategy and did not come into the open. On the other side, the communists were not averse to using limited force in order to loosen what they saw as the hold of reactionary officers over the democratic mass of the AK. In practice this task was frequently left to NKVD detachments charged with providing security behind the front. These units were hardly suited to drawing the fine distinctions such a policy assumed and from the start bloody clashes occurred between AK forces and those of the NKVD attempting to disarm them.⁷⁷

The mutual suspicions were greatly intensified by the outbreak of the uprising in Warsaw on 1 August, which was interpreted in Lublin as a dire threat to its position, demanding a new aggressive stance to replace the flexibility and optimism of the first week of power. On 3 August Radkiewicz put the Security Department's view of priorities to the PKWN: '1/Mobilisation into the army of the broad mass of the AK. 2/The arrest of the AK commanders. Our tactics - offensive... the AK is attempting to seize Warsaw, to install its army and administration'.⁷⁸ The repercussions of this tougher line were felt in Lublin immediately. On 2 August Radkiewicz had told the PKWN that 'the AK command in Lublin formally agreed to lay down its arms, but did this only partially.... We must commence determined activity, with the probable use of repression. The AK has begun illegal work...'.⁷⁹ The next day Tumidajski and Cholewa were brought in for further talks with the Russians with PKWN spokesmen in attendance. The 'Londoners' attempted to clarify the uncertainty over the treatment of their men, refusing once more demands that

⁷⁷ Turlejska W walce... op. cit., pp. 12-13.

⁷⁸ Minutes of the PKWN (extracts) 3 August 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 256.

⁷⁹ Minutes of the PKWN (extracts) 2 August 1944, ibid..

they subordinate their troops to the PKWN until such time as an agreement was reached between the Committee and Mikołajczyk, then in Moscow. The two men were thereupon arrested and despatched into imprisonment somewhere in the Soviet Union.⁸⁰

The episode was duplicated in many other places: Zamość, Przemyśl, Rzeszów, Białystok and dozens of other towns and villages. In general, the confrontation lasted a few days before the Soviets intervened decisively and cleared out the AK authorities. The course of events in Lublin demonstrated the inevitability of conflict between the two sides as they carried out their instructions, for although both strategies aimed at avoiding an open clash, they were more concerned with extracting de facto recognition from the other of their claim to rule Poland. The outcome of the manoeuvring in July and August 1944 was hardly satisfactory for either side: the PPR captured the administrative machine, but thanks to Soviet military power, not the support of a broad national front; 'London' demonstrated its military and administrative presence, but also its total powerlessness in the face of Soviet backing for the PKWN.

Despite these setbacks to their respective strategies, neither side openly abandoned its tactics. 'Tempest' continued until October, fizzling out as the Soviet-German front stabilised. Amongst the communists, the initial jolt of the Warsaw uprising gave way within a few days to a calmer appraisal of the situation. The arrival in Lublin of Gomułka and other leaders of the underground Party was followed by reassertions of the broad national front line. In his first speech to the Party aktyw on 5 August, Gomułka warned 'do not alienate other groupings... invite (them) to co-operate... by pursuing such a policy we deprive the conservative element of its weapons, we can isolate the

⁸⁰ This account is based on Caban and Machocki op. cit., pp. 36-39; Polskie Siły Zbrojne... op. cit., p. 626; Kersten PKWN... op. cit., pp. 30-31, 47; S. Korboński Polskie... op. cit., p. 165.

reaction from the masses still under its influence'.⁸¹ Over the following weeks the leadership persevered with this line, sustained by the Russians' apparent preference for a deal between Lublin and Mikołajczyk's following as well as the distinct possibility of the Red Army relieving the 'London' insurgents fighting in Warsaw. But on the ground, the strategies of both sides soon began to modify in the face of realities.

Having witnessed what had happened in Lublin and elsewhere, AK officers on the ground were most unhappy about carrying on with the policy of revealing their forces to the Russians. At least one commander wired Warsaw to confirm whether this order remained in force, adding that 'there is strong opposition amongst my officers and men'.⁸² Białystok AK, under the command of Colonel Liniarski, disobeyed the order en masse.⁸³ By September, Bor himself had apparently dropped this aspect of 'Tempest' and began ordering AK concentrations to disperse and partisan units to dissolve. On 26 September he transmitted this message to Rzeszów command: 'Do not organise any conspiratorial AK units. Dissolve partisan detachments under Soviet occupation' (my emphasis - J.R.). Disperse the troops...'.⁸⁴

Although Bor was by this time referring to the Soviet presence as an occupation, there is no satisfactory evidence that the 'Nie' network was activated. Its command was pinned down in Warsaw and communications with the outside were severely disrupted. Bor, who was gambling on the Red Army relieving the insurrection in the capital, repeatedly and categorically forbade provincial commands

81 Protokół zebrania delegatów PPR z Lubelszczyzny 5.8.1944, Pierwsze kroki... op. cit., p. 357.

82 nr. 1050 Cdr. Żoliborz to Cdr. Warsaw okręg, 12.9.1944, AK w Dokumentach... vol. IV op. cit..

83 H. Majecki Białostocczyzna w pierwszych latach władzy ludowej 1944-48 (2nd ed., Warsaw, 1977), p. 44.

84 nr.. 1163 Bor to podokręg Rzeszów, 26.9.1944, AK w Dokumentach... vol. IV op. cit..

to fight the Russians.⁸⁵ Clashes occurred all the same; orders to avoid conscription were misinterpreted by some units, which resisted with force or occasionally assassinated recruitment officers.⁸⁶ Shoot-outs also took place between NKVD detachments and AK units in the process of dispersal or remaining in conspiracy.⁸⁷ In some instances, AK officers disobeyed Bor's orders to dissolve and stayed underground to defend the population against marauding Soviet troops.⁸⁸ By the end of the year the Russians were claiming that some 300 Red Army officers had been killed.⁸⁹

Such bloodshed, by no means all the work of the AK, was minimal in comparison with the level it was to reach in early 1945. But together with the growing feeling amongst party activists that they were being overwhelmed by the sheer inertia of the administrative machine, as well as fears for the allegiance of the armed forces, this violence reinforced the arguments of the hardliners in the PPR who were demanding a more radical solution to the problem of the underground.

The October Turn

The Party's moderation towards the Home Army and the 'democratic' wing of the London camp was maintained until early October. Its line was then abruptly transformed. By November a concerted effort to crush the AK was underway, an aggressive land parcellisation campaign spearheaded a general radicalisation of policy, while any deal with London had been indefinitely postponed. Although lip-service was still paid to the construction of the national

⁸⁵ nr. 985 Bor to Nowogródek okręg, 2.9.1944, ibid.

⁸⁶ nr. 1052 Mikołajczyk to Bor, 13.9.1944r, ibid.

⁸⁷ Turlejska W walce... op. cit., p. 13.

⁸⁸ nrs. 1065, 1089, 14, 16.9.1944, AK w Dokumentach...
vol. IV op. cit.

⁸⁹ Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee,
17 December 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 397.

front, in practice from October 1944 to May 1945 this strategy was submèrged. Instead, the Party pursued a narrowly-based, radical course which relied heavily on the repression applied by its own meagre security forces, greatly reinforced by Soviet units and advisers.

The 'October turn' was sudden and drastic. As late as 26 September the Party leadership had affirmed that its objective was 'not only the maintenance, but also the broadening of the national front... (and) unification of the nation, conceived as the active solidarity of all the main strata of the nation, of all the democratic parties'.⁹⁰ To the distaste of Party militants, repressive measures were kept to a minimum. Edwarda Orłowska, secretary for Białystok province, complained of local activists coming '... to us from the districts and say "What sort of power is this?" Volksdeutsche and traitors walk about the town. Endeks (National Democrats - J.R.) openly make trouble and nothing happens to them.... Why so far has there been no death sentence? Ruthless repression should be applied against the leading (AK) commanders'.⁹¹ From what other speakers at the same meeting said, it is clear that generally the Party aktyw was not even armed at this stage.⁹²

The level of arrests was restrained too. At the end of September Radkiewicz reported that only 3,000 (including 1,500 Home Army) people had been detained, most of whom had been pressed into the army. He admitted though that 'so far as arrests by the Soviet authorities are concerned, we do not have full data or information'.⁹³ In the army itself the stress was on integrating not only AK

⁹⁰ Rezolucja KC PPR o sytuacji politycznej i zadaniach partii 26.9.44, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., pp. 30-37.

⁹¹ Protokół konferencji sekretarzy komitetów powiatowych i aktywu PPR terenów wyzwolonych 10-11.10.44, Pierwsze kroki... op. cit., p. 364.

⁹² Ibid., p. 373.

⁹³ Minutes of the PKWN (extracts) 4 October 1944 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 294.

troops, but officers too. An instruction to politruks of the 1st Army dated 25 September ordered them to engender 'an atmosphere of friendly concern and fraternity' around AK officers, 'strongly emphasising the factor of national unity'. While noting the danger of hostile infiltration, it warned against the use of 'police surveillance methods'.⁹⁴

Land reform, which the communists saw as the key to capturing the allegiance of the peasants, was handled with the same restraint and was entrusted throughout the summer and early autumn to Andrzej Witos, head of the PKWN Department of Agriculture. Witos was a member of the Peasant Party, not noted for his radicalism. He planned gradual land reform 'in the majesty of the law' and was sceptical whether this would be administratively possible before the end of the war. Nonetheless, the communists gave him a free hand and as late as 26 September stressed in a Central Committee circular that estate workers committees (organised and often manned by the Party) should co-operate with Witos' Land Offices.⁹⁵

During the following week the Party shifted its stance fundamentally. On 28 September amended instructions were issued to activists in the countryside claiming that 'even amongst some district officials of Land Offices and estate administrators, just those to whom the state has entrusted the implementation of land reform, there is a desire to delay and deflect it...'. Estate committees were now advised to keep a close eye on Witos' administrators and special Land Reform Commissions were to be created in order, amongst other things, 'to nip in the bud every attempt to obstruct the reform by lackies of the reactionary

94 I. Blum Sprawa 3lpp, Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny 1965 nr. 3, p. 45.

95 Okólnik KC PPR o zadaniach komitetów folwarcznych w realizowaniu reformy rolnej 26.9.44, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., pp. 39-41.

landowners'.⁹⁶ This was a portent. On 4 October Radkiewicz addressing the PKWN on security matters, digressed to announce the Party's altered strategic perspective. Claiming that 'a new situation, a new distribution of forces has arisen', he argued that there was now 'a distinct dividing line (between) the two centres: the PKWN and London, without any dividing line between Mikołajczyk and Sosnkowski' (leader of the London diehards). The attempt to differentiate between the various elements in the Home Army had not, he said, 'been confirmed by reality' and the divide between 'the PKWN and on the other side all the opponents of the PKWN', demanded that 'hitherto haphazard repression' give way to 'a period of planned, intensive work'.⁹⁷ A few days later, the land reform campaign was set in motion; Witos was dismissed and an improvised apparatus, led by special commissars with sweeping powers, forged ahead with the parcellisation of the estates. Party militants were allowed off the leash against the underground also. On 9 October Gomułka declared that 'the state must reply to the terror; the time has come to begin the counter-attack'.⁹⁸ A Decree for the Defence of the State was issued at the end of the month, introducing draconian penalties for 'subversion'. By mid-November a local commissar could report that 'peoples courts have been set up; 30 AK have been shot, 500 arrested!'.⁹⁹ In the army the volte-face was particularly dramatic. The 'open-doors' recruitment policy of the summer was abandoned, Gomułka stating bluntly that 'the AK on which not so long ago we were determined to construct the Polish Army, have in the overwhelming majority of cases turned out

⁹⁶ Instrukcja KC PPR o zadaniach organizacji partyjnych w przeprowadzeniu prac przygotowawczych dla podziału ziemi obszarniczej 28.9.1944, ibid., pp. 42-45.

⁹⁷ Minutes of the PKWN (extracts) 4 October 1944 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 295.

⁹⁸ Minutes of the PPR Central Committee (extracts) 9.10.44, ibid., p. 300.

⁹⁹ PPR National Conference (Selected Minutes) 12-13 November 1944, ibid., p. 371.

to be hostile elements'.¹⁰⁰ In November politruks received instructions contrasting sharply with those issued a few weeks before. 'Friendly concern and fraternity' towards the AK were now grounds for suspicion: 'Every political worker', the order demanded, 'must understand that today there is no room for any compromise with the AK in the army... treat advocates of a "neutral" or conciliatory attitude to the AK as AK members unless they immediately engage in active struggle with the AK'.¹⁰¹

The Party's change of direction in October 1944 meant that in Poland the foundations of communist power were laid in conditions of virtual civil war and overt reliance on Soviet force of arms. This outcome was at odds with the strategy pursued by the communists (both inside Poland and in Soviet emigration) during the war, or indeed later in 1945-48 in Eastern Europe generally. What prompted this apparent aberration?

With the abandonment on 22 September of attempts by the Russians and Berling's troops to establish a bridgehead on the west bank of the Vistula, it became apparent that the Red Army would not be used to relieve the uprising in Warsaw.¹⁰² Until then, this possibility had governed the political situation. As we have seen, Home Army command restrained its forces outside the capital in order not to antagonise the Soviets, while Lublin was half-prepared for early entry into a coalition with part at least of the London camp and the incorporation into its army of thousands of armed, battle-hardened insurrectionaries. With the stabilisation of the Soviet front on the far bank of the Vistula and the collapse of the last pockets of resistance on the other side a few days later, the political

¹⁰⁰ Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee
29 October 1944, *ibid.*, p. 359.

¹⁰¹ Blum Sprawa... *op. cit.*, p. 45.

¹⁰² Z.S. Siemaszko Sprawa Berlinga Zeszyty Historyczne 38
(1976), pp. 224-29.

situation was transformed. Whereas during the summer the PKWN had been able to some extent to capitalise on the patriotic elation which greeted the German retreat, the Soviet failure to save the uprising aroused a wave of popular hostility and bitterness towards the new authorities which undermined their appeal to national unity. Moreover, it would be several months before the advance could resume, until which time the PKWN would have to maintain its grip on power and establish a political base by means other than patriotic slogans and calls to battle against the Germans.

The implications of the Warsaw fiasco were sensed immediately in Lublin and doubtless discussed by the PKWN at a secret session held on 23 September.¹⁰³ But the Party seems to have been perplexed by Soviet policy and uncertain how to tailor its own course to the new circumstances. The leadership's resolution of 26 September was perhaps intended to head-off questioning of the Party's general line until Soviet intentions were known, but the questioning continued anyway. The next day, for instance, Rola-Żymierski showed the way the wind was blowing in a speech to the PKWN:

'... the operation which the AK is undertaking in the terrain is becoming increasingly strong and determined. I have instructed that all materials be examined and am determined to take a clear position on this matter. So far we have sought a conciliatory way of dealing with the problem. As a result of the hostile activity of the AK and other organisations we were unable to achieve this. The state of affairs which has arisen in this country cannot be tolerated. The Polish population is living under terror and we do nothing about it. I feel we can no longer be passive observers.'

Radkiewicz who spoke next supported this call for a more aggressive approach.¹⁰⁴ The next day, as we have mentioned,

¹⁰³ Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 292.

¹⁰⁴ Protokół z posiedzenia PKWN z dnia 27 września 1944 w Lublinie, Puacz op. cit., p. 192.

the Central Committee issues its amended and toughened instruction on land reform.

These moves preceded formal consultations to clarify Stalin's attitude. On 28 September a PKWN delegation flew to Moscow, staying until 3 October. The visit, as its leader, Bierut, reported on his return, 'was the result of our doubts over the general situation arising from the checking of activity on the Polish front and the failure of the Warsaw operation'.¹⁰⁵ Stalin, in his remarks to the full delegation, attributed the halting of the Soviet advance solely to military logistics and denied any political motives.¹⁰⁶ However, in conversations with its communist members, he bluntly expressed his dissatisfaction with their political performance, particularly over land reform, and signalled a change of course. According to Bierut's subsequent report to the Politburo, 'Stalin cannot see revolutionary method in our approach.... He sharply criticised our softness, that up to now not one landowner has been imprisoned.... As he put it "get better or get out"'.¹⁰⁷

Hitherto, Soviet pressure had consistently tended to restrain the radicalism of the Polish communists and stress the overriding importance of avoiding contention with the West over Poland. Now suddenly Stalin was reprimanding the Poles for their cautiousness. However, while it is clear that Stalin's intervention was a critical factor prompting the 'October turn', it would also seem that a significant and growing section of the Polish Party had reached the same conclusion before the delegation's departure. Stalin's injunctions obviously demanded an urgent display of aggression from the PPR leadership, which

¹⁰⁵ Sprawozdanie Bolesława Bieruta na posiedzeniu KC PPR 9 października 1944r z rozmów z Józefem Stalinem, Archiwum Ruchu Robotniczego vol. I op. cit., p. 351.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 352.

¹⁰⁷ Minutes of the PPR Central Committee (extracts), 9 October 1944 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 300.

complied without delay, but for much of the aktyw and at least part of the upper echelons of the Party, Stalin was at last allowing them to go in the direction they favoured and which they believed the political situation demanded.

Many of the Party activists, especially those charged with establishing the authority of the PKWN outside Lublin, had for some time been calling for a more aggressive line. These cadres were keenly aware of just how narrow was the support for the Lublin regime and felt increasingly exposed and powerless as the underground dispersed back into conspiracy. Sporadic assassinations, passive resistance and the continued domination by London sympathisers of large parts of the Militia, local government and even the security apparatus set up by the communists, aroused the fears and suspicions of such beleaguered cadres. These doubts were heightened by a growing feeling of immobilisme and wasted opportunity, especially over land reform,¹⁰⁸ as well as the ambiguous and unreliable attitude of the communists' supposed allies amongst the Peasants and Socialists. The outlook of these militants was shaped both by their awareness that time was short in which to install an adequate state machine before the Red Army continued its advance and by deeply-rooted ideological traits. Veterans of the KPP who constituted the backbone of the aktyw of the PPR in many cases found the new national front strategy altogether too liberal and gradualist. Internal Party reports frequently made reference to the distaste of older communists for the tactics they were expected to apply. Ex-KPP cadres who had joined the PPR after liberation, had according to one report from Praga, 'a whole range of sectarian prejudices from the period of KPP work and it is

¹⁰⁸ At the PPR conference held in Lublin on 10/11 October the PPR district secretary for Biała Podlaska expressed the incomprehension of the aktyw over the delay in the land reform: 'Since the Red Army and the Party are in such a strong position, why wasn't reform carried out at once? After all, that was our great mistake in 1920'. Protokół konferencji sekretarzy komitetów powiatowych i aktywu PPR z terenów wyzwolonych, 10/11.10.1944, Pierwsze kroki... op. cit., p. 369.

difficult for them to adapt themselves to our Party's system of work in the current situation'.¹⁰⁹ At Party meetings, hardliners found a receptive audience for their criticisms of the mildness of the official line. One of them, Witold Konopka, drew applause at a conference of the aktyw held on 10-11 October when he demanded that 'alongside campaigning against the AK, we must of course shoot at them and gaol them. By not shooting we are encouraging the enemy's impudence'.¹¹⁰ Another KPP stalwart and prominent figure in the PPR leadership, Leon Kasman, encapsulated the mood of the militants: 'Our Party has succumbed to the parliamentary disease. With power in our hands, we have not applied terror towards the reaction.... We showed our enemies softness - not a single head has fallen...'.¹¹¹

Some modern Warsaw historians have argued that this sectarian strain in the Party extended into the top leadership where it was represented above all by Jakub Berman, Hilary Minc, Roman Zambrowski and Stanisław Radkiewicz, all of whom had spent the war years in Moscow and were judged to be particularly subservient to the Soviets. The national front strategy, on the other hand, so it is claimed, was identified with the section of the Party which had fought underground in Poland during the war and amongst whom Gomułka was the leading figure. The 'October turn' is presented as a victory for the hardline 'Muscovite' faction over the 'native' supporters of the national front.¹¹²

In fact, the differences within the Party leadership

¹⁰⁹ Hillebrandt and Jakubowski op. cit., pp. 216-17.

¹¹⁰ Protokół konferencji sekretarzy komitetów powiatowych: aktywu PPR z terenów wyzwolonych, 10-11.10.1944, Pierwsze kroki... op. cit., p. 377. In a letter to the editors of Archiwum ruchu robotniczego (vol. II, p. 370), Konopka denied that he had called for an intensification of repression against the AK.

¹¹¹ Minutes of the PPR Central Committee (extracts), 9 October 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 301.

¹¹² J. Borkowski Nie tylko pod Lenino Miesięcznik literacki 1972, nr. 4, pp. 87-91.

over strategy tended to cut across the wartime divide. Thus the leading 'hawk' in the Politburo seems to have been Bierut, who had been in Warsaw from 1943. His views correspond to those of a vocal hardline element amongst the rank-and-file of the underground PPR. On the other hand, as we have seen, the broad national front strategy in the form crystallised in July 1944 had been largely the product of the Moscow emigration, closely reflecting Soviet requirements. The underground PPR inclined to a more radical 'democratic' national front and had been criticised for sectarianism by the Moscow group because of this. The 'October turn' in many ways vindicated the position of the 'natives' against the emigres, and for all the differences in outlook between them, it was Bierut and Gomułka who took the lead in orchestrating the 'turn'. Moreover, the 'democratic' character of the national front was once again accented.

Ideological undercurrents and differing political backgrounds apart, by mid-September all sections of the Party were increasingly disturbed by accumulating evidence of what was taken to be a wide-ranging conspiracy by London to overthrow the PKWN. Reports from local branches were alarming; rumours were put about that the PKWN would resign on 15 September; that the Germans were about to return; that the Western allies were on their way or that a coup d'etat was imminent.¹¹³ The PKWN deliberating on the situation in Warsaw gave serious consideration to the possibility that Mikołajczyk was about to parachute into the city and establish his government there.¹¹⁴ Disquieting reports were received from the army too. On 16 September the deputy-commander (political) of the 5th Infantry Division described the progress of political work amongst the civilian population:

¹¹³ Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 67.

¹¹⁴ Protokół z posiedzenia PKWN dnia 15 września 1944r,
Puacz op. cit., pp. 183-84.

'The AK, infuriated by this campaign, has gone onto the counter-offensive... a peasant PPR member of the organisational committee was badly wounded. The AK distributes masses of leaflets threatening those answering the call-up with death and makes armed attacks on conscripts.... The civilian authorities are timid and lack imagination. In Łuków there is no garrison commander... the Militia is completely helpless. It must be stressed that the reserve of the population towards us is dictated to a large extent by fear of AK terror.... The troops still look on the PKWN with reserve, unconvinced of its permanence, and the majority still hope for an agreement with the London "government". AK activity has a depressing effect on the troops.... Almost 100 per cent of the soldiers are fanatically religious...'.¹¹⁵

A particularly worrying aspect of what was seen as a concerted campaign by the AK to undermine the PKWN was its apparent success in dissuading trained officers from joining the army. Rola-Żymierski informed the PKWN on 18 September that while the general mobilisation was going according to plan, only 960 of the 2,400 officers required had been recruited.¹¹⁶

These fears did not abate. On 29 September the Governor of Białystok province filed a particularly disturbing report: 'the AK is beginning to activate very intensively here... setting up armed detachments. In the Białowieża forests these are thought to number 17,000. Other large forests have their units too.... Unconfirmed rumours are circulating that a large-scale armed demonstration is being prepared, with 14 November or another later date being mentioned'.¹¹⁷ The Party leadership seems to have expected an insurrection against the PKWN timed to coincide with Mikołajczyk's arrival in Moscow for talks in mid-October.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Blum Organizacja... op. cit., p. 358.

¹¹⁶ Minutes of the PKWN, 15 September 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 291.

¹¹⁷ Majecki op. cit., p. 46.

¹¹⁸ Meeting of the Politbureau and Central Committee of the PPR, 22 October 1944 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 356.

His previous arrival in Moscow in August had been immediately followed by the outbreak of the Warsaw uprising, which the communists were almost certainly right in regarding as no mere coincidence.¹¹⁹ The desertion of whole units from the army - some 3,000 troops in all from the Second Army during October¹²⁰ - culminated on the night of 12/13 October with the desertion of much of the 31st Infantry Regiment, apparently at the instigation of ex-AK officers,¹²¹ and was seen as confirmation of such fears.

The picture which emerges is that by late September 1944 the leadership of the PPR was encountering increasing difficulties in convincing the rank-and-file of the correctness of its moderate course. The apparent reactivation of the AK and the hardening of the Soviet attitude to the prospect of a deal with London seemed to remove both the internal and external props of the broad 'patriotic' national front. Once Stalin had given the signal, the Party with alacrity jettisoned the line it had been tied to for almost three years.

The Underground and the Aftermath of 'Tempest'

The widespread belief within the PPR that the underground was not only still a military threat, but was also sufficiently belligerent to contemplate a rising against the Lublin Committee was quite mistaken. In fact, as we have seen, by September and October, the AK Command was ordering its units to disperse and cease conspiratorial activity. With the capitulation of Warsaw on 3 October, Bor went into German captivity along with many of his staff, while his successor, General Leopold Okulicki, escaped to begin organising a new command in the Cześćchowa region. This command was cut off from a large part

¹¹⁹ Ciechanowski op. cit., p. 273.

¹²⁰ 20 lat... op. cit., p. 332.

¹²¹ Blum Sprawa... op. cit.; Z. Załuski Czterdziesty czwarty (4th ed., Warsaw, 1969), pp. 409-23.

of the AK network and also viewed very suspiciously by government circles in London. Okulicki was regarded by many as a reckless officer too closely identified with Sosnkowski, the effective leader of the opposition within the emigration to the kind of concessions which might allow a deal with the Soviet Union. Okulicki's appointment was not officially endorsed until shortly before Christmas, by which time Mikołajczyk's government had been replaced by one composed of critics of his policy of seeking an agreement at the cost of concessions on the eastern frontier. In the meantime, General Tatar exercised temporary command of the AK by radio from England.¹²²

Apart from these command problems, after the failure of the uprising and 'Tempest', the underground was in no state to undertake offensive operations. In the liberated zone of Poland, where several million Soviet troops were stationed, this would have amounted to suicide. In his 'Guideline for activity during the winter period 44/45', issued on 26 October, Okulicki admitted 'the great confusion and chaos' in the AK ranks and the need to 'overcome fatigue and a certain kind of stupor'. He laid stress on the importance of grouping together all military organisations under the AK, and preparing for the worst by adapting the conspiracy so that it could 'last out a possible Soviet occupation'. There was to be no armed resistance to the Russians, although the policy of revealing AK units was now specifically abandoned.¹²³

These instructions no doubt failed to reach many 'akowcy' in the field, but with very few exceptions, underground detachments were disinclined to take on Soviet and communist forces; their objective was rather to elude NKVD round-ups or conscription by dispersing to their homes or into the forests and sitting out the winter until the Red

¹²² W. Pobóg-Malinowski Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski, vol. III (London, 1960), pp. 778-92; J.J. Terej Na rozstajach dróg (Wrocław, 1978), pp. 272-85.

¹²³ Polskie Siły Zbrojne... op. cit., pp. 910-14.

Army resumed its offensive in the spring. Equally, the military formations linked with the right-wing National Democrats, the National Military Organisation and the NSZ had in general opted-out of 'Tempest', scattering their troops and burying their organisation in deep conspiracy. In spite of Okulicki's calls for unity, the endeks were gradually detaching themselves from the AK and in November the National Military Union (Narodowy Związek Wojskowy - NZW) was created, envisaged by its founders as a rival framework for the nationalist forces. Even the extreme National Radical NSZ were relatively quiet in 'Lublin Poland', though in German-occupied territory they continued their war with communist and Soviet partisans.¹²⁴

The ascription of the overwhelming difficulties of the PKWN in late 1944 to underground activity had then very limited validity; such difficulties had their origin in the objective weakness of the PPR and the narrowness of its influence, rather than subversion or sabotage.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, the case for striking at the AK while it was weakened and the Russians were at hand was persuasive and this consideration may have lain behind much of the militancy drummed up in October.

The Counter-Attack

The Lublin counter-attack, as Gomułka had defined it, lasted until May 1945. While continuing to employ the rhetoric of the national front, the communists in fact unleashed a campaign of terror designed to destroy the same underground forces which a few weeks before they had been courting. By early 1945 Party propaganda was equating the AK with the Gestapo.

The 'October turn' was viewed in various ways by the

¹²⁴ On 8 September the NSZ killed nearly 100 Soviet and AL partisans at Rząbiec, powiat Włoszczowa Walichnowski op. cit., p. 133.

¹²⁵ Załuski op. cit., pp. 459-63; Majecki op. cit., p. 46.

different sections of the Party. For the militants it represented the final abandonment of a tactical stance dictated by international considerations but which seemed to them to have little relevance to the situation on the ground or basis in revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. The indications are, though, that for the leadership, the turn was intended as a short-term tactical detour within rather than a departure from the national front strategy. It was assumed that a further attempt to reach agreement with 'London' would take place when this suited Soviet foreign policy and when 'Lublin' had strengthened its internal position and weakened that of its rivals. Meanwhile, the emphasis would be on 'capturing the majority of the working masses', especially the peasants through land reform, 'from below. 'Combinations from above' with the bourgeois parties could await more favourable circumstances.¹²⁶ This was the intention, but the 'October turn' had a momentum of its own which was to sweep the Party rapidly into positions quite incompatible with the national front.

The attempts to reach agreement with the leaderships of the underground parties and in particular Mikołajczyk's SL'ROCh' gave way to a policy of prising the rank-and-file of these parties away from those leaderships, a tactic which hitherto had been applied chiefly in order to exert pressure on party chiefs to compromise, but was now aimed rather at breaking up the 'London' organisations. On the surface the communists' stance towards a deal with Mikołajczyk did not change immediately. On 17 October Bierut held unofficial talks with him in Moscow and as late as 3 December the Politburo reaffirmed its public position of favouring Mikołajczyk's entry into the PKWN.¹²⁷ But the true feeling of the Party leadership was revealed in

¹²⁶ Protokół konferencji sekretarzy komitetów powiatowych i aktywu PPR z terenów wyzwolonych, 10-11.10.44, Pierwsze kroki... op. cit., p. 380.

¹²⁷ Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee 3 December 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 391.

Bierut's remark to Stalin on 12 October that 'we want to reach an understanding (with Mikołajczyk - J.R.), but would prefer that it takes place later'.¹²⁸ By mid-December, after Stalin had remarked that Mikołajczyk would not be allowed to return as long as the Red Army remained in Poland, the PPR line hardened and a deal seems to have been ruled out for the foreseeable future.¹²⁹

By this stage Stalin was ready to show his support for the PKWN more openly. At the end of the year he sanctioned the transformation of the PKWN into a Provisional Government and granted it official diplomatic recognition. This seal of approval was all the more significant since it was accompanied by a sharp weakening of the position of the Government-in-Exile at the international level. On 24 November, Mikołajczyk resigned, unable to carry the majority of his cabinet with his policy (which had the strong support of the British) or compromise with the Soviets and Lublin. A new government under the Socialist, Tomasz Arciszewski, was sworn in, but it had only the formal backing of the British and Americans. The former, in particular continued to pin their hopes of a deal on Mikołajczyk and his supporters who now moved into opposition.¹³⁰ Within the underground political leadership in Poland, in which Mikołajczyk's Peasant Party followers continued to exert a considerable influence, the change of government was received unfavourably. The return of the Peasants to the government was regarded unanimously by the underground parties as 'very urgent and important'.¹³¹ The SL pressed strongly for a vote of no confidence in Arciszewski and the resumption by Mikołajczyk of his

¹²⁸ Przygoński op. cit., p. 327.

¹²⁹ Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee
Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 394-95.

¹³⁰ Polonsky 'The Great Powers...' op. cit., p. 37.

¹³¹ APUST t.16 L.dz.K 595/45 Sobol (Jankowski) to President and Prime Minister, 28.12.44.

premiership with a determined policy of seeking agreement with the Soviets even at the cost 'of very heavy concessions in the east'.¹³²

The communists diagnosed these developments as symptoms of 'a deep and lethal crisis amongst the London emigres',¹³³ but they were not ready to renew their efforts to win over Mikołajczyk. In place of a political alliance with the peasant movement the communists now concentrated on mobilising the peasantry as a social class around the PKWN. Land reform was seen as the means to win over the allegiance of the rural population and undermine the base of the SL'ROCh. 'The quicker the land is divided, the weaker will be the position of Mikołajczyk', as Gomułka put it.¹³⁴ This political consideration was given priority over both the economic argument that the new plots should not be inefficiently small and the claims of the landless estate workers to preferential treatment in the apportionment of the land. The Party leadership repeatedly and categorically insisted that the benefits of the reform should be spread as extensively as possible and in particular that small and middle peasants should benefit. Local Party activists who showed a tendency to exclude these groups threatened, in the opinion of the Central Committee 'to sow conflict... between small-peasants and agricultural labourers, between middle-peasants and poor peasants.... (This) will assist the work of the reaction amongst the middle-peasant masses'.¹³⁵ In some cases where the reform had deviated from central instructions the Party demanded

¹³² APUST L.dz.K 516 and 517/45 Walkowicz (A. Bień) to President and Prime Minister, 25.1.45.

¹³³ Gomułka Artykuły... vol. I op. cit., p. 144.

¹³⁴ Protokół konferencji sekretarzy komitetów powiatowych i aktywu PPR z terenów wyzwolonych, 10-11.10.1944, Pierwsze kroki... op. cit., p. 381.

¹³⁵ Instrukcja KC PPR w sprawie zadań organizacji partyjnych w walce z wypaczeniami reformy rolnej 25.10.1944, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., p. 82.

that the land be redivided and in a few instances those responsible were arrested.¹³⁶ This uncompromising response stemmed from the leadership's awareness that it was the middle peasants who carried the most political weight in the villages and had to be won over if 'London's' rural base was to be broken.

The policy of by-passing the traditional peasant movement was also reflected in the communists' new attitude to the 'Lublin SL'. Until October this party, small though it was, had embraced certain genuine sections of the traditional movement. Witos, Kotek-Agroszewski and others in its leadership, while prepared to work with the PPR did not tamely accept its hegemony. In the new atmosphere such independence was no longer tolerated. According to Bierut 'reactionary-kulak elements' had been allowed into the SL leadership.¹³⁷ As we have seen, the removal of Witos from the PKWN, followed shortly by that of Kotek-Agroszewski, heralded the hardening of the PPR line. On 22-23 November along with other independently-minded activists they were expelled from the SL leadership. The new leadership, which had been cleared with the Politburo in advance¹³⁸ comprised less troublesome figures: Maślanka, Janusz, Czechowski, Grubecki etc. who it was thought could be relied upon to follow the communists' lead. However, within a month the Politburo was concerned at the inactivity of this group and decided to delegate some of its own cadres to strengthen it. The communists also envisaged a much more limited role for the SL. Gomułka warned that if the SL expanded as a mass organisation it would be exposed to penetration by Mikołajczyk's followers.

¹³⁶ Z materiałów listopadowej konferencji PPR w Lublinie w 1944r, Z pola walki 1959 nr.2 (6), pp. 139-43; Słabek Polityka agrarna... op. cit., pp. 230-33.

¹³⁷ Minutes of the PPR Central Committee (extracts), 9 October 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 300.

¹³⁸ Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee 9 November 1944, ibid., p. 364.

Berman went further and questioned whether the SL would be needed at all much longer. By this time the communists were pinning their hopes of capturing mass support in the countryside not on the Peasant Party, however tame, but on a new organisation, the Peasant Self-help Union (Związek Samopomocy Chłopskiej - ZSch), formed in December to link together those peasants who had been drawn under Party influence during the land reform.¹³⁹

However, the political gains of the land reform could only compensate in small part for the Party's failure to achieve an alliance with the peasant movement. The reform had only got underway in earnest in mid-October. By mid-November it was one third complete and by the 15 December, when peasant delegate congresses were held in each of the provinces, it was completed. In total some 212,084 hectares had been distributed between 110,000 households, creating 33,000 new holdings and expanding 77,000 existing ones.¹⁴⁰ About 14% of the rural population had benefitted. It was on this base that the Party was able to rest much of its expansion in late 1944, from just under 9,000 members at the beginning of October to 21,649 by the end of December (which together with members still under German occupation brought the estimated strength of the PPR up to 34,000).¹⁴¹ Zambrowski claimed that more than 100,000 peasants had taken part in the election of delegates to the first Congress of the ZSch in December 1944.¹⁴² This was an undoubted achievement and Stalin was reported

¹³⁹ Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee 17 December 1944, Polonsky and Druker op. cit., p. 397.

¹⁴⁰ Słabek Dzieje... op. cit., p. 92.

¹⁴¹ Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., p. 275.

¹⁴² W. Gomułka, H. Minc, R. Zambrowski Przemówienia na rozszerzonym plenum KC PPR w lutym 1945r. (Katowice, 1945), p. 26.

to have been pleased with the progress of the reform.¹⁴³ On the other hand, the Party remained extremely weak in most rural districts; over 80% of peasants had not received land and despite recruitment of new members they were still spread very thinly. In Białyłstok province, PPR members had more than quadrupled between 1 October and 1 January, but still stood at only 781.¹⁴⁴ The communists had gained a small foothold in the countryside, which nevertheless remained the domain of SL'ROCh' and the underground.

The role ascribed by the communists to the 'Lublin PPS' also diminished after October. The emphasis moved from recruiting former members of the WRN to excluding them from political life. At the Socialists' Supreme Council on 17 November Drobner warned against these attempts to divide the party into its RPPS and WRN wings.¹⁴⁵ However, as we have seen, Drobner himself soon came under communist suspicion and attempts were made to remove him from the PPS leadership and force Osóbka to purge the WRN.¹⁴⁶ There is also evidence to suggest that discussions were held within the PPR at this time on the possibility of a merger of the two parties.¹⁴⁷

The radicalisation of the Party's line on land reform was paralleled by a change of tactics in relation to ownership and management of industry. The PKWN manifesto and Party statements up to October had avoided using such terms as 'nationalisation' and said little about the role of workers in directing the factories. Instead they stressed the commitment to early restoration of industrial

¹⁴³ Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee
14 December 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 394.

¹⁴⁴ Kołomejczyk op. cit., p. 275.

¹⁴⁵ Syzdek op. cit., pp. 79-80.

¹⁴⁶ Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee
3 December 1944; Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR
Central Committee, 17 December 1944; Polonsky and
Drukier op. cit., pp. 391, 398.

¹⁴⁷ Sierocki PPR-owska... op. cit., pp. 10-11.

concerns to their private owners.¹⁴⁸ Instructions governing the return of ownership of factories to their original proprietors were drawn up by Kotek-Agroszewski's Department of Public Administration, dated 18 and 23 September. However when these were discussed by the PKWN on 7 October, it was decided that the Department had acted beyond its competence and the instructions were shelved.¹⁴⁹ At the same time, the powers of the workers' own representatives on the factory councils which had sprung up in many branches of industry were broadened. An instruction of the PKWN Department of National Economy and Finances from September 1944 had entrusted factory management to three-man provisional committees comprising the director as chairman, a representative of the local authority and a delegate elected by the factory council.¹⁵⁰ Central Committee instructions put out on 2 October proclaimed the 'great role' to be played by the factory councils in managing their concerns. Although the powers of the factory councils were not defined in law until February 1945, the instruction opened the way to what amounted in effect to workers' control of the management of many factories. This became all the more evident when the more industrialised regions were liberated a few months later.¹⁵¹ Within a

148 The PKWN manifesto declared that 'Property stolen by the Germans from citizens - peasants, shop-keepers, (small) craftsmen, (small and medium-scale) industrialists, institutions and the Church - will be returned to its rightful owners', Manifest PKWN (1974 version) op. cit., p. 20. The words in parenthesis are not included in the version of the manifesto published by Żeńczykowski Geneza... op. cit., p. 167.

149 H. Słabek Ogólne aspekty polityki PPR i PPS w kształtowaniu nowych stosunków przemysłowych, Z pola walki 1978 nr. 1 (81), p. 43. Minutes of the PKWN (extracts) 7 October 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 296-97.

150 J. Kaliński i Z. Landau (ed.) Gospodarka Polski Ludowej 1944-1955 (Warsaw, 1974), p. 82.

151 See further J. Reynolds Communists, Socialists and Workers: Poland 1944-48 Soviet Studies XXX/4 October 1978, pp. 519-20.

week of the issue of the 2 October instructions Party spokesmen were telling local factory activists that official policy was that 'the workers take upon themselves the entire responsibility for the factories'.¹⁵²

The new line was also applied in the army, as we have noted, and in the administration of local and central government. The Party's initial policy was to open wide 'the gates of the Polish Army to all soldiers and officers of the AK' and to employ civil servants regardless of their political background provided only that they had not collaborated with the Nazis and were not overtly hostile to the PKWN. This policy did not long survive the 'turn'. On 29 October Gomułka told the Politburo that

'the AK, on which not long ago we were determined to base the expansion of the Polish Army, have in the overwhelming majority of cases turned out to be a hostile element. In view of a possible agreement with Mikołajczyk, this danger is all the greater. The Army which we built may become an instrument in the hands of the reaction'.

As for the administration: 'We have power at the top, but by no means do we have the whole apparatus in our hands. Revolutionary changes will not be brought about with the old apparatus'.¹⁵³ A fortnight later the leadership assembled the PPR aktyw in Lublin to announce the second stage of the new course: the 'democratisation' of the Army, particularly of the officer corps, and of the state apparatus. 'Above all', Gomułka argued in his speech, 'the struggle for a democratic Poland is today a struggle for the state apparatus', which he defined as '1) the government, 2) the state administration, 3) the armed forces, 4) the courts and penal system'. Of these 'only one in its entirety is in the hands of democracy, i.e. the

¹⁵² B. Rumiński speaking to an industrial conference in Praga, 14 October 1944, quoted in J. Gołębiowski Nacjonalizacja przemysłu w Polsce (Warsaw, 1965), p. 112.

¹⁵³ Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee 29 October 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 359.

government in the shape of the PKWN. Elements hostile to democracy, elements on which the old Sanacja regime rested, have penetrated the others to a greater or lesser degree'. According to Gomułka the problem lay both in the shortage of politically reliable and experienced manpower and the lack of firm direction from the communists who had been placed in charge of trained specialists:

'Polish democracy... was unable to train its own cadres as managers and organisers of state power in sufficient numbers. The reaction has such managers and organisers.... This fact enables the reaction to push its people into various organs of state, especially where on some vital section set by the camp of Polish democracy, the manager loses vigilance and falls into the political cretinism of specialism (fachowość)'.

Henceforth political commitment rather than qualification and experience was to take precedence:

'Experts of all kinds are needed, badly needed, by democratic Poland. But if a specialist makes use of his skills for the purpose of expert destruction, then Poland does not need such experts; such experts belong behind bars. In the place of such specialists it is better rather to put a good democrat, a good worker, peasant or intelligent, even if non-specialist and without experience...'¹⁵⁴

The first priority was the 'democratisation' of the army officer-corps, where previously the Party had hoped to employ widely ex-AK recruits. This policy was now reversed as the suspicion that the underground had gone onto the offensive, infiltrating the army with the intention of capturing control, had been confirmed in the eyes of the leadership and Stalin by the desertions in October.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na naradzie partyjnej w Lublinie, 13.11.1944, Artykuły... vol. I op. cit., pp. 125-27.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 128-30; Meeting of the Politbureau and Central Committee of the PPR, 22 October 1944, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 356.

To avert this threat urgent steps were taken to strengthen the communists' hold on the army. 500 Party members were seconded to the officer corps. Also cadres from the war-time People's Army that had hitherto largely been sent into the Militia were directed into the army political apparatus. Finally, it was decided to find 10,000 volunteers from amongst the working-class and peasantry to 'pour a healthy, democratic stream into the ranks of the army'.¹⁵⁶ It is worth noting that these moves represented a strengthening of the influence of the former underground section of the Party over the army, eclipsing somewhat the position of the emigres who had hitherto dominated the political direction of the armed forces. Gomułka himself took charge of the campaign and a Military Department began functioning in the Central Committee.¹⁵⁷

The obverse of this influx of dependable manpower was a purge of the ex-AK element in the forces. Although publicly distinctions were still drawn between the 'democratic' mass of the AK and their 'reactionary' commanders, in practice former AK members came under more or less indiscriminate suspicion. We have already seen how instructions to political commanders in the army on the treatment of AK officer recruits had hardened. The general attitude of the communists to the AK after October, both in the army and outside was summed up by Gomułka a few months later as follows: 'in practice, the attitude of our Party organisations was such that honest akowcy were not distinguished from the reactionary parts of the AK. They were put under arrest, because they were akowcy'.¹⁵⁸ Although the leadership later blamed sectarian elements amongst the

¹⁵⁶ Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na naradzie partyjnej w Lublinie, 13.11.44 Artykuły... vol. I op. cit., pp. 133, 135-36; Okólnik KC PPR 'W sprawie ochotniczego zaciągu do Wojska Polskiego', 22.11.44, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., pp. 83-85.

¹⁵⁷ Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁵⁸ Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na I ogólnokrajowej naradzie PPR, 27.5.1945, Artykuły... vol. I, op. cit., p. 281.

rank-and-file for this extremism, there is clear evidence in the discussions held in the Politburo that by October-November 1944 the leadership was united in equating the bulk of the AK with the reaction¹⁵⁹ which it now aimed not simply to isolate and neutralise through political means, but to 'destroy' by repressive measures. Gomułka gave the lead in a speech on 10 October which introduced a new tone into official Party pronouncements. 'Not only does the new democracy', he said, 'not assist the activity and development of the reaction... but on the contrary, it makes the destruction of fascism and all dark, backward and reactionary forces a condition of its existence'. He continued: 'the democratic camp and the PKWN will not hesitate to apply these measures which will once and for all liquidate (the armed resistance)'. Efforts to win over the majority of the nation would be accompanied by the use of 'the severest repression towards the reaction... which is hiding under the cloak of Mikołajczyk'.¹⁶⁰ By February 1945 official Party documents, without qualification, referred to the AK as the 'armed agency of the land owners'.¹⁶¹ With this kind of language emanating from the centre, it was hardly surprising when local activists 'oversimplified their attitude to the AK by generalising hostility to all those who had at some time belonged to the AK'.¹⁶²

The contradiction between the Party's leadership's calls for national unity and the intensified struggle

159 For example, Gomułka said that the 'majority' of the AK were 'hostile', Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee, 29 October 1944, Polonsky and Druker op. cit., p. 359.

160 Gomułka Sytuacja obecna i zadania Partii. Referat wygłoszony na naradzie PPR w Lublinie, 10.10.1944, Artykuły... vol. I, op. cit., pp. 112-13.

161 Projekt uchwały rozszerzonego plenum KC PPR o zadaniach partii na wsi, 7.2.1945, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., p. 96.

162 Uchwała plenum KC PPR w sprawach politycznych, 26.5.1945 ibid., p. 141.

against the London camp was most keenly felt at local level by the PPR aktyw. Not surprisingly, significant sections of the aktyw seem to have considered that the leadership was unrealistic to expect the Party to broaden its base substantially and deal with its opponents at the same time. This view was evident when Gomułka descended on the Praga PPR organisation on 25-26 November. Praga, a working class suburb of Warsaw, was one of the few areas in Lublin Poland where the PPR might have expected to establish a base amongst the industrial workers. This had not happened however. Gomułka, speaking to the local leaders of the Party, 'assessed the activity of the Warsaw organisation of the PPR critically, using extremely severe terms in his speech. He said that the provincial committee lacked any idea how to work, had failed to break with conspiratorial habits, had made little contact with people, especially the workers, had a poor growth of membership, had not begun to organise cells in work-places as the Central Committee had directed, and that it lacked contact with the urban intelligentsia'. But for some at least of the aktyw, this was asking for the impossible: 'the criticism aroused the dissatisfaction of some of the members of the committee. They felt that the Central Committee Secretary was not sufficiently aware of the specific circumstances in Praga and that his assessment was not objective'.¹⁶³

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, the abandonment of the broad national front left the Party with little alternative, but to resort to police methods and the direct application of Soviet power to deal with its opponents. Inevitably, the work of hunting down AK suspects was largely left to the NKVD. As we have seen, the Polish security forces were not yet strong enough to play more than a supporting role. Gomułka hinted at the Party's acceptance of greater Soviet help in his 10 October

¹⁶³ Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., pp. 219-20. See also Sierocki Warszawska... op. cit., p. 230.

speech when he said that 'it would not by any means be an interference in the affairs of a given country if the Red Army is one of those factors destroying fascism everywhere where it is to be found'.¹⁶⁴ On 18th Stalin told Bierut and Osóbka in Moscow that the Polish forces were unable to cope with the security problem and the Soviet army would have to play a greater role than hitherto.¹⁶⁵ Party historians are largely silent on what this 'greater role' involved, but there can be little doubt that claims of mass arrests and deportations are true. In a letter written in 1956, General Zygmunt Berling, who had been removed from his command of the First Army, but remained a member of the PKWN until December, dramatically described the situation in the last months of 1944 as follows:

'Beria's lackies from the NKVD wreaked devastation over the whole country. Criminal elements from Radkiewicz's apparatus assisted them in this without hindrance. During legal and illegal searches the population had its property stolen and entirely innocent people were deported or thrown into gaol. People were shot at like dogs. Literally no one felt secure or knew the day or the hour. The chief military procurator told me on returning from an inspection which I had sent him on to prisons in Przemyśl, Zamość and Lublin, that over twelve thousand people were being held there. Nobody knew what they were accused of, by whom they had been arrested or what was intended to be done with them'.¹⁶⁶

Modern Party historians mention that from mid-November to mid-January the Soviet and Polish forces were deployed for what was described as 'offensive operations' or 'disarming the terrain'. This involved mass identity checks

¹⁶⁴ Gomułka Sytuacja obecna i zadania Partii. Referat wygłoszony na naradzie PPR w Lublinie, 10.10.44, Artykuły... vol. I op. cit., p. 98.

¹⁶⁵ Przygoński op. cit., p. 344.

¹⁶⁶ List Berlinga do Gomułki, 20.X.1956, in J. Nowak Sprawa gen. Berlinga, Zeszyty Historyczne 37 (1976), p. 39.

on males aged between 16 and 50 and the arrest of suspects. It is not possible to gauge accurately the extent of the arrests: fragmentary official figures covering three districts in the southern part of Lublin province put the number of detainees at 664, but, especially where Soviet troops were used, it is probable that the round-ups were much greater.¹⁶⁷ At the same time, as we have seen, executions of AK officers began.

Although, within a few months the PPR leadership was to become seriously concerned over the activities of the Soviet and Polish security forces, this was not the mood at the end of 1944. On the contrary, the Party leaders were satisfied with the results of the measures against the AK and favoured stepping up the campaign against the underground. On 17 December the Politburo discussed security matters at some length, Radkiewicz claiming that 'the AK is experiencing an internal crisis... initially the AK fought to win the masses and lost'. His deputy, Roman Romkowski, reported that 'we have struck blows in the leadership (of the AK) in all the provinces and in Białystok against the NSZ too'. Gomułka argued that 'the London base is contracting; the AK leadership has recently been decimated'. However, there was agreement that the underground still posed a serious threat and was concentrating on 'diversionary work of a closed, sectarian character', and as Berman put it 'up to now in the fight with the reaction we have been cutting off the tendrils; we must get at the roots'.¹⁶⁸

This assessment accorded with a general view in the leadership that the October turn had paid off. Despite the continued elusiveness of the national front, the mood of crisis in the Party, so much in evidence a couple of months before, had given way to an altogether more confident outlook. The agreed view in the leadership seems

¹⁶⁷ Turlejska W walce... op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁶⁸ Minutes of the Politbureau of the PPR Central Committee 17 December 1944 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 399.

to have been that initial errors had been corrected and that the modified line had yielded rapid results. It was Berman who was the most enthusiastic: 'The process of change is going quicker than we had expected... in a short time we have constructed the aparat; there are successes'.¹⁶⁹ But Gomułka too gave an interview published on 7 December expressing considerable satisfaction with the progress which had been made, without any of the critical notes which he was normally not averse to sounding.¹⁷⁰

By early January 1945 when the Soviet offensive was renewed, the PPR leadership was then in buoyant mood, having recovered much of the confidence which had deserted it in October. This mood did not last long; by April the Party had again reached an impasse.

¹⁶⁹ Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 399.

¹⁷⁰ Gomułka Nadszedł moment utworzenia rządu tymczasowego. Wywiad dla "Rzeczypospolitej" opublikowany 7.12.1944, Artykuły... vol. I, op. cit., pp. 141-45.

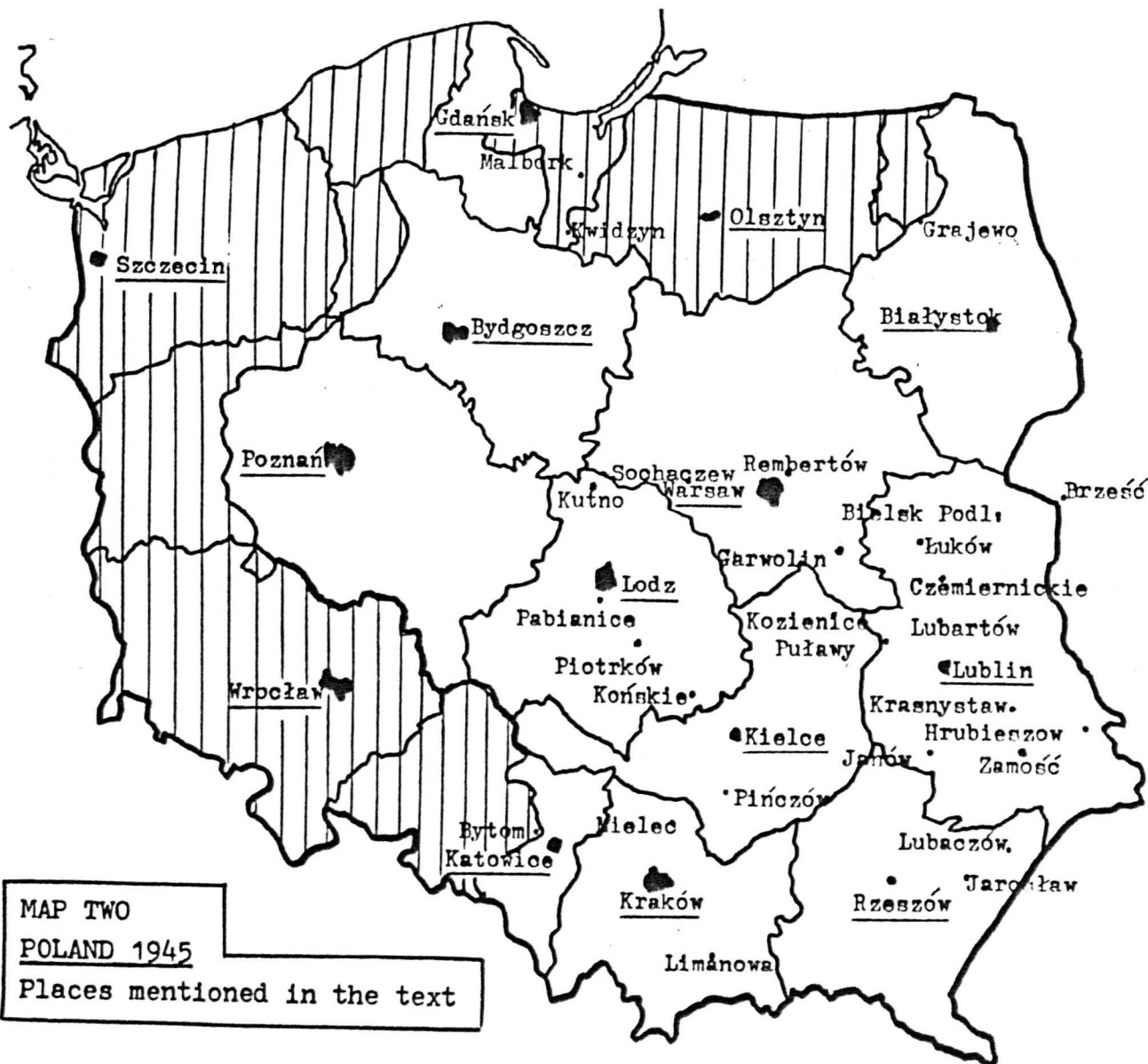
CHAPTER THREE

THE SPRING CRISIS AND THE MAY TURN (January to June 1945)

The Red Army resumed its advance on 12 January. Warsaw, systematically devastated by the Germans in the weeks after the collapse of the uprising, was liberated on 17 January, followed by Kraków and Lodz on 19th, Katowice on 27th and Poznań a month later. Pockets of resistance - Gdańsk, Szczecin and Wrocław - were mopped in the last weeks of the war.

The rapidity of the advance transformed the political situation facing the PPR. Suddenly, the communists found themselves with huge expanses of territory to organise and govern in central Poland and, after a short period of Soviet administration, in the former German western territories also. Simultaneously, the Lublin regime's protective Soviet shield moved away westwards. By no means all the Russian units pursued the German retreat, but the military and administrative resources at the disposal of the PPR shrank dramatically just at the moment when the demands made upon them multiplied. Compounding this shortage of manpower, the Party's radical line left the communists isolated within a considerably narrower front of allies than the previous summer. Moreover, the defeat of Hitler, although initially greeted by a wave of popular rejoicing and gratitude towards the Russians, deprived the communists of their strongest patriotic asset. Post-liberation euphoria soon gave way to hostility towards the new authorities as Soviet marauding, the use of terror to crush the underground and the dire economic conditions became apparent.

During the spring it became increasingly clear to most, though not all, of the Party leadership, that the narrower and more aggressive 'democratic national front' strategy which had it seemed suited the circumstances of Lublin Poland, did not meet the requirements of the new political



situation. The crisis was evident in four main areas: the campaign against the AK and the underground, the economy, the national front itself, and in Soviet-Polish relations, both at international level and on the ground in Poland. By May 1945 the Party leadership had concluded that the direction it had pursued in these areas since October 1944 was no longer correct. Rather than eliminating the opposition and widening the base of the national front, the Party's policies appeared to be generating opposition, leaving the PPR in deeper isolation and dependence on Soviet assistance. In May and June the Party line reverted in essentials to the broad national front line which the Party had abandoned eight months before.

The Revival of Underground Activity

The counter-attack against the AK did not abate as the front advanced. However, after January, the PPR was engaged in an attempt to terrorise the underground forces from a position of weakness. Party membership and the strength of Militia and security organs mushroomed during the first months of 1945, but their political reliability remained extremely uncertain. The security apparatus and Militia were still riddled with members of the underground,¹ while the Internal Army, soon to be renamed the Internal Security Corps, was only partly formed and trained by May 1945, when Moczar, one of its organisers, stated bluntly that it was not yet ready to take on the underground. What could happen when ill-prepared troops were deployed was mentioned by Gomułka: 'three Battalions of the Internal Army went out into the terrain and 2,000 people deserted'.²

1 Several of the best-known anti-communist partisan leaders active in 1945-47: 'Ogień' (J. Kuraś), 'Bury' (R. Rajs), 'Wołyński' (J. Zdziarski), A. Żubryd, 'Mścisław' (M. Wądołny), for instance, were in 1944-45 members of the army, militia or UB.

2 Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 435, 440. The first large KBW operation against the underground did not take place until February 1946.

This vulnerability left the Party very heavily reliant on the remaining Soviet cover and those Polish security forces it had at its disposal. The employment of Soviet troops against the AK was an embarrassing necessity which came under heavy criticism at the May 1945 Plenum. Even Radkiewicz agreed that it was 'unfortunate that two Red Army regiments were sent to Białystok; Poles should be used against the AK. The attitude that the Red Army will establish order for us here is bad'. The Central Committee was also alarmed by the tendency of some local Party chiefs to ignore the Politburo and pursue their own line using security organs and the Russians. The UB apparatus, conscious of its key role in protecting the Party's hold on power, began to slip from beneath Party control. Gomułka went so far as to warn 'that a second state is beginning to grow up over our heads. The security organs are making their own policy, with which no-one is supposed to interfere'.³

The round-ups which began in November continued into spring 1945 on a big scale. Emigre sources claim that as many as 50,000 members of the AK were arrested and transported to Siberia at this time,⁴ but there is no way of course of verifying this figure. Claims that some 8,000 people were incarcerated in Lublin castle at this time are plausible enough in view of official data revealing 1,646 arrests by the UB and MO alone in Lublin province between January and April. In the same operations, over 300 members of the underground were killed.⁵ Internment camps were set up for the AK at Skrobow, Rembertów, Piotrków and elsewhere. But as Figure 1 clearly demonstrates, the repression, far from breaking the underground, contributed to the massive irruption of armed resistance in the spring.

To a limited degree this followed from the territorial

³ Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 427.

⁴ Polskie Siły Zbrojne... op. cit., p. 926.

⁵ APUST File 52 L.dz.K. 2404/45 Korboński to London, 27 April 1945. Caban i Machocki op. cit., p. 97.

extension of communist rule to regions where the underground network had not been disrupted by 'Tempest' and Soviet policing, but about two-thirds of political murders were concentrated in the areas liberated in 1944⁶ and the upsurge in guerilla activity peaked in April-June, not in January-February when the AK and the communists first came into contact in central Poland.

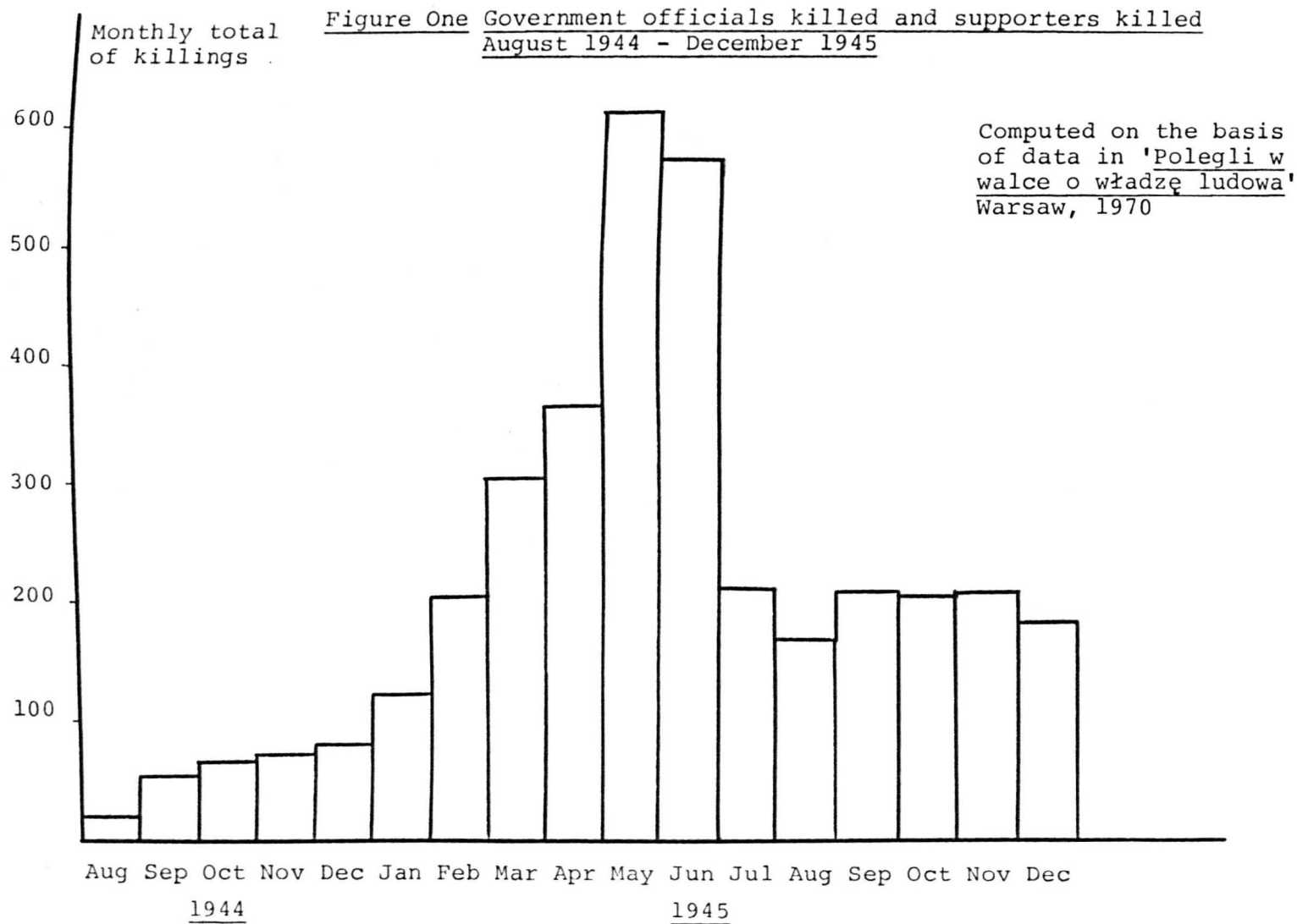
In spite of the repression, the stance of the underground remained generally defensive; resistance was offered on a sporadic and unplanned basis. Official historiography lays great emphasis on the 'Nie' organisation which it credits with an influence and degree of coherence it did not possess. In fact, the first three months of 1945 witnessed the virtual disintegration of the underground, with its leadership endeavouring to pick up the pieces, while rapidly coming to the conclusion that some kind of compromise had to be reached with the Russians. Non-recognition of the Lublin authorities and the conviction that the PPR was merely a Soviet puppet ruled out any direct approaches to the Polish communists.

Okulicki at this time gives the impression of a man swept along on an irresistible tide of events. On 19 January he ordered - to the surprise and puzzlement, it seems, of London, most of the AK as well as the communists - the disbandment of the AK. Emigre historians claim the decision was unpremeditated and conditioned by the mood of defeatism within the movement and the urgent need to sanction its members' flight from NKVD round-ups.⁷ Party historians argue rather that it had been planned in advance and was designed to prune down the AK, leaving only the dependable cadres of the 'Nie' organisation: the skeleton of the new anti-Soviet resistance.⁸ Okulicki's order had

6 Polegli w walce o władzę ludową (Warsaw, 1970), pp. 32-65. In 1945 61% of assassinations took place in Białystok, Lublin and Rzeszów provinces. A further 14% took place in Warsaw province, partially liberated in 1944.

7 Pobóg-Malinowski op. cit., pp. 854-55; Korboński Polskie... op. cit., p. 215.

8 Czapla W walce... op. cit., pp. 51-52; Walichnowski op. cit., p. 120.



indeed been ambiguous about the next step: 'We do not want to fight the Soviets, but we will never agree to live except in an entirely sovereign, independent, justly governed Polish state. The present Soviet victory has not ended the war...' President Radzkiewicz, endorsing Okulicki's order on 8 February, attempted to dispell the uncertainty, stating specifically that armed activity had ceased.⁹

The order added to the confusion and fragmentation reigning in the underground in the aftermath of the Soviet advance. Many of the conspirators, like the Russians, did not believe the order and simply ignored it, and began to repair and regroup the organisation. In Białystok, for instance, Colonel Liniarski disobeyed the order and set up an independent 'Citizens' AK',¹⁰ while the nationalists, who radically disagreed with the decision to disband, took further steps to revive their own military networks. And of course Okulicki himself did not cease activity, forming a central command for 'Nie', which apart from this never really got off the drawing-board.¹¹

The centrifugal processes at work in the military arm of the underground were matched by fission within its political leadership. As we have seen, in November Mikołajczyk, ready to settle with the Lubliners on terms favoured by the British and Americans, was dumped as premier of the Government-in-Exile and replaced by the intransigent Arciszewski. Mikołajczyk's Peasant Party went into opposition and following the commitment of the 'Big Three' at Yalta in February 1945 to the creation of a Polish coalition government, it succeeded in winning over Delegate Jankowski and most of the underground political leaders to Mikołajczyk's line. By March 1945 the London camp was dividing in two, just as the communists had

⁹ Polskie Siły Zbrojne... op. cit., pp. 925-27.

¹⁰ Majecki op. cit., p. 113; Pobóg-Malinowski op. cit., pp. 877-78 analyses the extent to which the order was ignored.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 878-82; Czapla W walce... op. cit., pp. 52-53.

intended nine months earlier, with the peasant movement and the centre groupings searching for a way out of conspiracy and entry into coalition with the PPR, while the intransigents were left isolated. Significantly the former AK, as represented by Okulicki, with some reservations, fell in with Jankowski.

The talks held between the Russian military command in Poland and the fifteen underground leaders headed by Jankowski and Okulicki at the end of March, which terminated with the arrest of the fifteen and their disappearance to the Soviet Union where they were put on trial in June, demonstrated the risks which the AK and the Delegatura were prepared to take to promote a deal. Okulicki had at first refused to participate, but finally caved in to Jankowski's persuasion and Russian insistence on his presence.¹²

The arrests certainly increased the difficulties facing the communists and must have significantly contributed to the irruption of underground violence in April, May and June which brought Poland to the brink of civil war.¹³ Other factors too prompted the upsurge of guerilla activity: the season - spring was suited to partisan warfare; the mass arrests, which propelled thousands of young men into the forests; and the realisation that Militia and security posts, or even prisons and internment camps often represented easy targets. The use of Red Army units and 'workers' brigades' to collect contingents from the peasants also aroused a great deal of conflict. These factors accounted equally for the activation of Ukrainian nationalist insurgents in south-east Poland. But besides, Yalta seemed to promise a new phase and the end of the

¹² APUST File 52 L.dz.K. 1802/45 Rzepecki to Anders, 5 April 1945; Korboński Polskie... op. cit., pp. 220-22; Pobóg-Malinowski op. cit., pp. 856-73 discusses in detail developments in London and within the underground leadership, November 1944 to March 1945.

¹³ Aleksander Zawadzki, for example, spoke of the danger of civil war at the May 1945 Plenum. Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 429.

communist monopoly in the administration. The defeatist, defensive mood which had weighed on the underground for months began to give way to a more offensive and hopeful one.

Soviet attempts to stamp out the resistance continued unabated. On 26 April London heard that

'The pacification has begun of Garwolin, Luków, Lubartów and Zamość districts. The Soviet Army surrounds villages and transports all the men, other than youngsters and the elderly, eastwards. The arrests numbering between ten and twenty thousand have provoked a mass exodus to the forests and the formation of irregular armed units, which nevertheless adopt a passive attitude, only defending themselves when attacked. The Soviet Air Force bombed the Czemiernickie forests'.¹⁴

The report, even if exaggerated, indicates accurately enough the degree of fear and terror sweeping the countryside. By no means all the armed units remained passive either. On 24 April, guerrillas overran the town of Puławy, massacring the local security policemen. A couple of days later the same happened in Janów, then Kozienice, then Grajewo. These were sizeable towns. Militia posts in the countryside faced an unenviable task - on the night of 27/28 March formidably armed and trained UPA (Ukrainian nationalist) units simultaneously wiped out the entire system of militia stations in Lubaczów and Jarosław districts, while in Białystok province, according to official data, some forty Militia offices had been demolished by March.¹⁵ In May pitched battles took place between security forces and ex-AK units led by 'Orlik' (Marian Bernaciak) and 'Łupaszko' (Zygmunt Szendzielarz).¹⁶

¹⁴ APUST File 52, L.dz.K 2313/45 Korboński to London, 26 April 1945.

¹⁵ R. Szpała Z dziejów MO i SB w pierwszych latach władzy ludowej w pow. Bielsk Podlaski Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny 1977 nr. 4, p. 187.

¹⁶ Majecki op. cit., p. 121; Turlejska zwalk... op. cit., pp. 238 et passim.

The Party's hard line had weakened and scattered the underground without seriously undermining its support and prestige amongst the bulk of the population. Mass arrests and internment created an atmosphere of tension and hostility to the communists in which clandestine activity proliferated and the underground, like a hydra, sprouted new members as fast as the security forces picked off the old. When the Central Committee Plenum met in May, the leadership attempted to reassert its control over a security apparatus which had itself lost its grip on the underground. Gomułka concluded the Plenum by saying that the existence of 'certain elements of crisis' was undeniable. 'In the reactionary camp there is a crisis, but we have been unable to narrow its base. We are unable to fight the reaction without the Red Army. That says something about (our) base'.¹⁷

Industry and the Working Class

The upsurge in underground activity was primarily a protest by the traditional rural communities of central and eastern Poland against the new order and indicated how shallow were the Party's roots in the villages. In the towns and cities the political hold of the authorities was more secure and violent opposition limited. Nevertheless by the spring the communists had to contend with a wave of discontent and industrial disruption amongst the urban working class, where they had hoped to find their strongest support.

The Polish economy was in ruins at the end of the war. National income, which had stood at 17.7 billion zloties in 1938, had fallen by 1945 to 6.8 billion. Industry had suffered particularly badly: some 65% of industrial plants had been destroyed. The population had declined from 35 to 24 million - a loss which disproportionately severely affected the skilled labour force, management and

¹⁷ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 440.

technicians.¹⁸ Cities like Warsaw, Wrocław and Gdańsk had been devastated. The occupation had also left deep psychological scars on those who had survived. The urban population had experienced Nazi rule at its most oppressive and had suffered the harshest material hardships. The legacy of the underground struggle continued to exercise a strong hold on large sections of the population for many years to come. This was to be seen in the conditioning of a whole generation to violence and fear, conspiracy and civil disobedience and in the intense loyalty to the memory of the AK and the secret state. In the economic sphere wartime habits: the permanent 'go-slow' in production, the sanctioning of pilfering both on patriotic grounds and for the sake of survival, and the black market, died hard. There were besides specific postwar social problems: an influx of untrained and often illiterate labour from the countryside to the towns; the existence of pockets of extreme poverty, exceeding even the general level of hardship, amongst widows, the unemployed, the Warsaw lumpenproletariat, for instance.¹⁹ Reactivation of industry and distribution was hampered by a virtual collapse of the currency in early 1945, as the wartime currencies were replaced by Polish zloty. For a time in many areas, vodka, spirit or sugar were used as a means of exchange to pay industrial workers and even state employees. By May 1945 the shortages of currency and credit had given way to fears of inflation.²⁰ With many of the urban population living at or below subsistence level, and workers receiving pay in kind rather than cash, the slightest disruption in the flow of food supplies was critical to the maintenance of production, which in any case stood in

18 F. Ryszka (ed.) *Polska Ludowa 1944-50. Przemiany społeczne* (Ossolineum, 1974), pp. 279, 285, 341.

19 Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., pp. 376-78, 349.

20 Kalinowski i Landau op. cit., pp. 146-53.

April at only 19% of its 1937 level.²¹ Absenteeism was a great problem, averaging 10-20% daily and in some industries over 20%.²² In March and April when the material conditions of the workers sank to a new low - real earnings in the first half of 1945 were less than 10% of their value in 1938²³ - short strikes became rife.

For days at a time food was unavailable. The authorities had estimated that contingents would provide about 1 million tons of grain and 1.9 million tons of potatoes in the economic year 1944/45. In fact only 681,000 tons of grain and 845,000 tons of potatoes were collected. As the army and Red Army had priority for such supplies, no more than 20% of these stocks could be made available to the civilian population in spring 1945.²⁴ Minc told the May Plenum that there had been some 'progress' - 'a month ago there was no bread in Lodz, now they're calling for dripping'.²⁵ Where such shortages were combined with resentment at the favourable treatment reportedly received by others as well as political agitation by opponents of the government, the Party was unable to restrain the workers. It is worth quoting at some length a report sent from Lodz to the Central Committee by Loga-Sowiński, the PPR secretary there; it covers the period 15 April - 15 May.

'Against the background of food-supply
difficulties strong tension of feelings

21 I. Kostrowicka, Z. Landau, J. Tomaszewski Historia gospodarcza Polski XIX i XX wieku (Warsaw, 1975), p. 486.

22 Gołębiowski Nacjonalizacja... op. cit., p. 222.

23 Ryszka op. cit., pp. 357-58, 367. It is estimated that real earnings in 1945 did not rise above 40% of the 1938 level. See A. Jezierski Historia gospodarcza Polski Ludowej 1944-68 (Warsaw, 1971), p. 120.

24 Ibid., pp. 93-94.

25 Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May, 1945, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 438.

in the factories. In the period of this report, especially in the past few days, a dozen or so brief strikes in Lodz, Pabianice, Końskie... The strikes last as long as the shop-floor meetings which the works councils call immediately the stoppage begins.... Factory cells display complete impotence towards the strikes. As a rule the meetings are very stormy; the workers, and especially the women workers, heckle the speakers; they should: "Fine democracy, when there's nothing to eat"; "The parasites stuff themselves as always, and the worker starves", etc.... We receive letters from workers asking why office-workers have good dinners with meat, why speculators go unpunished, why the shops are full of manufactures, only the government cannot find a way to feed the workers.... It is clear that the strikes are initiated by people sent in by the Reaction. The resentment of the workers over low pay and poor provisioning creates pretty fertile ground for strike-mongers...'26

Loga-Sowiński added that such 'outbursts of dissatisfaction among the workers inspired by the Reaction cannot in any way be regarded as a general index of their mood'. However as his report shows the authorities were keenly aware of the political dimension to these protests and attempted to dissociate economic grievances from broader political discontent. Sometimes this seems to have been successful. 'On 24 March', the Party committee in Warsaw reported, 'a public meeting of over a thousand people from the operational groups (organised to clear the ruins of the city - J.R.) gathered at 24, Żurawa street with the intention of demanding bread. The direct intervention of the Party committee prevented a further demonstration and resulted in the meeting ending with pro-government slogans'.²⁷ Emergency measures were taken to overcome the shortages. The

²⁶ Sprawozdanie KW PPR w Łodzi za okres od 15.4 do 15.5 1945r., Sprawozdania komitetów wojewódzkich PPR z 1945r. z pola walki 1971 nr. 4 (56), p. 287.

²⁷ Sprawozdanie KW PPR Warsaw, 25.4.45, quoted in Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 261.

Party press announced that

'In mid-July, just before the harvest the Warsaw PPR Committee was warned that once again there was no flour in the city stores and that stock-piles were sufficient for only 2-3 days. The City Hall proved helpless. Not having time to organise workers' brigades, the Warsaw committee immediately sent a team of its own staff to Sochaczew district. They brought back 80 tons of flour. The next PPR group was sent to Kutno bringing further tons of grain and famine was again averted'.²⁸

In line with the Party's tactics of mobilising the population in mass campaigns and to compensate for its own lack of manpower, the communists preferred, whenever possible, to despatch workers' brigades into the countryside to collect contingents. Altogether about 100,000 workers were said to have taken part in these brigades.²⁹

But improvised measures and propaganda could not conceal the political threat posed by the economic difficulties. Minc, speaking to the Central Committee Plenum in February, drew a direct link between the regime's authority and the success of its management of the economy:

'If the Provisional Government today comes to the newly-liberated regions with authority as the real administration of the country, this has happened because, amongst other things, this Provisional Government was able in general to overcome the economic difficulties in the territory liberated earlier... it was able... to feed the population and to reactivate industry more or less efficiently... it succeeded in introducing a rationing system.... The future of democracy and our triumph depends on whether we are able to solve all our economic problems'.³⁰

However, progress up to May fell short of the communists'

²⁸ Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 412.

²⁹ R. Zambrowski O masową milionową partię (Warsaw, 1946), p. 12.

³⁰ Gomułka, Minc, Zambrowski op. cit., p. 17.

hopes. The Politburo was especially concerned over the continuing low level of productivity in industry which Gomułka described as 'catastrophic'.³¹ Moreover, the wave of strikes, which one speaker at the May Plenum described as 'the most important element of the crisis',³² continued with stoppages in Silesia, Zagłębia, Warsaw, Olsztyn, Częstochowa and elsewhere.³³

The experiment in 'workers' control' through the factory councils also failed to produce the expected political dividends, but rather heightened the decentralisation of management which was in any case unavoidable during the first stages of industrial recovery. Factories tended to operate as autonomous units, sometimes even refusing to distribute their products to other factories in the production chain,³⁴ and works' councils, representing shop-floor opinion, encroached on the already reduced powers of management.

The decree on works councils was passed after four months of discussion on 6 February and remained in force effectively until the end of May. Works councils were to be formed in all concerns employing more than 20 people and were to represent the interests of employees in relation to the employer, as well as 'watch over the increase and improvement of production of the concern in accordance with the general guidelines of state economic policy'. In factories under state or local government control - the vast majority - the works council was entitled to direct representation in the management board, more or less on a

31 Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na I ogólnokrajowej naradzie PPR, 27.5.1945, Artykuły... vol. I, op. cit., p. 265.

32 Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 433.

33 Sierocki Warszawska... op. cit., p. 171; J. Kantyka Polska Partia Socjalistyczna na Śląsku i w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim w latach 1944-48 (Katowice, 1975), p. 185; E. Wojnowski Warmia i Mazury w latach 1944-1947 (Olsztyn, 1970), p. 91; J. Naumiuk Początki władzy ludowej na kielecczyźnie 1944-47 (Lublin, 1969), p. 130; Naumiuk PPR... op. cit., p. 359.

34 Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na I ogólnokrajowej naradzie PPR, 27.5.1945., Artykuły... vol. I, op. cit., p. 267.

par with the director. The director was required to consult the council on a continuous basis and such matters as taking on or discharging workers and their pay and provisions were for joint-decision.³⁵

The Party leadership seems to have looked to the works councils to provide a powerful check on the activities of management, which in many cases was suspected of political unreliability. At the February 1945 Plenum Minc stressed the wide role to be played by the councils which were to be given 'influence over who will be the director of a given factory and will be able to say "no, this one's bad and this one is good"'.³⁶

The problems posed by this arrangement soon became evident. Frequent conflicts arose between directors, together with specialist technical staff, on the one hand, and the factor councils, on the other. The workers' representatives considered that the managements had failed to adjust their thinking to the new order in industry and were refusing to allow the councils an adequate say in decision making.³⁷ The specialists in return argued that the councils undervalued their role. A particular bone of contention was the councils' tendency to reduce differentials and productivity bonuses, and to exclude non-manual staff from a share of the profits.³⁸ In some cases the Party's radical line unleashed an ultra-radical response from the workers which some commentators have defined as 'anarcho-syndicalist' in character.³⁹ The Party was

³⁵ Dekret Rady Ministrów, O utworzeniu rad zakładowych, 6.2.45, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., pp. 267-75.

³⁶ Gomulka, Minc, Zambrowski op. cit., p. 21.

³⁷ J. Gołębiowski Problemy nacjonalizacja przemysłu in Uprzemysłowienie ziem polskich w XIX i XX wieku (Warsaw, 1970) quoting a KCZZ report for April 1945.

³⁸ Uchwała plenum KC PPR w sprawach gospodarczych, 26.5.45, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., pp. 145-52.

³⁹ W. Góra Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa 1944-1947 (Warsaw, 1974), p. 129; see also Syzdek op. cit., pp. 261-2; Gomulka Referat wygłoszony na I ogólnokrajowej naradzie PPR, 27.5.1945, Artykuły... vol. I op. cit., p. 268.

critical of these tendencies. Loga-Sowiński reported from Lodz that the workers' councils had 'an incorrect attitude to the directors, (there is) a tendency to fight them, remove them and put in their place workers. We are not yet ready for this'.⁴⁰ The communists were also against egalitarianism in pay. In April the PPR-controlled Central Commission of the Trade Unions declared that the operative principle on wages should be 'equal pay for equal work', elaborating that

'in setting rates for particular categories of workers and staff one should be guided by their qualifications and professional skills.... Where technical conditions allow, a system of piecework should be applied which will have a positive effect on the increase in production.... Also, where technical conditions allow, a bonus system should be put into operation...'⁴¹

Frequently such conflicts had a strong party political flavour. In many factories despite calls by the PPR leadership to share power the communists monopolised the works councils. This led to conflict with both the legal and the underground wings of the Socialist movement. The PPR monopolism also extended from the top to the bottom of the trade union apparatus. 'In the Central Commission of the Trade Unions out of 23 members, 19 were members of the PPR and 4 of the PPS. The composition of the union executives in the largest industrial centres such as Lodz and Katowice was similar. In Lodz only one member of the PPS sat on the Regional Union Committee, while in Katowice it consisted exclusively of members of the PPR.'⁴² In Lodz, again according to Loga-Sowiński, '...monopolist tendencies are

⁴⁰ Sprawozdania KW PPR... op. cit., p. 287.

⁴¹ Uchwała w sprawie płac zarobkowych KCZZ, 21/22.4.45, Sprawozdanie KCZZ (listopad 1944 - listopad 1945), (Warsaw, 1945), pp. 110-12.

⁴² H. Jakubowska Walka o jednolite związki zawodowe w pierwszych latach Polski Ludowej, Studia i materiały z dziejów Polski Ludowej Vol. 12 (1978), p. 148.

universal. Comrades resist changes to the benefit of the PPS in factory councils or national councils, although their composition is in this respect blatantly unjust.' It proved very difficult for the Party leadership to overcome this obduracy. 'Everywhere we hear the same argument: we did not work in order to hand them seats now. (There is) suspicion and antipathy towards PPS members. Where Party directives are carried out it is formally, without conviction'.⁴³ As one modern historian has noted, 'despite the suggestions of the Central Committee of the PPR... changes in union leaderships took place very slowly. PPS representation in the Central Commission of the Trade Unions itself was not extended until the 1st Congress (November 1945 - J.R.)'.⁴⁴ Central instructions were ignored it seems by local Party organisations and the leadership's campaign from May onwards to stamp out monopolism was only partially successful. At the December 1945 Congress Zambrowski listed a whole series of unions where the situation was still unsatisfactory: 'without doubt the balance of forces on the executives of these unions, so far as the PPR and PPS is concerned, does not correspond to the balance of influence at the grassroots, in the factories'.⁴⁵

Such distortions not only created tension between the communists and their Socialist allies, but in some cases strengthened the appeal of anti-government Socialists who continued to play the role of spokesmen for the workers outside the PPR-dominated unions and factory councils. According to a report from Warsaw, 'the WRN holds sway in a great many PPS factory circles and engages in openly reactionary activity... our comrades' ultra-leftism exacerbates these conflicts...'.⁴⁶ During February and March

⁴³ Sprawozdania KW PPR... op. cit., p. 287.

⁴⁴ Jakubowska op. cit., pp. 149-50.

⁴⁵ Zambrowski O masową... op. cit., pp. 30-31.

⁴⁶ Sprawozdanie KW PPR Warsaw, 20.6.45, quoted in Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 435.

the leadership of the WRN under Kazimierz Pużak and Zygmunt Zaremba attempted to reactivate their network, issuing instructions ordering a boycott of the Provisional Government's political apparatus, but involvement in trade unions, factory councils and other social and economic organisations. The WRN was also to agitate for a fairer and more efficient system of food supply and higher wages.⁴⁷ In mid-March Pużak made a tour of industrial Upper Silesia and held one meeting inside a Bytom coal mine.⁴⁸

In May the Party leadership shifted the emphasis from the workers' prerogatives to the need to improve discipline and raise productivity. The experiment in workers' control had blurred managerial responsibility, reinforced ultra-radical deviations from the central Party line and, in many cases, fear of losing control of the councils had resulted in the alienation and exclusion of potential allies rather than the broadening of the Party's appeal.

The National Front

The third area where by May 1945 the Party's strategy had reached an impasse was within the national front itself. The communists' monopolist tendencies and conflicts with the Socialists in the trades unions and factories were symptomatic of more general strains within the governing coalition. After October the Party's attitude to its allies had reflected the underlying ambiguities in its strategy. On the one hand its continuing commitment to constructing a national front required the existence and growth of the 'Lublin' Socialist and Peasant Parties to rally support for the Provisional Government and draw off the rank-and-file from the 'London' parties. On the other hand the narrowing of the front and offensive against the

⁴⁷ On the activity of the WRN see: K. Pużak Wspomnienia 1939-45, Zeszyty historyczne 41 (1977), pp. 128-34; Z. Zaremba Wojna i konspiracja (London, 1957), pp. 305-06; Syzdek op. cit., pp. 83-84; Reiss op. cit., pp. 213-14; Kantyka PPS na Śląsku... op. cit., pp. 161-62.

⁴⁸ Pużak op. cit., p. 130.

underground meant in practice that the Party was more assertive in enforcing its 'leading role'. This meant keeping tight control of its allies' organisations and strict filtering of recruits to prevent pro-London elements taking over.

The trade-off between safeguarding PPR hegemony and broadening the base of the regime reappeared sharply in early 1945 as the legal parties expanded rapidly in the newly-liberated territories. As Table One demonstrates, the very rapid growth of the PPR up to April was followed by an equally dramatic shedding of members during the following months, so that by June the marked imbalance in the size of the three main government parties, evident in Lublin, had given way to near equality. Such global figures

Table One Membership of the PPR, PPS and SL in First Half of 1945⁴⁹

	PPR	PPS	SL
1944 December	21,649*	7,663*	5,000*
1945 January	69,239	-	-
February	176,337	-	-
March	262,652	-	-
April	301,695	124,428	-
May	255,904	-	-
June	206,510	156,832	200,000
July	188,904	-	-

* Figure for liberated territories only.

give only a rough indication, of course, of the relative organisational strength of the parties, but they do show that alongside the PPR, two mass parties had emerged which in some areas at least presented the communists with real competition. In Kraków, Katowice and Gdańsk, for instance,

⁴⁹ Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., pp. 275, 277; Reiss op. cit., pp. 69, 119, 189; Przygoński op. cit., p. 315; Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., p. 83.

the PPS was able to outpace the communists.⁵⁰

Moreover, the manner of the expansion of the PPR was assessed very critically by the Politburo which at the end of April put the process into reverse.⁵¹ In circulars issued on 7 May, the Central Committee stated that expansion had led to 'a series of negative phenomena', singling out the absence of any selectivity in signing-on recruits which had allowed corrupt, careerist and 'ideologically foreign elements' to join the Party, thereby discrediting it and assisting its opponents.⁵² The 'open doors' recruitment policy operated during the first weeks after the end of the German occupation placed virtually no restrictions on new members who were 'registered', often before cells had been organised, without any investigation of their views or background. The Central Committee was particularly disquieted by the massive expansion in Poznań province, a region with very little communist tradition⁵³ and an old stronghold of the National and Christian Democrats.

50 In Kraków (June 1945), the PPS had some 31,000 members in the province as a whole to 21,000 for the PPR. In the city itself (May 1945) the PPS had over 11,000, the PPR 5,000. In Gdańsk province the PPS led the PPR by 4,000 to 2,000 (May 1945) and in Katowice province by 23,000 to 20,000 (June 1945). See Z. Kozik Partie i stronnictwa polityczne w Krakowskim 1945-1947 (Kraków, 1975), p. 23; Reiss op. cit., p. 189; Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., p. 277; R. Wapiński Pierwsze lata władzy ludowej na wybrzeżu gdańskim (Gdańsk, 1970), p. 31; K. Ćwik Problemy współdziałania PPR i PPS w województwie krakowskim 1945-48 (Kraków, 1974), p. 51.

51 Minutes of a meeting of the secretariat of the PPR central committee (extracts), 24 April 1945, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 423.

52 Okólnik KC PPR 'w sprawie uporządkowania przynależności partyjnej i oczyszczenia szeregów partii z elementów niepożądanych (7.4.45) PPR... viii.1944-xii.1945 op. cit., pp. 124-31.

53 Ibid., p. 125. In 1944 Gomułka had described Poznań Province as 'a blank page for the Party', PPR national conference (selected minutes), 12-13 November 1944 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 386.

Between the end of February and the beginning of May membership there rose from under 2,000 to over 60,000. During May this figure was pruned back to 27,000.⁵⁴ Such wild fluctuations suggest that the real level of recruitment to the Party was much less than the official figures indicated and that in very many cases recruits lacked any deep political commitment to the PPR. Material and career considerations undoubtedly motivated a large part of the new membership as Zambrowski admitted some months later:

'admittance to the Party took place in contravention of all the principles obligatory in our Party... (members) were not admitted, but signed-up, or as it was called at the time - registered. Anybody who applied was registered and amongst them tens of thousands of people were registered who joined the Party to get a job, to get some work, to get into the Militia...'55

In the countryside the second stage of the land reform which began in February and benefited altogether 262,000 families was accompanied by mass recruitment. In the towns too the Party had considerable patronage at its disposal. In Lodz, for instance, in March and April the Party distributed nearly 9,000 housing units.⁵⁶

In such circumstances it was not difficult to enlarge the formal membership without significantly alleviating the Party's basic weaknesses and even intensifying some of them. The shortage of reliable cadres remained. Alexander Zawadzki complained to the May Plenum that 'we are trying to fill every position with a PPR member, but we do not have enough people who will follow the Party line'.⁵⁷ The

54 Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., pp. 98-99, 277.

55 Zambrowski O masową... op. cit., p. 54.

56 Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., p. 95.

57 Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 428.

influx of members without any previous association with the communist movement did not in many cases dilute the sectarian tendencies of Party veterans; rather the opposite. 'Careerist elements' were accused of ultra-leftism and an incorrect attitude to allied parties.⁵⁸ The rapidity of the expansion had also resulted in a loss of organisational coherence by increasing the remoteness of the central Party apparatus from local cells.⁵⁹ Above all, the majority of the leadership does not seem to have considered that the Party's growth indicated any real advance in broadening the base of the Provisional Government, the continuing narrowness of which lay behind the lack of political stabilisation and symptoms of crisis.⁶⁰

As we have remarked, the 'Lublin PPS' was in no position to challenge PPR hegemony effectively in 1944 and in spite of disputes within the government coalition, the communists found it easier to impose a subordinate status on the PPS than on the Peasants. However, from early 1945, the PPS gained strength despite the boycott declared by the WRN and succeeded in capturing a foothold in traditional Socialist strongholds. Although only a handful of the more prominent pre-war figures in the party, most notably Adam Kuryłowicz, Henryk Świątkowski, Henryk Wachowicz and a little later Józef Cyrankiewicz and Kazimierz Rusinek, threw in their lot with the new organisation, at local level it proved easier to win over activists and members.

The communists viewed this process with some apprehension. In February, even before it was properly underway, the sharpest dispute to date between the two parties developed as the communists attempted to prevent what they argued was an influx of WRN supporters into the PPS which

⁵⁸ Uchwała Plenum KC w sprawach organizacyjnych (26.5.45), PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., p. 154.

⁵⁹ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 430-31, 433.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 431, 439-40.

the communists feared would return to its old ideological stance.⁶¹ In the Central Committee Aleksander Kowalski warned against exaggerated suspicion and confusing 'real PPS-ites' with 'enemy agents',⁶² but the Politburo was inclined to stress the danger. Gomułka's report displayed the ambiguity in the Party's strategy: its commitment to the national front combined with hints to the aktyw to keep tight checks on potential recruits linked with 'London':

'... Our Party sees and realises the benefits that the existence of the national front and co-operation with the PPS, the Peasants and the Democrats bring to the cause of rebuilding Poland and laying the foundations of democracy. Our Party draws a distinction between those Socialists standing for the unity of the democratic camp and those WRN elements, alien to socialism, which squeeze into the PPS with the aim of pushing it onto the wrong course. We consider that decidedly hostile WRN elements ought to be excluded from political life...'63

Within the PPS leadership only Matuszewski and his group accepted the communists' analysis wholeheartedly. Matuszewski went so far as to insist that 'People from the WRN have no place in the reborn party and their ideology must be ruthlessly combated'.⁶⁴ But other speakers at the PPS Supreme Council on 25/26 February favoured a more liberal attitude to the WRN rank-and-file as well as towards the pre-war traditions of the party, taking the view that the threat of a WRN take-over was exaggerated and that the right could be contained.⁶⁵ But behind the discussion of the WRN and party traditions lay the question of the role of the PPS in the government coalition and the general

61 Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na rozszerzonym plenum KC PPR 6.2.1945 r., Artykuły... vol I op. cit., p. 215.

62 Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 434.

63 Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na rozszerzonym plenum KC PPR 6.2.1945r., Artykuły... vol I op. cit., p. 215.

64 Reiss op. cit., p. 106.

65 Sierocki PPR-owska op. cit., p. 12.

political situation. As usual Drobner did not mince his words, complaining that 'in grassroots circles of the PPR there is a conviction that only the PPR has the right to govern'. It was necessary, he went on, 'to dispel fear amongst our members, to make them aware that we are not a department of another party, but that we are an equal, sovereign party'.⁶⁶ Such sentiments were supported by Kuryłowicz, Obrączka, Motyka and others, in many cases linked with the Kraków PPS organisation.⁶⁷ Between the Kraków and Matuszewski wings of the party, Osóbka-Morawski's group still dominated the leadership. Of the twelve Central Executive members elected in February, 8 had belonged to the pro-KRN RPPS. Kuryłowicz and Matuszewski were included too, but not Drobner, who was replaced as chairman of the Supreme Council by Świątkowski from the pro-communist 'left'.⁶⁸ The resolutions passed also represented a rejection of Drobner's stance.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Osóbka-Morawski, with greater circumspection than the Kraków activists, was working towards the expansion and increased independence of the PPS, calling, for instance, on ex-Socialists to leave the PPR and join his party.⁷⁰ Talks were also started in February between the PPS leadership and WRN leaders from Kraków associated with Zygmunt Żuławski.⁷¹

The strains in communist-Socialist relations at the top were paralleled by much sharper conflicts at local level. In Kraków, according to Aleksander Kowalski, 'an atmosphere of intrigue and suspicion reigned between the PPR and PPS. (Włodzimierz) Zawadzki (the local PPR

⁶⁶ Bardach O dziejach... op. cit., p. 688.

⁶⁷ Ćwik op. cit., p. 49.

⁶⁸ Syzdek op. cit., pp. 107-8, 453.

⁶⁹ Reiss op. cit., p. 109.

⁷⁰ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 435.

⁷¹ Kozik op. cit., p. 32.

secretary - J.R.) told the PPS leadership to their faces that he had his people amongst them and knew what resolution they passed'.⁷² In Upper Silésia Socialist meetings were broken up by the communists,⁷³ while in May the Ministry of Public Security had to issue instructions not to arrest members of the PPS and Peasant Party without clearance from above.⁷⁴

Similar processes were at work in the legal SL. More than the PPS, its expansion rested on members of the underground party who now left the conspiracy without revising their outlook or abandoning their allegiance to Wincenty Witos and Mikołajczyk, the pre-war and wartime leaders of the movement.⁷⁵ The resumption of legal activity by former 'ROCh' members, and indeed whole organisations, was made easier by the rift between Mikołajczyk and the London government after his resignation as premier. The party in Poland supported his position and attempted to force London to retreat from its intransigent stance with threats to withdraw from the underground apparatus.⁷⁶

However, the leadership of the SL remained in the hands of the pro-communists. After the liberation the 'Wola ludu' group took over from the executive installed in Lublin and this change was endorsed, with some dissent from Maślanka and others, at the Supreme Council held in Lodz on 25-26 March.⁷⁷ But a more significant conflict emerged

72 Ibid., pp. 41-50; Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 429.

73 Kantyka PPS na Śląsku... op. cit., p. 157; Bardach O dziejach... op. cit., p. 688.

74 Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 437.

75 Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., p. 84.

76 Buczek SL... op. cit., p. 378.

77 A. Wojtas Kryzys programu i polityka "Rocha". Powstanie SL "Wola ludu" (Place of publication not given, 1976), p. 165.

between Bańczyk, the party president, who inclined towards a compromise with 'ROCh' and Kowalski, his deputy, who represented the communists' line. On this occasion the Kowalski faction was able to shape the resolutions passed and Bańczyk's followers were heavily outnumbered on the new executive.⁷⁸ But although the PPR could still ensure that the SL leadership was controlled by its nominees, the movement at local and even provincial level was to a considerable degree under 'ROCh' influence. By May, the political tension in the country generally was reflected in the growth of open opposition in the SL to the communists and the government which the leadership found increasingly difficult to restrain. At a congress of the peasant youth organisation, 'Wici', and again at a meeting of SL deputies to the KRN, fierce attacks were made on the communists and their management of the government, while anti-communist feeling in the provincial organisations prompted the leadership to issue a special circular which called for party discipline and underlined the need for co-operation with the PPR.⁷⁹

By May 1945 the PPR tactic of constructing the national front 'from below' had met only very limited success. Although it had been possible to embrace memberships of many thousands within the framework of the allied parties and place at their head executives dominated by pro-communists, it had proved far more difficult to break old allegiances and win the loyalty of the new members for the government coalition. The difficulty was heightened by the resistance of many local Party activists to working with organisations which they considered were riddled with underground and reactionary connections.

⁷⁸ A. Wojtas op. cit., p. 166; Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., p. 81.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 102-3; S. Jarecka-Kimlowska Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej "Wici". Walka o oblicze ideowe i nowy model organizacyjny 1944-48 (Warsaw, 1972), pp. 92-94.

By May the communists judged the situation in the PPS to have-improved since February when they had feared that it might slip from under the control of the pro-communist group. However, the PPR concluded that it was because the Socialist leadership was not automatically subservient to the PPR that this improvement had taken place.⁸⁰ The situation in the SL was, on the other hand, extremely unstable, the communists concluded, because it was led by 'our people' who had very little contact with the rank-and-file members. The domination by pro-communists at the top had turned out to be an obstacle which stood in the way of winning over the mainstream of the movement. The treatment of the SL as 'an annex of the PPR' and as 'an appendix which had to be tolerated' had been mistaken. As Gomułka put it, a new course was required, 'so that the SL can become an independent party, with equal rights in the coalition... there are many peasant activists within our grasp who we have yet to win over'.⁸¹

The Question of Sovereignty

'Our central problem is state sovereignty', declared Edward Ochab at the May Plenum, 'the war is over, the Red Army should leave Polish territory...'.⁸² The Soviet presence was indeed a crucial ingredient of the political crisis, casting doubt not only on Poland's sovereignty, but also on the sovereignty of the Party leadership within Poland and even within the Party itself.

The lesser problem was the relationship between the Politburo and the Kremlin. Berman and Finkielsztajn, who were both closely involved with Soviet-Polish liaison, agreed at the Plenum that Stalin respected the right of the Poles to direct their own affairs. According to Berman, 'Stalin stands for Poland's sovereignty and knows what the

⁸⁰ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 431-32.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 427.

⁸² Ibid., p. 430.

PPR understands by sovereignty'. The problem arose at a lower level of the Soviet apparatus, as Finkielsztajn pointed out: 'There is a difference between the position of Stalin on sovereignty and how the Soviets in the terrain conceive this matter'. He added that the fault also lay with the over-cautiousness of the Party itself: 'Poland's foreign policy must coincide with the principles of the Soviet Union's policy, but within the framework of that policy we are able to defend our own interests; there is a lot of room for independence. We have not exploited these possibilities, we have not been active'.⁸³

Uncertainty over Soviet policy towards Germany caused disquiet in the Party leadership and was considered to be one area where Poland would need to assert its claims more energetically. It was feared that if Moscow decided to court German opinion it could be at the expense of Poland's claim to the territory up to the Oder-Neisse.⁸⁴ Such fears were heightened by delays in the hand-over of administration of these territories to the Poles. The sudden resumption in mid-May by the Russians of administration in Szczecin, which had earlier been transferred to the Provisional Government, was especially worrying. Ochab demanded a strong protest, 'it is a political defeat, an alarm signal. And now there are rumours about Wrocław...'.⁸⁵

But the need to press Polish interests more vigorously than hitherto during the peace settlement was a less immediate problem than putting a stop to the political interference and marauding of Russian officers and troops stationed in Poland. The lawlessness of some Red Army units was having very damaging effects on public opinion. According to Aleksander Zawadzki 'the population in Silesia was enthusiastic towards the Soviet Union. Today its attitude is decidedly unfavourable... the debauchery of Red Army

⁸³ Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 434, 436.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 425.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 430.

troops returning from Soviet territory, marauding and outrages... alienate the nation from the Soviet Union'.⁸⁶ Plundering took place both in the form of individual 'trophy-hunting' as well as on an organised basis. In May, despite decisions taken during Bulganin's latest visit many factories and much of the transport system remained under Soviet administration and its dismantling and removal eastwards continued.⁸⁷ As we have seen, the Red Army was also widely used to liquidate the AK. According to a report from Białystok province, 'up to now the partial destruction of the bands has been carried out mainly by the Red Army (not enough Polish Army); this has had a negative effect on the mood of the population'.⁸⁸ Soviet 'advisers' also played a major role in the UB, where Radkiewicz agreed that their impact had recently been damaging.⁸⁹ But it was the Soviet commanders stationed in the localities who were considered by the Party leaders to have created the most trouble with their interference in affairs outside their competence which often cut right across the PPR line. According to Zambrowski, 'not only the Central Committee makes Party policy. The military commanders do as well. In Lodz, for example, they summon precinct committees without the provincial committee knowing and send them to rallies; Red Army troops campaign for kolchozy...'.⁹⁰ In Malbork and Kwidzyn the Soviet authorities prohibited the formation of PPS, Peasant and Democratic Party branches.⁹¹

86 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 429.

87 Ibid., pp. 424, 429.

88 Sprawozdanie KW PPR w Białymstoku za lipiec 1945r., Sprawozdania KW PPR... op. cit., p. 293.

89 Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 437.

90 Ibid., p. 432.

91 S. Przywuski PPS w woj. Gdańskim 1945-48. Powstanie, organizacja i formy działania Z pola walki 1978 nr. 1 (81).

The tendency of some local Party organisations to follow the lead of the Soviet and security organs rather than central directives was particularly disturbing to the Central Committee. The inexperience of local cadres, the danger and often isolation in which they worked, the ultra-radical euphoria which gripped much of the aktyw and especially the KPP veterans during the first months of power not to mention the calls from above for greater vigilance and tough measures against the reaction lay behind this tendency. Local cells looked to the real sources of their strength: the Soviet presence and the security forces and the Party's hold on the state apparatus rather than the uncertain and frequently ineffective assistance of the allied parties, or even of the central Party network itself. This was one of the main counts against Włodzimierz Zawadzki who was removed as Party secretary for Kraków on 16 April. Gomułka accused him of following his own line 'which substituted Security for the Party's policy', while Berman categorised his deviation more precisely: 'Jasny (Zawadzki) formulated the theory that every problem in Poland may be solved by the aid of the Red Army. This is a Trotskyist theory of revolution carried on bayonets'.⁹² Zawadzki seems to have been made a scapegoat for what was a more general phenomenon. His running of the Kraków organisation accorded with the feelings of much of the aktyw⁹³ there and there was some dissatisfaction at his sacking. Indeed such was his popularity with the communist veterans at grassroots level in the city that in November they rebelled against the Central Committee and elected him as a delegate to the Party Congress. The leadership responded by expelling him from the Party.⁹⁴

⁹² Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 426-27, 434.

⁹³ Kozik op. cit., p. 50.

⁹⁴ Central Party Control Commission resolution of 28 November 1945 concerning Zawadzki, Włodzimierz (Jasny) and Minutes of a hearing with Włodzimierz Zawadzki, 26 November 1945, Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 450-51; Protokół z pos. Sekretariatu KC w dniu 15.XI.45, Protokoły KC (1945) Zeszyty Historyczne 24 (1973), p. 147.

The degree to which the Party leadership had lost control of internal events was highlighted by the opening of negotiations between the Soviet military authorities and the leadership of the underground at the end of March, which as we have seen, concluded with the arrest of the fifteen London delegates and subsequent trial in Moscow. While much has been published in the West about this episode,⁹⁵ we know nothing about the motives of the Russians in seizing the Poles or how and at what level the decision to do so was taken. However, it seems clear that the Polish communists did not participate in any of the preliminaries leading up to the 'talks', nor in the charade on 27-28 March which seems to have been executed by the NKVD without any outside assistance. It is difficult to reconcile the coup with the Party's wider efforts to establish its national credentials and stabilise the political situation and it seems unlikely that the Politburo would have allowed what was an embarrassing affront to its authority to have occurred if it had had any influence on the decision. Probably the communists were presented with a fait accompli. This was the view of the underground leadership which replaced the arrested delegation. The new Delegate, Stefan Korboński, informed London that 'Lublin government circles consider the arrest of the fifteen by the Soviets a great mistake. They themselves are washing their hands of it...'.⁹⁶ It is worth noting that Wincenty Witos was also arrested on 31 March by the NKVD and driven to Brześć on the Polish-Soviet border and then, mysteriously, driven back and released. Although Witos apparently thought it was his poor health which cut short this strange journey,

⁹⁵ See for instance: Pużak op. cit., p. 134 et passim; K. Bagiński Proces szesnastu w Moskwie Zeszyty Historyczne 4 (1964); Z. Stypulkowski Invitation to Moscow (London, 1951); Korboński Polskie... op. cit., pp. 220-22; Polish Plotters on Trial. The Full report of the trial of Polish Diversionists in Moscow, June 1945 (London, 1945).

⁹⁶ APUST File 52, L.dz.K. 3346/45, Korboński to London, received 11.6.45.

it seems more probable that it was political intervention, perhaps with the Soviet government, or perhaps from the Polish leadership.⁹⁷

By May all sections of the leadership of the PPR seem to have been agreed on the urgency of sharply reducing the role of the Soviet forces and asserting the Party's primacy in directing affairs in Poland. Gomułka summed up this feeling with the remark that 'the masses ought to see us as a Polish party. Let them attack us as Polish communists and not as an agency'.⁹⁸ The strategy of using the Red Army to crush 'London' while the Party established a political base and consolidated its hold on the state apparatus had failed. The repressive measures of the Soviet forces had proved an obstacle to stabilisation, had reinforced the communists' isolation and fuelled the opposition.

The May Turn

Between mid-April when Zawadzki was ousted (Gomułka called his dismissal 'the first warning step'⁹⁹) and early June, the Party line was put into reverse. Although he claimed that there was no '180 degree turn; only a "recognition of deviations"', Gomułka at the same time demanded that 'a real, fundamental turn in the policy of grassroots organisations' should take place. His claim that 'the line from the occupation, the line of the July manifesto, remains in force', was disingenuous since October 1944 a very different line had been pursued in practice.¹⁰⁰ The London

97 S. Wójcik Stanowisko W. Witosa w 1945r., Zeszyty Historyczne 34 (1975), p. 200.

98 Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier, op. cit., p. 426.

99 Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na I ogólnokrajowej naradzie PPR, 27.5.1945r., Artykuły... vol. I op. cit., p. 283.

100 Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 428.

was in no doubt that the Party was following a new course, on 12 June Korboński informed London that 'During the past few days a sudden and fundamental change has been executed in the Lublin press and tactics'.¹⁰¹

The essentials of the new line were unveiled at the Central Committee Plenum held on 20-21 May and announced to the top Party aktyw at a special conference a week later. As usual the turn was accompanied by a redefinition of the Party's strategic formula. In October the twin tests of support for the national front were active commitment to the destruction of the opponents of the PKWN and the establishment of a 'democratic' Poland. In May all that was required was recognition of the authority of the Provisional Government and compliance with its decrees. Thus, the 'democratic national front' of 'struggle with the domestic reaction for a strong, democratic Poland',¹⁰² of October, gave way to the more inclusive broad or united (wspólny) 'democratic national front' embracing 'all those groups and political activists who recognise the Provisional Government of the Polish Republic... (and) express a readiness to assist the implementation of all state instructions'.¹⁰³ Gomułka elaborated for the aktyw what this meant: 'We are not opening the doors for everybody. We have one basic criterion. We say: we will co-operate with those groups and political elements which above all recognise the Provisional Government as the only authority operating in Poland on the basis of the national will and ... undertake to co-operate with the government in rebuilding the country. Provided these conditions are fulfilled, we consider both discussion and criticism as possible if it does not conflict with the fundamental principles of

¹⁰¹ APUST File 52 L.dz.K. 3439/45 Korboński to London, 12.6.45.

¹⁰² Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na naradzie PPR w Lublinie 10.10.1944r., Artykuły... vol. I op. cit., p. 115.

¹⁰³ Uchwała plenum KC PPR w sprawie politycznych, 26.5.45 PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., p. 141.

the democratic front'.¹⁰⁴ In the terminology of one Warsaw historian, the formula applying from late 1944 to spring 1945 of 'he who is not with us is against us' or even 'not everyone who is with us is with us', was now replaced with the same criterion in force the previous summer: 'he who is not against us is for us'.¹⁰⁵

The turn-around was most evident in a revision in the Party's attitude to the AK. The blanket condemnation of the AK 'from beginning to end, without distinction between leaders and led',¹⁰⁶ was now replaced with a policy of distinguishing the 'honest AK' from 'the reactionary part of the AK'. It was admitted that unjust arrests of AK members had driven others back into conspiracy.¹⁰⁷ According to underground reports to London, posters with the slogan 'Down with the AK and NSZ cut-throats' disappeared and in their place it was confirmed 'in all the press and official statements that the AK are heroes'.¹⁰⁸ On 30 May a partial amnesty was ordered covering those arrested for connections with the AK who had not actually participated in armed resistance to the new authorities and had not held command positions in the AK. The same order instructed the use of propaganda to persuade 'as many people as possible to leave the forests'.¹⁰⁹

Methods of combating the partisans changed too. Priority was given to deploying Polish units rather than

104 Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na I ogólnokrajowej naradzie PPR, 27.5.1945r., Artykuły... vol. I op. cit., pp. 284

105 Załuski op. cit., p. 460.

106 Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 432.

107 Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na I ogólnokrajowej naradzie PPR 27.5.1945r., Artykuły... vol. I op. cit., pp. 281-82.

108 APUST File 52 L.dz.K. 3439/45 op. cit..

109 Walichnowski op. cit., p. 135.

Russians against the underground. On 24 May the Internal Security Corps (KBW) was formed from the existing Interior Armies and some regular units, and the 1st, 3rd and 9th Infantry Divisions were ordered to eastern Poland for duties against the guerillas.¹¹⁰ A new emphasis was placed on the political aspect of operations too. An all-party 'Supreme Political Commission to Combat Banditry' was created under Gomułka's chairmanship,¹¹¹ and special 'agitprop groups' were attached to anti-insurgency units. The instructions issued to these groups stressed the need to deprive the guerillas of their popular base and prestige. They were depicted as 'bandits' who 'murder peasants, soldiers and militiamen, steal from the population and state property, want to prevent the country's reconstruction... and Poland benefiting from the blessings of peace'. Group members were to avoid parading their party allegiances, but appear as 'representatives of the population, of the democratic camp'. The key to military success was 'the complete isolation of the bands from the population, and the resistance of the population to the bands'. Assurances were also given that partisans and deserters who gave themselves up to the authorities would not be punished.¹¹² The change of tactics resulted almost immediately in talks opening between the authorities and guerilla units in some areas.¹¹³

Industrial policy too underwent a marked transformation. Its keynote now was the improvement of productivity and labour-discipline and an end to the radical experimentation and improvisation which had reigned in the factories over the previous months.

¹¹⁰ Walichnowski op. cit., pp. 136-37.

¹¹¹ Protokół posiedzenia Głównej Komisji Politycznej dla spraw Walki z Bandytyzmem, 8.6.45, Z pola walki 1965 nr. 3 (31) pp. 196-200.

¹¹² Instrukcja KC PPR o zadaniach grup agit-prop. przy jednostkach WP prowadzących walkę z bandami reakcyjnymi, June 1945, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., pp. 174-78.

¹¹³ Protokół pos. GKP... op. cit., pp. 198-200.

The problem of raising productivity was considered by the Politburo to be of foremost significance in achieving economic recovery and political stabilisation. 'The situation which exists today in this area is not just unsatisfactory, but one must say, outright alarming, outright catastrophic. If we do not solve the problem of increasing labour productivity then we will not solve any of the problems which stand before us in this both economically and politically difficult situation, we will not maintain democratic power in Poland...'.¹¹⁴ This was a victory for the view of Minc's Ministry of Industry, so it seems, over trades union representations. As early as 2 April Minc had issued instructions on measures to raise productivity which ignored the role of the trade unions and works councils.¹¹⁵ The trades unions had, on the other hand, still argued that the subsistence of the workers was 'the deciding question' determining their productive capacity in a resolution of 22-22 April.¹¹⁶

The first step taken to bring about this improvement in productivity was a marked curbing of the powers of the works councils in favour of the management. In May the wide role which the councils had played in practice in the factories for some months received legal regulation as the February decree came into force. At the same time instructions were issued on holding formal elections.¹¹⁷ At the May Plenum however the leadership came down strongly in favour of 'the increased and strengthened authority of the director, engineer and foreman', which was spelt out as

¹¹⁴ Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na I ogólnokrajowej naradzie PPR, 27.5.1945r., Artykuły... vol I op. cit., p. 265.

¹¹⁵ Kaliński i Landau op. cit., p. 84.

¹¹⁶ Uchwała KCZZ w spr. aprowizacji, 21-22.4.45, Sprawozdanie KCZZ... op. cit., pp. 121-22.

¹¹⁷ The decree came into force on 20 May. Election arrangements were governed by an order of the Ministry of Labour, 7 May. Ryszka op. cit., p. 313n.

meaning that while the management and works council ought jointly to decide questions concerning the employment and laying off of workers as well as housing, rationing and other material and social needs of the workforce, 'the director alone decides all matters relating to the economic and technical management of the concern as well as matters related to bonuses'.¹¹⁸ On 1 June Minc's Ministry issued instructions limiting the role and powers of the councils 'in the name of efficient economic management'.¹¹⁹ This move was discussed at a National Industrial Conference held on 2-3 June.¹²⁰ As Gołębiowski has commented 'in consequence of the decisions taken the works councils and labour-force were deprived of direct influence on the economic management of concerns'.¹²¹ Thus just as elections got underway and the membership of the councils was broadened, they lost their hold on the factory purse-strings.

Complementing these changes there was a further centralisation in the overall management of the economy. Individual concerns were brought more closely under central direction,¹²² and 'the emergency measures reminiscent of Soviet war communism (in 1918-21 - J.R.)' by which the economy had been run since mid-1944¹²³ began to be tempered by the first moves towards systematic planning. On 8 June Ministries received instructions to draw up plans.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Uchwała plenum KC PPR w spr. gospodarczych, 26.5.45, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., p. 147.

¹¹⁹ Ryszka op. cit., p. 313n; see also Gomułka Wywiad dla redakcji czasopisma "Trybuna Związkowca", 1.6.45, Artykuły... vol. I op. cit., pp. 288-92.

¹²⁰ Kalinowski i Landau op. cit., p. 83.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 83.

¹²² Ibid., p. 83.

¹²³ J.M. Montias Central Planning in Poland (2nd ed., Westport, Conn., 1974), p. 52.

¹²⁴ Ćwik op. cit., p. 108.

On pay, the Central Committee reaffirmed its rejection of egalitarianism in favour of linking wages to productivity and skills, with non-manual employees receiving a share of profits. Wage-rates were to be reformed throughout industry during June. Simultaneously prices were to be revised so as to increase the profitability of industry while avoiding large price rises in basic consumer goods, manufactures for agriculture and industrial raw materials. Transport and service charges were to cover costs, with reduced fares for certain groups, especially for workers.¹²⁵

Even before the Plenum steps had been taken to speed up the reprivatisation of small and middle industry under temporary state management. An Act of 6 May embodied fairly liberal terms governing the restoration of factories to their original owners and an Industry Ministry circular of 15 May was designed to accelerate this process.¹²⁶ At the Plenum itself Gomułka complained that the Party had not been able to revitalise the private sector, and called for a far bolder policy¹²⁷ and the economic resolution demanded a greater role for 'private initiative' and trade. With some reservations the Central Committee gave its backing for a large-scale expansion of "Społem", the main established co-operative organisation in Poland, grafting the ZSCh co-ops onto this network.¹²⁸ This represented a retreat, for the time being, by the communists who had hoped to set up the Union as a separate co-operative movement under their influence. It was also a concession to

¹²⁵ Uchwała plenum KC PPR w sprawach gospodarczych, 26.5.45, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., pp. 147-8.

¹²⁶ Kaliński i Landau op. cit., pp. 86-89; Ryszka op. cit., p. 315.

¹²⁷ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 424.

¹²⁸ Uchwała plenum KC PPR w sprawach gospodarczych, 26.5.45, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., pp. 147-48.

the Socialists who had strong links with "Społem". In early May Minc had severely criticised the 'old co-operative movement', arguing that its structure did not suit the new political and economic regime. This had aroused a stout defence of existing arrangements from the Socialist co-operators led by Jan Żerkowski, president of "Społem". By the time of the co-op 'parliament' in Lodz on 10 June these differences had been resolved, largely to the satisfaction of the PPS. Minc abandoned his critical stance and fell in with the decision not to create a separate new movement.¹²⁹

Within the Party leadership the question of the role of the co-operatives was bound up with deeper programmatic problems. Its economic standpoint remained ill-defined and although Minc took the lead in attempting to systematise the Party's improvisations into a model his analyses still lacked precision and were not enshrined as official positions. At the February 1945 Plenum he had devoted some attention to theoretical matters, concluding that the present stage was characterised by the struggle between 'private capitalism', which was 'unrestrained, uncontrolled unregulated, without a bridle, collar or muzzle' and 'state capitalism', which involved the handing-over by capitalism of a 'part of its profits to society', and the removal 'of its most venomous speculative fangs'.¹³⁰ In May he commented on the view that Poland was experiencing an NEP-style co-existence of private and state sectors, a view he described as 'thoroughly wrong and dangerous'. He argued that Poland was in fact 'a capitalist system undergoing a democratic revolution', and that this was different.¹³¹ Some members of the leadership were prepared to

¹²⁹ S. Jarecka-Kimlowska Z problemów spółdzielczości wiejskiej w Polsce w latach 1944-57 (Warsaw, 1977), pp. 27-29.

¹³⁰ Gomułka, Minc, Zambrowski op. cit., p. 20.

¹³¹ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 438.

consider very unorthodox solutions to the problem of defining Poland's unorthodox economic arrangements. Ochab suggested the concept of 'Co-operative Republic', but Zambrowski spoke against this.¹³²

In practice May 1945 saw the introduction of the 'three-sector model' in which state, co-operative and private sectors existed side-by-side. For the Socialists this model was looked upon as a satisfactory long-term arrangement. The communists, on the other hand, viewed it as a transitional stage suited to the initial years of economic recovery and consolidation of power, but from 1947 pressed for its transformation towards socialism, by which they meant the clear supremacy of the state sector over reduced and dependent co-operative and private elements.

The emergence of the tripartite economic model was paralleled by the institutionalisation in May and June 1945 of the multi-party system based on the PPR, Socialists and Peasants. In addition, two smaller organisations: the Democratic Party, representing the urban intelligentsia and trade, and the Party of Labour (Stronnictwo Pracy - SP) representing Catholics, were allowed to organise. The National Party, the anti-communist wing of the PPS and former AK circles were prevented from organising their own legal parties and either joined the legal 'opposition', ceased political activity or operated in conspiracy. The communists were not of course prepared to allow the other parties to threaten their hegemony within the government coalition or their control over the key instruments of state power: the army, security, police and penal system, upper levels of the administrative apparatus and the media. Nevertheless it is fair to say that from mid-1945 until early 1947 a genuinely pluralistic party system functioned in Poland in which the communists could not automatically rely on their allies to follow their lead as was to be the

¹³² Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 430, 432.

case by 1948-9.

The development of this system followed from the communists' decision in May to broaden the national front and, in particular, to relax their hold on the leadership of the Peasant Party and allow the recruitment of members of 'ROCh' on a large scale. At the Plenum the use of 'plants' to direct the policy of the SL leadership was heavily criticised and it was decided that particularly discredited figures such as Janusz (the deputy-premier) and Bertold (Minister of Agriculture), should be removed. However the use of plants 'for information purposes' was continued.¹³³ The communists seem to have hoped that even without their direct intervention the bulk of 'ROCh' could be contained within the existing legal SL and that the minority of the party committed to co-operating with the PPR would be able to keep Mikołajczyk, on his return, in check.¹³⁴ Zambrowski speaking confidentially in August said that the Party's initial tactics had been to force Mikołajczyk to join 'a single, united party, on the platform of the existing SL, in which the SL would have a majority'.¹³⁵ Confident that the pro-communist factions would continue to guide the direction of the SL and PPS, the Politburo was prepared to envisage a wide range of free debate among the coalition parties, pledging itself to the 'principle of equality, of discussion and agreement of the more important resolutions and steps... the encouragement of debate and admission of criticism, and also opposition, as long as it does not clash with the basis

¹³³ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 441.

¹³⁴ Minutes of a meeting of the secretariat of the PPR central committee (extracts), 23.6.45 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 449.

¹³⁵ Protokół z posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC odbytego w dniu 8.8.1945r., Protokoły KC (1945), op. cit., p. 132.

itself of the coalition...'.¹³⁶

The Party's attitude to the PPS also changed from May 1945. The campaign of February to prevent an uncontrolled expansion of the PPS by playing on the alleged WRN menace was discontinued and the question of merging the two parties was placed on ice in favour of an indefinite period of partnership.¹³⁷ This special partnership of the workers' parties, the 'united front', was given a new emphasis. With the way open for Mikołajczyk's return and the emergence of an independent Peasant Party, the Socialists assumed a pivotal role in the government coalition. Even before the Plenum the PPR leadership had been applying pressures on its local organisations to allow the Socialists a larger share of posts in industry and the administration and this was accompanied by policy concessions to the PPS - especially in the economic field. An example of this was the communists' volte-face on co-ops. And while the Party declared its 'aspiration' to the leading role in the national front, the Politburo made it clear to the aktyw that this role would have to be earned through political work and could not be claimed as of right.¹³⁸ The

136 Uchwała plenum KC PPR w spr. politycznych, 26.5.45, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., p. 142.

137 Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone na XXVI Kongresie PPS, 29.6.1945r., Artykuły... vol. I, op. cit., p. 303.

138 When addressing socialist audiences, the communists stressed the joint leadership of the government coalition by 'the working class' - i.e. by the PPR and PPS, *ibid.*, pp. 302-3. Internally, however, the PPR continued to call on its activists to work to achieve a leading role for the Party. Party members were instructed to work to 'ensure the leading role of the Party in the work of the state apparatus and among the Polish nation by strengthening the authority, activity and initiative of the Party and not through patronage and administrative means!'. Uchwała plenum KC PPR w sprawach politycznych, 26.5.45, PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., p. 142. Gomułka in his commentary on the resolutions of the May Plenum said that 'the PPR... has the aspiration to lead in the democratic national front and in the Polish nation'. He added that 'the tasks which the Plenum of the KC PPR has placed on all Party organisations can be carried out only by arduous, self-sacrificing, day-in-day-out work by all members of the Party.

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PPR had been forced to recognise that the Socialists could no longer be treated as a 'department' of the Party, but would have to be handled as a coalition ally which was aware of its value to the communists which steadily rose as Mikołajczyk moved into open opposition and the elections drew closer.

The May Plenum also introduced fundamental changes in the Party's attitude to its relationship with the Soviet government. The Politburo accepted the criticisms by Central Committee members of infringements of Polish sovereignty, and the unassertiveness of foreign policy hitherto. New emphasis was placed on Poland's sovereignty and independence and Party propaganda disclaimed any intention of 'sovietising' the country. In the foreign policy sphere, Gomułka, concluding the Plenum's deliberations, went so far as to state that 'the Soviet Union's change of course towards Germany should not bind us', adding that 'the problem of sovereignty was correctly put in the discussion'.¹³⁹

This determination to follow a more independent foreign policy was expressed in the occupation on 19 June by Żymierski's troops of Zaolzia, a border area over which the Polish and Czech governments were in dispute. The use of military force to press the Polish claim against the Soviet Union's close ally can hardly have pleased Moscow. Without

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Our Party will be able to take its rightful place and will become the leading party of the nation'. Gomułka O uchwałach plenum KC PPR, Maj 1945, Artykuły... Vol. I op. cit., p. 235. In contrast, at the February 1945 Plenum he had emphasised that the Party's leading role was well-established and followed from its Marxist character: 'the correctness of our Party's assessment of political events and its political far-sightedness, which follows from the Marxist character of the Party, also contributed to the fact that the PPR was from the beginning the leading party of the democratic front...' Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na rozszerzonym plenum KC PPR, 6.2.45, ibid., p. 202.

¹³⁹ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 441.

resorting to such dramatic gestures, the Russians were persuaded at the beginning of July to hand over the administration of Szczecin.¹⁴⁰ Also in August, the Poles rejected Stalin's proposal for joint-companies to exploit the Lower Silesian coalfield.¹⁴¹

The problem of reducing the Soviet presence in Poland had been considered at length during the Plenum and it had been decided to pursue with greater vigour efforts to persuade the Russians to adopt a less provocative profile. Soviet military administration was largely withdrawn in July and August.¹⁴² Polish calls for tougher measures against Red Army marauders also brought a response. By the end of the year court martials and in some cases the public execution of offenders had resulted in a significant reduction in outrages against the local population.¹⁴³ But as Gomułka candidly admitted there was no point in demanding a departure of all the Soviet forces; 'we would not have enough of our own forces to put in their place'.¹⁴⁴ The hand-over of policing operations to the Polish Army seems to have continued into 1946. As late as the first half of 1946 Soviet fatalities in clashes with the underground were still running at around 10% of those suffered by Polish pro-government forces and civilians, a proportion much the same as it had been during the first half of 1945.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ H. Rybicki Powstanie i działalność władzy ludowej na zachodnich i północnych obszarach Polski 1945-49 (Poznań 1976), p. 48. The port of Szczecin remained under Soviet administration until September 1947.

¹⁴¹ W.T. Kowalski Walka dyplomatyczna o miejsce Polski w Europie 1939-45 (Warsaw, 1966), p. 753; H. Bartoszewicz Polsko-radzieckie stosunki gospodarcze 2 pola walki 1977 nr. 1 (77), p. 281.

¹⁴² Rybicki op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁴³ Sprawozdanie KW PPR Pomorza zachodniego (Koszalin) za grudzień 1945r. i pierwszą dekadę stycznia 1946r., Sprawozdania KW PPR... op. cit., p. 336.

¹⁴⁴ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op.cit., p.440

¹⁴⁵ Calculated on the basis of a sample of data from Polegli w walce... op. cit. The proportion of Red Army personnel as a percentage of the total number of government

Nonetheless, from June 1945 the army was Polonised as Russian officers seconded during the war returned home. According to Żymierski, speaking in September 1946, some 14,000 Soviet officers, including 40 generals had departed.¹⁴⁶ The British embassy in Warsaw detected a major reduction in the presence of Soviet troops in Poland at the turn of 1945/46 and the Ambassador, Cavendish-Bentinck was inclined to accept as true a statement by the Polish Government of 30 January 1946 that the number of Soviet troops had been reduced to 250-300,000.¹⁴⁷

Finally, the May Plenum heralded the transformation of the Provisional Government into the Provisional Government of National Unity following agreement at talks held in Moscow between the Warsaw Poles and Mikołajczyk on 21 June. The three Allied Powers had agreed on a formula for the reconstruction of the Provisional Government months before at Yalta. The communique issued on 11 February at the close of the conference had stated that:

'A new situation has been created in Poland as a result of her complete liberation by the Red Army. This calls for the establishment of a Polish Provisional Government which can be more broadly based than was possible before the recent liberation of western Poland. The Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland should therefore be reorganised on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad.... This Polish Provisional Government of National Unity shall be pledged to the holding of free and unfettered elections as soon as possible on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot. In these elections all democratic and anti-Nazi parties shall have the right to take part and to put forward candidates'.

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supporters and officials killed was, according to this source, as follows: 1944 (Jul-Dec) 18.8%; 1945 (Jan-Jun) 10.7%; 1945 (Jul-Dec) 14.1%; 1946 (Jan-Jun) 9.3%; 1946 (Jul-Dec) 3.8%.

¹⁴⁶ E. Reale Raporty: Polska 1945-46 (Paris, 1968), pp.247-53.

¹⁴⁷ PRO FO371 56438 N5411.

Molotov, Harriman and Clark Kerr were authorised as a commission to consult members of the Provisional Government and 'other Polish democratic leaders from within Poland and abroad'.¹⁴⁸

The work of the commission proceeded slowly. The stumbling block was Mikołajczyk. The British and Americans regarded his inclusion in the reconstructed Government as essential. However, at Yalta Stalin and Molotov had stated that Mikołajczyk was unacceptable to the Warsaw Poles.¹⁴⁹ Molotov, again took this line at a meeting of the commission on 27 February.¹⁵⁰ Polonsky suggests that pressure from the Polish communists may indeed have prompted the Soviet veto on Mikołajczyk.¹⁵¹ If so, it seems likely that as in October 1944 (cf. Chapter Two, p. 99) the advice from Warsaw was that the time was not yet ripe to deal with Mikołajczyk, rather than such a deal was unacceptable in principle.

Sometime in April or May the Soviet and Polish authorities seem to have decided that it would be safe to run the risk of Mikołajczyk's return. In a letter of 7 April to Churchill, Stalin had offered to use his influence with the Warsaw Poles to make them withdraw their objections to Mikołajczyk, provided he declared his acceptance of the Yalta decisions on Poland.¹⁵² Mikołajczyk did this on 15 April.¹⁵³ However, it seems unlikely that the Poles shifted their ground before the May Plenum. None of the speakers at the Plenum referred to the possible implications of Mikołajczyk returning; indeed there was no

¹⁴⁸ Communique issued at the end of the Yalta conference (extract), 11 February 1945, Polonsky The Great Powers.. op. cit., pp. 249-50.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 242 n1, 245 n.3.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 254 n.2.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 263n.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 263.

discussion at all on the reconstruction of the Government.¹⁵⁴ It was left to Gomułka in his summing up to state that the Party aimed to form a democratic coalition and that it was in its interest to solve the problem of the Provisional Government along the lines of the Yalta decisions as soon as possible.¹⁵⁵ Ten days later, during Harry Hopkins' placatory trip to Moscow, Stalin finally agreed to the resumption of talks with Mikołajczyk.

In executing the May 'turn' it seems, therefore, unlikely that the Party was simply falling in with decisions already taken in Moscow to allow Mikołajczyk's return. The absence of discussion on reconstructing the Government indicates that this was not the Central Committee's principal concern. Moreover, all the indications are that, in contrast to October 1944, Stalin had not given a firm lead to the Politburo. The discussion at the Plenum was remarkably frank and members of the leadership openly disagreed in their interpretation of the political situation.

When Stalin was mentioned, it was to make it clear that he understood and supported the Party's wish to assert its sovereignty and independence.

The communists recognised that Mikołajczyk's return was the price they would have to pay to achieve early Western recognition of the Provisional Government. Western recognition was important both in order to secure aid for Poland's economic recovery and to ensure maximum Polish influence at the forthcoming peace conference which was to determine the extent of Poland's territorial gains in the north and west.¹⁵⁶ The discussion at the May Plenum focussed on the problem from this specifically Polish perspective and these Polish interests appear to have been

¹⁵⁴ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 440.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Polonsky Communique issued at the end of the Yalta conference (extract), 11 February 1945 The Great Powers... op. cit., p. 251.

paramount in the leadership's decision to seek an early deal on reconstructing the government.

Although international considerations clearly played a part in the May 'turn', the speeches made at the Plenum were dominated by internal concerns: the economy, the underground, relations with the allied parties and the Soviet role in Poland. The communists regarded international recognition of the Provisional Government as important but a lower priority than the question of power in Poland. Gomułka made this clear a few weeks later in Moscow when he told Mikołajczyk

'if we do not reach agreement we shall return home without you. You may be certain that in two or three months time our government will be recognised by the Western Allies.... But even if it happens that we have to wait longer - then we shall wait, but we shall never hand over power'.¹⁵⁷

It was then above all the progress of the Party's efforts to consolidate its position and broaden its mass base, which determined the extent and timing of its change of course in May. The hard line democratic national front adopted in the previous October had, in the view of the majority of the Party leadership, served its purpose of securing the Party's hold on power and was now propelling the country towards a political crisis which would find the PPR isolated and totally dependent on the Russians. It was this spectre which most concerned the May Plenum and convinced the Central Committee that a major change of tactics was required. The reorientation was not confined to a revision of policy towards the Mikołajczyk Peasants, but extended widely to take in other political groupings, security policy, industrial ownership and management, the economic model, Poland's national sovereignty and intra-Party matters. One section of the Party argued that the

¹⁵⁷ Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone na drugim plenarnym posiedzeniu przedstawicieli rządu tymczasowego i konsultantów z kraju i zagranicy, 18.6.1945r., Artykuły... Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 295-96.

modification of the line should not go so far. This included KPP veterans like Włodzimierz Zawadzki who wanted to step up the use of the Red Army and security forces against the underground, or Konopka who warned of a rightist deviation in the Party threatening its leading role.¹⁵⁸ This group was easily isolated as 'sectarian', but within the leadership Berman too expressed a minority view. Though he rejected Zawadzki's 'Trotskyism' and recognised that the Party must 'first complete the bourgeois revolution', Berman argued from Soviet experience that the Party's narrow base signified great difficulties, but not a crisis. He viewed the increase in underground activity as the result not of a revival in popular support for London, but of the work of reactionary elements and claimed that 'what we see as a danger is (in fact) the excessively slow tempo of our own activity in relation to changes taking place. We have failed to follow up our own successes'. According to Berman, sectarianism was not a reaction to the crisis, but rather an 'illness' arising from the Luxemburgist tradition of the old KPP.¹⁵⁹ The implication of this was that the existing line was basically correct and major adjustments unnecessary. But Gomułka's group and most of the ex-emigres for whom Zambrowski emerged as the main spokesman, but including Aleksander Zawadzki, Ochab, Wierbłowski, Finkielsztajn and Radkiewicz, came down decisively for a change of direction, justifying it by stressing the severity of the crisis. The position of Bierut, Minc and Szychalski is difficult, on the evidence available, to assess. Gomułka had the majority behind him in concluding that it was

'undeniable that there are certain elements of crisis. It is a crisis when the base

¹⁵⁸ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 426-27.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 433-44.

narrows.... If our base was growing sectarianism would not occur. If the SL executives could build a real SL, the SL problem would not arise.... In the reactionary camp there is a crisis, but we have not been able to narrow its base. There is a lack of confidence in the Provisional Government. We cannot fight the reaction without the Red Army. That says something about (our) base...'.¹⁶⁰

He added, in an undoubted reference to Berman's speech, that 'some people say that it took a long time for Soviet authority to be established. The comparison is incorrect. We are not establishing a Soviet system. We want to establish a democratic coalition'.¹⁶¹ In May 1945 the majority of the PPR leadership believed that the political crisis demanded the formation of such a broad based democratic coalition and that the Party's hold on the key areas of power was sufficiently secure to allow it to run the risks involved. The next nine months were to convince the PPR that those risks were still too great.

¹⁶⁰ Extracts of the minutes of the plenum of the PPR central committee, 20-21 May 1945 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., pp. 439-40.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 440.

CHAPTER FOURNATIONAL UNITY? (June 1945 - February 1946)

On 23 June Roman Zambrowski reported to the Central Committee Secretariat on the outcome of the Moscow talks with Mikołajczyk:

'The formation of the National Unity Government is a success. Its core is the Provisional Government. Five ministers out of 21 are from the London Government, which means that the (existing) government has been extended, not replaced. We have not made political concessions to London. The trial of the Sixteen (underground leaders arrested in March - J.R.) cuts off the retreat of Mikołajczyk and Stańczyk (one of the leaders of the emigre PPS - J.R.) to the London reaction'.¹

The deal with Mikołajczyk indeed appeared to be a major success for the communists. The terms of the agreement left the framework of the Provisional Government, and within it the dominant position of the PPR, intact. Moreover, the regrouping of the London camp which the communists had sought fruitlessly in 1943-44 had come about at last. They had driven a wedge between the London 'democrats' led by Mikołajczyk, and the diehards, who regarded any deal with the Lublin camp as capitulation. The results of the regrouping were evident in a general stabilisation of the political situation and a marked fall-off in underground activity after June (see Figure 1, p. 118). The consequences of Western recognition of the provisional government were soon evident also. The flow of economic aid from UNRRA (primarily that is from the USA) began in September.²

¹ Minutes of a meeting of the Secretariat of the PPR central committee (extracts) 23.6.45 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 448.

² Jezierski op. cit., p. 109.

And at Potsdam in July the Polish delegation which included Bierut, Mikołajczyk, Gomułka and Osóbka-Morawski secured de facto recognition by the Great Powers of a Polish frontier on Oder-Western Neisse line.³

However, the communists were aware that despite this success, the return of the London 'democrats' and the lower Soviet profile in Polish affairs would place the Party's hegemony within the government coalition at risk. Zambrowski pointed to the danger in his report to the Central Committee Secretariat:

'the entry of Stańczyk, Żuławski, Witos, Mikołajczyk and Kiernik into the Government and KRN represents a strengthening of anti-PPR elements, sowing distrust towards the Soviet Union. There is a danger of the London elements blocking together as well as of attempts to form a PPS-SL bloc against the PPR. The question of a fifth party arises with the invitation to Popiel (leader of the Catholic Party of Labour - J.R.).... It is essential to strengthen co-operation with the PPS and SL. The leadership group in the SL is weak and fissile, lacks wide support and will find it difficult to prevent Mikołajczyk, Kiernik and Witos returning in triumph...'⁴

The period from June 1945 to February 1946 was a testing-time when the communists sought to consolidate and make permanent the advantages they had won at the conference table in Moscow and at the same time avert the inherent dangers to them in the new political situation. The legalisation of the mainstream peasant movement and the elections, expected for the first half of 1946,⁵ cast

³ V. Mastny Russia's Road to the Cold War (New York, 1979), pp. 299-300.

⁴ Minutes of a meeting of the Secretariat of the PPR Central Committee (extracts) 23.6.45 Polonsky and Drukier op. cit., p. 449.

⁵ At Potsdam Bevin had obtained from Bierut the statement that elections would be held not later than early 1946. R. Buczek Udział delegacji polskiej w konferencji poczdamskiej w 1945 r. Zeszyty historyczne 341 (1975), p.121. contd....

a shadow of uncertainty over the communists' hold on power. As Gomułka put it, 'the elections are the last resort which the reaction wants to win and around which it concentrates all its hopes and forces'.⁶ The Party was under no illusions about the likely outcome of a contest: '... it must be expected that if the PSL (Mikołajczyk's Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe - J.R.) fought the elections independently... as well as if the democratic parties split over the elections - the PSL would have a serious chance.... We as a party must... pursue those tactics which will ensure us electoral victory'.⁷

Until February 1946 those tactics were to secure the integration of the London 'democrats', and in particular Mikołajczyk's followers in the peasant movement, into the national front, or more specifically, a single electoral bloc of the six coalition parties. Although the communists were at no stage prepared to concede their leading role in such a bloc, they continued to regard the mainstream peasant movement, in more or less its existing form, as the foremost potential partner for themselves and the PPS in the 'worker-peasant alliance' and the principal means to extend the base of the national front into the countryside. In essence, they aimed to put into practice the conception of the broad democratic national front which they had sought without success to achieve in 1943-44 and had returned to in May 1945.

However, Mikołajczyk and the overwhelming majority of

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Gomułka told the Central Committee Plenum of 10.2.46 that 'we wish to hold the elections more or less in the first half of this year'. Sytuacja polityczna a sprawa wyborów do Sejmu Ustawodawczego z referatu Sekretarza Generalnego KC PPR na plenum KC PPR dnia 10.2.1946r. z pola walki 1964 nr. 2 (26), p. 7. Mikołajczyk told the British early in 1946 that he expected 'that the election will take place at the end of June or beginning of July and that it will not be possible for the Communist Party to postpone the elections beyond that time' PRO FO371 56432 (conversation 14.1.46).

⁶ J. Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 424.

⁷ Sytuacja polityczna... op. cit., p. 9.

his party were not prepared to accept the bloc on the terms that the PPR demanded. Mikołajczyk recognised the necessity of working closely with the PPR,⁸ but he was not prepared to accept an electoral bloc which would preserve the communists' leading role in the coalition. Nor did he believe that the PPR was sufficiently strong to force him to do so. Although he had little confidence that the elections would be free and unfettered, he considered that the size and organisational strength of the peasant movement and the configuration of international forces were such, that he could capture the leadership of the government coalition from the communists and himself dictate the terms on which his party would co-govern with the PPR.

On his return to Poland following the Moscow talks, Mikołajczyk proceeded to put this strategy into effect with immediate and conspicuous success. In August his Polish Peasant Party (PSL) was legalised and within a few months had a mass membership considerably larger than that of communists and their allies taken together. The pro-communist SL almost ceased functioning as its members went over en masse to the PSL. By spring 1946 the PPR leadership, though significantly not its PPS allies, had all but abandoned hope of bringing the PSL into the national front and were convinced that urgent and aggressive measures were needed to recover the political initiative and fend off Mikołajczyk's challenge. As in October 1944, the communists decided that the question of power had to take priority over the quest for a more broadly-based national front.

'The Worker-Peasant Alliance'

The communists considered that there were only two courses open to Mikołajczyk and his followers in the new political situation which had arisen as a result of the Moscow agreement. The first was for the 'London' Peasants to assume the role of a subordinate partner to the 'Lublin'

⁸ Polonsky Averell Harriman to Acting Secretary of State Grew: Telegram Moscow 28 June 1945 The Great Powers...
op. cit., p. 277.

parties in the national front, taking their place as one arm of the 'worker-peasant alliance' under the hegemony of the workers' parties and, in particular, the PPR. On condition that they accepted the leadership of the PPR in the coalition once and for all, the communists were prepared to concede to the Peasants a greater share of influence in the government apparatus and even allow them some freedom to express loyal opposition from within the national front. In the longer term the PPR believed that, cast in such a role, the peasant movement would evolve into an important prop for the future social and economic transformation of Poland.

The only alternative for the 'London' Peasants, in the communists' view, was that of outright opposition to the 'democratic camp' in tacit alliance with the anti-communist underground. This the PPR would not tolerate. If the Peasants took up such a stance, the communists made it clear that they would use force to dismantle the movement's organisation and make it impossible for Peasant activists to operate in the open. The communists would look elsewhere for a partner in the 'worker-peasant alliance'.

In the period from mid-1945 to February 1946 the PPR sought to force Mikołajczyk to make a clear choice between these alternative courses. The communists seem to have decided from the start⁹ that the acid test of Mikołajczyk's true intentions would be the PSL's 'attitude to the question of the worker-peasant alliance and to the problem of uniting in a joint electoral bloc'.¹⁰ However, their allies in the leadership of the PPS did not accept this approach until November, when, at least formally, it was the Socialists who took the initiative of inviting the PSL to join an electoral bloc. Under strong pressure from the two workers' parties, the PSL leaders finally entered

⁹ Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 424.

¹⁰ Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na zebraniu aktywu organizacji warszawskiej PPR, 21.10.1945r. Artykuły... Vol. I op. cit., p. 392.

negotiations in February 1946.

Despite increasing tension between the communists and the Peasants as 1945 wore on and pessimism as to the possibility of winning the consent of Mikołajczyk and his supporters¹¹ to an electoral bloc, until February the preference of the PPR leadership was to keep the PSL within the national front. Gomułka made this clear at the commencement of the negotiations in a speech delivered to the Central Committee on 10 February which provides the fullest statement of the Party's view on the choice which lay before the PSL:

'... the creation of an electoral bloc is the main objective of our Party.... We are endeavouring to form a bloc of the six political parties (i.e. including the PSL - J.R.). Why do we want this and what shall we gain by it?... Above all we shall guarantee the hegemony of the political line which commenced with the policy of the KRN and later the PKWN. By forming this bloc of six we shall disappoint all the hopes of our domestic reaction for a change of government in Poland.... All those reactionary elements which are today pinning their hopes on the PSL would be, quite clearly, profoundly disappointed and would of necessity be forced to alter their attitude to the PSL. By achieving the bloc of six we could establish political stabilisation in the country.... The creation of a bloc of six is beneficial not only from the point of view of our party, but from the national point of view.... The bloc is a state imperative...'¹²

¹¹ Gomułka told the February 1946 Plenum that the opponents of the bloc were 'very numerous': 'Above all the PSL leaders themselves with Mikołajczyk in the fore do not wish to form an electoral bloc. Within the leadership of that party there is virtually nobody who is a sincere advocate of the conception of the electoral bloc.... In the grassroots too there are strong anti-bloc currents'. He added that after the first round of talks with the PSL 'we came away with the general impression that an agreement is unlikely' Sytuacja polityczna... op. cit., pp. 11-12.

¹² Ibid., pp. 10-11.

The Politburo considered that it would be worth making limited, but not insignificant political concessions to win PSL compliance:

'We must realise and say clearly that we would have to make certain concessions to the PSL in the state apparatus without however handing them hegemony.... However strengthening the PSL in the state apparatus within the bloc of six would not in fact be dangerous since the bloc of six must strengthen the leftist tendency and forces in the PSL. If the PSL joined us in the bloc it would be combated by the entire reaction.... A strengthening of the PSL in local government would also have to follow. The question of local government elections on different principles would then arise'.¹³

The Party leadership continued to see within the PSL considerable social potential as a partner in the 'worker-peasant alliance'. Although he considered that the ideology of the PSL leadership was basically 'bourgeois-liberal' in character and that 'as the party furthest to the right' it had inevitably attracted support from 'reactionary, fascist elements', and had become 'the defender of the social interests of various capitalist strata, above all kulak, business and speculating layers', Gomułka warned the Central Committee that:

'We must not close our eyes to the fact that a substantial number of people who are gathered within the PSL ought not to be there considering its character - above all poor peasant elements.... However this should be seen as a temporary phenomenon and the poor amongst the PSL rank-and-file should be looked at as a factor which should cause centrifugal tendencies to grow inside the PSL. The interests of this poorer layer are diametrically opposed to the interests of the kulaks and speculators and we must recognise that there exist real possibilities of these centrifugal tendencies increasing'.¹⁴

¹³ Sytuacja polityczna... op. cit. p. 11.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

However, if the PSL refused to enter the bloc, thus disputing the hegemony of the PPR by contesting the elections as an independent force, 'or more precisely', as the communists saw it, 'in a bloc with the reaction and the illegal organisations',¹⁵ it would no longer be combated tolerantly as a loyal opposition, but would be treated on a par with the outlawed 'reaction':

'If the PSL does not go along with the bloc of six, it places itself not just in opposition to the government, but makes its party a factor splitting the unity of the democratic front. Therefore we would conduct our struggle with the PSL primarily from the angle not of a struggle against an opposition, but with those who smash and disrupt democratic unity'.¹⁶

Gomułka had spelt out rather more explicitly what this meant in a speech he had made a few months before, when he had said that for those determined to provoke an electoral confrontation 'the Polish Workers' Party has only one reply: with opponents and enemies of democratic Poland we speak only in the language of struggle'.¹⁷

If such aggressive tactics became necessary, the bloc parties would continue to look for the support of the peasant masses which had hitherto followed Mikołajczyk. But instead of the evolutionary approach of integrating the bulk of the PSL into the government front and prodding it steadily leftwards, the PSL would be broken up. Its 'reactionary' elements would be suppressed and the rank-and-file gathered into a new mass party based on the rump of the 'Lublin SL'. As Gomułka put it:

'our main task would have to be to work for

¹⁵ Sytuacja polityczna... op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

¹⁷ Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na zebraniu aktywu organizacji warszawskiej PPR 21.10.1945r., Artykuły... Vol. I op. cit., p. 393.

a clear differentiation inside the PSL so that it will be possible to detach from it the democratic elements which are indisputably to be found within the ranks of that organisation. These democratic elements must be linked and mobilised with an electoral bloc of the four democratic parties.... The (Lublin - J.R.) Peasant Party... has great potential influence on the poor peasantry amongst the PSL rank-and-file'.¹⁸

Thus the communists were uncompromising in defending the two crucial advantages which in their view they had gained in Moscow: their hegemony in the state apparatus and the separation of Mikołajczyk and his followers from the London diehards. As late as February 1946 the Party was endeavouring to transform the Moscow deal into a deeper alliance, its aim on terms naturally, with the PSL as a whole, or at any rate its major part. Simultaneously, it indicated that any attempt by the PSL to challenge these two essential points, by forcing an electoral contest, would not be tolerated.

Mikołajczyk and the Tactics of the PSL

Until 1947 to a very large degree, Mikołajczyk dominated the tactical direction of his party. Witos, the ailing elder statesman of the movement died in October 1945 having played little more than a symbolic role in the party during the last months of his life.¹⁹ The third major figure of the interwar years active from 1945 was Władysław Kiernik, a cautious and flexible politician with none of Mikołajczyk's wartime prestige. Despite some earlier doubts, it was not until after the 1947 elections that Kiernik and the leaders of the wartime underground 'ROCh' organisation, Józef Niećko and Czesław Wycech, began openly

¹⁸ Sytuacja polityczna... op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁹ There is some controversy over Witos' stance in 1945. See J. Borkowski Kształtowanie się antymikołajczyckiej opozycji w kierownictwie PSL 1946-47 Polska Ludowa 1962/1, pp. 86-88, S. Wójcik Stanowisko... op. cit.

to dispute Mikołajczyk's leadership.

Stanisław Mikołajczyk was born in 1901, the son of a peasant who had emigrated to work in the Westphalian coalfield. Later the family returned to Poznań, where Mikołajczyk's father bought a small (6 hectares) farm near Krotoszyn. Mikołajczyk took part in the Wielkopolska Uprising in 1918/19 and the Russo-Polish War in 1920. After elementary school, he completed his education with short courses at agricultural college. He was a fairly successful farmer and in 1930 he was able to buy a 20-hectare farm near Wągrowiec.

Mikołajczyk began his political activity in 1922 when he joined Witos' 'Piast' Peasant Party. In 1927 he helped to found the youth section of 'Piast' in Wielkopolska and was its chairman from 1928-30. After 1930 he was effectively leader of the Poznań peasant movement and won prominence in the national leadership of the unified Peasant Party. He sat as deputy to the Sejm between 1930-35 and was secretary of the Sejm club and the Supreme Council of the SL. By the mid-1930s, he had emerged as a leading domestic spokesman of the section of the movement which favoured active opposition to the Sanacja regime (many of the older leaders of the party, e.g. Witos, Kiernik and Bagiński were in exile). Mikołajczyk was in effective charge of the SL during the violent confrontations which took place with the authorities between 1936-38, when mass demonstrations, a boycott of government directives, the organisation of 'self-defence' groups in the villages and, above all, peasant strikes were used to press for the restoration of representative government.

In the September Campaign, Mikołajczyk fought as a private soldier and then escaped via Hungary to France where he became chairman of the Foreign Committee of the SL and vice-chairman of the National Council (i.e. the Polish Parliament in exile). He was one of Sikorski's main allies in Paris and London and from September 1941 to July 1943 was deputy-premier and Minister of Internal Affairs in the Government-in-Exile. On Sikorski's death he became Prime

Minister.²⁰

The considerable political reputation which Mikołajczyk enjoyed when he returned to Poland in 1945 was entirely destroyed by his defeat and subsequent flight from the country in 1947. Many Western accounts of the postwar struggle for power in Poland, including his own which was published in exile in 1948, depict him as a simple, straightforward - not to say naïve - liberal democrat who made the mistake of believing that the PSL would be allowed to win the elections, or if not, that the West would intervene on his behalf at the crucial juncture.²¹

In reality, Mikołajczyk was by 1945 a seasoned politician with a wide range of experience both in government and opposition. His background was, in many ways, particularly appropriate for the political circumstances of postwar Poland. In the 1930s he had led the SL at a time when its scope for activity within the parliamentary arena was severely limited and the movement had been forced increasingly to resort to extra-parliamentary and economic opposition to the authoritarian military governments of Piłsudski and Rydz-Śmigły. Although he had no direct experience of the underground struggle against the Nazi occupation, he had played an important role in its organisation from abroad as Minister for Internal Affairs between 1941-43 and Prime Minister in 1943-44. His premiership had also given him a considerable insight into the workings of Great Power diplomacy.

This experience had taught him to be a realist. Perhaps more than any other Polish politician, he had understood that Poland's future depended not on solemn treaties and undertakings, but on the real interests of the Big Three. He also recognised that the success of his party's bid for power would not depend on its popularity alone, but

²⁰ Polski Słownik Biograficzny t.XXI/1 z.88, pp. 152-54.

²¹ S. Mikołajczyk The Pattern of Soviet Domination (London, 1948); N. Bethell op. cit., pp. 108, 122; A. Bromke Poland's Politics. Idealism vs. Reality (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p. 51.

crucially on its organisational strength and capacity to withstand the repressive measures which the communists would undoubtedly use against it. He understood that the elections would not in themselves decide the struggle for power and that the Soviet Union, not the Western Powers, would settle the issue. In his view, therefore, the key to the situation lay in demonstrating that Poland was ungovernable without the peasants and thereby convincing the Soviet Government that its interests would be best served by a Poland in which his party was allowed to play a full role.

In the longer term, Mikołajczyk did not regard the prospects as unhopeful. Two days after the Moscow agreement, Averell Harriman reported that:

'Mikołajczyk does not expect the full freedoms which he would like for Poland and the Polish people. On the other hand he is hopeful that through the strength of the Peasant Party a reasonable degree of freedom and independence can be preserved now and that in time after conditions in Europe become more stable and Russia turns her attention to her internal development controls will be relaxed and Poland will be able to gain for herself her independence of life as a nation even though he freely accepts that Poland's security and foreign policy must follow the lead of Moscow'.²²

In the international sphere Mikołajczyk had nothing but contempt for the London diehards who while 'apparently giving up nothing, had lost everything'.²³ In his view reality demanded that Poland accommodate herself to her passage into the sphere of Soviet military power. He excluded the possibility of an armed clash between East and West which might, as the diehards hoped, reverse this

²² Averell Harriman to Acting Secretary of State Grew: Telegram Moscow, 28 June 1945, Polonsky The Great Powers... op. cit., pp. 276-77.

²³ S. Mikołajczyk Na drodze czynnej i konstruktywnej polityki Jutro Polski 27.5.45.

development.²⁴ Rather he expected the alliance against Hitler to continue in the postwar world, with both Poland and the Soviet Union relying heavily on Western aid for years to come in order to reconstruct their ruined economies. This economic constraint on Stalin and the Polish communists would allow a compromise solution to the Polish question: Poland would ally itself closely to the Soviet Union in foreign policy and internally anti-Soviet groups would be excluded from political power, but the constitutional and economic order would be modelled on the Western pattern. The Peasants, as the largest party, would lead a representative coalition government which would include the communists. The aim of the PSL leaders was to achieve the kind of relationship with the USSR which was taking shape in Finland.²⁵

His acceptance by the Russians was crucial to Mikołajczyk's strategy. He aimed at nothing less than supplanting the communists in their role as the main beneficiary of Soviet confidence and as protector of Soviet interests in Poland. In a speech delivered shortly after his return, he explained the kind of alliance he was seeking:

'... The need for a Polish-Soviet alliance is understood by the peasants.... What in essence does the Polish-Soviet alliance rest upon? On mutual respect for the sovereignty and socio-economic systems existing in these states and on mutual non-interference in internal affairs.... At the highest levels we have never met with the denial of one of these basic points... on the contrary, we have always met with complete good will.... We consider that neither for Russia, nor for Poland would it be good if the question of confidence, collaboration, of sincere

²⁴ Report of a speech by Mikołajczyk in Poznań, 7.10.45. Chłopski Sztandar 21.10.45. Mikołajczyk said that there were 'trouble-makers who whisper about the possibility of a new war.... We do not want one, we must not wish for one and there will not be one'.

²⁵ J. Borkowski 'Działalność PSL w latach 1945-47' Rocznik dziejów ruchu ludowego 1960 nr. 2, p. 89.

co-operation and friendship were to rest on only one or two parties. We feel that the more we can convince our eastern neighbour that co-operation and the alliance is supported by the widest possible groups in society, the more long-lasting will be its ties. The great extent of PSL influence amongst the peasant masses will play an important and positive role in shaping the co-existence of these two states'.²⁶

This policy may have appeared naïve in the light of later events, but until mid-1946 the portents for its success seemed favourable. Official Soviet pronouncements were very moderate in tone in accordance with the stance of respect for Polish sovereignty and of disengagement from internal affairs on which the communists had since May 1945 also based their strategy. In February 1946 Stalin in a speech made in Moscow indicated that this Soviet moderation would continue,²⁷ while in Warsaw Lebediev, the Soviet ambassador, expressed his 'complete confidence in Mikołajczyk himself'.²⁸ The British advice to Mikołajczyk was to take Stalin's assurances at face value and proceed on that premise. Rumours that the Russians would not accept Mikołajczyk as premier were ascribed to PPR sources and were thought to have little foundation.²⁹ While only limited significance could be attached to speeches and rumours, the landslide victory of the Hungarian Smallholders' party in Soviet-supervised elections in November 1945, as well as the continued reduction in the size of the Soviet military presence in Poland seemed to bear out Mikołajczyk's assessment of Russian intentions. He thought that the Russians would not provide the Polish communists with the kind of support they would require to prevent the PSL winning the elections. In conversation

26 S. Mikołajczyk My a państwo Jutro Polski 28.10.45.

27 Wielka mowa Stalina Gazeta Ludowa 11.2.46.

28 PRO FO371 56434 N.2648.

29 Ibid., 56432.

with the British ambassador, Cavendish-Bentinck, in January 1946 he said he 'was certain that the Communist leaders would think out other plans to remain in power when the elections go against them...' but that it would be difficult for them 'to remain in office without the active support of the Russian Army for which purpose it will be necessary for the Soviet High Command to increase their forces in Poland; he added that these had been further reduced during the past few weeks'. In reply to Cavendish-Bentinck's enquiry whether the communists would be able to use the Polish army to retain power, Mikołajczyk said 'that if it came to a clash between the Army and the people the Polish soldiers would refuse to act'.³⁰

The role of the Western powers in Mikołajczyk's thinking was less prominent than most accounts suggest. His experience as premier of the Government-in-Exile had taught him better than anyone that Britain and the United States were determined not to become embroiled in a confrontation with the Soviet Union over Poland. His private contacts with Western diplomatic circles confirmed the limited scope of their support but this did not deter him.³¹ The value of his connections with the West was twofold. First, he hoped that Anglo-American diplomatic, and more important, economic, pressure on the communists and the Soviets would act as a constraint and check the use of overt repressive measures against his party. Secondly, his popular image as a statesman with the solid backing of the Western powers

30 PRO FO371 56432.

31 In February 1946 Mikołajczyk sent his envoy, W. Zaremba, to London, to sound out the Foreign Office view on the elections and the extent to which Great Britain was prepared to support the PSL's opposition to a single list. Warner, the British official with whom Zaremba spoke affirmed British support for free elections, but was careful to avoid giving any undertakings as to the future (ibid. 56434 N.2154). British policy was in fact under review at this time. Bevin had suggested that it might be 'relying too exclusively on Mikołajczyk' and that this was encouraging him 'to take up an unduly intransigent attitude' on the elections (ibid. 56434 N.2624).

added greatly to his credibility and the credibility of the peasant opposition. The widespread popular assumption that the Western Powers were ready to intervene on Mikołajczyk's behalf gave him a major psychological advantage over the communists and his rivals in the PSL. He actively cultivated his image as a man of the West, for example making a visit to the United States in November 1945, where he saw Truman. Even the communists did not sense how shaky was the reality behind the reputation: in February Gomułka told a Party audience that 'the Anglo-Saxon states are very widely committed... in recent times we are witnessing severer forms of pressure on us... abroad great significance is attached to the elections'.³²

In the domestic sphere the lynchpin of Mikołajczyk's strategy was, as we have mentioned, the mobilisation of the peasant movement in order to demonstrate that political stabilisation and effective government depended on the peasants' continued support for and participation in the coalition. In Mikołajczyk's eyes the Moscow agreement had proved the indispensability of his party to the communists. His objective was to return to Poland and capitalise on this indispensability. In a revealing remark made in a speech delivered in Poznań in October 1945, he tried to make it clear that the hard bargain which the communists had forced on him in the Moscow negotiations on the share-out of ministries in the Provisional Government resulted not from his naivety or the communists' negotiating skill, but rather from his belief that the detailed terms of the agreement were of little importance in comparison with the underlying strength of the forces which had made the agreement:

'I know how to accommodate myself to reality without running to the law. I shall not cry if undertakings are not kept. I could recite the Moscow agreement. But if the SL which came out into the open in Lublin (i.e. the pro-communist Peasant Party - J.R.) had

³² Sytuacja polityczna... op. cit., pp. 6-7.

sufficed alone there would have been no need to extend the (regime's) political base by forming the Government of National Unity'.³³

He was confident that regardless of the communists' control of the levers of government in Warsaw, his party would be able to capture control of local government in the countryside, thereby frustrating at the grassroots any attempt at wide-scale falsification of the election results. He accepted that such attempts would take place, but believed that in the rural areas at any rate the communists would lack the resources to make these effective unless they resorted to extreme measures which would create international difficulties and destabilise the situation at home, neither of which would suit Stalin. Apart from the elections, Mikołajczyk thought that the needs of economic reconstruction and the supply of food for the towns would force the communists to make political concessions to the peasants. This economic leverage was already brought into play by autumn 1945 when the communists had to face both strikes over food shortages in the towns and problems in obtaining quotas from the peasants. The attitude of the PSL leadership in this crisis was ambivalent.³⁴ These two planks of Mikołajczyk's strategy conditioned his reaction to the communists' and Socialists' electoral proposals.

First, his aim was not to achieve a modus vivendi with the Lublin parties, but to outflank them and win Stalin's

³³ Chłopski Sztandar, 21.10.45.

³⁴ Mikołajczyk indicated his party's position on agricultural contingents in his speech in Poznań, 7.10.45: '... the peasants must deliver quotas regardless of whether it hurts them or not... I call on you to fulfil this duty. On the other hand, if someone criticises the organisation of quota-collection itself, that is not quite anti-state activity'. Ibid. According to a communist source, 'Kiernik's position at a meeting in Grodzisk virtually amounted to this: give quotas, but as they give you industrial products for the same prices' Sprawozdanie KW PPR Warsaw, 1.8-15.9.45, Sprawozdania KW PPR... op. cit., p. 298.

confidence. Until this were done, in his view, no deal made with the communists would have any substance.³⁵ His attitude to the Socialists was almost as sceptical, combining long-standing mistrust of the reliability of the PPS from pre-war and wartime days with disbelief in the authenticity and independence of the 'Lublin' Socialists.³⁶ The key consideration was the question of 'hegemony'. Mikołajczyk certainly did not share the communists' view that their hegemony in the coalition had been agreed in Moscow and he was totally opposed to an electoral deal which would institutionalise their advantage. Wójcik, the PSL secretary-general expressed the party's position in a speech to the KRN in January 1946: 'We have always endeavoured to maintain the very best possible worker-peasant co-operation... on one condition, that the political representation of our working class brothers gives up its desire for supremacy over the peasant movement'.³⁷ The strong agrarian tendency in the PSL, with which Mikołajczyk sympathised, aimed at establishing the hegemony of the peasant movement itself, with the workers' parties playing second fiddle in the coalition.³⁸ However, even the more cautious wing of the party rejected PPR hegemony and hoped for a sizeable PSL contingent in any future government and in the Sejm to act as a brake on the communists. Kiernik inclined to this view. After a conversation with him in January the British ambassador reported to London that Kiernik and a few older members of the PSL

35 In mid-1946 the First Secretary of the British Embassy asked Mikołajczyk what assurances Britain might demand of the Polish government. Mikołajczyk 'smiled sadly and replied that no assurance given by Bierut had any value, unless we took measures to ensure its implementation'. PRO FO371 56444 N.10142.

36 Interview with Franciszek Wilk (London, 2 February 1977).

37 Chłopski Sztandar, 6.1.46.

38 A. Dobieszewski i Z. Hemmerling Ruch ludowy w Wielkopolsce 1945-1949 (Warsaw, 1971), pp. 100-1.

'would be prepared to advocate consenting (to the bloc) if they could obtain terms which would break the present hegemony of the Communist Party... as they fear that despite all precautions the elections may not be free and unfettered, and that even if they are free and the PSL win, the Communist Party will not quietly abandon power... Kiernik frankly admitted as a further reason that if the PSL were victorious at the elections and formed a Government, such a Government would soon lose popularity as the Polish people are at present expecting that the change of Government will work wonders...'.³⁹

But for this group too the question of hegemony was crucial as Kiernik made plain in a speech in his constituency some months later: 'we cannot allow the PPR which is in a minority to obtain hegemony over us...'.⁴⁰

Secondly, Mikołajczyk's conviction that his party was indispensable and that the communists lacked the strength to sustain themselves in power by force, meant that he did not take the threatening undercurrent of their propaganda very seriously. He was anxious to delay as long as possible and minimise the attack on his party organisation which he expected would take place during the immediate run-up to the elections. However, he hoped to turn any increase in political tension to his own advantage by demonstrating the strength of popular backing for the PSL and the communists' inability to counter it. He correctly reasoned that a rise in the political temperature would intensify the pressure not only on the PSL but on the communists and their allies too. In fact, as the communists alleged, Mikołajczyk's agreement to participation in the talks on the electoral bloc was purely tactical. In mid-January he confided to Cavendish-Bentinck that 'his object in not refusing outright the request of the Communist and Socialist parties for a single list is to reduce the period between open refusal by his party to agree to a single list of candidates and the elections and thus to

³⁹ PRO FO371 56432. Conversation 23.1.46.

⁴⁰ Kozik op. cit., p. 214.

avoid as long as possible open hostilities with violent repressions on local leaders of his party...'.⁴¹

The Rise of the PSL

Both the communists and Mikołajczyk were thus pursuing strategies which assumed that worker-peasant co-operation should continue but collided on the issue of which side was to be the dominant partner. Mikołajczyk was determined to break the hegemony of the communists and aspired to establish his own. Until early 1946 it was the PSL which held the initiative and the communists who were on the defensive and, naturally, Mikołajczyk had no intention of abandoning tactics which seemed to be working. It was rather the strategy of the PPR which was undermined by internal developments during the latter half of 1945.

We have seen how at the international level Mikołajczyk was able to maintain his reputation as a statesman enjoying full Western confidence and support, while Stalin's intentions remained inscrutable but not discouraging for the PSL. Domestically the PSL was advancing on all fronts. By early 1946 it had captured large sections of the communists' hard-won rural base, penetrated deeply into the local administrative apparatus and generated a series of strains within the parties of the former Lublin coalition. At the same time the communists' hopes that Mikołajczyk's return would bring about an evaporation of the popular discontent which had disrupted industrial production and fuelled armed violence in the countryside during the spring were disappointed. The political climate remained unstable despite the relaxation, a combination of circumstances which caused increasing alarm within the PPR.

Mikołajczyk's first major success was within the peasant movement itself. It was tacitly assumed during the Moscow talks that 'ROCh' and the 'Lublin SL' would merge to form a single united party once the coalition government was formed and seats in the new cabinet were allocated on

⁴¹ PRO FO371 56432. Conversation 14.1.46.

this premise. The communists initially hoped to force the 'London' Peasants into a united party dominated by Lublin elements, according to the same plan which was executed more or less successfully in the case of the Socialists and the Catholic Party of Labour.⁴² Mikołajczyk's followers, who clearly had a much sounder appreciation of the situation in the movement, proceeded from the start to activate their own organisation based on the wartime and pre-war leadership which held a conference in Warsaw on 8 July and constituted itself as a provisional party executive. At this meeting the question of tactics towards the existing SL was discussed. A couple of days previously the strength of support for Mikołajczyk within the 'Lublin SL' had been clearly demonstrated when its Poznań organisation (with the approval of the national executive) had elected Mikołajczyk as its president. This confirmed the confidence of the 'ROCh' leaders that in Kiernik's words, 'the liquidation of the hitherto fictional SL is inevitable'.⁴³

The pro-communist element in the leadership of the SL which was led by Władysław Kowalski had been thrown off balance by the strength of pro-Mikołajczyk feeling amongst the rank-and-file as well as many of the provincial activists. The so-called 'centrists' in the party led by Stanisław Bańczyk and Bolesław Ścibiorek seized the opportunity to force Kowalski's resignation as party vice-president, reinstate several suspended critics of the leadership and open talks with Mikołajczyk.⁴⁴ Mikołajczyk

42 Zambrowski defined the tactics of the PPR at a meeting of the Party Secretariat in August 1945: 'In the first phase our tactics rested on playing on the case for unity and giving the support of the democratic camp to the existing Peasant Party on forcing Mikołajczyk to form one united party on the platform of the existing SL in which the SL would have the majority'. Protokół z posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC odbytego w dniu 8.8.1945r., Protokoły KC (1945) op. cit., p. 132.

43 Borkowski Działalność... op. cit., pp. 79-80; J. Borkowski O powstaniu PSL i ukształtowaniu się jego naczelných władz Polska Ludowa 1964 nr. 3, p. 62.

44 Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., pp. 117-18; J. Borkowski Rola i działalność Mikołajczyckiego PSL (1945-47) unpub. doctoral thesis (1958), Ch. 2.

responded by offering the 'Lublin SL' a one third share of seats on the national executive. The 'centrists', at first held out for more, but a month later put forward a compromise on Mikołajczyk's terms.⁴⁵ By this time however the communists had changed tactics. At the end of July they and Kowalski decided that in any merger the 'Lublin' element would be submerged beneath the Mikołajczyk majority and that it would therefore be preferable to keep a separate 'left' SL in existence. On 5 August attacks on Mikołajczyk began in the SL press,⁴⁶ and on the 8th Zambrowski informed the PPR Secretariat that:

'since up to now the situation has developed towards the outnumbering of the present SL by the Mikołajczyk group... (which has) revealed itself to be alien to the political line of the democratic camp and... which basically aims at restoring the pre-1926 (the year the parliamentary system was overthrown - J.R.) system, we have recognised that there is no possibility of uniting these two parties; the existing poor and middle-peasant one, with democratic bloc, worker-peasant alliance and Soviet alliance traditions - and the middle-peasant and kulak pre-war Piast-type one. Our task is to give our peasants support... to instill them with a sense of the grandeur of their political heritage, to accentuate clearly the line of division between the Mikołajczyk group and the existing SL'.⁴⁷

The Bańczyk-Ścibiorek compromise was thrown out by the leftists on the executive and on 22 August Mikołajczyk grasped the opportunity to legalise his own independent Polish Peasant Party (PSL).⁴⁸

The troubles of the pro-communists in the SL now

45 Borkowski Działalność... op. cit., pp. 80-81.

46 Borkowski O powstaniu PSL... op. cit., pp. 64-65.

47 R. Halaba Z zagadnień współpracy politycznej PPR z radykalnym SL w okresie lipiec 1945 - styczeń 1946
Rocznik dziejów ruchu ludowego 1962 nr. 4, p. 78n.

48 Borkowski O powstaniu PSL... op. cit., p. 66.

began in earnest. One after the other the local and provincial organisations of the party declared for Mikołajczyk while within the rump of the party Bańczyk and Ścibiorek won wide support for their concept of a united, centrist Peasant Party.⁴⁹ The Socialists were particularly well disposed to the prospect of the emergence of such a party which would be a potential partner for the PPS in a Socialist-Peasant alliance of the sort which had been common in the 1920s. On the other hand, the Kowalski faction, with a narrow and shaky majority on the executive, took an uncompromising pro-communist line and its relations with the Socialists were marked by strong mutual antipathy.⁵⁰ The final split between the 'centrists' and the 'left' took place on 23 September at a meeting of the party Council. Bańczyk attempted to use his wide support on the Council to reorganise the executive, while Kowalski and his supporters attempted to oust Bańczyk and co-opt their sympathisers to the Council. Amid stormy scenes Bańczyk, who claimed the support of 32 of the 76 Council members, led his followers in a walk-out from the meeting.⁵¹ Attempts by the PPR to heal the split failed and on 25 September 20 members of the 'centrist' group were expelled by the 'left' faction.⁵²

The pro-communists' victory had been a Pyrrhic one. They had kept control of the central organisation in Warsaw

49 Bańczyk told a party meeting on 15 September: 'There is a fear that we would be outnumbered by the PSL in a merger; that we might go too far to the right... the SL can be neither right nor left, but centrist, close to the left-wing, since that is the mood of today' *ibid.*, p. 68.

50 At a meeting of the Supreme Council of the SL on 11 February 1946 sections of the leadership of the PPS were heavily criticised for an 'incorrect attitude to the SL' and for 'favouring the reaction'. Halaba *Stronnictwo...* *op. cit.*, p. 190.

51 Borkowski *Działalność...* *op. cit.*, pp. 81-82; *O powstaniu PSL...* *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.

52 Borkowski *Działalność...* *op. cit.*, p. 81.

but without difficulty Mikołajczyk had captured the bulk of the grassroots network. Małopolska (Kraków, Rzeszów, Katowice) and Wielkopolska (Poznań, Bydgoszcz) traditional bastions of the movement went over to the PSL more or less en masse, while in Warsaw, Lublin, Łódź, Kielce, Gdańsk and Wrocław provinces the PSL captured a large part of the organisation. By November it claimed 200,000 members.⁵³ The position in Warsaw province, described in a PPR report, was typical:

'All except two members of the Provincial Executive have declared for the SL. However in the counties things are much worse... The PSL are extraordinarily active... the SL behaves completely passively. Not only do they not care about their position, but one gets the impression that they want "to be taken over".... At present they are waiting ... "at ease" while the PSL meanwhile cleans up the organisation from under their noses...'⁵⁴

No reliable figures are available which would allow us to estimate the extent of the collapse of the 'Lublin SL' with precision. The party claimed 300,000 members in August 1945 but no further figures are available before 1947. Nevertheless, there is no reason to dispute Słabek's statement that 'at the turn of 1945/46 the SL organisation went over to the PSL virtually in its entirety'.⁵⁵ So weak was the SL in early 1946 that it was not included in the talks on the electoral bloc - to the intense chagrin of its leaders who feared that the communists had, like the Socialists, decided that in the future it would have little role to play.⁵⁶

⁵³ Borkowski Działalność... op. cit., p. 82.

⁵⁴ Sprawozdanie KW PPR Warsaw, 1.8 - 15.9.1945 Sprawozdania KW PPR... op. cit. p. 305.

⁵⁵ H. Słabek Wpływy partii wśród chłopów ziem dawnych 1944-48 Z pola walki 1974 nr. 2 (66), p. 51.

⁵⁶ At a meeting held with the leaderships of the PPR and PPS at the request of the SL on 11.2.46 Korzycki argued that 'the low-point of the crisis in the SL was after September.... If both workers' parties assist, the SL will grow and strengthen. The PSL cannot be counted on for anything'. Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., pp. 172-73.

The loss of the Bańczyk 'centrists' had been a severe setback. Amongst them were men such as Bronisław Drzewiecki and Franciszek Litwin who like Bańczyk had added some authenticity to the pro-communist SL and had been linked with it since the "Wola ludu" group was formed in early 1944. Apart from a few veterans of the pre-war KPP peasant 'fronts' (Kowalski, A. Korzycki, M. Gwiazdowicz), the main prop of the leadership were the so-called 'Kadzichłopi', a group of somewhat discredited former Sejm deputies who had been active in the 1920s on the left of the peasant movement and had later opposed Witos' leadership of the SL to the extent of lending support to the Sanacja regime in the late 1930s (J. Putek, S. Fidelus, A. Langer, S. Wrona, A. Waleron, H. Wyrzykowski). This group was naturally anathema to the mainstream movement and did little to widen the base of the party.

The Bańczyk group, following its secession, attempted during September-October to legalise itself as a third 'centrist' Peasant Party. This added to the communists' discomfort since the PPS lent vocal support to the proposal. The differences of view between the PPR and PPS over the future of the peasant movement were revealed at a joint-meeting of their leaderships on 27-28 September.

Osóbka-Morawski, speaking for the majority of the Socialist leadership, set out the case for a 'centrist' solution:

'... the PPS differs from the PPR in its assessment of the problem of the SL. The PPS stands for greater tolerance towards the Peasants than does the PPR. The Peasants do not understand the situation. With a tolerant course it would be possible to win them over. For various reasons the influence of the SL hitherto has been minimal. If Bańczyk, Drzewiecki and the others were to drop out of the SL, that influence will decrease to a minimum, damaging our camp and strengthening Mikołajczyk. An agreement between the SL and Bańczyk and Drzewiecki would be the best way out, but if that turns out not to be possible - the formation of a third party would be a lesser evil than if Bańczyk and Drzewiecki

joined Mikołajczyk'.⁵⁷

Gomułka replied for the Politburo of the PPR:

'... the PPS accuses us of pursuing the wrong policy towards the Peasants since Lublin times. Already we have explained that it was then not possible to apply a different policy from the one we adopted.... We shall agree with comrade Osóbka-Morawski and there will be no divergence between us in relation to the Peasants if as a basis for the worker-peasant alliance we choose a real and simultaneously democratic force in the countryside.... Today perhaps the PSL constitutes the greater real force, nevertheless it is not sincerely democratic. The SL is a lesser real force, but it is genuinely democratic. If we choose the real force and support it despite its anti-democratic potential that would be the wrong course and could lead to unfortunate consequences.... A third party based on Bańczyk, which the PPS would back with enthusiasm, is objectively speaking unnecessary and harmful. Logic teaches that factions struggle against one another. If that minority which left set up a party, it would conflict with the radical majority which was left. And ideologically, after all, this group inclines towards the PSL...'⁵⁸

Although the Socialists subsequently abandoned their support for Bańczyk's group, which in November joined the PSL, the PPS leaders had little confidence in the ability of the pro-communist SL to rally support to the national front from the mainstream of the peasant movement. The communique at the end of the September meeting indicated clearly that the Socialists looked beyond the SL for allies: '... the PPS whole-heartedly supports the left SL and all Peasants who unreservedly and loyally work towards the political aims of the Government of National Unity'.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., pp. 130-31.

⁵⁸ Halaba Z zagadnień... op. cit., pp. 79-80.

⁵⁹ Resolution of the Central Executive Committee of the PPS, 28.9.45, cited in Syzdek op. cit., p. 326.

For the present as we have seen the communists had not ruled out an alliance with the PSL and favoured an electoral agreement with Mikołajczyk. However while the communists regarded such an alliance as desirable, provided that their leading role was preserved, the Socialists regarded an agreement with the Peasants as essential and they were prepared to go further than the PPR in making concessions to achieve it. In particular, the Socialists themselves now questioned the hegemony of the PPR and saw an alliance with the Peasants as a way to strengthen their own position in the national front. Osóbka stated at the September meeting that until a short time before 'there existed the conviction that the PPR leads and has to lead in Poland. Now we must... emphasise that the working class leads'.⁶⁰ As Gomułka told the Central Committee 'the PPS would like to be as it were in the middle of the configuration of forces in Poland, with the PPR on one side and the PSL on the other'.⁶¹

Mikołajczyk's success in rallying the peasant movement was a major setback for the communists. Not only had the PSL drawn off a very large part of the organisation and rank-and-file membership of the SL, it had even won back the Bańczyk group which had broken with 'ROCh' in 1944. In the process it had brought to the surface strains between the PPR and the Socialists.

As the Peasants went over en masse to Mikołajczyk, much of the infrastructure of government in the countryside also fell under PSL control. In the villages the communists relied heavily on the SL to man local government, the administration of agriculture and mass organisations such as ZSCh and 'Wici', the rural youth movement. In local government in November 1945, the SL held 25% of seats on Provincial National Councils, 31% at district level and 50% at commune level.⁶² Switches of allegiance amongst these

⁶⁰ Sierocki Warszawska... op. cit., p. 254.

⁶¹ H. Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory 1947 (Katowice, 1963), p. 15.

⁶² Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., p. 154.

councillors allowed the PSL to make rapid inroads into local administration. In Kraków province, for example, by the end of the year the PSL had 25% of seats at both district and commune level.⁶³ This was just the start of a process which continued for most of 1946 and enabled the PSL to establish a dominant position in the lower tiers of local government across much of rural central Poland (see pages 238-241). In the villages the communists lacked the strength to halt this trend. In the Peasant strongholds of Kraków and Rzeszów, Kiernik as Minister of Public Administration was even able to install PSL members as provincial governors.⁶⁴

Wherever possible, the PPR used its influence at central government level to halt the PSL advance.⁶⁵ In local government the 'Lublin' parties continued to dominate the Provincial National Councils which nominated members to the KRN. The PSL was therefore prevented from securing more than a small minority of seats in parliament (see Table Two). Nevertheless, the communists were in a minority in the KRN also and were heavily dependent on the PPS and their other allies to keep the PSL in check.⁶⁶

63 Ćwik op. cit., pp. 309, 320.

64 Kozik op. cit., pp. 176-77; Olszewski Początki... op. cit., pp. 172, 190-91. Z. Robel, a PSL sympathiser, was Governor of Kraków province until December 1945. R. Gesing, a member of the leadership of the PSL, was Governor of Rzeszów province, 1946-47.

65 Thus, for instance, on 13 November 1945 responsibility for the administration of the new western and northern territories was transferred from Kiernik's Ministry of Public Administration to a new Ministry for the Recovered Territories under Gomułka. Subsequently the PSL was largely excluded from local government in this area.

66 For example, the PSL twice almost defeated the PPR during discussions in committee of the KRN on the Nationalisation Law in early 1946. The PSL attacked the principle of compensating former owners and won support from spokesmen of the SL, PPS and SD. Shortly afterwards the PSL backed an SL amendment to give co-ops control of the food industry. In each case the support of the Socialists enabled the PPR to vote the PSL down. See Słabek Ogólne aspekty... op. cit., pp. 52-55.

Table Two Party Representation on the KRN 1945-46

	August 1945 ⁶⁷	December 1946 ⁶⁸
PPR	100	139
PPS	77	112
SL	56	60
PSL	3	55
PSL 'Nowe Wyzwolenie'	-	2
SD	16	38
SP	-	8
Non-party/others	31	30
Total	283	444

The communists' loss of influence in the rural bureaucracy was accompanied by a general contraction of their base of support in the countryside. Apart from the defection to Mikołajczyk of most of the peasant movement the Party itself lost members during the summer. In August 1945 it had 61,000 peasant members but by September this figure had fallen to 53,800. Although it had climbed back to 66,000 by December,⁶⁹ recruitment in rural areas was markedly slower than in the towns. The proportion of peasant members in the PPR in the spring had been 37%; by December 1945 it had fallen to 28%.⁷⁰ The continuing activity of the armed anti-communist underground was blamed for this.⁷¹ It seems more likely that the real reason was that in many country areas the Party's organisation was too weak to withstand the emergence of the PSL as the dominant

67 Syzdek op. cit., pp. 249-50.

68 PPR. Rezolucje, odezwy, instrukcje i okólniki komitetu centralnego i.1946 - i.1947 (Warsaw, 1961), p. 214.

69 Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., p. 290.

70 Ibid., pp. 287, 290.

71 Ibid., pp. 118-23.

force in the villages. Zambrowski indicated the Party's concern over this problem and in particular the Party's lack of good peasant cadres at the First Congress of the PPR in December 1945:

'... provincial and district committees treat our Party's 60,000 members in the countryside as second-class members of the Party. The needs of rural cells are worst served, they meet least often, they are least looked after. The abundant, committed and authoritative aktyw which came forward in the ranks of the PPR during the implementation of land reform has for the most part been squandered and incorrectly spread around the state administration, behind desks and so on.... We must achieve ... a shift back to work on a mass scale in the countryside'.⁷²

The position in the Peasant Self-help Union, which with over half-a-million members was an important channel of Party influence in the countryside, was said by September to have reached a crisis. An internal Party report commented that the 'Union's members have stopped paying their subscriptions. In those districts where SL executives have been taken over by the PSL, the Peasant Self-help offices have been as well. Self-help co-operatives are vegetating without any possibility of growth' - kept down it was said by the (PPS-dominated) "Społem" co-ops and the (PSL-dominated) Land Offices.⁷³ Mikołajczyk's followers succeeded in capturing many local branches of the Union and even the provincial sections in Poznań and Gdańsk. Only concerted efforts by the PPR, including the arrest of PSL delegates, prevented the PSL securing a majority at the national Congress of the ZSch in March 1946.⁷⁴

⁷² Zambrowski O masową... op. cit., p. 40.

⁷³ Sprawozdanie KW PPR Warsaw, 1.8 - 15.9.45 Sprawozdania KW PPR... op. cit. p. 306.

⁷⁴ Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., pp. 174-76; Montaż Zjazdu Samopomocy Jutro Polski 14,21,28.4.46. Zambrowski had told the First Congress of the PPR: 'we must dam the further penetration of the PSL into the ZSch', Zambrowski O masową... op. cit., p. 41.

The PPR was powerless to prevent 'Wici', the 400,000-strong peasant youth movement from falling into PSL hands. Its congress in December 1945 has been described as 'a huge pro-PSL demonstration' and the president and his deputy (J. Dusza and M. Jagła) were both members of the PSL Supreme Council.⁷⁵ A few days before the PSL had captured control of the Polish Teachers' Union at its first postwar congress. Of 1,500 delegates it seems that only about 30 were communists.⁷⁶ The paucity of PPR influence within the teaching profession had been a cause of leadership concern for some time. In September 1945 the Party launched a campaign to expand its following in the schools,⁷⁷ but a few months later Zambrowski lamented over the 'pathological opposition towards our democratic system of a large part of the teaching profession'.⁷⁸ A number of factors limited the appeal of the PPR amongst teachers, including the general anti-communism of the intelligentsia and their depressed material conditions. Moreover the Peasants had great influence within the profession. The SL 'ROCh' had largely organised the underground schools system during the war and one of the leading wartime educational activists, Czesław Wycech, a prominent member of the PSL, was from 1945-47 Minister of Education.

To sum up, the legalisation of the mainstream peasant movement in mid-1945 did not so much extend the government's base in the countryside, rather it allowed the traditional political structure of the villages to re-surface. In the spring, despite their numerical weakness, the communists had held the levers of power in their hands by monopolising local government and the ZSch, excluding their opponents from the 'Lublin SL' and 'Wici' and employing the UB

75 Jarecka-Kimlowska ZMW "Wici"... op. cit., pp. 109-10.

76 J. Jakubowski Polityka PPR i PPS wobec ZNP 1944-48 z pola walki 1973 nr. 4 (64), p. 41.

77 Okólnik KC PPR w sprawie pracy partyjnej wśród nauczycieli PPR... viii 44 - xii 45 op. cit., pp. 201-3.

78 Zambrowski O masową... op. cit., pp. 40-41.

to overcome political obstacles. However, by the end of 1945 the PSL was running the villages.

The Illegal Opposition

Despite the concessions in the political apparatus the communists had made to the other coalition parties, the stabilisation of the political and economic situation, which had been one of the main objectives of the 'May turn', was only very partial. Underground activity, lawlessness, strikes and protests persisted. For the communists this continuing climate of uncertainty and their failure to generate any marked shift in popular feeling towards themselves was unexpected and troubling. For Mikołajczyk, on the other hand, the absence of stabilisation bore out his claim that only the PSL could provide Stalin with a secure and friendly Polish government.

Despite the regrouping of political forces in 1945, the underground remained one of the main obstacles to stabilisation. The formation of the Provisional Government of National Unity in effect marked the end of the underground state formed in 1939/40, which had survived, battered, until mid-1945. At a meeting in Kraków on 27 June the political leadership of the movement formally disbanded and announced this publicly on 1 July.⁷⁹

The military underground, commanded since Okulicki's arrest by Colonel Jan Rzepecki, had been reorganised in April as the Armed Forces Delegation (Delegatura Sił Zbrojnych - DSZ), in part because the 'Nie' organisation was known to the Russians, but also it seems as a more strictly military formation than its predecessor, firmly subordinated to the political leadership of the underground.⁸⁰ While setting itself the task of 'liquidating particularly harmful persons' and 'armed resistance to the nation's destruction as well as the depopulation and devastation of

⁷⁹ Uchwała Rady Jedności Narodowej z dn. 1 VII 1945 r. in T. Żenczykowski Dramatyczny rok 1945 (London, 1981), pp. 216-23.

⁸⁰ Korboński Polskie... op. cit., pp. 229-30.

the country',⁸¹ the DSZ sought to curb unco-ordinated resistance and two appeals were issued in May to this effect.⁸² The DSZ succeeded in gathering together rather more of the old AK network than had 'Nie', but a considerable part, including the National Democrats, remained outside, and its organisation was still far from complete in August 1945 when following the dissolution of the underground state it followed suit.⁸³

However, only about 44,000 people took advantage of the amnesty of August-September 1945. For the most part these were members of the Peasant Battalions. Old loyalties and mistrust of the authorities dissuaded most of the AK/DSZ and nationalists from revealing themselves.⁸⁴ According to estimates of the Ministry of the Interior, which must be very approximate, some 80,000 people remained active in the underground in 1945 and about 60,000 in 1946.⁸⁵

As Figure One (p.117) shows, although the peak of anti-government violence in spring 1945 fell off sharply in June-July, it thereafter remained almost constant at a level of about 200 assassinations of officials and government supporters every month - a considerable number. In some areas, in particular most of western Poland and the urbanised regions, armed resistance was slight. But across much of central Poland it persisted on a wide scale, while in the remoter parts of the east and south of the country government forces were confined to the towns, under virtual siege.

Two main underground networks active in 1945/46. 'Freedom and Independence' (Wolność i Niezawisłość - WiN),

81 Pobóg Malinowski op. cit., pp. 882-83 fn. 274.

82 Ibid., p. 884.

83 Czapla W walce... op. cit., pp. 53-59, 64.

84 Góra Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa... op. cit., p. 161.

85 Walichnowski op. cit., p. 332. This source suggests that the figures are probably underestimates.

established in September 1945 was based on the former membership of the AK/DSZ. The National Military Union (NZW), the armed wing of the underground National Party, was formed as we have seen in November 1944, and by mid-1945 had absorbed much of what remained of the NSZ. There were also regional organisations such as the Conspiratorial Polish Army 'Lasy' (Lodz province), or that of 'Ogień' (Podhale) and 'Łupaszko' (Pomorze). These networks sustained a considerable degree of organisational coherence until late 1946.⁸⁶ In addition, the Ukrainian nationalist movement, active along the south-eastern border, was particularly well-organised and effective.⁸⁷

Apart from the full-scale insurgency by the Ukrainian nationalists, the Polish guerillas too were capable of inflicting considerable damage to the authority of the government. On 4/5 August 1945, for instance, some 250 men equipped with seven lorries, occupied Kielce, captured its key points and stormed the prison to release 376 prisoners.⁸⁸ A month later a smaller group, again transported in lorries, attacked Radom prison, allowing the escape of 292 prisoners.⁸⁹ Early in 1946 NZW 'Special Action' units

⁸⁶ On WiN see: Czapla W walce... op. cit., pp. 64-76; S. Kluz W potrzasku dziejowym WiN na szlaku AK: Rozważania i dokumentacja (London, 1978). On the nationalist underground see: Czapla W walce... op. cit., pp. 78-105; J. Pilaciński NSZ - kulisy walki podziemnej 1939-46 (London, 1976); Z.S. Siemaszko Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (London, 1982). The activity of the KWP 'Lasy' is described in Turlejska W walce... op. cit., pp. 315-65; 'Ogień' is dealt with in Turlejska Z walk... op. cit., pp. 170-237; J. Koźliński Podziemie na Pomorze 1945-47 (Gdynia, 1959) and Były żołnierz AK 5-ta Brygada Wileńska AK mjr. Łupaszki Zeszyty Historyczne 21 (1972), pp. 136-44 contains material on 'Łupaszko'.

⁸⁷ On the Ukrainian nationalist underground see: A. Szczepniak i W. Szota Droga do nikąd. Działalność OUN i jej likwidacja w Polsce (Warsaw, 1973); Y. Tys-Krokmaliuk UPA Warfare in Ukraine (Society of Veterans of Ukrainian Insurgent Army, USA, 1972).

⁸⁸ Czapla W walce... op. cit., pp. 326-27.

⁸⁹ Siemaszko Grupa Szańca... op. cit., p. 24; J. Kowal Letter to the editor Zeszyty Historyczne 22 (1972), pp. 152-53.

carried out a 'pacification' of pro-government White Russian villages in Bielsk Podlaski District which had delivered quotas on time. Forty-six inhabitants were killed.⁹⁰

Such incidents, accompanied as they were by a host of less dramatic shootings and attacks, had as we have seen a disastrous effect on Party morale and support in the countryside. It is clear from reports to the Central Committee that the security problem remained serious during the second half of 1945.⁹¹

'Security in Kalisz district is beneath criticism. Chocz commune and in part Kościelec are almost continuously under the terror of the bands' (Poznań, July-August). 'The activity of the terrorist bands has decreased significantly. There are nevertheless districts such as Ostrów Mazowiecki, Ostrołęka, Garwolin, where up to now it has not been possible to venture outside the towns. Militia posts have been withdrawn; in the communes our authority does not in reality exist.' (Warsaw, August-September). 'The wrecking on two occasions of the prisons in such strategically vital places as the towns of Kielce and Radom and their virtual occupation has undoubtedly strengthened the reaction'... 'Party work in some districts, such as Kozienice, Sandomierz and Pińczów, encounters immense difficulties... due to the marauding bands... (In Pińczów) Party activity literally exists only in conspiracy. It is impossible because of the intense terror of the bands... to conduct activity in the terrain' (Kielce, September-October). '... in Zawiercie district our Party has been unable to expand since as a result of the activity of the bands, five of our commune committees were forced to suspend activity' (Katowice, December).

The communists' lack of resources to combat the underground and the pervasiveness of the mood of uncertainty is shown by a report from Rzeszów for October-November:

⁹⁰ Majecki op. cit., pp. 147-48.

⁹¹ Sprawozdania KW PPR... op. cit., pp. 305-6, 321, 324-25, 329, 338. Pierwsze lata władzy ludowej w dokumentach PPR (1945-46) Z pola walki 1974 nr. 2 (66), p. 320.

'Since the unfortunate close of the London conference of Foreign Ministers (11.9.-2.10.45 - J.R.) we have observed a steady growth in the impact of reactionary rumours that a third world war will break out. This has caused a steady increase in anti-Soviet, anti-PPR, anti-democratic feeling as well as of the reactionary terror. In a number of districts the appearance of new terrorist bands or the expansion of old ones and their increased activity has been evident.... In some of the districts it is difficult to master the situation in view of the inadequate strength of the Militia and Security forces and the limited possibility of employing local army garrisons (lack of political training).... (There are) frequent refusals by whole units to take part in operations. Many of the officers (display) decidedly unfavourable, not to say hostile feeling.... The Party has in some districts to a large extent been forced underground'.

In many rural areas the underground was clearly capable of countering the communists' police resources. The PSL was allowed a free run, while the Party was forced into hiding.

Clandestine organisations were active in the towns too, where they mounted protests and circulated anti-government literature. Although armed resistance was much less common than in the countryside there was much unrest. Working-class protests were frequent and often it seems took an anti-Semitic turn. In August Endek elements, so it was claimed, provoked a pogrom in Kraków and attempted to do the same in nearby Rąbka, Chrzanów and Miechów.⁹² Strikes in the Lodz textile mills the following month were blamed by the communists on 'reactionary elements' and anti-Semitic overtones were once more evident.⁹³ 'Very strong anti-Semitic feeling' was reported amongst the employees of the Rzeszów aircraft factory in November.⁹⁴

⁹² Kozik op. cit., p. 118; Robotnik 15.8.45.

⁹³ Protokół z posiedzenia Komitetu Centralnego z dnia 20.9.1945 r., Protokoły KC (1945) op. cit., pp. 137-38.

⁹⁴ Sprawozdanie KW PPR w Rzeszowie za okres od 15.10. do 15.11.1945 r., Sprawozdania KW PPR... op. cit., p. 328.

Students for the most part were vociferously anti-communist and the Endeks retained some of their pre-war influence in the universities, especially in Kraków and Poznań.⁹⁵ But student rebelliousness was evident in Lodz too where in December following demonstrations some 100 students were arrested and the university closed early.⁹⁶

As we have said, the communists were determined to keep in place the wedge they had driven between Mikołajczyk and the 'reaction'. They feared that a situation might develop in which underground activity would complement Mikołajczyk's legal opposition. Following the October 1945 Plenum the communists renewed the 'class struggle' against the 'reaction'. This they hoped would complete the destruction of the underground.⁹⁷ At the same time they launched a propaganda campaign to warn Mikołajczyk against taking advantage of the situation. They did not at this stage accuse him of allying his party with the 'reaction', but rather of ambivalence:

'... the reaction would like to assign to Mikołajczyk the role of a trojan horse... This raises a basic question: what attitude does the other side take to these plans?... Today it is still too early to give a definitive reply to this question. All the same it is striking that Mikołajczyk and his group do not repudiate the reaction in a conclusive way, but maintain a discrete silence... and what is worse there are even those in the PSL who do not hide that they would willingly take the help offered to them by the other side'.⁹⁸

Mikołajczyk had in fact commented just a week before that 'peasants know how to count... there are so many of

95 Kozik op. cit., pp. 273-74.

96 PRO FO371 56432.

97 Gomułka Referat wygłoszony na zebraniu aktywu organizacji warszawskiej PPR 21.10.1945 r. Artykuły... Vol. I op. cit., p. 376.

98 Ibid., pp. 380-81.

us... that we do not need to look to any help from the reaction'.⁹⁹ But he did not accept the communists' all-embracing definition of the 'reaction'. He applied the term only to former Sanacja circles and right-wing Nationalists, traditional enemies of his party who regarded him as the betrayer of the Government-in-Exile and now looked to the armed overthrow of the coalition government or a third world war.¹⁰⁰ The fact that moderate sections of the AK and the National Party remained underground and that popular outbursts took place was in the view of the PSL the consequence of communist repression and excesses rather than mass support for the diehards.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless leaving aside the Sanacja and NSZ extremists there was indeed a great deal of affinity in terms of short-term political objectives as well as the social base of the legal and illegal oppositions. Apart from Białystok province where the Peasants were weak and the underground numerous and particularly uncompromising, the two movements both drew the bulk of their support from the same social groups in rural central and eastern Poland. Most of the rank-and-file of the underground were peasants, as were many of its officers, while others were often drawn from the rural intelligentsia, especially from among teachers.¹⁰² Despite their political differences, in most areas the PSL supporters had far more in common with their former AK colleagues than with their official allies from the PPR.

There was also much in common between the political outlook of the PSL and much of the underground. The right wing of the underground based its strategy on the assumption that armed conflict would sooner or later break out between the West and the Soviet Union and directed its

99 Chłopski Sztandar 14.10.45.

100 This seems to have been the view of some sections of the National Party at first. See Kozik op. cit., pp. 171-73.

101 S. Bańczyk Domagamy się wyborów w dniu 28 lipca (speech to X session of the KRN) Gazeta Ludowa 28.4.46.

102 Turlejska W walce... op. cit., pp. 268-70; Walichnowski op. cit., pp. 248-49.

energies to preparing for a rebellion inside Poland when this happened. The PSL was, especially at first, viewed with hostility by this element. However, as Mikołajczyk moved into opposition its general attitude shifted to one of non-aggression if not active support.¹⁰³ However, the stronger current in the underground geared its tactics closely to those of the legal opposition. WiN in particular seems to have been conceived by its founders as a kind of underground party which would provide a moderate rallying point for former members of the AK who might otherwise be drawn to the Endek extremists.¹⁰⁴ Its 'ideological guidelines' of September 1945 closely paralleled PSL thinking, apart from the demand by WiN for a renegotiation of the eastern frontier settlement. The guidelines called for the restoration of civil rights, drastic curbs on the powers of the security forces and full Polish sovereignty. WiN viewed free elections as 'the only correct way' to achieve this, and although it did not intend to contest such elections, it declared that it would 'exert every effort so that (the seats) would be found in the hands of genuine Polish democracy', and to ensure that the results were not falsified. The guidelines welcomed the programme of the Government of National Unity 'in many of its fundamental features', but criticised the distortion of the programme to serve 'the political objectives of one party'. The decision of the previous underground leadership to co-operate with the coalition government in 'open struggle for its aims' was greeted as 'sensible and courageous', and WiN considered that the legitimacy of the Government-in-Exile had ceased and called on the emigration to return home. Although the movement aimed at 'freedom and independence as conceived by Anglo-Saxon society' it recognised that 'the maintenance of good political relations and

103 Borkowski Miejsce PSL w obozie reakcji (1945-47) Z pola walki 1959 nr. 2 (6), pp. 70-72.

104 'Archiwista' Zestawienie wydarzeń dotyczących kierowania konspiracji w kraju po powstaniu warszawskim Zeszyty Historyczne 26 (1973), p. 207.

economic co-operation with the Soviet Union' was 'necessary and positive'. Armed activity was not ruled out, but WiN disassociated itself from 'the anti-democratic activity of extreme groups' and admitted that 'self-defence' had often taken 'too severe a form'.¹⁰⁵ There is evidence that the rank-and-file members of the underground regarded the emphasis on the political character of WiN sceptically and tended to see it as a straightforward anti-communist military organisation.¹⁰⁶ and changes in its command during 1946 reinforced this tendency.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the elections remained at the centre of WiN activity and the movement's raison d'être was largely removed by the defeat and collapse of the PSL in early 1947.

The fact that in Poland, alone amongst the East European satellites, the underground anti-communists continued to play a significant role through 1945-46 had obvious implications for the viability of the Party's strategy. First, it hindered the communists' efforts to escape their political isolation and gather a mass following. This was particularly so in the remoter country areas where armed attacks made it difficult for the communists to establish even the rudiments of an effective organisation. But even in the towns it was not easy for the Party to break the remnants of wartime solidarity, the prestige of the AK and the widespread popular view that Party membership was tantamount to collaboration with an occupying power. Secondly the communists' insecurity and suspicion

¹⁰⁵ Deklaracja programowa WiN z dn. 2.IX.1945 r. O Wolność Obywatela i Niezawisłość Państwa (Wytyczne ideowe) in Żenczykowski Dramatyczny rok... op. cit., pp. 229-33.

¹⁰⁶ Caban i Machocki op. cit., pp. 48-49; Turlejska W walce... op. cit., pp. 262-63.

¹⁰⁷ Following his arrest in November 1945, Col. Jan Rzepecki the first 'President' of WiN, publicly called for an end to underground armed activity. His successor Franciszek Niepokólczycki who led WiN until he in turn was arrested in late 1946 was a former follower of Piłsudski from the eastern kresy and a more conservative and military figure. See S. Lis-Kozłowski "Teodor" Zeszyty historyczne 38 (1976), pp. 180-92; Polski Słownik biograficzny t.XXIII/1, z.96.

towards potential allies was greatly intensified by the continued activity of political conspiracies and guerilla groups. They were acutely aware that their hegemony in the government was shaky and saw clearly the danger of a complete loss of control if it was relaxed. Thirdly, the activity of the underground gave teeth to the whole opposition movement and reduced the effectiveness of the communists' control of the state apparatus, the security forces, censorship and the media. Mikołajczyk could point to the long-standing conflicts between his party and the forces which composed the underground, but by fuelling the atmosphere of instability and paralysing the political machine of the PPR, the underground enhanced the viability of the Peasant opposition. Unlike the legal 'bourgeois' parties elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the PSL did not feel compelled to avoid confronting the communists. Its leadership felt that it could emerge victorious from such a showdown because the alternative would be to slide to civil war which the Russians would not allow.

The Mood in the PPR

Although Gomułka and the leadership continued to condemn 'sectarianism' within the Party and to argue for the line adopted in May 1945, the growth of the Peasant opposition and the persistence of clandestine activity prompted calls for a harder line from the aktyw. The formation of the Government of National Unity had not been popular with many activists. A report from Warsaw province for August described the mood at a series of meetings of the aktyw:

'A characteristic feature noticeable at all these meetings was the serious disquiet and disorientation aroused in the Party's ranks by the formation of the Government of National Unity, the audacious stunts of the reaction and at the same time the contraction (in the role of the PPR - J.R.). Such cries as: "We need a Dzierżyński"; "Put an end to Kerensky-ism"; "Enough talk: when do we begin to fight the reaction?", were to be heard at the meetings. The report on the political situation, the call to organise struggle with

sabotage and the reaction and to turn a blind eye to (PSL) ministerial and procuratorial decisions - brought a sigh of relief'.¹⁰⁸

In November the same tendencies were revealed at the conferences preceding the Party Congress. Kasman reported to the Secretariat of the Central Committee that:

'In general the conferences took the form of serious debates... Comrades raised the subject of the struggle against the reaction and the call for strong government. It was apparent that there was concern amongst the Party rank-and-file that the system of power of People's democracy should be safeguarded. The tendency to overcome difficulties by administrative pressure was fairly widely in evidence. At several conferences a number of speakers put forward the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat in various forms, which met with applause.... The sectarian tendencies... result in general from an inability to overcome the difficulties which we encounter in the struggle for influence amongst the masses, as well as from KPP traditions mechanically carried over to present circumstances. The sectarian mood results not from an oppositionist attitude to the Party line but rather from a failure to understand and digest it.... At numerous conferences in small-town working-class centres, which ought to be strongly linked with the countryside, the issue of the worker-peasant alliance was dealt with weakly or not at all...'¹⁰⁹

Kasman mentioned rebellions which had taken place against the Party line at conferences in Kraków and Łódź. In the former, where Włodzimierz Zawadzki still enjoyed considerable popularity, the conference had demanded a change of policy, rejecting the national front and calling for the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹¹⁰ Although Ochab doubted

¹⁰⁸ Sprawozdanie KW PPR Warsaw, 1.8. - 15.9.45, Sprawozdania KW PPR... op. cit., p. 309.

¹⁰⁹ Protokół z posiedzenia Sekretariatu Centralnego Komitetu odbytego w dniu 15.11.1945 r., Protokoły KC (1945) op. cit., p. 147.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

whether 'the general ultra-leftist tendency' would give rise to an organised left faction at the congress, he did think that it was necessary for the leadership to speak out against this trend.¹¹¹

In fact Ochab was one of those given a rough ride by the left at the congress. As one of the delegates from Lodz later reminisced, Gomułka had to answer hardline critics of the Party's moderation towards the intelligentsia who had interrupted Bienkowski's speech with such cries as 'Down with the reactionary professors!'. Gomułka also had to reply to Daniszewski and others who argued that the PPR lacked a clear conception of where it was heading and had departed too far from the traditions of its Marxist predecessors. But the sharpest attack on the leadership was led by Maria Kamińska, second secretary of the Poznań committee and a prominent figure in the KPP in the 1930s:

'In her speech she delivered a crushing condemnation of the work of the Land Offices as hotbeds of the landlords and their supporters, of the land commissioners of the Ministry of Agriculture for indolence; she criticised the State Repatriation Office for sluggishness and poor organisation of repatriation, lack of energy in combating the PSL and the reaction etc. However it was not only the content, but the form which was decisive. She spoke with such fluency, so suggestively and convincingly... that she carried the entire congress with her. Time and time again the audience responded with bursts of applause or made shouts of approval Later in Edward Ochab's summing-up it turned out that on a number of matters Kamińska had been wrong. Ochab, replying to Kamińska, argued that according to her everybody, especially those at the top, were at fault, except the Poznań committee. He pointed out that a great many of the weaknesses of the Poznań party organisation resulted from the poor work of the provincial committee: that it was necessary to go to the peasant, to the countryside, combat the reactionary elements, but not to look to

¹¹¹ Protokół z posiedzenia Sekretariatu Centralnego Komitetu odbytego w dniu 15.11.1945 r., Protokoły KC (1945)
p. 149.

Warsaw, to the security forces, to think that decrees solved everything. But he spoke less convincingly, perhaps even too monotonously, so that the conference-hall received his speech rather reservedly'.¹¹²

Unfortunately the proceedings of the February 1946 Central Committee Plenum, with the exception of parts of Gomułka's opening speech from which we have already quoted, have never been published. The resolution adopted suggests that the Plenum backed the leadership's preference for a bloc of six and a deal with the PSL but without really expecting that this would transpire.¹¹³ The conflict between the tactics of the PPR and Mikołajczyk was increasingly apparent. He had captured the peasant movement and won control of much of the rural political infrastructure. The Lublin coalition had been seriously weakened: the SL had virtually collapsed, recruitment to the PPR had slowed down and divergences in outlook between the PPR and the PPS had come to the surface. Underground activity continued on a wide scale and there was growing discontent amongst the Party aktyw. No doubt all these factors weighed on the discussion. Aleksander Zawadzki was doubtless not alone in admitting that the Party's line had yet to yield dividends:

'At present we find ourselves in a more difficult situation than at the beginning when we crossed with our army and the Red Army (into Poland). The liberation of the country pushed everything else into the background... A year has passed. People have looked us over, have got down to work. And at the same time the reaction has regenerated and begun to activate'.¹¹⁴

112 L. Kieszczyński Moja działalność w Łódzkiej Dzielnicy PPR - Górna Prawa, styczeń-czerwiec 1945 Z pola walki 1974 nr. 2 (66), pp. 296-97.

113 Uchwała plenum KC PPR w sprawie Bloku Wyborczego Stronnictwo Demokratycznych, PPR... i.46 - i.47 op. cit., pp. 33-34.

114 Gołębiowski Pierwsze lata 1945-1947 (2nd ed., Katowice, 1974), p. 327.

With such thoughts in mind, the Plenum placed the Party in readiness for a probable change of course: a move away from version of the national front which had prevailed since May 1945 and the adoption of a more aggressive policy towards the PSL.

The Church and the Catholic Camp (I)

In many ways the Polish Catholic Church, always one of the strongest in Europe, emerged from the Second World War with its prestige and position as the defender of Polish nationhood enhanced. The patriotic stance and suffering of the vast bulk of the clergy during the German occupation and the transformation of Poland from a state populated not only by Roman Catholics, but by Greek Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish and Protestant communities into a homogenous Catholic one, led in the later 1940s to a certain renaissance of the Church in Poland.¹¹⁵

For the communists the Church represented a spiritual and social force with which it was difficult to find a common language, but which nevertheless they recognised as being too deeply-rooted and resilient an institution to attack directly. Until 1949-50 when relations degenerated into open confrontation, the Party's policy towards the Church was generally correct and respectful. While in the long-term, the communists assumed, the influence of the Church would gradually wither, for the present the political neutralisation of the Church was their main goal. At the Central Committee Plenum of June 1946, the Party defined its attitude as follows:

'The Central Committee of the PPR... steadfastly stands for full religious toleration, respect for religious feelings and traditions as well as Church institutions, demanding at the same time complete respect for the laws and regulations of the authorities of the Republic as well as that religious feelings

¹¹⁵ H. Roos A History of Modern Poland (London, 1966), p. 238.

must not be made use of in political disputes'.¹¹⁶

The Government's repudiation of the Concordat in September 1945 seems to have been motivated by this same outlook that Church and State should operate in different spheres, rather than by any hardening of policy towards the Church.

At the same time Catholicism had for many years been a political as well as a social and religious force. In interwar Poland the two main Catholic political groupings, the Christian Democrats and the National Workers' Party had merged in 1937 to form the Party of Labour (SP) led by Karol Popiel. This party remained small and assumed a position of liberal opposition in the Sanacja regime. In the wartime underground its influence grew somewhat since Sikorski was closer to the SP than to any other of the four main conspiratorial parties. Other Catholics were drawn to the right, to the National Democrats and the Sanacja, while on the left the Peasants and Socialists drew much of their support from the Catholic masses despite certain anti-clerical currents amongst their activists and leaders. After the war the PPR displayed a good deal of hesitancy towards the idea of allowing the re-emergence of a Catholic political movement. Though such a movement would clearly be a gain for the national front, it would be difficult to prevent it moving to the right and forming a potentially very dangerous opposition centre.

The attempt by the communists to cultivate the neutrality of the Church and to generate support amongst Catholics for the government continued throughout the period. But by mid-1946 the relative success hitherto of this strategy began to reverse and two processes became observable: one was the narrowing of government influence amongst politically active Catholics; the other was the increasing engagement of the Church hierarchy on behalf of the opposition. Thereafter a slow but steady deterioration in

¹¹⁶ Uchwała plenum KC PPR w sprawie głosowania ludowego, 2.6.46, PPR... i.46- i.47 op. cit., p. 119.

relations between Church and state took place until by 1948 the Church itself had assumed again its traditional mantle as the protector of the nation against its rulers.

From 1944-46 the communists achieved some success in their efforts to win the constructive neutrality of the Church. Considerable attention was paid to reassuring the faithful that the Party posed no threat to religious freedom. Chaplains were attached to Polish Army units, Church lands were excluded from the Land Reform, the Catholic University in Lublin was re-activated, the communist mayor of Kraków made a courtesy visit to the Archbishop, Bierut attended Church and through Jerzy Borejsza, the communist publishing overlord, in particular, the Party sought contact with Catholic circles. One outcome of these soundings was permission for the Kraków Catholics to begin in April 1945 publication of a weekly paper, Tygodnik Powszechny. Later the same year a group of Warsaw Catholics started another weekly, Dziś i Jutro. Even London circles admitted that this campaign had yielded results. In June 1945 in a report to the Government-in-Exile, Korboński, the acting-Delegate, wrote:

'As for the situation of the clergy in Poland, we observe a flirtation by the Lublin Committee with them, including Sapieha (Archbishop of Kraków - J.R.). Priests and their property are not touched and the Committee endeavours to win the support of the clergy, which in part they have succeeded in doing'.¹¹⁷

The authorities do indeed seem to have established a modus vivendi with the Kraków Curia quite early. This was of particular value since during the wartime exile of the Primate, Cardinal Hlond - an absence which aroused some criticism - Archbishop Sapieha of Kraków effectively led the Polish Church and was its most respected figure. Sapieha and the circle of Catholic journalists and academics around him, though undoubtedly conservative in their

¹¹⁷ APUST File 52 L.dz.K 3567/45.

general outlook, took a typically Galician pragmatic attitude, rejecting either a boycott of or confrontation with the new authorities, and advocated instead a policy of involving themselves in public life and attempting to influence as much as possible the changes taking place. As one Catholic writer has put it, they 'inclined to stabilisation and some sort of engagement in what had arisen'.¹¹⁸ It was this philosophy which Tygodnik Powszechny put forward.

Following the formation of the Government of National Unity and the return of Hlond in mid-1945, the Episcopate began to take a more assertive stand against materialism and for the reconstruction of Poland on Christian principles. At their conference in Jasna Góra in October 1945 the Bishops expressed their regret at the government's repudiation of the Concordat, stressed the incompatibility of Christianity and materialism and called on Catholics to vote in the coming elections

'according to their Catholic conscience, in other words to elect the candidates of those parties which undertake to realise a social and political programme in agreement with Christ's teaching... under our modern democratic constitution... the overwhelming Catholic majority in the country has the right to be represented in the Sejm by parties suited to its religious convictions and ethical principles'.¹¹⁹

The Bishops seem to have concurred on the whole with the viewpoint of Hlond, which was more uncompromising than that of the 'Sapieha bloc'. Hlond, who became Primate in 1926, had a reputation as being on the political right. Before the war he had attracted criticism for his amenable attitude to the Sanacja regime¹²⁰ and his alleged anti-

¹¹⁸ Kozik op. cit., p. 85.

¹¹⁹ Komunikat z plenarnej konferencji Episkopatu Polski, Jasna Góra, 4.10.45, Listy pasterskie episkopatu Polski 1945-1974 (Paris, 1975), pp. 23-24.

¹²⁰ Polonsky Politics... op. cit., p. 438.

Semitism.¹²¹ After 1945 he took the view - at least in conversation with the emigre circles with whom he maintained contact - that Poland was experiencing a temporary phase which would soon be transformed by intervention from the West or the collapse of Soviet power. After discussions with Hlond in Rome late in 1946, the 'London' ambassador to the Vatican reported back to the Government-in-Exile that 'his (Hlond's - J.R.) conviction as to the temporary and provisional character of the Warsaw "government" revealed itself very clearly'.¹²² Hlond was inclined to emphasise the gulf between Christian teaching and communist materialism. In his first major address in Poznań in October 1945, he bluntly stated that despite certain points of agreement 'in fundamental matters there is such a vast difference between Christianity and materialism that it is not possible to reconcile them theoretically'.¹²³ A year later, en route to the Vatican, he spoke with a representative of the Government-in-Exile who reported Hlond's views as follows:

'... at present, just as last year, he takes the position that a temporary cease-fire is possible between the communist world and the world of western culture and Christianity but there is no possibility of compromise. Such a deep ideological conflict must sooner or later lead also to a clash in the realm of material forces...'¹²⁴

Working from these assumptions Hlond was much less inclined than the Kraków Catholics to seek a long-term modus vivendi with the new order. Not only did he studiously avoid

121 P. Lendvai Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe (London, 1971), p. 213.

122 GSHI Ambasada RP Watykan A.44.2 (1947), 2.

123 Kościół katolicki w Polsce wobec zagadnień chwili, 28.10.45, Listy pasterskie episkopatu... op. cit., p. 14.

124 GSHI Ambasada RP Paryż A.46.I (1945-46).

any official contact with government dignitaries,¹²⁵ but he was lukewarm towards the idea of a Catholic Party operating under the present political arrangements.¹²⁶

At the Moscow talks of June 1945 it had been agreed that Karol Popiel would return to Poland and, tacitly, that his Party of Labour would resume legal activity. Mikołajczyk, whose relations with Popiel were not good, broadly favoured the reactivation of the SP but did not regard this as a priority and, in Popiel's view, had not done enough for his party in Moscow.¹²⁷ The Socialists, Osóbka and Szwalbe hoped to see the SP emerge as a conservative centre party which would tend to keep the Peasants on the centre-left.¹²⁸ The PPR though was quite determined to prevent the emergence of a conservative oppositionist SP.¹²⁹ In this until spring 1946 they were relatively successful, executing the same manoeuvre which failed so dismally in the case of the PSL. This involved grafting onto the leadership of the underground (Popiel) SP a group of individuals committed to close collaboration with the PPR.

In early 1945 Gomułka had made contact with Zygmunt Felczak and Feliks Widy-Wirski, the leaders of a small, leftist splinter of the Party of Labour called the Zryw Narodowy. After talks Widy-Wirski was appointed Governor of Poznań and Felczak Deputy-Governor of Pomorze provinces.¹³⁰ Felczak, who led the Zryw group until his death in July 1946, was a genuine catch for the communists. He had been a prominent figure on the left of the National

125 PRO FO371 56443 N9185.

126 W. Bujak Historia krajowej działalności SP 1937-1950 (unpub. doctoral thesis, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, 1971), pp. 208-9.

127 K. Popiel Od Brześćcia do "Polonii" (London, 1967), p. 89.

128 Bujak op. cit., p. 212.

129 Ibid., p. 213.

130 Ibid., p. 195.

Workers' Party and then the SP in Pomorze during the 1930s and had vociferously opposed the Sanacja. During the war he had been one of the chief organisers of the underground Party of Labour and for a spell was its leader and representative in the political leadership of the wider underground movement. But in late 1942 the left lost control of the SP and Felczak split away to form Zryw.¹³¹ Widy-Wirski who before war had been active in both pro-Sanacja student circles and then in 'Popular Front' organisations was a little-known figure who was prepared to comply closely with PPR wishes.¹³² Zryw viewed Catholicism as only a very loose framework for its political ideas and seems to have have almost no contact with the Church hierarchy. Its influence was largely confined to the left-wing of the former National Workers' Party in western Poland and was in any case very limited. Felczak hoped to see the emergence of an independent SP, working in alliance with the communists and based chiefly on the Catholic workers.¹³³

Although Zryw represented only a small minority of the Party of Labour's membership, the communists succeeded in forcing the Popiel-ites to accept a fifty-fifty split on the party's national executive. Popiel's supporters had begun organising a legal party immediately following his return, but the authorities refused legalisation until a compromise had been reached with the Zryw-ites. An attempt was made to form a separate Christian Party of Labour, just as Mikołajczyk had set up the PSL independent of the 'Lublin SL', but this too was denied legalisation. In November 1945 the Popiel-ites gave way and accepted merger with Zryw. Only Popiel's casting-vote as chairman gave them control of the evenly-divided executive.

This was a favourable outcome for the communists. They had secured the establishment of a party which through

¹³¹ Głos ludu 5.7.46.

¹³² Bujak op. cit., p. 200.

¹³³ Ibid., pp. 198-99.

the Popiel-ites had good contacts with influential sections of the Church, especially the Kraków Curia, and the support of these quarters, but in which the pro-communist faction would check any opposition tendency and influence the development of the party. The Popiel majority had accepted these terms confident that they could rapidly erode the position of the Zryw group by activating the party locally and then calling a national congress to elect a new leadership which would reflect more accurately their overwhelming support amongst the rank-and-file. The communists were equally determined to prevent any disturbance of the status quo.

Quite apart from the Zryw group, the communists had some success in cultivating the active support of elements of the Catholic intelligentsia in close contact with the Church with a political background very far removed from communism. In Warsaw a group of 'radical Catholics' led by Bolesław Piasecki and dominated by his followers from the pre-war fascistic Falanga movement offered their assistance to the communists. It seems certain that Piasecki had won the support of the Soviet security forces for the initiative.¹³⁴ In a memorial presented in July 1945 this group argued for close collaboration between Catholics and Marxists around a programme of radical reform and national reconstruction.¹³⁵ In November the group was allowed to begin publication of its own journal, Dziś i Jutro and became perhaps the most committed ally of the communists and the pro-Soviet orientation in Poland.¹³⁶ The Dziś i Jutro circle had at this stage reasonably good relations with the Episcopate. Hlond even gave a donation to assist in the costs of launching the paper,¹³⁷ while

¹³⁴ For the text, see J. Wójcik Spór o postawę (Warsaw, 1969), pp. 51-52.

¹³⁵ R. Zambrowski Dziennik Krytyka no. 6 1980, p. 86.

¹³⁶ L. Blit The Eastern Pretender. The Story of Bolesław Piasecki (London, 1965); Bromke op. cit., pp. 81-85 and Ch. 11.

¹³⁷ Wójcik Spór... op. cit., p. 60.

one of the circle described Sapieha's attitude as 'fair to the end'.¹³⁸ In 1945-46 the Church seems not to have taken the hostile attitude to the 'radical Catholics' it was to assume subsequently.

A separate, even smaller, current of pro-government Catholic opinion was represented by Aleksander Bocheński, who in 1947 was elected for Kraków as one of the three 'Progressive Catholic' deputies in the Sejm, and Ksawery Pruszyński, a well-known journalist and writer. Their ideas were an elaboration of the Kraków school of positivist conservatism, which rejected the romantic tradition in Polish history and proclaimed the need for realism and the acceptance of the new political order.¹³⁹

The communists attached considerable significance to courting sympathetic Catholics; Gomułka and Bierut appear to have been directly or indirectly involved in contacting such circles and Jerzy Borejsza, the Party's publishing overlord was particularly active in this field.¹⁴⁰ Although it would be wrong to exaggerate the extent of the Catholic elements they won over, it was true nonetheless that these groups exercised an influence beyond their numbers and at the turn of 1945/46 provided the communists with a bridge to the wider Catholic political movement and to the Church itself.

¹³⁸ Kozik op. cit., p. 237.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 86; Bromke op. cit., pp. 71-74.

¹⁴⁰ Kozik op. cit., pp. 84, 86.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEMOCRATIC BLOC AND THE REFERENDUM (February to September 1946)

The period from spring to autumn 1946 was marked by increasing political polarisation and tension as the parties prepared for the coming elections. The long-awaited negotiations between the communists, Socialists and PSL on the proposal to form an electoral bloc broke down on 22 February 1946. In reply to the workers' parties' offer of 20% of the seats in the next Sejm for the PSL (as against 70% for the 'Lublin' parties), Mikołajczyk had demanded that in any bloc representatives of the countryside (i.e. the PSL and SL) should have 75% of the seats.¹ The failure of the talks was followed by the postponement of the elections, expected in the first half of the year, until the autumn and then the winter of 1946/47.² In their place, a referendum held at the end of June provided an inconclusive opening round to the coming battle.

As we have seen, in the months after the formation of the Government of National Unity, the PPR had sought to force Mikołajczyk to make a clear choice between full alignment of the PSL with the national front (and hence tacit acceptance of communist hegemony), and outright opposition 'in a bloc with the reaction and the illegal organisations'.

1 Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 431.

2 Mikołajczyk told the US ambassador at the end of February that the PPR had decided to postpone the elections for 6 to 8 months. In April, the Polish Foreign Minister told the US ambassador that September would be the earliest practical date for the elections and the prime minister informed the KRN that the elections would be held in autumn. In the first half of October Mikołajczyk told the British ambassador that the election date would be fixed when the PPR and PPS finalised their agreement and said that January 19 - the date eventually chosen - had been mentioned. PRO FO371 56434 N2654, 56437, N4475, 56438, N5700, 56447 N13136.

The outcome of the talks was seen by the PPR as final proof that Mikołajczyk had chosen the latter path. The Party concluded from this that an accommodation with the PSL in its existing form and under its existing leadership was no longer realistic and that the time had come to commence open struggle with the opposition. Preparations for the elections should ensure that the PSL was prevented from mounting an effective challenge for power.

In terms of the national front strategy, this represented a decisive turn away from the conception of a broad national front embracing the mainstream of the peasant movement which the PPR had with more or less consistency sought to achieve since 1943 and which in mid-1945 had appeared briefly to have come to fruition. The emphasis which the Party had hitherto placed on drawing the peasant movement as a whole away from the 'reaction' now gave way to propaganda which aimed to establish 'links between the PSL and the reaction'. The communists no longer looked to the PSL for partners in the 'worker-peasant alliance', but to the rump of the 'Lublin' SL and any 'democratic' elements which could be persuaded to break with the PSL 'from below'.

The crucial strategic question was how and with what resources the PPR would neutralise the PSL and manage the elections: Mikołajczyk believed that the communists would be unable to crush the PSL unless the Russians intervened directly on their behalf. However, as we have seen, such a course would have been contrary to the conception of Poland's development held by Gomułka and a significant section of the Party leadership. This aimed to establish a balance of forces within Poland which would enable the national front to defeat its opponents with its own internal resources. Those elements in the leadership which in 1944/45 had inclined to an external solution to the question of power had been silenced by the damage done to the Party by its close dependence on the Soviet forces in the period between October 1944 and May 1945. In any case, the indications were that Stalin was equally anxious to

avoid direct intervention and the costs this would entail in terms of Soviet relations with the West. Also, as we shall see, there is evidence that at this stage Stalin may not yet have been convinced that a satisfactory deal with the PSL was unattainable.

However, the internal resources at the disposal of the communists in 1946 were still very limited. In spite of the expansion of the Party and the security forces over the previous year, in many parts of the country the communists lacked sufficient reliable manpower to hold the opposition and the underground in check and administer the elections. The army was an important additional source of manpower, but in early 1946 the political allegiance of many of the troops was an unknown factor. The 'Lublin SL' and the splinter-groups detached from the PSL during 1946 were far too weak to reinforce significantly the narrow base of the national front in the countryside.

These circumstances underlined the vital importance of the Socialists within the national front. The PPS was by 1946 a mass party with considerable popular appeal among Polish society. It played a major part in the apparatus of central and local government and the administration of the economy where the communists were heavily dependent on the Socialists to ensure that key positions of power were kept in the hands of their allies. The PPR was acutely aware that the support of the PPS was essential to defeat Mikołajczyk's challenge. For its part, the left-wing leadership of the PPS was convinced that the workers' parties must remain united to prevent Mikołajczyk gaining power and to secure the continuation of the political programme of the Lublin coalition: however, it did not share the view of the PPR that a deal with the PSL was no longer realistic. Indeed, it regarded further concerted efforts to achieve an electoral agreement as essential, both in terms of the national and its own party interest. It considered that an open confrontation with the PSL after the February talks was premature and that it might be possible to avoid a clash altogether if the left parties pursued a more flexible

course.

As the PPR went onto the offensive, these differences came into the open. During the summer, the Socialists launched a wide-scale campaign to reverse the increasing polarisation in the country and restore national unity. Particular emphasis was laid on the special role which the PPS might play in any future coalition government. The communists were deeply alarmed by what they feared was an attempt by the Socialists to supplant them at the head of the national front. However, constrained by the need to preserve the united front with the PPS and possibly unsure of Soviet wishes, they did not openly oppose the campaign.

For Mikołajczyk the developments of spring and summer 1946 appeared to bear out his conviction that the communists would be unable to prevent the PSL from winning a substantial number - if not a majority - of seats at the coming elections. Despite the increase in tension and the repressive measures applied against the PSL after February, the communists' attacks did not develop into the decisive showdown which he had expected. His party was not expelled from the Government and in many areas was able to continue to operate and expand its influence without serious hindrance until late 1946. Within the PSL Mikołajczyk's leadership and policy remained virtually unquestioned while the divisions in the national front were evident for all to see. The referendum, held in the midst of the dispute between the PPR and the PPS, demonstrated the capacity of the opposition to frustrate the communists' efforts to fabricate the results and the continuing narrowness of popular support for the PPR camp. At international level, there was no sign despite increasing East-West tension of a major hardening of Soviet policy or any slackening of Western support for his cause. The Catholic Church ruled out a compromise with the communists and indicated its tacit commitment on behalf of the opposition more and more clearly.

Mikołajczyk therefore saw no reason to respond

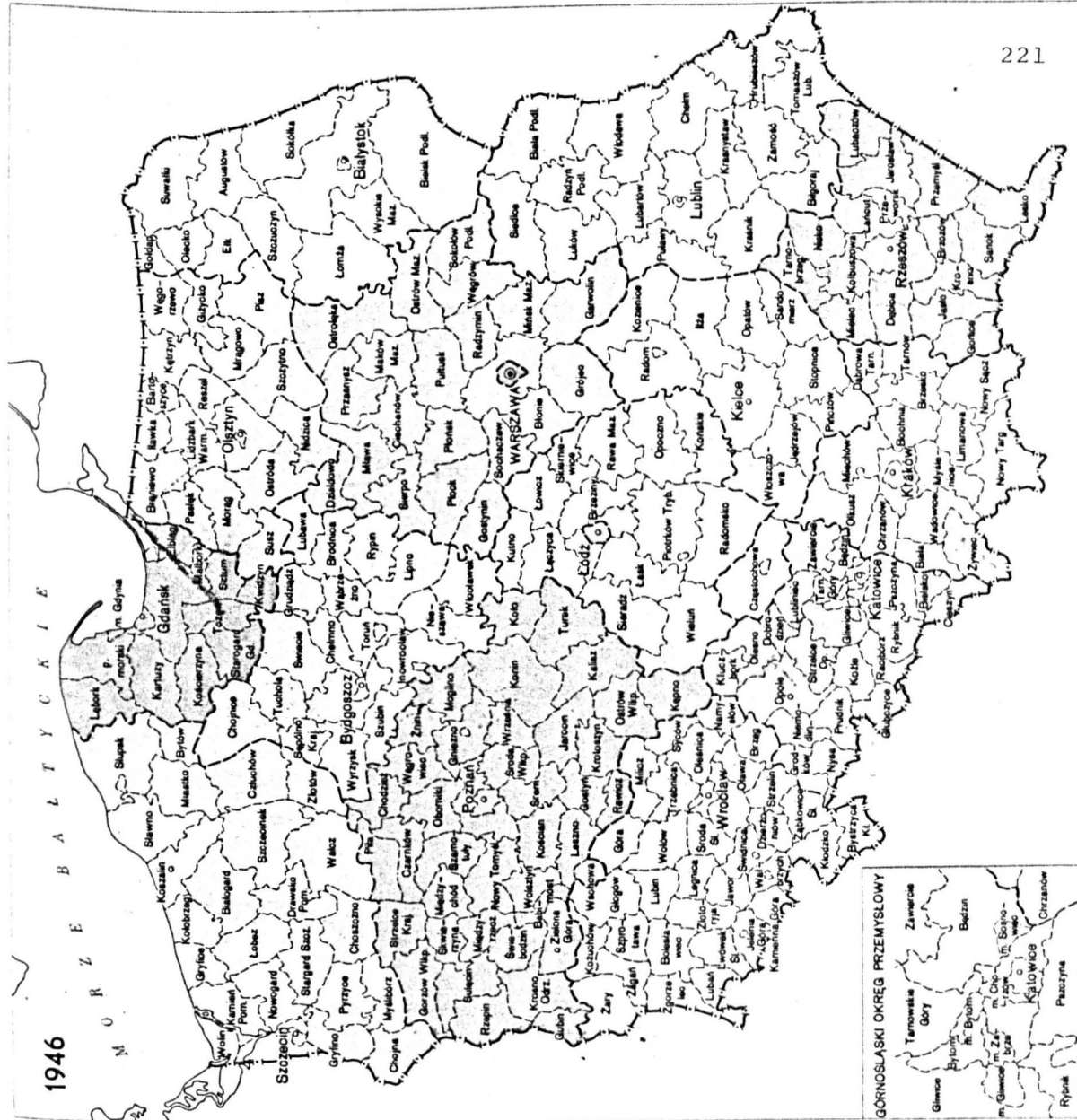
1946

M O R Z E B A L T Y C K I E

221

MAP THREE
POLAND 1946
Districts (powiaty)
and Provinces
(województwa)

GÓRNOŚLĄSKI OKRĘG PRZEMYSŁOWY



positively to the Socialists' overtures. He did not regard the PPS as a genuinely independent force and was not attracted by a compromise in which the Socialists would in effect occupy the pivotal position. In the end it was the PPS which was forced to give way. Its efforts to revive the broad national front of mid-1945 collapsed in September/October when it became apparent that neither the PPR nor the PSL were prepared to concede on the fundamental question of leadership in the future government. In September, the PPS leadership accepted the inevitability of a bloc of four parties and concentrated its energies on maximising Socialist influence on the government to be formed after the elections. The failure of the Socialists' bid to reconstruct the broad national front opened the way for the communists to begin in earnest the offensive against the PSL. Within a matter of weeks, this offensive destroyed the opposition as an effective force and secured once and for all that the communists would determine Poland's future development.

'General Storm'

As we have seen, the ground for the Party's change of course in February had been prepared at the Central Committee Plenum on the 10th. The Party leadership began to organise the offensive against the PSL immediately after the collapse of the negotiations on the bloc on 22 February.³ The campaign was launched at a mass meeting of the PPR and PPS aktyw in Warsaw on 27 February. By the beginning of March headlines in Gazeta Ludowa, the organ of the PSL, told of a 'general storm' on the party.⁴

Gomułka's speech to the Warsaw meeting on 27 February signalled the main lines of attack on the PSL which were to be developed in the following weeks. The first was to

³ The Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PPR met on 22 February to plan the campaign. See Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 432.

⁴ Gazeta Ludowa 2.3.46.

identify the PSL with the 'reaction'. According to Gomułka, by rejecting the bloc, the PSL leadership had 'chosen co-operation with the reaction'.⁵ This co-operation was to be seen both in the political support given by the underground to the PSL and cases of alleged participation by PSL members in illegal organisations.⁶ The second line of attack was to encourage internal opposition to Mikołajczyk within the PSL. Gomułka drew a clear distinction between the policy of the leadership group in the PSL and the wishes of the mass of the peasantry, including many of the rank-and-file members of the PSL. At this stage, the communists hoped that it would be possible to mount a significant anti-Mikołajczyk faction within the peasant movement.⁷ Thirdly, Gomułka stressed the importance of unifying the democratic bloc, and in particular strengthening the alliance of the PPR and the PPS, in preparation for the elections.

In terms of the Party's strategy, the new course marked a clear shift away from the 'broad national front'. Although the communists still aimed to split the peasant movement, after February they saw no real possibility of averting an open clash with the PSL if they were to keep power. They regarded Socialist hopes that a more moderate course might still win the PSL away from the 'reaction' as a dangerous illusion. In a speech delivered on May Day in Katowice, Gomułka claimed that:

'Two forces, two political blocs are at work in the nation.... The first is the democratic bloc with the working class parties at its head, the second... is the reactionary bloc, which the PSL has in reality joined... Let nobody think that

5 Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone w Warszawie na wspólnej konferencji aktywu PPR i PPS 27.2.1946 r., Artykuły... Vol. II, op. cit., p. 31.

6 Ibid., pp. 44-47.

7 Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., pp. 432, 434.

there is some third road. There is no third road'.⁸

As political tension increased and the hoped-for split in the PSL failed to materialise, the identification of the PSL as a whole with the 'reaction' became steadily more pronounced in PPR propaganda. In a speech made in Warsaw on 30 April, Gomułka accused the PSL leaders of corrupting their organisation and of 'inculcating their supporters with a fratricidal spirit' as well as being 'linked by a great many ties with the reaction'. He claimed that:

'The difference between the PSL and the illegal fascist organisations is beginning to disappear in some areas... many local PSL organisations have become the cover for hotbeds of diversionaries and bandits. Many of these organisations are deeply corroded and controlled by these elements. The organisers and executors of fratricidal murders and criminal diversionary acts stood (and doubtless stand) at the head of certain PSL organisations...'⁹

The same speech contained a clear warning that the PPR was contemplating outlawing the PSL - i.e. a reversion to the situation that had applied before mid-1945:

'The time has come to say to the PSL leadership that... in accordance with the Yalta and Potsdam conference resolutions, only democratic, anti-fascist organisations may conduct legal activity. Our system, our rule of law in reconstructed Poland is democratic. But there is no democracy in the world which would allow the forces of conservatism to indulge in acts of bloody violence, terror and anarchy. Therefore our democracy will also respond to such acts with repression

⁸ Gomułka Przemówienie na manifestacji pierwszomajowej w Katowicach, 1.5.1946 r., Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 108.

⁹ Gomułka Przemówienie na akademii pierwszomajowej w Warszawie, 30.4.1946 r., Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., pp. 91-93.

and will regard this reply as proof of the rule of law. The leaders of the PSL should pay attention to all this'.¹⁰

Although the PPR no longer regarded the broad national front as viable, Gomułka made it clear that the Party would deal with the opposition with its own internal resources. He alluded to this in his speech on 27 February with the remark that 'we are a sovereign state and we do not want foreign help with the elections, since we do not need it'.¹¹ And on 30 April he reiterated that the national front was capable of defeating its opponents: 'Polish democracy with the parties of the working class at its head will find sufficient strength to thwart the plans of the reaction'.¹²

Despite the differences between the two parties on policy and tactics, the Party regarded the united front of the PPR and the PPS as the cornerstone of its strategy in the period up to the elections. Gomułka, in particular, laid special stress on the importance of the united front, claiming that 'all the social reforms and gains by the working people achieved so far are above all the result of the united collaboration of the working class. The united front is a great achievement'. He admitted, however, that many within the PPR and PPS did not yet share this view.¹³ According to Gomułka, the alliance with the Socialists would be the key to victory over the PSL:

'We need fear no opposition as long as the working class is united, as long as our decisions, all our moves against our

10 Gomułka Przemówienie na akademii pierwszomajowej w Warszawie, 30.4.1946 r., Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., pp. 93-94.

11 Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone w Warszawie na wspólnej konferencji aktywu PPR i PPS, 27.2.1946 r., Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 48.

12 Gomułka Przemówienie na akademii pierwszomajowej w Warszawie, 30.4.1946 r., Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 94.

13 Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone w Warszawie na wspólnej konferencji aktywu PPR i PPS, 27.2.1946 r., Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 53.

opponents and also all our steps in the direction of the reconstruction and development of Poland are agreed and executed jointly. That is the basis, the foundation of our victory'.¹⁴

The practical consequences of the Party's new offensive course were felt straight away. The ZSch Congress held in Warsaw on 10-12 March, provided the occasion for the first major confrontation. As we have seen (page 193), the PSL had captured control of much of the local network of the ZSch in the second half of 1945. To prevent the PSL taking control of the national organisation - thereby eliminating the most important remaining source of communist influence over the peasants - the PPR used every means in its power to exclude PSL delegates and pack the Congress with its own supporters. During the opening session Mikołajczyk staged a walk-out at the head of some 700 of the delegates in protest at the irregularities. Later the same day the security forces made their first raid on the headquarters of the PSL in Warsaw, making 6 arrests and confiscating various documents.¹⁵

Violence against PSL members increased markedly from February. Such attacks were not of course a new development and there had been a number of notorious killings of PSL activists in 1945.¹⁶ However, the attacks became more common during spring 1946. At least 21 PSL members were murdered between February and April and at least 25 were killed in May alone.¹⁷ The PSL ascribed the attacks to

¹⁴ Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone w Warszawie na wspólnej konferencji aktywu PPR i PPS, 27.2.1946 r., Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁵ Ł. Socha Interpelacje posłów PSL Krytyka 6(1980), pp. 155-58.

¹⁶ For example, the murders of W. Kojder, a leading activist from Kraków province and member of the national executive of the PSL, in September 1945, and of B. Ścibiorek, secretary-general of 'Wici' in December.

¹⁷ F. Wilk Słownik biograficzny ofiar terroru PSL Zeszyty Historyczne 6 (1964), pp. 7-15.

the security forces, and produced many eye-witness accounts in support of these allegations.¹⁸ It seems certain that in many cases members of the UB were indeed implicated, although the evidence that there was an organised campaign of terror is thin.¹⁹ Nevertheless the PPR leadership bluntly rejected the claims of the PSL and gave strong public support to the activity of the security forces.²⁰

Arrests amongst the opposition also became commonplace. One source - referring to Silesia - notes the continual arrests of members of the PSL accused of co-operation with the underground from April onwards.²¹ In the same region, the activity of the Party of Labour, which had considerable local support, was virtually paralysed by sweeping arrests in March and April.²² Censorship of the PSL press was also tightened at this time and in May the Ministry of Public Security for the first time banned PSL branches in two districts.²³ A further seven were banned within the next month.²⁴

At the same time, there was a general activation of the security forces aimed primarily at stamping out the underground. In February the KBW was deployed in Białystok, Warsaw and Lublin provinces for its first major operation against the underground. Some 10,000 troops took part, detaining 6,000 suspects, over 300 of whom were shot after

18 Socha Interpelacje... op. cit., pp. 151-55 and Protokół przesłuchania świadka pp. 159-64.

19 Dokument MBP z 1945 r., Krytyka 6 (1980), p. 147.

20 Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone w Warszawie na wspólnej konferencji aktywu PPR i PPS, 27.2.1946 r., Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., pp. 45-47.

21 Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... op. cit., p. 49.

22 T. Potomski SP na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1937-50 (Katowice, 1969), p. 68; Bujak op. cit., pp. 246-50; Popiel op. cit., p. 169.

23 Ćwik op. cit., p. 145 (Włoszczowa and Grojec).

24 PRO FO371 56441 N7860.

summary court martial.²⁵ On 29 March Żymierski announced a nationwide offensive against the underground and a State Security Commission, paralleled by provincial committees was set up to co-ordinate the campaign. In all between 150-180,000 soldiers and militiamen were put at the disposal of the security committees, chiefly in eastern Poland.²⁶ Soon round-ups of suspects resumed on a considerable scale. In Kielce province, for example, 1,600 'suspects' were arrested in a UB-Army operation between 12-15 April.²⁷

However, despite the increasing belligerence of the communists, in spring 1946 the PPR was not yet strong enough to launch an all-out effort to crush the opposition. Its hold over the apparatus of central and local government remained weak in many areas and the organisation of the security forces as a reliable arm of the Party was far from complete.

On paper, at least, the PPR was no bigger than it had been in spring 1945. On 1 January 1946 its membership was 235,300; by June 1946 this had increased to 347,105 (the membership in April 1945 was 302,000).²⁸ Although the Party's organisation had been improved and the number of cadres had grown, these gains had been very uneven and in many rural areas where support for the PSL and the underground was greatest, there had been little or no progress. Table Three shows that the expansion of Party membership was concentrated in the Western and Northern territories and in the major cities where the PPR was able to exercise firmer control over economic administration and local

25 Czapla KBW w latach 1944-65 Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny 1965 nr. 3, p. 84; Turlejska W walce... op. cit., pp. 21-24 gives slightly different figures.

26 Ibid., pp. 26-27.

27 Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., p. 197.

28 PPR... viii 1944 - xii 1945 op. cit., p. 391; PPR ... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 212.

Table Three

Rate of Expansion of the Membership of the PPR by Region
(January to June 1946)²⁹

Province/city	PPR Membership		Index of increase
	January 1946	June 1946	(January 1946 = 100)
<u>i Old territories</u>			
Kraków province	21,196	22,571	106
Lublin province	12,155	14,379	118
Kielce province	24,295	29,194	120
Łódź province	16,515	19,969	121
Rzeszów province	5,646	6,856	121
Warsaw province	25,896	33,356	129
Total	105,703	126,325	120
<u>ii Mixed territories</u>			
Białystok province	2,581	3,579	139
Śląsk-Dąbrowa province	35,589	50,278	141
Poznań province	26,779	39,847	149
Bydgoszcz province	24,207	35,978	149
Gdańsk province	5,244	11,647	222
Total	94,400	141,329	150
<u>iii New territories</u>			
Olsztyn province	2,560	6,169	241
Wrocław province	9,965	26,363	265
Szczecin province	4,109	12,533	305
Total	16,634	45,065	271
<u>iv Cities</u>			
Łódź city	8,984	15,048	167
Warsaw city	9,729	19,348	199
Total	18,713	34,396	184
OVERALL TOTAL	235,450	347,115	147

²⁹ PPR... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 212.

government.³⁰

In terms of mass membership, the PPR fell short of the PSL and was only slightly ahead of the PPS. In January 1946 the PSL claimed 540,000 members and the PPS 194,000.³¹ Of course, these figures give only a general idea of the relative strengths of the parties; new members were often simply registered en masse and the number of active, paid-up members was considerably less than the total. However, this was true for all the parties and as we shall see in many rural areas at least, the PSL was a match for the communists in terms of its organisation as well as the size of its membership. As Table Four shows, the PSL was by far the largest political force in the provinces of central and eastern Poland - Kraków, Rzeszów, Poznań, Kielce, Warsaw, Lublin - and even in Szczecin and Olsztyn amongst the new western and northern territories. This ascendancy was overwhelming in comparison with the peasant membership of the PPR. Elsewhere, particularly in the urban areas of Warsaw, Lodz, Gdańsk, Kraków, Rzeszów and Wrocław provinces, the membership of the PPS outstripped that of the PPR (see Table Five).

Only a relatively small proportion of the total Party membership was suitable for responsible political work. The shortage of reliable, experienced and capable cadres remained acute. In December 1945, Zambrowski stated that the Central Committee's records of members holding responsible posts in the party and state apparatus and those with higher education, contained only 6,358 names.³²

30 Thus Kowalik, writing about Lower Silesia, admits that 'Party activists occupied the top positions in local government (and) in every kind of commission which had direct contact with settlers. Sometimes the allocation of houses, farms, cows or horses depended on the party membership of the settler'. A. Kowalik Z dziejów Polskiej Partii Robotniczej na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945-1947 (Wrocław, 1979) pp. 38-39.

31 Borkowski Działalność... op. cit., p. 82; Reiss op. cit., p. 317.

32 Zambrowski O masową... op. cit., p. 59. An analysis of the composition of the aktyw is given in Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., p. 296.

Table Four

Membership of the PPR, PPS and PSL by Province, first quarter of 1946³³

Province	PPR-December 1945 ^b				Date
	PPS December ^a 1945	Total	Peasants	PSL	
Białystok	860	2,581	813	6,000 ^c	ii/iii '46
Bydgoszcz	20,362	24,207	7,753	?	
Gdańsk	8,735	5,244	1,367	6,069 ^d	i '46
Katowice	22,486	35,589	3,684	35,000 ^e	i '46
Kielce	12,344	24,295	6,920	50,000 ^f	iii '46
Kraków	35,500	21,196	5,625	100,000 ^g	i '46
Łódź	10,529	16,515	5,134	?	
Łódź city	12,873	8,834	-	?	
Lublin	3,464	12,155	7,774	24,000 ^h	i '46
Olsztyn	1,766	2,560	988	8,000 ⁱ	iii '46
Poznań	13,042	26,779	8,468	70,000 ^j	mid '46
Rzeszów	8,152	5,646	2,159	70,000 ^j	i '46
Szczecin	4,000	4,109	1,600	18,000 ⁱ	ii '46
Warsaw	14,543	25,896	9,905	65,000 ^g	xi '45
Warsaw city	11,014	9,729	-	?	
Wrocław	14,700	9,965	3,664	50,000 ⁱ	vi '46
TOTAL	194,107	235,300	65,854	502,069+	

33 Sources:

a Reiss op. cit., pp. 301, 313, 317;

b Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., pp. 289-90;

c Majecki op. cit., p. 144;

d Wapiński op. cit., p. 100;

e Gołębiowski Pierwsze lata... op. cit., p. 332;

f Naumiuk PPR... op. cit., pp. 348-49;

g Borkowski Rola i działalność... op. cit., gives a figure of 170,000 members of the PSL in Małopolska (i.e. Kraków, Rzeszów and part of Katowice provinces) for January 1946. Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 173 gives an estimate of 70,000 for Rzeszów province alone for May 1946;

h Caban i Machocki op. cit., p. 100;

i Pasierb Ruch Ludowy... op. cit., p. 143;

j Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., p. 106 says that the figure of 70,000 members is mentioned in PSL and PPR sources. Paid-up membership was 20,362 in 1945 and 39,725 in 1946.

Table Five

PPR and PPS Membership in Urban Areas (turn of 1945/46)³⁴

Province/city	PPR membership in urban areas* (December 1945) ^a	PPS membership in urban areas ⁺ (December 1945/January 1946) ^b
Białystok	508	c. 400
Bydgoszcz	6,060	5,727
Gdańsk	1,794	3,978
Kielce	6,054	c.4,000
Kraków	5,813	18,260
Lublin	1,277	c.1,500
Lodz (province)	1,595	c.1,127
Lodz (city)	8,834	12,873
Olsztyn	267	250
Poznań	3,745	4,425
Rzeszów	638	c.3,000
Szczecin	337	c. 500
Śląsk-Dąbrowa	15,566	c.7,742
Warsaw (province)	1,352	-
Warsaw (city)	9,729	11,014
Wrocław	1,702	3,035
Total	65,271	c.77,831

* That is members of town committees (komitety miejskie) of the PPR.

⁺ That is members of the PPS in provincial towns (miasta wydzielone).

³⁴ Sources:

a Kołomejczyk PPR... op. cit., pp. 309-16;

b Reiss op. cit., pp. 316-17.

Although these records were not complete, it was clear that the aktyw available to the Central Committee was far from sufficient to satisfy the Party's needs. Even in critical areas, such as the training of organisers for the elections (which incidentally began only at the beginning of 1946), provincial committees of the PPR found it difficult to find appropriate people. A Central Committee circular dated February 1946 complained that despite instructions, some of the provincial committees had sent 'people entirely at random, without suitable qualifications' to the first course organised by the Party's Central School.³⁵

The PPR leadership was particularly concerned about the weakness of the Party organisation in the countryside. Exhortations to the local aktyw to extend their activity outside the country towns seem to have had little effect. A Central Committee circular 'on mass Party work in the countryside' issued on 1 April admitted that:

'the majority of Party organisations have yet to make a start on enacting the Party Congress resolution on the expansion of mass activity in the countryside. In particular the Central Committee considers that communes and villages are not adequately served by the Party aktyw and have up to now remained outside the scope of our Party's mass activity. The run-up to the elections demands from us the extension of mass activity to the countryside. Party organisations cannot therefore confine themselves to gathering peasants in country-towns, but ought to focus on a systematic campaign of mass-meetings in the communes and villages'.

This campaign was to begin immediately and be given special priority, with the 'best aktyw... regardless of position held' being mobilised to organise it.³⁶ The Party also paid special attention to the organisations of protests

³⁵ Okólnik KC PPR w sprawie II kursu agitatorów i organizatorów wyborczych, PPR... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p.45.

³⁶ Okólnik KC PPR w sprawie masowej pracy partyjnej na terenie wsi, PPR... i 1946 - i 1946 op. cit., pp. 60-61.

against Mikołajczyk and the PSL during celebrations of "Zielone Świąta" the traditional peasant holiday in May.³⁷

Efforts were also made to revive the pro-communist Peasant Party. This had been virtually moribund at local level in most areas since the formation of the PSL. In provinces where the peasant movement was traditionally strong, its membership was insignificant in comparison with that of the PSL. In Kielce in March 1946 it claimed 3,700 members (compared with 50,000 in the PSL); in Rzeszów in June 1946: 3,680 (PSL: 70,000).³⁸ Many of these members were only loosely attached to the party. In Poznań, for instance, out of 5,000 SL members in March 1946, only 656 actually held party cards.³⁹ The leadership group in the SL remained weak and divided - some elements, it seems, inclined towards an alliance with the PSL.⁴⁰ The communists apparently concluded that the relative independence they had allowed the SL leadership in running the party after May 1945 had failed. Gomułka told the June 1946 Plenum that 'in practice our approach... was to let the SL grow by itself. It has not grown. The conditions are right for it to become established as a powerful force, but we must help it...'.⁴¹

The Party's control over the upper levels of the army and security forces was secure, but allegiance of the lower ranks in a clash with the opposition was uncertain. As we have seen, Mikołajczyk was convinced that the army would refuse to act on behalf of the communists in a confrontation with the 'people'. And indeed army units did refuse

37 Okólnik KC PPR w sprawie obchodów Świąta Ludowego, 15.5.1946, PPR... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., pp. 92-96; Instrukcja KC PPR w sprawie obchodów Świąta Ludowego, 15.5.1946, ibid., pp. 98-100.

38 Naumiuk PPR... op. cit., p. 349; Olszewski Początki... op. cit., pp. 260-61.

39 Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., p. 133.

40 PRO FO371 56435 N2521, 56434 N2476.

41 Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., p. 193.

outright to take part in operations against the underground in Rzeszów province.⁴² The Militia was often unreliable too. Gomułka claimed that the anti-communist underground had succeeded in penetrating the Militia and that for a time had agents in the Supreme Command of the MO.⁴³ In Warsaw province the communists reckoned that a large part of the MO was on the side of the opposition.⁴⁴ WiN was allegedly active within the MO command in Olsztyn province.⁴⁵ A major purge of the Militia which had led to the dismissal of 20,000 officers in 1945 continued throughout 1946.⁴⁶ The Party's hold on the UB was more secure, although even here the leadership considered that it was inadequate.⁴⁷ Also, by no means all UB functionaries were PPR members. Figures for Warsaw UB in 1946 show that 63% belonged to the PPR, 4% to the ZWM, 3% to other parties and 29% were non-party.⁴⁸ Nationally, it has been estimated that at the turn of 1945/46 87.6% of UB officers and 73.3% of Militia officers belonged to the PPR.⁴⁹

As the likelihood of a showdown with the PSL grew, the PPR took urgent steps to reinforce the security forces at its disposal. In February, just as the talks on the block reached breaking-point, the government took the decision to form ORMÓ - the Militia Voluntary Reserve (Ochotnicza Rezerwa Milicji Obywatelskiej). Its function was to provide 'a fighting force, capable of combating banditry in

42 See page 198.

43 Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone w Warszawie na wspólnej konferencji aktywów PPR i PPS, 27.2.1946 r., Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 45.

44 Sprawozdanie KW PPR za okres I viii do 15 ix 1945, Sprawozdania KW PPR... op. cit., p. 304.

45 Wojnowski op. cit., p. 139.

46 Gazeta Ludowa 4.10.1946. In Gdańsk province more than half the Militia were dismissed between October 1945 and April 1946, see Wapiński op. cit., p. 118.

47 Zambrowski O masową... op. cit., p. 52.

48 Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 399.

49 W. Góra (ed.) PPR w walce o niepodległość i władzę ludu (Warsaw, 1963), p. 108.

the defence of order and democracy'. Recruits were drawn from the PPR and the PPS and 'the better elements amongst the SL and the SD'. The Party was told to accept recruits from the PSL only if they were 'democratic in outlook'.⁵⁰ In practice, the PSL played no part in ORMO which in many areas was a paramilitary extension of the PPR, and to a much lesser degree of the PPS.⁵¹ By mid-March the new organisation had 40,000 members⁵² and by the end of 1946 over 100,000. Two-thirds of these were members of the PPR or its youth movement.⁵³

However, it was to be some months before ORMO was ready for action against the underground. In the meantime, the security operations in the countryside and the increase in political tension led to a marked upsurge of violence which showed that the armed underground remained a real threat to the communists in many rural areas of the country. In some provinces the break-down in security reached crisis proportions. Kozik, writing about Kraków, comments that 'the state of security deteriorated with each successive month, despite counter-measures and the season of the year which created unfavourable conditions... the situation in the province, as other authors agree, can be defined as approximating to a state of civil war'.⁵⁴ Figure Two illustrates how the level of violence against government supporters increased in spring 1946.

As in spring 1945, the tougher line against the opposition and the underground provoked a backlash which in many areas the Party and security forces were hard-pressed to cope with.

One of the communists' main lines of attack after

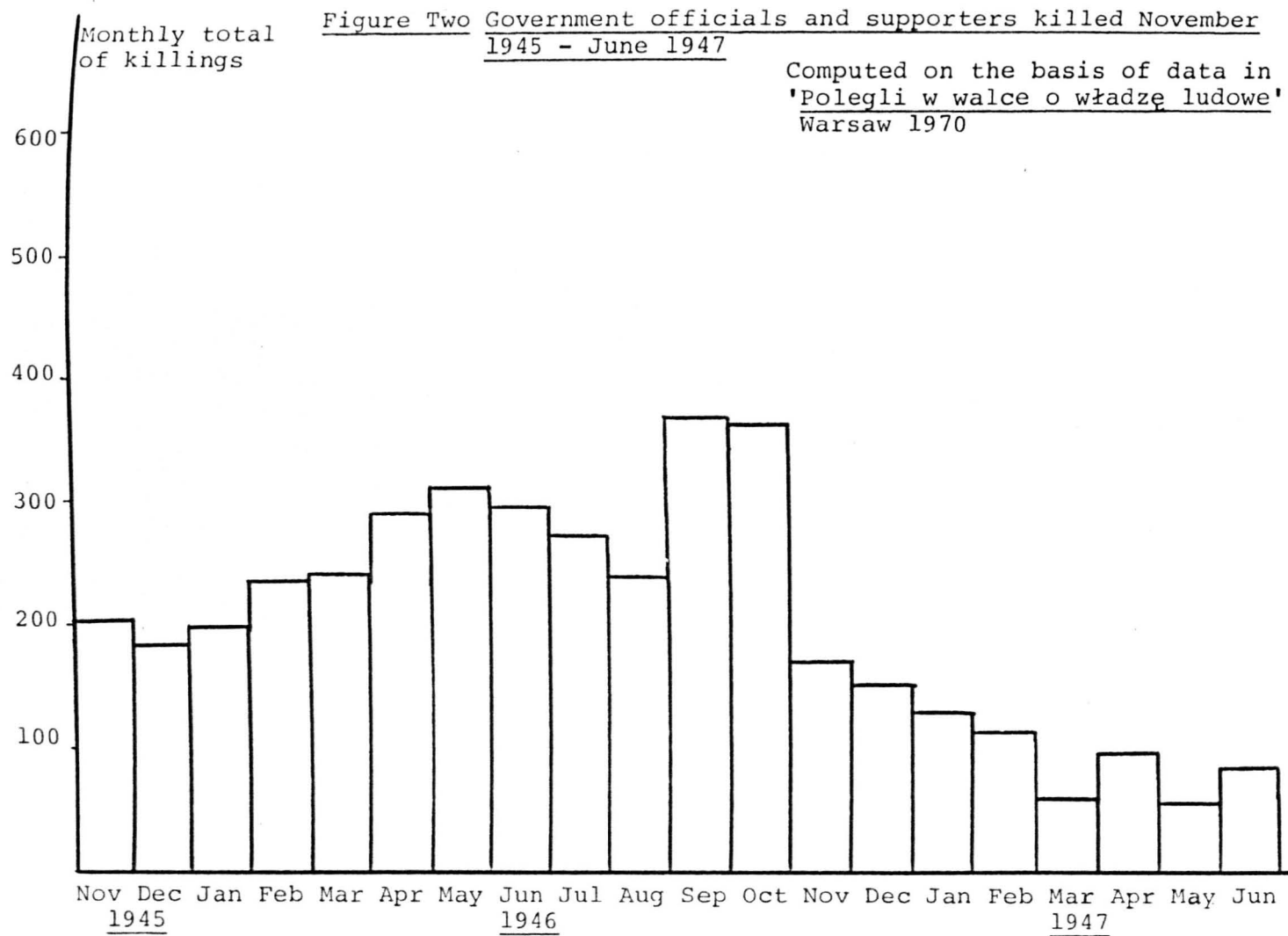
⁵⁰ Okólnik KC PPR w związku z utworzeniem ORMO, 8.3.46, PPR... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., pp. 47-49.

⁵¹ Syzdek op. cit., p. 256fn.

⁵² E. Olszewski Polska Partia Robotnicza na Lubelszczyźnie 1942-1948 (Lublin, 1979), p. 281.

⁵³ Plikas op. cit., p. 255.

⁵⁴ Kozik op. cit., p. 249.



February was the campaign to reduce the influence of the PSL in central and local government.⁵⁵ As Tables Six, Seven and Eight show, by 1946 the PSL had secured a substantial presence in both the representative and executive arms of local government, especially at the lower levels. At the upper levels of the bureaucracy and in the towns and regions, such as Silesia, where the PPR was relatively numerous, the PSL was given only token representation or excluded altogether. Its gains elsewhere reflected its own organisational strength and popular support and the inability of the PPR to man the administrative apparatus at grassroots level. The weakness of the PPR and its allies was also reflected in the extensive dependence on 'non-party' representatives on national councils. In Białystok province 90% of commune national council members at the end of 1945 were 'non-party'.⁵⁶

Table Six

PPR, PPS and PSL Membership of National Councils (August 1946)⁵⁷

National Council	PPR	PPS	PSL
Provincial	314	226	121
District	1,623	1,035	1,213
Commune	5,209	2,322	7,600

The scale of the PSL presence in the local bureaucracy was clearly a threat to the communists' capacity to administer the elections in their favour. It also underlined the importance of the alliance between the PPR and the PPS, which was the third significant force in local government.

⁵⁵ Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 432.

⁵⁶ Majecki op. cit., p. 138.

⁵⁷ Gołębiowski i Góra op. cit., p. 84.

Table Seven

PPR and PSL Strength on Various District and Commune
National Councils (1946)⁵⁸

Province (date)	District N.C. seats		Commune N.C. seats	
	PPR%	PSL%	PPR%	PSL%
Kraków ^a (i'46)	27.2	20.9	24.4	20.5
(x'46)	20.8	37.2	11.8	51.9
Poznań ^b (v'46)	27.6	30.1	21.8	33.2
Rzeszów ^c (vi'46)	15.4	37.1	5.8	54.3
Kielce ^d (vi'46)	28.6	30.6	20.8	38.8
Wrocław ^e (ii'46)	30.2	0.5	?	?
Katowice ^f (xii'45)	21.6	0	28.0	2.6

Table Eight

Role of PSL in Local Government Administration (1946/47)
(Percentage of Posts Held by PSL)⁵⁹

Province (date)	Starostowie (Prefect)	Burmistrzowie (Mayor)	Wójtowie (Commune Adminis- trator)	Sołtysi (Village Adminis- trator)
Poznań (vi'46) ^a	17.5	3.4	38.5	25.0
Katowice (vii'46) ^b	0	0	5.1	12.6
Kraków (iii'46) ^c	20.0	7.9	38.1	52.6
Olsztyn (iv'46) ^d	11.7	35.3	38.1	?
Rzeszów (iii'47) ^e	?	?	42.1	44.9
Gdańsk (vi'46) ^f	0	-----	12.3-----	?

⁵⁸ Sources: a. Ćwik op. cit., pp. 310-13; b. Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., p. 110; c. Olszewski Początki op. cit., pp. 182-83; d. Naumiuk Początki op. cit., p. 191; e. Kowalik op. cit., p. 97; f. J. Kantyka Na drodze do jedności (Katowice, 1973), p. 183.

⁵⁹ Sources: a. Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., p. 111; b. Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., p. 203; c. Góra PPR w walce... op. cit., p. 116; d. Wojnowski op. cit., p. 109; e. Olszewski Początki op. cit., p. 181; f. Wapiński op. cit., p. 118.

Urgent steps were taken to improve the organisation of the Party in local government. The Party leadership had been critical of provincial and district committees for poor organisation in this area for some time. Zambrowski complained to the Party's First Congress that PPR members of national councils

'... are not always sufficiently active... in most (national councils), especially at the district and commune level, they do not form groups or meet as groups, they do not prepare themselves for meetings of the council, they show insufficient initiative.... Comrades in provincial, district and town committees tolerate a state of affairs where inter-party consultative committees discuss and decide matters which belong to the national councils..⁶⁰

In March the Central Committee set up departments in each provincial committee to deal with administrative and local government affairs and to activate PPR councillors and local officials.⁶¹ At the same time a purge of PSL supporters in the local administration began.. A Central Committee circular issued in March stated that

'the apparatus of state and local government ought to be an effective instrument in the hands of democracy in the struggle with the reaction. National Councils... should play a decisive role in that struggle and in the purging of the state and local apparatus of hostile and destructive elements'.⁶²

Wójcik, the secretary-general, informed the executive of the PSL at its sitting on 10/11 April of the effects of the purge. He reported that, for example, in Lower Silesia 17

⁶⁰ Zambrowski O masową... Źp. cit., p. 49.

⁶¹ Okólnik KC PPR w sprawie pracy administracyjno-samorządowej na terenie powiatów, April 1947, PPR. Rezolucje, odezwy, instrukcje i okólniki komitetu centralnego i 1947 - xii 1948 (Warsaw, 1973), pp. 72-73.

⁶² Okólnik KC PPR w sprawie pracy partii na odcinku administracyjno-samorządowym, March 1946, PPR... i 1946 - 1947 op. cit., p. 52.

out of 18 PSL prefects (starostowie) had been sacked within a period of two weeks, along with a considerable number of lesser officials.⁶³

Overall, however, the policy of squeezing the PSL out of state apparatus fell well short of its objectives. As Tables Six, Seven and Eight show, the PSL maintained a strong position in local government in many areas after Spring 1946. Table Nine below, based on data for Kraków and Kielce provinces, suggests that the PSL continued to make inroads until the end of the year.

Table Nine

Party Representation on Commune and District National Councils in Krakow and Kielce Provinces, 1946*

Province (date)	District National Councils			Commune National Councils		
	PPR%	SL%	PSL%	PPR%	SL%	PSL%
<u>Kraków</u> ⁶⁴ (i.46)	35.1	15.3	27.0	29.9	28.4	25.1
(vi.46)	28.9	6.0	44.3	-	-	-
(x.46)	25.5	8.8	45.5	15.0	5.9	66.1
(i.47)	-	-	-	19.2	13.6	52.2
<u>Kielce</u> ⁶⁵ (vi.46)	30.4	20.1	32.6	24.8	20.6	46.5
(xi.46)	29.8	19.1	31.5	22.5	10.6	58.2

*Note: figures include only PPR, PSL, PPS and SL members.

There seem to have been a number of reasons for this. The PPR was not yet ready organisationally to undertake a thoroughgoing purge of local government. A year after they had been formed, the Central Committee admitted that the local government departments of the provincial committees of the Party were still not in a position to extend their

⁶³ Borkowski Kształtowanie się... op. cit., p. 96.

⁶⁴ Ryszka op. cit., p. 263; Cwik op. cit., p. 310.

⁶⁵ Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., pp. 191, 231.

activity to rural communes.⁶⁶ Also, three PSL ministers continued to sit in the government and although their powers were gradually whittled away, they were still able to achieve local victories in the state apparatus.⁶⁷ Perhaps the key factor preventing an all-out purge was the attitude of the Socialists who until the autumn still sought a compromise with the PSL. It was only after the PPS leadership accepted the inevitability of a confrontation with the PSL that the elimination of the influence of the opposition in the state apparatus began in earnest. The signal for this was expulsion of the PSL from the network of all-party consultative committees that in effect decided the distribution of political appointments and the 'party key' in the administration. This did not take place until late September.

The PSL: Weathering the Storm

Mikołajczyk seemed to the British and US ambassadors 'highly worried and very nervy' about the communists' offensive against his party.⁶⁸ He feared the expulsion of the PSL from the government and 'the formentation of disorders throughout the country' as a pretext for requesting Soviet intervention, followed by rigged elections in which the PSL would be suppressed by the security forces.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, he was not deflected from his strategy. He was determined not to compromise on the question of the bloc. In reply to Cavendish-Bentinck's observation that he had perhaps 'been opening his mouth a bit wide' in demanding

⁶⁶ Okólnik KC PPR w sprawie pracy administracyjno-samorządowej na terenie powiatów, April 1947, PPR... i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., p. 72.

⁶⁷ For example, Wycech appointed a PSL sympathiser to run Kraków education authority, a position which according to the communists he used to limit their influence. See Kozik op. cit., p. 202.

⁶⁸ PRO FO371 56437 N4396, N1893.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 56433 N1893.

75% of seats on a joint-list, Mikołajczyk admitted

'that he had done so on purpose as he was determined that there should not be a joint list of candidates... he feared however that the other parties would insist on a resumption of inter-party negotiations as they were bent on achieving a single list'.⁷⁰

Critics within the PSL of his conduct of the negotiations were silenced by a unanimous vote of approval for his stand at a specially-called national conference of provincial leaders of the party on 2 March.⁷¹

In fact, Mikołajczyk decided to meet the 'general storm' head-on. He believed that the confrontation with the communists could be turned to his advantage and that in any case his party would lose more by entering the bloc than by continuing the struggle outside of it. He assumed that the PPR would use intimidation and falsification of the results in the elections to achieve a majority in their favour.⁷² However, he expected that despite the repression the PSL would still be able to use the elections as a demonstration of its strength and capture enough seats to obstruct changes to the constitution.⁷³ His main objective was to force the PPR to the limit to ensure that in order to obtain a majority 'the efforts which the Communist leaders will have to adopt to secure this result will show the strength of the opposition'.⁷⁴

Mikołajczyk hoped that as the struggle between the communists and his party intensified, external pressure on the PPR would increase. At a sitting of the executive of the PSL on 25 May he argued that 'if Polish society holds

⁷⁰ PRO FO371 56434 N2476.

⁷¹ Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 432; Gazeta Ludowa 3.3.46.

⁷² PRO FO371 56441 N7860.

⁷³ Ibid., 56447 N12480, 56452 N16279.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 56441 N7860.

out, counting on its own strength, it may also receive foreign help'.⁷⁵ No doubt most of his colleagues took this to be a reference to diplomatic and economic pressure by the Western Powers and indeed Mikołajczyk endeavoured to extract the maximum political leverage from this source.⁷⁶ However, he also continued to work for an accommodation with the Russians and this may have been the real significance of his remark. He hoped that the Russians would ultimately be persuaded by the extent of popular support for his party to throw their weight behind a compromise. On 12 May Mikołajczyk told Cavendish-Bentinck of his hitherto abortive attempts to arrange 'a confidential and unofficial talk' with Lebediev, the Soviet ambassador, adding that 'sooner or later the Soviet Government are likely to find themselves faced with the alternative either of having to occupy this country militarily or acquiescing in a Government headed by himself. He believed they would choose the latter...'.⁷⁷ A few days later (probably 15 May) he

75 Borkowski Kształtowanie się... op. cit., p. 98.

76 For example, Mikołajczyk informed the Americans in confidence that he regretted their agreement in April 1946 to provide a \$50m credit for the purchase of US war surplus and a \$40m trade loan to buy locomotives and coal cars. He suggested that a loan to help Polish agriculture would have strengthened his position, but that the credits had been given in a form which gave 'the impression that the present Polish government can obtain credit from the US and is not viewed with disfavour by the US Government'. On 11 May, after Bliss Lane had flown to Paris to persuade Byrnes to suspend the credits, the State Department announced they had been frozen. The British Foreign Office, which had been highly critical of the US decision to grant the loans, was given to understand that 'whilst they (the State Department) did not directly speak of financial sanctions in the event of the Polish Government resorting to terrorist methods against Mikołajczyk and the opposition, the threat was implicit and fully appreciated'. See PRO FO371 56438 N5700, 56440 N6828; Bliss Lane op. cit., pp. 193-97.

77 PRO FO371 56439 N6206.

at last obtained an interview with Lebediev and tried to convince him that a PSL-led government would bolster the Polish-Soviet alliance. He warned that the Soviet Union would be blamed if bloodshed broke out.⁷⁸ Although Lebediev was 'not particularly responsive', Mikołajczyk does not seem to have been discouraged and it appears that a further meeting took place on 31 May.⁷⁹ These approaches were doubtless linked with the talks which Stalin held in Moscow between 23-26 May with Lebediev and the leaders of the PPR and PPS. The outcome of these talks, as we shall see, suggested that Stalin had not finally ruled out a deal with the PSL.

Internally too, Mikołajczyk sought to outflank the communists and Socialists rather than to find a compromise solution. His response to the communists' offensive was to launch a protest campaign of mass meetings, starting early in April with a tour of Silesia where he addressed large crowds in Katowice and Opole.⁸⁰ These meetings - the last to be granted official permits - were met by counter-demonstrations from the PPR and were followed by attacks on PSL activists. Nevertheless, the campaign continued with demonstrations of PSL strength at gatherings held to celebrate public holidays, at funerals of murdered PSL activists, at dedications of PSL banners and even at an international football match and a scout rally.⁸¹

The campaign was characterised by an overt appeal to urban working-class support, as the choice of the industrialised cities of Silesia for Mikołajczyk's first tour indicated. He is reported to have declared in Katowice that 'the workers' parties have no monopoly on the workers' and to have urged the PSL aktyw to 'go amongst the ranks of the workers'.⁸² Despite the doubts of the agrarian wing of

⁷⁸ PRO FO371 56440 N7139.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 56445 N10451.

⁸⁰ Gazeta Ludowa 10,11,12.4.46.

⁸¹ Mikołajczyk The Pattern... op. cit., pp. 173-79.

⁸² Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... op. cit., p. 49; Gołębiowski Pierwsze lata... op. cit., p. 331.

the party who feared that PSL recruitment in the towns would lead to an influx of Endek elements,⁸³ from late 1945 the party seems to have undertaken the formation of urban circles on a wide scale. In December 1945 the PSL had 800 members in Ursus, an industrialised suburb of Warsaw; a few months later it had 1,353 members in Poznań city - about half of them organised in factory circles.⁸⁴ Mikołajczyk believed that the PSL would be able to mobilise working-class support against the communists if they attempted to crush his party. Following a conversation with Mikołajczyk on 12 May, the British ambassador reported to London that he 'gathered... that if he (Mikołajczyk) is ejected from the Government he will try to cause any resultant disturbances to take the form of strikes nominally for higher wages rather than a political outburst'.⁸⁵

The political and economic situation in the towns favoured the PSL campaign. Discontent, generated by the harsh economic conditions and the general increase in political tension, was widespread. As in early 1945, the government faced severe difficulties in maintaining basic food supplies and preventing sharp price rises in the winter months of 1946. Against this background, a wave of strikes took place in the spring, notably in the Lodz textile industry, the Gdańsk-Gdynia docks, the Silesian coalfield and in Warsaw, Radom, Kielce and Częstochowa.⁸⁶ Generally, the strikes were brief protests arising out of food shortages or suspicions that the available food was being distributed unfairly. Usually the workers resumed production once extra rations were issued. But often the

⁸³ Borkowski Kształtowanie się... op. cit., pp. 91-93; Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., pp. 109-10.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 108-9; PRO FO371 56432.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 56439 N6245.

⁸⁶ Robotnik 19.4.46, Gołębiowski Pierwsze lata... op. cit., p. 331; Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., p. 181; Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 369; PRO FO371 56439 N5886, N6901, N7266.

strikes also had anti-government overtones and were attributed by the communists to the continuing influence of 'reactionary' elements amongst the working class.⁸⁷ In some cases the PSL may have been involved. The communists blamed the PSL for organising strikes in Warsaw on the eve of May Day and short stoppages which took place on the railways, in the 'Schicht' factory and among the telephone employees.⁸⁸ The situation was regarded with alarm by the PPR and PPS which issued a joint declaration warning that they would oppose 'any attempt by PSL wreckers to split the working class with every means at their command'.⁸⁹ Urban unrest was also expressed in demonstrations against the government. The most serious took place on Constitution Day, 3 May, when despite a last-minute ban on processions, large-scale protest marches occurred in Kraków, Katowice, Gliwice, Sosnowiec, Bytom, Łódź and numerous other towns. In Kraków and Gliwice rioting broke out after clashes between demonstrators and police units.⁹⁰

Mikołajczyk's readiness to rise to the communists' challenge and his determination not to enter the bloc conditioned his attitude to the attempts of the PPS leadership to find a compromise. He and the great majority of the PSL leaders regarded the PPS as little more than a stalking horse for the PPR and believed that its following in the country and many of its activists would swing behind the opposition rather than accept a joint-list with the communists. The PSL gave open encouragement to the anti-bloc faction of the PPS lead by Zygmunt Żukawski,⁹¹ which was

87 See further: Reynolds Communists... op. cit., p. 524.

88 Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 369.

89 Ibid., pp. 429-30.

90 Gazeta Ludowa 4.5.46; PRO FO371 56439 N7266; Kozik op. cit., pp 203-4; Gołębiowski Pierwsze lata... op. cit., p. 374; Kantyka PPS na Śląsku... op. cit., pp. 251-52; Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., p. 202. A detailed account of events in Gliwice appeared in Jutro Polski 8.12.46.

91 Gazeta Ludowa 9.3.46; Kozik op. cit., pp. 308-9; Ćwik op. cit., pp. 137-39.

fiercely opposed to the 'centrist' leadership of the party around Osóbka, Cyrankiewicz and Szwalbe.

By May, the tension and doubts which had been evident in the PSL leadership when the communists began their offensive, had given way to a mood of greater confidence and unity. Cavendish-Bentinck found Mikołajczyk 'in better spirits than I have seen him for some time past'.⁹² The PSL had weathered the 'general storm'. The party had not been ejected from the government and, as we have seen, had generally maintained its position in the state apparatus. Kiernik and a few others who had questioned Mikołajczyk's uncompromising line on the bloc had rallied behind his leadership,⁹³ which clearly had the overwhelming support of the rank-and-file. Despite the increase in repressive measures against the PSL its popularity was undiminished. Finally, it was clear that the PPR and PPS were sharply divided on strategy and tactics.

The PPS: 'The Third Road'

Although the leadership of the PPS fell in with the PPR offensive against the PSL, it did not share the communists' view that Poland had split finally into two camps and that a clash with the PSL was now unavoidable. The dominant 'centrist' faction in the PPS, led by Osóbka, Cyrankiewicz, Szwalbe, Rusinek and Hochfeld, did not accept that the failure of the February talks should deflect the workers' parties from the broad national front strategy and their efforts to forge an alliance with the mainstream peasant movement. It considered that the 'obstacle to forming an electoral bloc, to achieving full worker-peasant unity, is above all that relatively narrow group of activists which was connected with the London Government Delegation'.⁹⁴ The Socialists argued that '... We ought not

92 PRO FO371 56939 N6206.

93 Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 434.

94 Robotnik 2.3.46.

to describe the whole of the PSL as reactionary and by doing this estrange its healthy elements from positive co-operation... a wise policy will assist the process of their coming closer to us'.⁹⁵ The PPS favoured a tougher line towards the PSL - and the rhetoric of the Socialists was often more menacing than that of the PPR⁹⁶ - but such language was intended to force the PSL, or at any rate its more pragmatic leaders, back to the negotiating table. Even as the February talks collapsed, Osóbka asked the PSL spokesman to reconsider and offered them a week to withdraw from their position.⁹⁷

These accounts were muted at first; by May and June, as tension in the country grew and the PPS became seriously alarmed at the communists' increasing belligerence, they grew louder. Initially, however, the PPS leaders were more concerned to preserve the united front with the PPR and defeat the anti-bloc faction in the party led by Zygmunt Żuławski, which had considerable influence amongst the rank-and-file.⁹⁸ Despite their differences with the PPR,

95 Robotnik 26.8.46.

96 During the February talks, Cyrankiewicz described part of the constituency of the PSL as 'pathologically ill' and in need of 'educational measures'. Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 429n. In June 1946 he called for 'ruthless struggle until the fascist source of infection is entirely destroyed'. Robotnik 7.7.46.

97 Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 432.

98 Żuławski was a major figure in the leadership of the PPS between the wars and was chairman of the party's Supreme Council in 1939. After Yalta he favoured the cessation of underground activity by the PPS and its unification with the 'Lublin PPS'. Talks between Żuławski and the 'Lublin PPS' were held during mid-1945, but broke down in the autumn, whereupon Żuławski and his followers formed a separate 'Polish Social Democratic Party'. However, permission to legalise this organisation was refused. In December Żuławski and his followers were admitted to the PPS on an individual basis and at the meeting of the Supreme Council on 31 March/1 April 1946, Żuławski and five of his group were co-opted as members. See further: Reiss op. cit., pp. 216-74; L. Cohn Zygmunt Żuławski Krytyka 6 (1980), pp. 184-89.

the 'centrists' were determined at all costs to maintain the hegemony of the workers' parties within the government. They accepted that if a bloc of six parties with the PSL was not achieved, the PPS would collaborate with the communists to defeat the PSL in a bloc of the four 'Lublin' parties. For the 'centrists' this was the overriding priority, as Osóbka made clear: 'the most important problem is to maintain political power in the hands of the world of labour.... Therefore the four democratic parties... must win a majority even without the PSL...'.⁹⁹ They feared that the alternative would be a regeneration of right-wing forces which the communists and the Russians would crush by force:

'We are certain that having once handed over power, we would have to wrench it back from the hands not of conservatives, but fascists, not through the ballot box, but by force.... We are genuinely afraid of unleashing elements which will either have to be crushed with Cromwellian fanaticism, or will rule out the possibility of a peaceful development towards socialist democracy in Poland We are afraid of the spread of attitudes which might justify the Soviet Union's lack of confidence towards Poland...'¹⁰⁰

The 'centrists' believed that only through the united front could they exercise a moderating influence on the communists and avoid a narrowly-based, forced construction of socialism in Poland on the Soviet model.¹⁰¹

99 Robotnik 2.3.46.

100 J. Hochfeld List do towarzyszy z Labour Party Przegląd Socjalistyczny 1.4.46.

101 Szwalbe set out the evolutionary approach of the PPS thus: 'according to the PPS we are not constructing a socialist system now or in the present historical period. Nevertheless, we want to arrange matters in such a way that the foundations of the new Poland created now will not have to be demolished when circumstances and the will of the majority of the nation calls - as we believe it will - for a socialist economy'. Robotnik 10.8.46.

Despite the strength of opposition to the alliance with the PPR in the provincial organisations of the PPS in Kraków, Warsaw, Katowice and elsewhere,¹⁰² the 'centrists', supported by the left, had no difficulty in outvoting the Żuławski group at the party's Supreme Council on 31 March - 1 April.¹⁰³ The Council reaffirmed the party's commitment to the united front and the bloc and agreed that the PPS should put forward a proposal to hold a referendum before the elections.¹⁰⁴ Having removed the threat from the right, the 'centrists' turned their attention, with growing urgency, to their efforts to reverse the polarisation between the communists and the PSL. At a sitting of the party executive on 14 May, the left: Świątkowski, Matuszewski and, in particular, Stanisław Skowroński, accused the 'centrists' of wavering and demanded closer co-operation with the PPR against the PSL. However, the majority decided in favour of a concerted attempt to reach a compromise with the Peasants. Stańczyk, on the right of the party, went as far as to argue that 'if we do not achieve a bloc of six, we could have a revolution on our hands'.¹⁰⁵ The 'centrist' position was set out in an article by Szwalbe, the party president, entitled 'For a correct evaluation of the attitude of the PPS to the PSL and the Party of

102 The PPS leadership encountered considerable opposition to the block with the communists at the provincial conference of the PPS in Kraków on 16/17 March. Żuławski, who had led the criticism, was elected to the provincial committee with two of his followers. See Kozik op. cit., pp. 308-9. At a meeting of secretaries of local committees of the PPS in Upper Silesia in April, 19 out of 23 speakers considered that party members were opposed to the bloc. Kantyka PPS na Śląsku... op. cit., p. 245. See also Sierocki Warszawska... op. cit., p. 266.

103 Reiss op. cit., pp. 270-72; Bardach O dziejach... op. cit., pp. 688-92; GSHI Kol.97/30 (Arciszewski papers) Rada Naczelna FPPS w dn. 31 III i 1 IV 1946 r.; PRO FO371 56437 N4832.

104 Syzdek op. cit., p. 336.

105 F. Baranowski Z dziejów... op. cit., p. 36; T. Sierocki Dyskusje nad programem PPS w latach 1945-47 Z pola walki 1971 nr. 4 (56), p. 157.

Labour', which appeared in 'Robotnik' on 24 May. Szwalbe - no doubt with Gomułka's recent Warsaw speech (see p.223) in mind - bluntly contradicted PPR claims that the situation had polarised to the point where the legality of the PSL was in doubt:

'..."private" farmers and businessmen have their own economic interests and must have their own political representation to express these economic interests. All those comrades who, oversimplifying the situation, consider that there is no place for politically moderate parties in contemporary democratic Poland are mistaken. There is such a place and in the interest of the normal development of Poland's political situation, this place must remain. All thought then of delegatising such parties would be fanciful...'106

The article concluded with a clear offer to resume negotiations to reach a compromise around an all-party bloc:

'... We shall fight the PSL more and more sharply.... But at any time if the PSL agrees to the maintenance of government by democracy... in the way that we conceive it (which does not exclude struggle over socialism)... then the PPS, doubtless in full agreement with the PPR, will propose substituting conflict with an internal pact of the six parties which would be so beneficial for Poland, an agreement based on the principle of recognition of the true role of the PKWN parties in general, and the workers' parties in particular, in sustaining, deepening and continuing genuine democracy, not the formal democracy of Chjeno-Piast times (i.e. the right-centre coalitions between Witos' followers and the Christian Democrats in the 1920s - J.R.) or from before September 1939, but the new democracy founded on the social reforms decreed by the PKWN and the KRN and the new style of government in Poland'.107

The timing of the Socialists' offer was probably governed by the hope that it would influence the PSL executive which

106 Robotnik 24.5.46.

107 Ibid.

met on 25 May to decide its tactics in the referendum. The PSL leaders, though fully aware of the PPS attempts to promote a compromise,¹⁰⁸ voted for a contest.

However, such tactical considerations were not paramount. In fact, by this stage the disagreements between the PPR and the PPS over strategy were such that Stalin had become involved. Between 23-26 May a Polish delegation including Gomułka, Bierut, Szwalbe and Osóbka made a publicised visit to Moscow to discuss Soviet credits and the general political situation. No details of the discussions are available, but it is apparent that Stalin did not veto the PPS campaign to re-open talks, which continued with renewed vigour on the delegation's return. Rather, it seems that Stalin's attitude prompted the communists to soften their line and accept - at least formally - that a further attempt to draw the PSL into the bloc should be made before the elections. On his return, Gomułka warned the Central Committee at its Plenum held on 2 June of the likelihood of new talks with the PSL:

'The PPS is convinced that a six-party electoral bloc is possible, real, immediate. Our view is different. We consider that the six-party bloc will not come about. All the same, it cannot be excluded that because of the position of the PPS, we shall, as it were, be forced tactically to take certain steps which will help to convince the PPS of its illusions. This means being able, on the basis of some sort of experience with the PSL, to convince the PPS that its calculations are mistaken'.¹⁰⁹

In its resolution the Plenum stated that decided opponents of Mikołajczyk within the PSL could expect to find 'a common tongue with the Polish democratic parties, despite ideological and programmatic differences' and 'forms of

¹⁰⁸ Mikołajczyk told the executive that the PPS had told him that 'they aimed at us being in the bloc'. Borkowski Kształtowanie się... op. cit., p. 432.

¹⁰⁹ Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 432.

loyal, constructive co-operation'.¹¹⁰ This was a distinct moderation of the Party's public stance.

The Socialists put their own gloss on the communists' very limited retreat and pressed on with their efforts to achieve an agreement. On 8 June Szwalbe published a further article in 'Robotnik' entitled 'More on the attitude of the PPS to the PSL'. This reiterated the Socialists' commitment to the broadest possible alliance 'of the entire working countryside with the entire labouring population of the towns... an understanding not only with the "red" countryside, but also with the "green" as well as the "red and white" (colours of the peasant movement and the Polish national flag - J.R.) and not only with the SL'. While the political battle with the PSL would continue, the PPS was determined to seek

'a way through to those masses organised in the PSL movement which in reality agree with the new order in Poland and genuinely wish to improve or influence its future development, even if in the spirit of their own "moderate" ideology. The resolutions on the PSL of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the PPR on 2 June deal with this issue in the same way. Despite rumours, the PPR, sharply attacking the reactionary and negative attitude of the PSL to the Polish system, also explicitly spoke of the possibility of finding a common tongue with Peasant-democrats...'.¹¹¹

The PPS leadership was much encouraged by the formation of the 'Nowe Wyzwolenie' group which opposed Mikołajczyk's tactics in the referendum and was expelled from the PSL in June. The PPS saw this as a potential third peasant party of the sort which they had hoped the Bańczyk group would form the previous September; such a party would be a natural ally for the Socialists.¹¹² However, as Osóbka

¹¹⁰ Uchwała plenum KC PPR w sprawie głosowania ludowego, 2.6.46, PPR... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 119.

¹¹¹ Robotnik 8.6.46.

¹¹² In 1948, in a speech denouncing the policy of the party in 1946-47 which he had been prominent in shaping, Cyrankiewicz said that the PPS 'right' had endeavoured to 'galvanise such a group as 'Nowe Wyzwolenie'... (in order to have its own pawns to play in the countryside'. See Przegląd Socjalistyczny October/December 1948.

made clear in a speech on 9 June, the PPS aimed to win over not only the dissidents, but also those remaining inside the PSL who had doubts about Mikołajczyk's tactics.¹¹³ On 19 June he appeared to go even further in a speech which proclaimed the need for national unity and flatly denied the identification by the communists of the PSL with the opponents of the national front:

'if someone asked me the question what we most need, I would reply - national unity
.... Today not only the four political parties which founded the KRN, but also the SP and the PSL, accept in principle all the political and programmatic assumptions of our camp...'¹¹⁴

Convinced as they were that the Socialists' hopes of a deal with the PSL were illusory, with thereferendum only a matter of days away, the communists had no choice but to fall in with the PPS whose collaboration would be crucial to producing a favourable result when the votes were counted.

The Referendum

The failure of the talks on the electoral bloc placed a question mark over the timing of the election. In early April the PPS, supported by the PPR, put forward the proposal, which had been in the air for some months,¹¹⁵ that a referendum should be held before the elections. The proposal was accepted by the KRN at the end of April and the date of the referendum was fixed for 30 June. The electorate were asked to vote on three issues: abolition of the

113 Robotnik 13.6.46.

114 Robotnik 21.6.46.

115 Western journalists had heard by January 1946 that a referendum was under consideration, PRO FO371 56434 N2028. Gomułka mentioned the possibility of a referendum in his speech on 27 February, Przemówienie wygłoszone w Warszawie na wspólnej konferencji aktywu PPR i PPS 27.2.1946 r., Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 51.

Senate (the upper chamber of the Polish parliament); approval of the economic reforms provided for in the Land Reform and the 1946 Nationalisation Law; and approval of the new frontiers of Poland. For the PPR the referendum was a convenient way to delay the elections, which were now expected to take place in the autumn.¹¹⁶ It would also place the PSL in a political dilemma. If the vote was unopposed, the communists could claim the result as a vote of confidence in the government. On the other hand, the Peasants were long-standing critics of the Senate and would have to reverse their policy to oppose the communists on this issue. A contest on the economic reforms or the new frontiers would compromise Mikołajczyk's progressive and pro-Soviet stance. For the Socialists, the referendum had the additional advantages of providing further time to seek a compromise with the PSL and reassuring the PPS rank-and-file over the postponement of the elections.

At first, it seemed that the PSL would not contest the referendum. Its executive met on 10/11 April and decided to accept the referendum as the price for fixing the date of the elections. When it was suggested that the PSL might force a contest, both Mikołajczyk and Kiernik were opposed.¹¹⁷ Mikołajczyk's view was that 'if, prior to the referendum, he and his party could feel sure that the elections will be held and these will be reasonably free... his party would not advise members as to how to vote... as, if the elections are in fact held, it will later on have no importance...'.¹¹⁸ However, during May opinion in the PSL leadership hardened in favour of a contest. The majority favoured recommending members to vote 'no' to question one

¹¹⁶ Modzelewski, the Polish Foreign Minister, told Bliss Lane in April that September would be the earliest practicable time to hold the election, PRO FO371 56437 N4475.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 56439 N6206; Borkowski Kształtowanie się... op. cit., p. 97 and Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 425n.

¹¹⁸ PRO FO371 56439 N6206.

(abolition of the senate) and 'yes' to questions two and three. Some favoured an even tougher line (a boycott or 'no' votes on questions one and two). The party Council on 26-27 May gave overwhelming support for the first formula. Only 10 out of 128 Council members voted for the 'three times yes' formula which would have avoided a contest, and 3 voted for a boycott.¹¹⁹ Mikołajczyk explained to the British ambassador after the Council that:

'... at first he had thought the C(entral) C(ommittee) of the P(olish) P(easant) P(arty) should not give any advice to its members as to how to vote in the referendum but should regard this as unimportant and should concentrate on preparatory work for the elections. However, he subsequently changed his mind... for the following reasons. If the referendum produced a majority in favour of the abolition of the Senate, this would result in the election only being for one chamber instead of two. Should this one chamber have, as a result of the elections being rigged, a two thirds majority prepared to obey the orders of the Communist leaders, it would be possible for the latter to change the constitution forthwith and turn this country into a totalitarian Communist state. On the other hand with 2 chambers the operation would be more difficult. Moreover, a large negative vote on the proposed abolition of the Senate would help to show the strength of the opposition...'.¹²⁰

Despite the communists' efforts to generate internal opposition to Mikołajczyk within the PSL, only a small minority dissented from the decision to force a contest. The most prominent critics of a 'no' vote: Zygmunt Załęski, Kiernik and Kazimierz Bagiński were opposed largely for tactical reasons and fell in with the majority once the decision was taken.¹²¹ A handful of lesser figures, led by

¹¹⁹ Borkowski Kształtowanie się... op. cit., pp. 97-99 and Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 435n.

¹²⁰ PRO FO371 56440 N7127.

¹²¹ Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 435.

Tadeusz Rek, deputy-secretary of the party, came out publicly against the decision and were immediately expelled. Although this group began publishing its own newspaper (with the help of the bloc parties) and formed a new party, the PSL 'Nowe Wyzwolenie', it was unable to win over any significant support from the grassroots of the PSL. It was widely viewed as a communist 'front', though as we have seen, its orientation was closer to the PPS.

The official results of the referendum were not issued until 12 July. According to these figures, the results of the voting were as follows:

Table Ten

Official Results of the Referendum, 30 June 1946¹²²

Question	% voting 'yes'	% voting 'no'
I (For abolition of the senate)	68.2	31.8
II (For the land reform and nationalisation law)	77.3	22.7
III (For the new frontiers)	91.4	8.6

The turnout was 85%. Mikołajczyk, who produced evidence of widespread irregularities in the voting arrangements and the count, issued separate figures covering just under 30% of the polling districts where PSL sympathisers had succeeded in witnessing the count. According to these returns, 2,770,351 (83.5%) voted 'no' to question one in these areas.¹²³

Generally the voting seems to have been conducted correctly.¹²⁴ However, even at this stage some blatant irregularities took place. One PPR electoral official from the Chełm region recounted in memoirs published in 1974 making off across the meadows with the ballot box in one

¹²² Głos Ludu 12.7.46.

¹²³ Jutro Polski 28.7.46.

¹²⁴ PRO FO371 56443 N8598.

hand and a pistol in the other, several hours before voting in a pro-PSL village was due to close.¹²⁵ It was during the count that the communists intervened to falsify the results. Instead of the votes being counted locally, as provided for in the regulations, the count took place at district level, in most cases without PSL scrutineers present.¹²⁶

Although the communists claimed victory, it was clear that the referendum was a major setback for the Party, both in political and organisational terms. According to the British ambassador, the communists were 'appalled at the small vote they secured'.¹²⁷ Even the official results betrayed the continuing failure of the PPR and its allies to capture public support. A heavy vote for the opposition had been expected in the countryside, where political brigades often required protection from the army and ORMO units when they ventured into the villages.¹²⁸ However, in the towns they had expected that a combination of economic and administrative pressures on government employees and support for the left amongst the urban working-class, would produce a respectable vote. In fact, the outcome in many of the towns appears to have been disastrous for the bloc. In Kraków city, according to the official figures, the vote on question one was 'yes': 23,162; 'no': 120,840 (84%).¹²⁹ In Kielce, Częstochowa and Radom the official returns did not conceal 'yes' votes and turnouts well below average.¹³⁰ Apart from Kraków, Poznań (53%), Rzeszów (79%)

125 A. Kraszewski To były tylko trzy lata... Z pola walki 1974 nr. 3 (67), p. 118; S. Wójcik PSL w walce z komunistami 1945-47 (typescript, n.d.), p. 24.

126 Ibid., pp. 24-25; PRO FO371 56443 N8598.

127 Ibid., 56443 N8983.

128 I. Blum Z dziejów GZP WP 1944-56 Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny 1963/3-4, p. 226. According to this source 25,700 Militia, 28,070 ORMO, 11,315 UB, 8,370 KBW and 36,400 Polish Army troops were deployed during the referendum.

129 Nowe Wyzwolenie 13.7.46; Ćwik op. cit., pp. 162-64.

130 Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., p. 223.

and Stalowa Wola (80%) voted 'no' to question one on the official figures. The last two, both industrial towns, also voted against nationalisation and the land reform on question two by majorities of 73% and 68% respectively.¹³¹ There were rumours of a landslide vote against the government in Katowice and there was open talk in communist circles about the fiasco in Lodz, which had been regarded as a PPR stronghold.¹³²

Apart from the voting itself, the strength of hostility to the communists revealed in the campaign preceeding the referendum came as a sharp jolt to the PPR. According to Hillebrandt and Jakubowski, writing of Warsaw, the Party had little experience of campaigning amongst the public. Canvassers 'sometimes met open hostility to the Party... there were cases of assaults on canvassers, they were whistled at and pelted with rotten fruit'. This reception was unexpected:

'... contact during the pre-referendum campaign with the broad mass of the population in Warsaw enabled the party to ascertain more accurately the mood of groups with which it had hitherto not been in touch: the unemployed, small craftsmen, the petit-bourgeoisie, housewives. Their mood was, according to reports of the PPR Provincial Committee, worse than expected. It had not been realised that there was so much unemployment, especially amongst women and the young. The universal fear of losing homes, shops, sheds or small workshops with which owners were it was supposed threatened and which made them hostile or suspicious towards the new authorities, came as a surprise. Canvassers also confirmed that strong prejudice towards the new government as well as hopes of a change in the political system, pinned chiefly on the PSL and the person of Stanisław Mikołajczyk, still existed in many neighbourhoods...'.¹³³

¹³¹ J. Zasada Referendum w województwie poznańskim 30.VI.1946 (Poznań, 1971), p. 90; Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 242.

¹³² PRO FO371 56445 N10451, 56443, N8998. According to the PSL's figures, there was a 90% vote against the communist camp in working-class centres. Jutro Polski 15.12.46.

¹³³ Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., pp. 373-74.

The referendum had made abundantly clear how far the PPR was from achieving a broad base of popular support for the national front, or even winning the allegiance of a significant section of the urban working-class.

The referendum had also demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the Party's organisation in many areas. Despite the measures taken to produce a positive result, in Kraków and elsewhere the bloc had been unable to prevent the opposition scoring embarrassing local victories. These upsets seemed to confirm Mikołajczyk's conviction that the communists lacked the organisational resources and manpower to prevent his party winning a substantial number of seats at the elections.

The machinery for counting the votes had been set up in mid-May. Central Committee instructions issued at the time made no bones about the fact that local Party committees were to ensure that these electoral commissions were manned by 'people who have demonstrated actively their allegiance to the democratic camp and who desire the maintenance of People's Poland'.¹³⁴ This meant the wholesale exclusion of the PSL from the electoral apparatus. At provincial level, the PSL forced its representatives onto only three commissions (Poznań, Łódź, Kraków) out of seventeen and in the polling districts its representatives were present on only about 3,000 of the 14,000 commissions.¹³⁵ But where the PSL was strong, it was able to breach the monopoly of the communist bloc. In Poznań city 5 of its members were commission chairmen, in Jarosław five commissions were composed entirely of PSL members and in Lubaczów nearly all were.¹³⁶ In Kraków province, all 30 commission chairmen in Dąbrowa District, 23 out of 28 in Limanowa District, 46 out of 75 in Biała District and 20 out of 62

¹³⁴ Okólnik KC PPR w sprawie referendum - głosowania ludowego, May 1946 PPR... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 87.

¹³⁵ Wójcik PSL w walce... op. cit., p. 22.

¹³⁶ Zasada op. cit., p. 58, Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 230.

in Nowy Targ District, belonged to the PSL. Out of 560 commission members in Nowy Targ, just 12 were in the PPR; in Limanowa only 2 out of 280.¹³⁷

The communists' grip on the electoral machinery was shaky not only in the Peasant strongholds, but also in the towns where the PPR was heavily dependent on the Socialists.¹³⁸ The attitude of the Socialists seems to have been the decisive factor governing the efficiency of the management of the results. In Kielce province where the leftist leadership of the local PPS co-operated closely with the PPR, the Socialists played a big role on the electoral commissions. Despite the local strength of the PSL succeeded in producing voting figures that were better than average.¹³⁹ In Rzeszów and Stalowa Wola the PPS vote was thought to have gone against the government, while in Kraków not only did Żuławski tacitly support the opposition, but the ever-present friction between the local PPS and PPR had been sharply exacerbated by the summary replacement of the Socialist chairman of the provincial electoral commission by a communist.¹⁴⁰ The referendum underlined the fact that the communists would have both to intensify measures against the PSL network in the villages and secure greater co-operation from the Socialists if they were to arrange a satisfactory outcome to the elections. On their own they were still not ready organisationally to take on the

137 Ćwik op. cit., pp. 150-51.

138 In Warsaw 44.4% of chairmen of local electoral commissions during the referendum belonged to the PPS, see Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 375. In Katowice province 31.2% of the chairmen belonged to the PPS, see Kantyka PPS na Śląsku... op. cit., p. 254.

139 Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., pp. 206-7. In Kielce province 35.6% of commission chairmen were PPS members, compared with 41.1% belonging to the PPR.

140 Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 242; Ćwik op. cit., pp. 149-50, 157-58, 162. The petition drawn up by the left-wing of the PPS in August 1946 attributed the referendum result in Kraków to the 'complete paralysis of the united front', Bardach O dziejach... op. cit., p. 693.

opposition.

After the Referendum

The summer months of 1946, between the referendum and the unleashing by the PPR in the autumn of the offensive which dispersed the PSL and the underground and enabled the bloc parties to manage successfully the elections when they were finally held in January 1947, offered the last opportunity to return to the compromise of June 1945. By this stage, the chances of agreement were slight. The two main protagonists: the majority of the PSL led by Mikołajczyk, and the PPR, were determined to join battle. It was the Socialists and a minority within the PSL led by Kiernik and Wycech which endeavoured to avoid the clash.

The communists, shaken by their failure to win wider support in the referendum, took their retreat from the broad national front line of mid-1945 one step further. The 'general storm' in the spring had failed to fragment the PSL or curb its influence largely because the Socialists had been unwilling to co-operate in applying more than limited pressure on the opposition. After the referendum, the PPR leadership gave priority to strengthening the alliance with the Socialists as the springboard for a much more intense and effective offensive against the PSL. The purpose of the offensive would be to eliminate the bulk of the PSL from further political activity. In the communists' view the referendum had shown that only a small part of the PSL could be drawn into the 'democratic' camp, the majority led by Mikołajczyk being irredeemably linked with the 'reaction'.

Gomułka set out the Party's position in his first post-referendum speech, delivered at a meeting of the PPR and PPS aktyw in Warsaw on 6 July. While claiming that the bloc had won a great victory, his conclusions betrayed the failure of the Party's earlier strategy. He argued that the referendum had confirmed the PPR view that the PSL was incapable of playing a centrist role between the communists and their allies, on the one hand, and the anti-communist

underground on the other. It had also shown the continuing strength of the 'reaction', which was 'even stronger than we had thought'. Gomułka based this interpretation on the following analysis of the results. The referendum had provided a 'straightforward and clear-cut line of division between democrat and reactionary'. Among those who had cast negative votes, a small number, about 10-12%, had followed PSL instructions (i.e. 'no' only to question one). This section of the electorate could be considered as 'the right wing of the democratic camp' which had 'demonstrated its distaste for the present government while accepting the basis on which democratic Poland rests. This group is in opposition to the government, however that opposition is within the framework of democratic Poland'. The PPR was not friendly to this element, but was not hostile either and had no intention to persecute it or hinder its activity. On the other hand, the remainder of the opposition, the 'reactionary, fascist Mikołajczyk PSL', embracing all those who had cast more than one negative vote (i.e. a large majority of the voters in some areas) were to be eliminated from political life. Gomułka ended his speech with a call for 'a mighty, lightning offensive... against the reaction, against the Polish fascists, against the bandits and diversionaries...', the success of which, he stressed, would depend on the cohesiveness of the united front.¹⁴¹

The implication was that the referendum had confirmed the conviction of the PPR leadership that there was no possibility of achieving an electoral bloc with the PSL or even a substantial part of its following. Indeed, the PPR and PPS could only hope to retain power at the elections by means of a 'mighty offensive' against the PSL and the underground. In effect this would require the suspension of the broad national front which the communists had sought to construct with varying degrees of conviction since May 1945 and its substitution by what amounted to a temporary

¹⁴¹ Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone w Warszawie na zebraniu aktywu PPR i PPS, 6.7.46, Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., pp. 158-76.

proletarian dictatorship of the united front of the PPR and the PPS.

Mikołajczyk and the majority of the PSL leadership and activists were not deflected from their course by the outcome of the referendum, rather the opposite. The official results had come as no surprise. It had been apparent to Mikołajczyk for weeks before the vote and indeed before the PSL decided on a contest, that the communists planned to manage the results very carefully.¹⁴² However, according to the British ambassador, Mikołajczyk was 'so encouraged by the real results of the referendum which far exceeded his expectations'.¹⁴³ Opinion on the PSL executive and Council was strongly in favour of his opposition line and there is little doubt that grassroots party members would have resisted any compromise with the communists, even if the leadership had agreed to join a single list.¹⁴⁴ Mikołajczyk was ready to discuss limited local electoral pacts providing they formed part of a broader political understanding and did not leave the PPR hegemony intact. However, he was opposed to any discussion of a nationwide bloc. As in February, his real objective in any negotiations was to extract a firm date for the elections which he was determined would be basically competitive.¹⁴⁵

Mikołajczyk's general strategy was unaltered. He was still optimistic that the PSL could capture leadership of the government coalition by winning the confidence of the Russians, enlisting Western diplomatic and economic pressure, holding together the PSL electoral organisation and sustaining a mood of resistance and uncertainty in the country. His aim as reported to the British ambassador remained:

¹⁴² PRO FO371 56441 N7641.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 56443 N8804.

¹⁴⁴ Mikołajczyk thought that 'he would lose all influence with the rank-and-file of his party' if he joined the bloc, *ibid.*, 56447 N12480.

¹⁴⁵ Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., pp. 437-8n.

'victory for his party secured by international supervision, followed by the formation of a coalition Government: 50% of the Ministries being reserved for his people. His policy then would be to go slow, avoid antagonising the Russians, prevent as far as possible any reprisals, avoid a purge and concentrate on keeping agriculture and industry going. He was convinced he could get on with the Russians and that the immediate result would be an all-round relaxation of tension'.

The only alternative, he told the British, would come about if Poland were abandoned by the West and would involve

'the continued suppression of his party, rigged elections... and the affirmation of a totalitarian Communist regime. This would throw the people into despair, violence would increase, more and more people would take to the woods, public security would be reduced to nothing, the Government, unable to control the country with its own resources (he does not think the Government can rely on the militia) would call in more Soviet police and troops, and a state of smouldering civil war would ensue'.¹⁴⁶

He seems to have put much the same arguments to Lebediev during a long conversation in early July during which he again asserted that the Russians needed the PSL.¹⁴⁷

Internationally circumstances still seemed to favour his approach. The British were, it was true, averse to his idea of international supervision of the elections, chiefly on practical grounds, and the Americans, to the annoyance of the British and the US ambassador, Bliss Lane, were prone to lapses in their support for Mikołajczyk, as for example in their decision on the eve of the referendum to unfreeze credits to the Polish Government.¹⁴⁸ However, their basic attitude was underlined by the delivery to the Poles on 19 August of strong notes demanding a decision on

¹⁴⁶ PRO FO371 56444 N10042.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 56444 N9822.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 56443 N8804.

the date of the elections.¹⁴⁹ In September Mikołajczyk sent his emissary, Kulerski ("Mr. Carter"), to London to sound out the Foreign Office. The outcome was satisfactory. When Kulerski informed the British that Mikołajczyk 'earnestly hoped that we would pursue our policy of linking economic help to political questions and get the Americans to do the same', he was told that this was precisely what was being done.¹⁵⁰ The attitude of the Russians was at this time more puzzling than at almost any other time. Not only were there, as we shall see, clear signs that Stalin's confidence in the PPR was at a low ebb and that he was ready to look elsewhere to achieve stabilisation in Poland, but Molotov's overt appeal to German opinion in a speech on 10 July¹⁵¹ highlighted the shakiness of the communists' claim that they were the best guarantors of Polish interests and showed the risks involved if the pro-Western wing of the government, represented by Mikołajczyk, was forced out of office.

Internally PSL tactics altered little either. Despite growing repression, mass demonstrations continued. On 28 July Mikołajczyk addressed 10,000 peasants at Krotoszyn and delivered a strong attack on the government's economic and political policies. On 4 August he spoke at a rowdy meeting in Gdańsk.¹⁵² However, after the referendum emphasis was placed on developing a more disciplined, semi-conspiratorial cadre-organisation. In effect, the party stepped back towards the underground it had left in 1945 in an effort to counter infiltration, avoid the repressive measures taken against its activists by the authorities, and ensure that an organisational network remained intact

149 PRO FO371 56450 N14980.

150 Ibid., 56446 N12336.

151 D. Yergin Shattered Peace. The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State (London, 1978), p. 230.

152 Gazeta Ludowa 31.7.46, 7.8.46.

for activation during the elections.¹⁵³ In sum, the PSL during summer 1946, far from modifying its oppositionist stance, was digging in for the coming battle.

In the aftermath of the referendum the minority in the leadership led by Kiernik and Wycech and supported by Załęski and Niećko, which had reservations about Mikołajczyk's tactics pressed hard to keep open the possibility of a compromise. But although alarmed by the obvious determination of the PPR to go to any lengths to retain power and the general increase in tension which had found a bizarre expression a few days after the referendum in a pogrom of Jews in Kielce and the surrounding district,¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ PPR reports for August 1946 noted that the PSL 'has recently changed course and is tending to set up illegal circles', Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 429. In Olsztyn province a commissioner with 17 instructors was sent from party HQ to reorganise the local PSL. There followed a gradual disappearance 'of the normal organisational network... and its replacement by a network of secret delegates.... The most committed individuals (were) withdrawn from active work and formed into the so-called second team.... There was even talk of the existence of two provincial leaderships: the official and unofficial'. Wojnowski op. cit., pp. 159-60. In Poznań province, in accordance with central instructions, 'the whole election campaign was run on conspiratorial lines' Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., p. 145.

¹⁵⁴ On 4 July 1946 a mob attacked a tenement in Kielce inhabited by Jews. In the ensuing violence 34 Jews were murdered and 6 Militia men killed. In the days following, a further 31 Jews were murdered in the surrounding district. The trial of the alleged instigators of the pogrom was held within a week and nine of the twelve defendants, who included Militia men, were sentenced to death. Both the local UB and Militia commanders were briefly arrested in the aftermath of the incident. The Party's version of events, repeated at the trial, was that the pogrom was organised by NSZ and Anders supporters. However, the PSL maintained that the pogrom had been inspired by the communists to divert attention from the referendum fiasco (see Mikołajczyk op. cit., pp. 186-88). An evaluation of the evidence by the British Embassy doubted this interpretation and attributed the pogrom to a right-wing provocation against a background of small-town provincial anti-Semitism, the incompetence of the security forces and the indifference of the local Church authorities (PRO FO371 56444 N9871). See further: M. Chęciński *Poland: Communism, Nationalism Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1982), pp. 21-34; K. Kersten *Kielce - 4 lipca 1946 roku* *Tygodnik Solidarność* 4.12.81.

this group was only prepared to consider an electoral bloc in which the PSL had 40-50% of the seats and the hegemony of the PPR camp was broken.¹⁵⁵

The 'centrist' leaders of the Socialist Party: Osóbka-Morawski, Cyrankiewicz, Szwalbe and Rusinek also felt that the referendum had demonstrated the correctness of their calculations. On the one hand, it had shown that the hold of the left on power was tenuous and would not long survive a split in the 'united front' of the kind advocated by Żuławski and others on the 'right' of the party. And on the other, it had underlined the acute danger of drift away from the national unity platform of the PKWN and the coalition government towards a virtual dictatorship of the proletariat in which there would be little place for the PPS. They pointed to the need to avoid a recurrence of the mistakes of early 1945, fearing that the same indiscriminate condemnation of the London camp which had occurred then might now be applied to the PSL.¹⁵⁶ The Socialists were, despite the intransigence of the communists and much of the PSL, not to mention the PPS hardliners led by Matuszewski, determined to make one further, serious, concerted attempt to bring the Peasants into a bloc.

The strains within the united front apparent before the referendum were heightened in its aftermath by sharply divergent interpretations of its significance. The Socialists emerged as defenders of the national front conception, while the PPR adopted a line which a year before its own leadership had denounced as 'sectarian'. The divergence arose from the difference in the parties' assessment both of the viability of the broad governing coalition and the extent and character of the opposition. While Gomułka argued that the referendum had provided a clear-cut dividing line between 'democracy' and 'reaction', the PPS view was altogether more liberal. Rusinek, speaking for the Socialists at a sitting of the trade union executive in early

¹⁵⁵ Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 437.

¹⁵⁶ Robotnik 11.8.46.

July, argued that 'those who regard all the "no" votes as the votes of fascism and black reaction over-simplify the situation' and suggested that apart from right-wing and conservative elements, the "no" voters included also

'those objectively dissatisfied, the homeless, the poorly-paid, the hungry and ill-clothed. It was not calculated opposition or class-hostility to the new political system which they expressed, but only despair at their material condition, the social inequality which they see, at injustices, sorrow and disappointment experienced every day'.¹⁵⁷

In Socialist eyes the 'reaction' was much less threatening and all-pervasive than the communists claimed in proposing drastic counter-measures. Rather the united front should remain on the course it had adopted a year before. As Osóbka-Morawski put it to the Council of the PPS on 25 August:

'... the referendum confirmed our political position regarding the policy of the six-party bloc.... At the present historical stage only the policy of close agreement of the six parties is beneficial for Poland.... Whoever causes the break-up of the six-party bloc will carry a great responsibility before history and the nation. Of course, if a six-party bloc does not come about, there will be a five-party or four-party one and I am convinced that it will be victorious.... Only it is a shame that this same victory would have to be bought at the cost of serious conflict and undue sacrifice which with luck might be spared'.¹⁵⁸

Renewed talking on forming a six-party bloc began almost immediately after the referendum and continued on and off until early October when the PSL Council declared finally for a separate list. The discussions went through three distinct phases. During July the negotiations were held chiefly between Wycech and Kiernik, from the PSL, and

¹⁵⁷ Gazeta Ludowa 13.7.46.

¹⁵⁸ Robotnik 26.8.46.

representatives of the PPR. In August it was the PPS leadership which took the initiative with a rather more serious and determined attempt to achieve an understanding. During September it became apparent that this effort had failed and the PPS reluctantly moved back into line with the PPR, while Mikołajczyk's critics within the PSL fell in with the uncompromising stance of the majority of the party.

The first round of talks in July revealed the wide gap between the two sides. Mikołajczyk had agreed to Kiernik and Wycech holding discussions only with the proviso that 'there could be no question of a bloc'.¹⁵⁹ The communists for their part were not prepared to consider any other electoral arrangement or to go beyond giving the PSL (with 'Nowe Wyzwolenie') 25% of the seats in such a bloc. In addition, the exclusion of Mikołajczyk was to be a condition.¹⁶⁰ When the PSL executive met on 27 July to decide its attitude to these proposals, Wycech and Kiernik were unable to attract any support for a motion rejecting the bloc while leaving open the door for talks on a more limited electoral agreement. Mikołajczyk's motion insisting on a separate PSL list was passed almost unanimously,¹⁶¹ and on 2 August the party activists from the provinces gave his line their backing.¹⁶² The same week he renewed hostilities with speeches in Krotoszyn and Gdańsk. The PPR which had agreed to participate in the talks chiefly to convince the Socialists that a deal was impossible also resumed physical and propaganda attacks on the PSL at the end of July.¹⁶³ In their view the time for talking was over, the time to launch an offensive to disperse the

¹⁵⁹ Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 436n.

¹⁶⁰ Jutro Polski 15.12.46.

¹⁶¹ Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 437.

¹⁶² Borkowski Miejsce... op. cit., p. 77.

¹⁶³ Gazeta Ludowa 26.7.46. In June/July about 7 members of the PSL were murdered; in the period August/October 1946 at least 30 were killed, see Wilk Słownik... op. cit.

opposition had arrived.

The 'Banner of National Unity'

For the Socialists, however, this point had not yet been reached.¹⁶⁴ Adamant on the need for a bloc with the PSL, the PPS 'centrists' considered that greater determination was required to bring this about and that the communists would have to offer concessions to attract the PSL. These should include dropping the demand for Mikołajczyk's exclusion.¹⁶⁵ On 29 July 'Robotnik' carried the first of a cycle of articles by Osóbka-Morawski under the title 'Who will raise the banner of National Unity?'. This marked the beginning of a concerted drive by the PPS leaders to achieve a compromise in which their party would play a key role.¹⁶⁶ In the view of the Socialists, what was required was internal peace and not the further polarisation advocated by the communists and their own left wing:

'today, when we need unity so much and when that unity is so lacking, the PPS ought to make every effort to construct it as broadly and quickly as possible. I consider that the PPS is suited to this role. In order to achieve success in the area of national unity two basic things are necessary: to genuinely want it and to know how to achieve it. That the PPS wants it ought not to arouse any discussion or doubts'.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Mikołajczyk later acknowledged the role of the PPS in restraining the PPR. He told the PSL Supreme Council in October that after the referendum 'it was decided to take the nation by the throat and pay it back for voting as it did. This did not come about. Here we must give credit to the Polish Socialist Party, which did not wish to take upon itself the responsibility for what would follow'. Jutro Polski 15.12.46.

¹⁶⁵ Jutro Polski 15.12.46.

¹⁶⁶ Robotnik 29.7.46, 2.8.46, 5.8.46, 6.8.46.

¹⁶⁷ Robotnik 29.7.46.

The PPS was inclined to concede considerable ground to the PSL to win its accession to the bloc. They were ready to open talks with an offer of 33% of Sejm and Cabinet seats and some, such as Szwalbe and Wachowicz were willing to go as far as 40% - a figure which would have satisfied Kiernik. Osóbka stated publicly that his party envisaged 'such a balance and procedure in parliament, that without the agreement of PSL and SP members, (the Constitution) could not be passed'.¹⁶⁸

The PPS moves provoked a profound crisis in relations between the two workers' parties. The communists were deeply alarmed by the Socialists' open advocacy of a reconstruction of the government coalition so as to deprive them of their leading role. In their determination to prevent this, the PPR leaders seem to have contemplated abandoning the basis of the alliance with the PPS which had been central to their strategy since May 1945. This would have marked the end not only of the 'worker-peasant alliance', but also in effect of the 'united front' as well.

First, the communists attempted to oust Osóbka-Morawski from the premiership. In April, in order to reassure the PPS as repression against the opposition was stepped-up, Henryk Wachowicz, leader of the Lodz PPS, was appointed deputy-Minister of Public Security. On 1 August, just three days after the publication of Osóbka's call for national unity, 'Robotnik' though not the PPR press, announced that Wachowicz had resigned. The reason for this was that Wachowicz, probably with Osóbka's approval,¹⁶⁹ had ordered the release from arrest of a veteran Socialist, Antoni Wąsik; Radkiewicz, the communist Minister of Public Security, on hearing of this had ordered Wąsik's re-arrest.¹⁷⁰ Wąsik was not an important figure and doubtless the

¹⁶⁸ Robotnik 2.8.46.

¹⁶⁹ Mikołajczyk The Pattern... op. cit., p. 188.

¹⁷⁰ Gomulka Nasze stanowisko. Artykuł opublikowany w 'Głosie Ludu', 18.8.46, Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., pp. 194-95; Jutro Polski 8.9.46.

communists' main purpose was to reassert absolute control over security matters and indirectly to undermine Osóbka's position as prime minister.¹⁷¹ On 5 August the Socialists replied to this pressure for Osóbka's removal with what amounted to a show of force in Warsaw. Large crowds of PPS supporters marched through the city and loudly demonstrated in favour of Osóbka outside the prime minister's office.¹⁷² Cyrankiewicz stoutly defended the PPS line in his speech to the marchers:

'... we are an independent party and we are an equal party and we have every political and moral right to fight for that equality. A great campaign to consolidate society has been undertaken by Comrade Osóbka-Morawski in the name of the PPS. We need internal peace. A broad coalition of democratic parties, guaranteeing each other mutual co-participation in government and excluding all aspirations to mono-party rule, is required. The attempt has once more been undertaken to assure Poland peace through an understanding of the parties...'

He added the observation that 'amongst the perpetual suspicions that someone else has mono-party tendencies... lie frustrated hopes for one's own monopoly of power. This must end'.¹⁷³

Without it seems informing the Socialists, Gomułka, Bierut and Minc had in the meantime flown to Moscow for further talks with Stalin (2-7 August).¹⁷⁴ Stalin's advice did not however settle matters; Osóbka remained as premier, but the PPR remained firmly opposed to further talks with the PSL. On 13 August the Secretariat of the PPR Central Committee assessed the differences between the Mikołajczyk

¹⁷¹ Bardach O dziejach... op. cit., p. 696.

¹⁷² Robotnik 6.8.46.

¹⁷³ Robotnik 7.8.46 (emphasis as in the original). Cyrankiewicz was later to repudiate what he described as 'certain tendencies to pseudo-national demagoguery' in the leadership of the PPS in the period 1946-47, Robotnik 18.3.48.

¹⁷⁴ PRO FO371 56445 N10598.

and Wycech-Kiernik groups in the PSL and concluded that these were 'insignificant... on the critical issues they are entirely at one. They (Kiernik and Wycech - J.R.) have set their demand in the election at 40%, which shows there is no possibility of negotiating with this group'.¹⁷⁵ At the same time the Central committee seems to have given its approval and assistance to an attempt by the 'left' faction in the PPS to capture the leadership of the party and put an end to the 'centrists' overtures to the PSL.¹⁷⁶

This episode was the subject of fierce debate at the time and again more recently amongst historians of the PPS in Poland.¹⁷⁷ According to the 'centrists' the Matuszewski group attempted a putsch which was intended to remove the leadership by force. The 'left' claimed that its activities aimed only at organising internal opposition to the 'centrist' line of the party. Strains between the two factions had been apparent before the referendum and during July the 'centrists' did not prevent changes in the leadership of local party organisations which strengthened the 'right' at the expense of the 'left'.¹⁷⁸ On 29 July, the same day that Osóbka launched his campaign, Stanisław Skowroński, the most outspoken 'leftist' in the leadership and secretary of the Kielce organisation was expelled from the party over protests from the PPR.¹⁷⁹ On 9 August the 'left' responded by circulating amongst the aktyw a

175 Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 437.

176 Bardach O dziejach... op. cit., p. 696.

177 See: Bardach O dziejach... op. cit.; F. Baranowski W związku z artykułem Juliusza Baracha 'O dziejach powojennej PPS' Kwartalnik Historyczny R. LXXX, z.3, 1973, pp. 668-71; J. Bardach O wewnętrznym zróżnicowaniu w PPS w latach 1944-1946 ibid.; Baranowski Z dziejów... op. cit.. A commentary by E. Osóbka-Morawski, Uwagi do artykułu F. Baranowskiego pt. 'Z dziejów nurtu lewicowego powojennej PPS' has been placed in the Party's Central Archive (CA KC PZPR sygn. 4063), but has not been published, see Z pola walki 1978 nr. 3 (83), p.342.

178 For example, in the Rzeszów provincial organisation, see Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 251.

179 Robotnik 2.8.46; Bardach O dziejach... op. cit., p. 696n.

petition, signed by 28 leading figures in the party which warned that as the result of 'an offensive by hostile WRN elements the danger had arisen of 'a distortion in the political-ideological face' of the PPS which cast it in the role of a 'champion of compromise with the PSL and Mikołajczyk'. The petitioners denied the need for 'serious and unjustified concessions' to the PSL and declared their support for the communist conception of an offensive against the opposition. They also demanded the co-option of more 'leftists' to their inner leadership of the party (i.e. Secretariat and Political Committee).¹⁸⁰ The 'centrists' were not deflected however. In the provincial Socialist press Drobner and Wachowicz published articles supporting the leadership¹⁸¹ which drew a polemical reply from Gomułka,¹⁸² while Cyrankiewicz made a direct approach to Mikołajczyk, proposing talks.¹⁸³

At this stage, some of the 'leftists', including Skowroński and perhaps Matuszewski, planned and possibly attempted the putsch. Hochfeld, one of the leading 'centrists' gave his version of events to Denis Healey of the International Section of the Labour Party in a conversation a few weeks later, which Healey reported as follows:

'the Communist Party told the PPS that Moscow had forbidden them to approach Mikołajczyk again. The PPS refused to accept the instructions, so one of its own national executive members, Matuszewski, the Minister of Information, began to organise the control of the executive by crypto-communists, the expulsion of Cyrankiewicz and the others, and the fusion of the PPS with the Communist Party, all this to take place at the next meeting of the executive'.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Bardach O dziejach... op. cit., pp. 693-94.

¹⁸¹ B. Drobner Nasze polityczne oblicze, Naprzód 16.8.46, H. Wachowicz List do przyjaciela z PPR, Kurier Popularny 11,12,13.8.46.

¹⁸² Głos ludu 18.8.46.

¹⁸³ Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 237.

¹⁸⁴ PRO FO371 56446 letter D. Healey to M. Phillips, 12.9.1946.

Osóbka-Morawski, speaking to the PPS Council on 25 August, made the same claim: 'We have proof that a putsch was attempted, the take-over by force of the editorial offices of "Robotnik" and the Central Executive Committee...'¹⁸⁵ According to Hochfeld's version, the Socialists outflanked this coup by appealing direct to Moscow:

'... Cyrankiewicz heard of the plot and demanded to see Stalin. Stalin agreed, so Cyrankiewicz Szwalbe and Osóbka-Morawski flew to Moscow to ask Stalin two questions:

1) Does Stalin want a single-party state in Poland? If not, the PPS must be left independent within the limits of Soviet Foreign Policy, and given greater representation in the Polish Government in proportion to its greater mass support than the CP.

2) Does Stalin want civil war after fake elections, or will he agree to an attempt to persuade Mikołajczyk to enter common lists with a fairer proportion than suggested before? Stalin gave way on both points. The PPS is to have a larger representation in the government after the elections, and Mikołajczyk is to be approached again with a genuine offer of collaboration'.¹⁸⁶

The circumstantial evidence supports this description of events. The PPS leaders seem to have made a trip to Moscow on 18/19 - 21 August.¹⁸⁷ It was Berman, the Politburo member chiefly responsible for Kremlin-Party liaison, who according to Osóbka ordered the 'leftists' to call off their plans to seize the leadership.¹⁸⁸ Certainly, the PPS behaved after their supposed visit to Moscow with renewed

¹⁸⁵ Bardach O dziejach... op. cit., p. 696. According to one source, the leftist plotters planned either to intimidate the Supreme Council of the PPS, using an armed gang from Skowronski's organisation in Kielce, or to split the party and form a second organisation which would claim to be the PPS, see J. Holzer ('W. Pański') Agonia PPS, Socjaliści Polscy w sojuszu z PPR 1944-1948 (Warsaw, 1981), p. 15.

¹⁸⁶ PRO FO371 56446 letter D. Healey to M. Phillips, 12.9.1946.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 56446 N11074; L.M. Oak Free and Unfettered (Newtown, Montgomery, 1947), pp. 22-23.

¹⁸⁸ Bardach O dziejach... op. cit., p. 696.

confidence. The same day Osóbka had a lengthy conversation with the US ambassador¹⁸⁹ and on 25 August he had a ninety minute talk with Cavendish-Bentinck in which he 'made a strong plea that HMG should support the P(olish) S(ocialist) P(arty) on the ground that his party constituted a moderate element, and that if supported by HMG and (the) US Government (it) would have less reason to look to (the) Soviet Union'. Osóbka added that 'the elections would make no difference, and that it was necessary that Poland should be governed by a coalition of Communists, Socialists and a Peasant group, all of whom would have equal power but that the Socialist party, which would gain in strength, would together with the Peasant group, be able to control the C(ommunist) P(arty)'.¹⁹⁰ On 23 August the PPS re-opened talks with the PSL, offering 25% each for the PSL and the PPR, with 20% of the seats in the bloc for themselves and 30% for the other three parties. This formula came very close to breaking communist hegemony.¹⁹¹ Next, at a meeting of the party Council on 25/26 August the leadership moved against Matuszewski and his group which had been left at its mercy by the turn of events. A purge of the 'left-ists' was instituted, Matuszewski was suspended from the party and the leadership's efforts to achieve a bloc were given a vote of approval.¹⁹²

The PSL followed the dispute between the workers' parties closely and at its height on 18 August decided to hold a special congress on 15 September to decide election tactics, a move which may have encouraged the Socialists to

189 Robotnik 22.8.46.

190 PRO FO371 56446 N10853.

191 Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 437; PRO FO371 56446 N11074. Under this formula the PPR with the SL and SD would have had less than half the seats in the bloc: 45% (not 50% as envisaged in the February offer) and the PSL with the SP would have had more than one third (35% as against 30% offered in February), i.e. enough seats to block constitutional changes.

192 Syzdek op. cit., pp. 355, 358.

press on with their campaign. However, Mikołajczyk did not waver in his refusal to consider a bloc. He informed the PPS on 28 August that his party might agree to limited local pacts, but insisted on competitive elections in most areas.¹⁹³ Two days later he told his executive that since the Socialists' offer was confined to a general bloc, it was 'unacceptable' and that he was opposed to any further discussion of such a bloc, although some looser agreement giving a 'decisive majority' to the PSL, PPS and Popiel SP might be considered.¹⁹⁴ The same sitting decided that because of the postponement of the KRN due for 31 August at which the election ordinance and date were to have been settled, the PSL special Congress would also be put off.¹⁹⁵ The same evening Mikołajczyk in what appeared to the Socialists to be a calculated affront, left the country for three weeks (30 August to 19 September) to attend a conference of the F.A.O in Copenhagen.¹⁹⁶ From there he sent a secret emissary, Witold Kulerski ("Mr. Carter"), who told the British that 'there was as yet... no strongly led movement among leading Socialists which could be relied on'.¹⁹⁷

The final round of the campaign to draw the PSL or part of it into the bloc took place in early September. After further consultations with the Russians, the PPS, this time jointly with the PPR, repeated the offer of 25% of the seats in the next Sejm for the PSL and 'Nowe Wyzwolenie'. The PSL was given until 11 September to respond.¹⁹⁸ Kiernik again indicated a readiness to compromise if the

193 Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 437.

194 Jutro Polski 15.12.46.

195 Gazeta Ludowa 1.9.46.

196 Stenogram obrad Niezależnej Młodzieży Socjalistycznej w dniu 18 IX 1946 r., Krytyka no. 4, 1980, p. 59.

197 PRO FO371 56447 N12741.

198 Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 438; Stenogram obrad NMS... op. cit., p. 59.

PSL were given 40%,¹⁹⁹ but Mikołajczyk ignored the offer entirely.²⁰⁰

The communists considered that with the passage of the 11 September deadline, the time had come to begin the offensive against the PSL.²⁰¹ However, the 'centrist' leaders of the PPS, despite their growing conviction that a deal with the PSL was unattainable,²⁰² managed to keep the offer of a compromise on the table a little longer. On 13 September the workers' parties published a joint open letter to the PSL which in the redraft demanded by the Socialists once again called on the Peasants to respond to the proposals for a six-party bloc.²⁰³

The Socialists did not wait for the PSL's formal reply which was decided at the party's Supreme Council meeting on 6-7 October. On 26 September at a conference of the four bloc parties, Cyrankiewicz for the PPS agreed to abandon attempts to form a six-party bloc and accepted the exclusion of the PSL from the system of inter-party consultative committees.²⁰⁴ This amounted to the expulsion of the PSL from the national front and signified that the PSL would be prevented from exerting influence on the administration of the elections. The Socialists' change of course was announced in the press the next day.

External factors undoubtedly played a part in the decision of the PPS leadership. Stalin's personal views were no doubt an important influence. There is strong

199 Borkowski Pertrakcje... op. cit., p. 437n.

200 Stenogram obrad NMS... op. cit., p. 59.

201 Ibid..

202 Ibid.; Robotnik 8.9.46.

203 Ćwik op. cit., p. 171; Stenogram obrad NMS... op. cit., p. 59.

204 Robotnik 27.9.46. The decision seems to have been taken sometime before 17 September, when Szwalbe told a meeting of the provincial secretaries of the PPS that the PSL would not enter the bloc and that the PPS leadership had agreed 'to fight the PSL, but to fight in a reasonable way'. Stefaniuk Łódzka organizacja PPS 1945-1948 (Łódź, 1980), p. 121. Hochfeld implied the same at the ZNMS meeting on 18 September, Stenogram obrad NMS... op. cit., p. 59.

evidence that a joint delegation of the PPR and PPS leaders visited Moscow on 28-30 August for talks with the Russians on strategy.²⁰⁵ According to Mikołajczyk's account published in 1948 it was at this meeting that Stalin dictated how the elections and the repression of the opposition were to be conducted.²⁰⁶ It is indeed true that the talks came at a time when the Soviet government's policies at home were hardening distinctly.²⁰⁷ However, it is unlikely that Stalin ruled out further efforts to reach an agreement with Mikołajczyk. The immediate outcome of the visit was a renewed offer by the PPS and PPR of a deal which the communists had hitherto opposed. At the time the PSL leadership was far from discouraged by the visit. Kulerski, Mikołajczyk's emissary, told the British that the Russian attitude had shown the same flexibility which the Socialists had found during their separate visit a few days before. 'In general', Kulerski reported, 'Stalin had conveyed the impression that he must have peace in Poland and that the present regime had not conducted its affairs in a manner which ensured this. He had intimated that they must really try and do a deal with the PSL on less unfair lines...'.²⁰⁸ The talks, as a perceptive Socialist commentator later wrote, were probably inconclusive.²⁰⁹

Apart from direct Soviet advice on the internal situation, it seems that the evolution of East-West relations with regard to Germany and the implications of this for the permanence of Poland's western frontiers had a major influence on the attitude of the PPS leaders. As we have said, Molotov's pro-German speech in July doubtless contributed

205 PRO FO371 56446 N11370; Mikołajczyk The Pattern... op. cit., pp. 190-91; "R" The Fate of Polish Socialism Foreign Affairs Vol. 28 nr. 1, October 1949, p. 131.

206 Mikołajczyk The Pattern... op. cit., pp. 190-91.

207 Z. Brzezinski The Soviet Bloc (Harvard, 4th ed., 1971), p. 44.

208 PRO FO371 56446 N12336.

209 "R" The Fate... op. cit., p. 131.

to the determination of the PPS to achieve national unity at home. On 6 September the US Secretary of State, Byrnes, made his reply in a speech in Stuttgart which placed a question mark over American backing for the Oder-Neisse line. Despite Mikołajczyk's public criticism of the speech,²¹⁰ the PPR seized the opportunity to tar the whole pro-Western orientation and the PSL in particular with accusations of unreliability on the issue of the frontiers. Byrnes' speech cast doubt on the value which the Socialists had placed on the continued participation of the PSL in the government coalition. It also underlined the need to secure Stalin's firm support for the Oder-Neisse frontier and to restore his confidence in the ability of the PPR-PPS alliance to stabilise the political situation in Poland. Stalin may have given the Socialists assurances on the frontier question during the talks held in August. Molotov's statement of 17 September confirming the integrity of Poland's frontiers made the Soviet position clear.²¹¹

The PPS leaders were also under various forms of pressure from the communists. As we shall see in the next chapter, the PPR reviewed its line towards the PPS at the Central Committee Plenum held on 18 September. The Plenum revived the prospect of a merger of the two workers' parties, an issue which had largely been dropped since the period of the Lublin Committee. It also began a campaign to influence PPS policy 'from below' through joint-meetings of local activists of the two parties. More personal forms of pressure may also have been brought to bear on the PPS leaders; Rusinek, for instance, was from May to September 1946 under investigation by a special prosecutor after allegations had been made about his conduct in Stutthof concentration camp during the war.²¹² It is doubtful though

²¹⁰ Gazeta Ludowa 11.9.46.

²¹¹ S. Trepczyński i N.N. Rodionow (eds.) Polska Ludowa - Związek Radziecki 1944-1974. Zbiór dokumentów i materiałów (Warsaw, 1974), p. 133.

²¹² Robotnik 13.9.46.

if these factors played much part in the Socialists' acceptance of the four-party bloc. The pressures on the PPS had been much greater in July-August when the centrists had out-manoeuvred their left-wing critics and the PPR. Moreover, the party leadership's abandonment of the six-party bloc was accompanied by re-emphasis of the special role for an independent PPS in Poland's future and the consolidation of the 'centrists'' control over the party organisation.

However, the fundamental reason for the PPS leadership's decision to abandon its fight for a six-party bloc was its acceptance that in view of the entrenched positions of both the PSL and the PPR this objective was simply unattainable. Consistent with the strategy they had pursued since 1944, the PPS 'centrists' believed that in these circumstances they had no choice but to ally their party with the PPR in the coming confrontation with the opposition. Only in this way could they ensure that power would remain in the hands of the left without resort to direct Soviet intervention, and preserve the possibility that the PPS would be able to broaden the base and moderate the policies of the government formed after the elections. Hochfeld, the leading 'centrist' theoretician, explained the leadership's reasoning in a confidential speech delivered to a conference of the PPS youth organisation in September. He frankly told the delegates that in the absence of agreement on the bloc, the alternative to fabrication of the elections would be national disaster:

'... We will not give up power... we are a party which took power in exceptional circumstances at a time when there was the threat of a political void. To hand over power in such a moment... would lead to catastrophe, not to some different government. If only it were a matter of handing power to Mikołajczyk. But no, it would be handing power to anarchy. We would find ourselves between the hands of the NSZ and intervention by the Soviet Union... Under no condition whatsoever can we allow such a situation to arise. So it is an open secret that if it comes to an electoral

showdown, those elections will be fabricated...'213

He had no doubts that the communists possessed the means to manage the elections, nor any illusions about what this might mean for Poland's future development:

'... the PPR has the sources of power in its hands - the army, the security forces, a large part of the state apparatus, industry ... They can do as they please. They do not want to use this power against society but they are able to do so. And then there would be nobody to help; Uncle Sam will not come to our aid; at the most he will suspend a loan. But that will only damage Polish society, not help. Soviet mistrust would increase enormously and the possibility of rebuilding Poland with our own hands would sharply diminish. Our ideas of socialist humanitarianism and our hopes of rebuilding the Polish economy by raising the living standards of Polish citizens, and not at the human cost and personal sacrifice that was necessary in the Soviet Union, will be gravely at risk...'214

Hochfeld saw little possibility of avoiding this outcome, but nevertheless considered that the PPS should persevere with its efforts to extend its influence and salvage what could be saved from the break-up of the coalition government:

'Will the bloc come about? This is rather doubtful. The opposition is so great, that in view of the hostile attitude of the PPR, our efforts to bring these two madmen to an agreement will be impossible. What should we do? Maybe throw the towel in and tell the PPR to govern on its own. Or we could say something different. We will not be the ones to fabricate the elections, but we hope to enter the new situation as as strong a factor as possible, with the greatest amount of power in our hands... The PSL

213 Stenogram obrad NMS... op. cit., pp. 57-58.

214 Ibid., p. 57.

has already lost its opportunity; it's finished. The PPS remains on the battlefield.... It remains in order in a difficult situation to win that 5% chance of saving Poland's links with the West... We must do the dirty work in order that a cleansing of the atmosphere for clean work may follow from this 5 or 10% chance. This might or might not succeed, we do not know, but we must not give up'.²¹⁵

As we shall see in the next chapter, the PPS leadership attempted to put this strategy into action in the following months. But many party members rated its chance of success even lower than Hochfeld and sensed that Poland had reached a crossroads rather than a temporary detour. As one of the speakers who replied to Hochfeld's speech put it:

'We will see that after the liquidation of the PSL, the turn of the PPS will come. The conception of dependence on the Soviet Union is an opportunity for the PPR. There is no place for us within that conception... Fabricated elections will weaken us, we are selling out. The consequence of fabricated elections is sovietisation of Poland'.²¹⁶

The Church and the Catholic Camp (II)

The development of a generally cool but correct relationship between Church and state authorities during 1945 has been described above.* In spring 1946 as the communists commenced hostilities against the PSL in earnest and Mikołajczyk took up the challenge, relations between the government and the Church began to show some strain. This was to be seen in a gradual shift in the Church's position, from neutrality towards tacit support for the opposition, and increasing pressure from the communists in an effort to stop this trend.

* See Chapter 4, pages 207-15.

²¹⁵ Stenogram obrad NMS... op. cit., pp. 59-60.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

The political tension in the country was discussed by the Bishops in conference at Jasna Góra on 22-24 May. In the communique issued afterwards, the Bishops roundly condemned the lawlessness and violence, the responsibility for which they placed implicitly, though unmistakably, on the communists.²¹⁷ Shortly afterwards Borejsza sent a representative to Hlond to warn him that the Party viewed the communique as a 'declaration of war' and that reprisals would be taken. But this threat seems to have been designed chiefly to lever Hlond into making a statement favourable to the government or at least publicly visiting Bierut as President before the referendum. Hlond refused to do either.²¹⁸ Instead, on the very eve of the referendum, a letter from the Pope containing a veiled attack on communism was read out in the Polish churches.²¹⁹

Once more the Kraków Catholics showed a rather more conciliatory attitude than Hlond and the Church as a whole. Their reluctance to assume a position of fundamental opposition or negation towards the new political order was expressed in an article by Jerzy Turowicz published in 'Tygodnik Powszechny' on April 7.²²⁰ Popiel and his followers in the leadership of the Party of Labour took much the same view. In February the SP executive had called for a compromise between Mikołajczyk and the 'Democratic Bloc' and in May at the congress of the Kielce organisation of the SP he delivered a sharp attack on Mikołajczyk for not facing up to political realities and accepting the logical consequence of his return to Poland by joining the bloc.²²¹ Popiel seems indeed to have seen his role in the

217 Komunikat z plenarnej konferencji Episkopatu Polski, Jasna Góra, 24.5.46, Listy pasterskie episkopatu...
op. cit., pp. 38-39.

218 PRO FO371 56443 N9185.

219 Ibid..

220 Kozik op. cit., pp. 234-35.

221 Bujak op. cit., pp. 271, 275.

party, and of the party in the country, as essentially that of a mediating force.²²² However the tough line of the Episcopate, the increasingly violent trend of communist policy and the strong sympathy for the opposition amongst the SP grassroots made this line very difficult to maintain. In March Popiel told the British he was on the verge of dissolving the party, lamenting that 'it was quite impossible to carry on. It really was a delusion to think otherwise'.²²³ In May the leaders closest to the Church raised once more the question of disbanding the party.²²⁴

Instead, according to Bujak under pressure from the Episcopate,²²⁵ the SP - or more accurately the Popiel faction - moved over to Mikołajczyk's oppositionist position. On May 21/22 the party executive adopted a formula advising its supporters to vote the same way as the PSL in the coming referendum, while stating that a pro-government vote (three times 'yes') was also admissable. The 'Zryw-ites' concurred for fear that otherwise the party would be dissolved.²²⁶ This formula failed to prevent an open split between left and right during the campaign. While Popiel and his supporters campaigned for a 'no' vote to question one, the communists, Socialists and 'Zryw' faction endeavoured to swing the party back to its former neutralist line. At a meeting of the national executive on 25 June only Popiel's casting-vote defeated a motion censuring the activities of the 'right', after Józef Gawrych, hitherto a supporter of Popiel,²²⁷ had gone over to 'Zryw'.²²⁸

222 Bujak op. cit., pp. 266-68, 234-35.

223 PRO FO371 56436 N3492.

224 Bujak op. cit., p. 290.

225 Ibid., p. 277.

226 Ibid., p. 281.

227 Gawrych was particularly vulnerable to communist pressure. Before the war he had been active in the Silesian Christian Democratic movement and had run its anti-communist intelligence section during the 1921 uprising. In the 1930s as a member of the Silesian Sejm he had joined the right-wing National Party.

228 Bujak op. cit., p. 283. Felczak was absent ill and died a few days later. His replacement on the executive, another 'Zryw' supporter, gave the group a majority of one.

The 'Zryw' faction refused to accept this result and on the eve of polling issued public calls for a pro-government vote.

Complicating the dispute within the SP over referendum tactics was the forthcoming party congress, for although the 'Zryw' faction had momentarily captured control of the national executive, no more than 5-10% of congress delegates were on their side.²²⁹ The expansion of the SP in early 1946 had been less selective than the 'Zryw-ites' had hoped and been based chiefly on the old Christian Democratic strongholds, Silesia and Kraków, rather than the Christian labour tradition of western Poland where the 'left' was rather stronger.²³⁰ The communists tried to correct this trend by arresting activists from the 'right' of the party,²³¹ but at one provincial conference after another the rank-and-file demonstrated their support for opposition to the government and weakened the 'Zryw' group.

The conflict came to a head immediately after the referendum. The communists as we have seen were reeling from the unexpected size of their defeat and their united front with the Socialists was strained to breaking-point. Simultaneously they were faced with the prospect of a take-over of the Party of Labour by the 'right' at its Congress due to be held on 19-20 July. It is worth noting that 'Zryw' was prepared to accept a compromise which would have given Popiel a clear majority on the executive while leaving them with 40% of the seats. They would not accept Popiel's offer of 25% and demanded instead a postponement

229 Bujak op. cit., p. 295.

230 The membership of the SP at its peak in mid-1946 was probably about 100,000. In Silesia it has been variously estimated at between 16-60,000 members, see Gołębiowski *Pierwsze lata...* op. cit., p. 333; Bujak op. cit., p. 250; Potomski op. cit., p. 68. In Kraków it had some 9,000 members, see Kozik op. cit., p. 230 and in Poznań about 10,000, see Bujak op. cit., p. 238. It was also fairly strong in Łódź city, Częstochowa and Bydgoszcz.

231 See above, page 226.

of the Congress and purge of the membership.²³² Szwalbe's attempt to mediate resulted in a meeting of the two factions with himself and Zambrowski on 13 July at which Szwalbe appealed to Popiel to accept the terms offered by 'Zryw', promising at the same time a relaxation of the authorities' measures against the SP. Zambrowski, speaking 'brutally, but for the first time sincerely', took a tougher line. According to Popiel,

'he defended the methods used against the SP. They were in present Polish realities proper and necessary. After the experience with the PSL - Zambrowski said, we cannot allow the unhindered growth of a second political party, all the more dangerous than the PSL in that it rested on a unified ideological position. These words clearly showed and I understood them to mean that the other side had also had enough of this bizarre "co-operation"...'233

No agreement was reached and the following day the take-over of the party by the 'Zryw-ites' took place, the Congress was declared postponed and several of Popiel's supporters, though not Popiel himself, were suspended from the executive. After the protests of the 'right' had been rejected by the prime minister and the KRN, it announced on 18 July that the party had suspended its activity. Within a month the local organisation of the party had been largely disbanded, while the minority set about salvaging what they could.

Mikołajczyk claimed that the elimination of the SP was a rehearsal by the communists for their coming attack on the PSL.²³⁴ This is unlikely. The communists had a clear interest in maintaining the existence of a broadly neutral Catholic party in which sympathetic elements had a strong influence. The dissolution of the SP followed its marked

232 CAHSD/KW SP Memoriał i uchwały KW SP 1946-47, letter from KW ZG SP to Prezydium KRN, 15.7.46.

233 Popiel op. cit., pp. 202-3.

234 PRO FO371 56440 N10034.

shift towards the opposition and many weeks of pressure to force it to resume its initial unaligned stance. The communists were even ready to concede Popiel a majority on the executive to achieve this. As it was the bridge which the government bloc had established with the Catholic camp was now closed. In September the Bishops bluntly rejected the claims of the 'Zryw-ite' SP to represent Catholic opinion²³⁵ and although it survived as a separate organisation until 1950 it remained isolated and fissile with nothing like the popular base of the party in 1945/46.²³⁶ The Socialists certainly felt a mistake had been made and in September 1946 and again in spring 1947 encouraged Popiel's attempts to form a new Christian Party of Labour.²³⁷ The root cause of the decision of the SP 'right' seems to have been their clear preference by mid-1946 for withdrawing from politics rather than compromising on the oppositionist character of their party.

This seems to have suited the Church which as polarisation took place in the country, found it increasingly embarrassing to be identified with a particular party so closely. If the SP resumed a middle position the Church would be seen as distancing itself from the opposition. If, on the other hand, the SP allied itself with the PSL, the Church would be drawn into open confrontation with the communists.²³⁸ In fact, the rift between the Church and the government grew wider in any case as the elections approached. Church statements criticised the government

235 Komunikat z plenarnej konferencji Episkopatu Polski, 8-10.9.46, Listy pasterskie episkopatu... op. cit., pp. 45-46. This was confirmed in the Episcopate's statement of 22.10.46, see Popiel op. cit., p. 284.

236 The membership of the SP declined from about 27,000 at the end of 1947 to less than 18,000 in 1950 when the party was dissolved. Widy-Wirski had joined the communists in 1949; Stefan Brzeziński and others continued activity in the SD.

237 Popiel op. cit., pp. 230-31, 272, 281.

238 Bujak op. cit., p. 290.

and gave tacit support to the PSL. At the third postwar conference of the Episcopate at Jasna Góra on 8-10 September, the bishops repudiated the pro-government rump of the SP and issued a proclamation on the elections which reasserted the right of the Episcopate to involve itself in public affairs, forbade Catholics to join parties whose principles or activities were in conflict with Christian teaching, and told the faithful not to vote for 'those lists whose programmes or methods of government are inimical to common sense, the well-being of the Nation and the state, Christian morality or the Christian view of the world'.²³⁹ The left-wing parties saw the declaration as a victory for Hlond's tough policy towards the government.²⁴⁰ This did not deflect the communists from their cautious line towards the Church. Despite personal attacks on Hlond,²⁴¹ the Party carefully avoided being drawn into open conflict with the Church and continued to cultivate its remaining links with Catholic circles throughout the election period, to little effect, as we shall see.

²³⁹ Orędzie Episkopatu Polski w sprawie wyborów do Sejmu, 10.9.46, Listy pasterskie episkopatu... op. cit., pp. 40-44.

²⁴⁰ Robotnik 15.9.46.

²⁴¹ Robotnik 7.7.46, 14.7.46.

CHAPTER SIX

'A MIGHTY LIGHTNING OFFENSIVE' (September 1946 - Spring 1947)

Mobilising the Party-State Apparatus

Despite the Socialists' last-ditch efforts to keep open the possibility of a deal with Mikołajczyk, in September the communists pressed ahead with preparations for the 'mighty, lightning offensive' which Gomułka had called for two months before. Demonstrations held on 8 September to protest against Byrnes' Stuttgart speech served as a symbolic opening shot, and in Warsaw ended with a mob sacking the offices of 'Gazeta Ludowa', the PSL's daily newspaper.¹

On 18 September the Central Committee of the PPR met in plenary session for the last time before the elections to consider the general political situation. Only fragmentary extracts from the speeches made at the Plenum have been published. However, it is clear from these and the resolution which was carried that the discussion centred on two main issues: relations with the PPS, which we will look at in the next section, and the campaign to crush the PSL and the underground in the run-up to the elections.

The Central Committee presented the divide between the Democratic Bloc and the PSL in stark terms:

'... the elections must settle the great historical confrontation between progress and backwardness; between democracy and fascism; between the road leading to a great and prosperous Poland with its frontiers resting on the Oder Neisse and the Baltic, and the road of political recklessness and national catastrophe; between the sacred rights of working men, the peasant and the white-collar worker, and the base interests of parasites, profiteers speculators, ex-landowners and dispossessed monopolists'.²

¹ Gazeta Ludowa 10.9.46.

² Uchwała plenum KC PPR 'O najważniejszych momentach sytuacji politycznej Polski', 18.9.46, PPR... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 147.

The resolution reaffirmed the Party's commitment to a limited form of pluralism, offering:

'... complete freedom for the opposition parties if in defending their principles and distinctive programmes they separate themselves from and combat actively all forms of fascist ideology and methods, as well as every kind of illegal struggle or terror'.³

There would be no place for the PSL which the Plenum claimed had 'placed itself outside the democratic camp' and was 'tightening its alliance with the fascist underground and the fascist emigration'. In a clear reference to the coming offensive, the Central Committee warned that:

'... Polish democracy has proved that it has sufficient strength to thwart the reaction's every move. PSL calculations on obtaining dominance in Poland by allying themselves with the underground and getting help from their foreign protectors will meet with the determined resistance of the masses and will be completely crushed'.⁴

The election campaign would require 'the mobilisation of all the constructive forces in the nation' to 'crush and shatter the centres of the reaction in Poland'.⁵

In the view of the Party leadership there was a clear cleavage between the 'democratic camp' on the one side, and the 'reactionary camp', including the PSL, on the other. Great stress was placed on the linkage between the PSL and the underground and the association of the PSL with espionage and subversion. One of the main tasks of the aktyw in the period leading up to the elections would be '... to reveal the true face of the PSL: in reality the

3 Uchwała plenum KC PPR 'O najważniejszych momentach sytuacji politycznej Polski', 18.9.46, PPR... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 146.

4 Ibid., p. 145.

5 Ibid., p. 148.

ally of Anders and the bands of the fascist underground...⁶ PSL branches were described as often being no more than a legal cover for the activity of the WiN and NSZ.⁷ The Plenum discussed ways of giving publicity to the alleged connections between the PSL and the illegal opposition, including the use of political trials, and the identification of the two was a constant theme of trials in the following months.⁸ Much less emphasis than in the past was placed on the presence of 'democratic' elements in the PSL which might be won over.⁹ The leadership's clear message to the Party rank-and-file was to deal with the PSL in the same indiscriminate and repressive way as it was dealing with the armed underground. In effect, the Party was acknowledging that it had been unable to isolate the 'reaction' and that its offensive would embrace not only the die-hard anti-communist right, but wide sections of centre and left-of-centre opinion grouped within and around the PSL.

In this situation, the crucial strategic question was, as we have seen, whether the internal resources at the disposal of the PPR would be adequate to the task of neutralising the opposition and managing the elections without provoking serious international repercussions or a political destabilisation at home in which the Russians might decide that they had to intervene directly. As Bierut put it:

'We are living through critical times when old political structures die away and new ones come into being... the task of politicians

⁶ Uchwała plenum KC PPR 'O najważniejszych momentach sytuacji politycznej Polski', 18.9.46, PPR... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 148.

⁷ Ibid., p. 145.

⁸ Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... p. 56; cf. Gazeta Ludowa 17,18.10.46.

⁹ For instance, the September Plenum political resolution made no mention of winning over 'democratic' elements from the PSL.

and leaders is to steer the state in a way which will spare the nation from unnecessary loss and reduce the unavoidable conflict to a minimum.¹⁰

In late 1946 it was still an open question whether the communists would be able to achieve this. The fact that they did was due principally to the successful mobilisation of the Party organisation and the organs of the state under communist control, particularly the central and local bureaucracy, the army, the Militia and the security forces.

The PPR expanded rapidly in the latter part of 1946 and early 1947, and at the same time there was a mass activation of its members to carry out tasks associated with the election campaign. Membership grew from 347,000 in June, to 420,000 in September, to 556,000 in December 1946 and by June 1947 had reached 849,000.¹¹ As before, organisations in the western and northern territories increased in size faster than those in central and eastern Poland and the proportion of urban workers increased as the Party continued to shed its predominantly peasant character of 1944-45.¹²

Motives for joining the PPR were various. It is important not to discount the genuine appeal of the Party's programme in radical and left-wing quarters. The Party displayed a vitality and offered a vision in the 1940s which was eroded in later years. Others were drawn to the PPR because it seemed the most effective route to participation in the political, cultural and economic regeneration of Poland.¹³ For many others Party membership provided an

¹⁰ Jutro Polski 29.9.46.

¹¹ PPR... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 212, PPR... i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., p. 287. The September 1946 figure is given in Gołębiowski i Góra op. cit., p. 36.

¹² The percentage of peasants in the membership of the PPR declined from 28.1% at the beginning to 23.2% at the end of 1946; in the same period workers increased from 61.0% to 64.7%, PPR ... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 213.

¹³ On this point, see L. Kołakowski The Intelligentsia in Poland: Genesis of a Revolution, ed. A. Bromberg (New York, 1983), p. 58.

opportunity for social advancement. But these were constant factors that can have played little part in the sudden expansion of the Party in the election period. Nor is there any convincing evidence of any spontaneous movement of opinion which could explain the growth. In fact, most new members appear to have joined the PPR not through spontaneous choice, but because material pressures or incentives of one kind or another were brought to bear. In the countryside, for example, Party membership was not correlated with differences in size of land ownership, but was heavily concentrated amongst peasants and former agricultural labourers who had benefited from the land reform.¹⁴ In the towns strong pressure seems to have been placed on white-collar and manual workers to join the PPR. The personnel supervisors who were attached to most offices and factories to ensure that the more important posts were occupied by government supporters appear to have stepped up their activity before the elections.¹⁵ The British Consul in Lodz reported that workers in government-run undertakings had been issued with discharge notices, with the offer of re-employment on condition that they joined the PPR.¹⁶ The rationing system and housing allocations provided other means to persuade people to join the Party.

These methods of recruitment were effective, particularly in the towns, and especially amongst office-workers, managers, government employees and the like, as a means of extending the influence of the Party and in weakening the sense of solidarity which was essential to sustain the opposition. However the level of commitment and political education of the recruits was often very low. In 1946 systematic political training of PPR members had hardly begun.¹⁷ The situation was particularly bad in the

¹⁴ Ryszka op. cit., p. 262.

¹⁵ PRO FO371 56452 N15949.

¹⁶ Ibid., 56449 N14649.

¹⁷ The Training Department of the Central Committee of the PPR was not established until March 1947, Kuśmierski Propaganda polityczna PPR w latach 1944-1948 (Warsaw, 1976), p. 96. See also Wytyczne Sekretariatu KC PPR w

countryside, where the Party remained very weak. Rural cells tended to be little interested in affairs outside their locality and not infrequently members were said to be under the influence of the Church.¹⁸ The expansion of the Party was primarily a consequence of its tightening grip on the state and economic apparatus: it did not represent a real broadening of the popular base of the PPR which remained narrower than that of any other communist party in eastern Europe.¹⁹

The election involved an unprecedented mobilisation of these members at all levels. A special network of trójki (triumvirates) was established within the party at provincial, district and local level to organise the campaign, and all members were required to follow their instructions in the period until the elections. As a rule, one member of the trójka was simultaneously the chairman or deputy-chairman of the electoral commission responsible for administering the elections and counting the votes in each area. Another was in charge of the citizens' electoral committees which were established throughout the country, typically to serve a village, a block of flats or a

contd...

sprawie szkolenia kadr i politycznego wychowania członków partii, February 1947, PPR... i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., pp. 33-37.

- 18 J. Szczepkowski Problemy rozwoju organizacyjnego PZPR w okresie scalenia organizacji partyjnych po zjednoczeniu PPR i PPS (xii 1948 - xi 1949), Z pola walki 1967 nr. 1 (37), pp. 32-33; Uchwała Sekretariatu KC PPR oceniająca przebieg obchodów Święta Ludowego, May 1948, PPR... i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., p. 236.

- 19 The numerical strength of communist parties in various east European states in relation to total population in 1946 was as follows:

	<u>Poland</u>	<u>Czecho.</u>	<u>Bulgaria</u>	<u>Hungary</u>	<u>Germany (Soviet)</u>
Population	23.90m	12.08m	6.97m	9.20m (1948)	20.51m
CP membership	0.42m (Sep 46)	1.08m (Mar 46)	0.50m (Mar 46)	0.65m (Sep 46)	1.30m (Apr 46)

Brzezinski op. cit., p. 86; N. Kołomejczyk Rewolucje ludowe w Europie 1939-1948 (Warsaw, 1973), p. 352.

factory or office.²⁰ Although the Party was unable to establish a full network of trójki²¹ and often had to rely on cadres from outside to man them (in Kraków province, 1,000 activists were brought in from Silesia to reinforce district committees),²² the apparatus seems to have been generally effective in securing the Party's control over the electoral machinery and ensuring a high level of participation by PPR members in the campaign. The most reliable cadres were appointed to the electoral commissions, of which there were some 5,000 in the country as a whole. These were manned largely, or in some areas, exclusively, by the PPR. Although there were only about a third as many commissions as there had been in the referendum, the numbers of cadres required to staff them was still considerable, over 1,500 in Lublin province and more than 2,000 in Kraków province, for example.²³ The role of PPR members in the citizens' committees was important also. The purpose of the committees was to mobilise the other Bloc parties and non-party sympathisers, to organise canvassing and, above all, to make arrangements for open, collective voting.²⁴ Some 5,000 PPR members in Kraków province, 11,000 in Warsaw city and 19,000 in Upper Silesia sat on the committees.²⁵ In all, about 200,000 Party members took

20 Instrukcja KC PPR w sprawie pracy partyjnej trójki wyborczej w obwodzie głosowania, November 1946, PPR ... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., pp. 167-70.

21 In 376 out of 527 polling districts in Kraków province, 183 out of 267 in Białystok province, 345 out of 470 in Lublin province, 351 out of 386 in Rzeszów province; Ćwik op. cit., p. 190, Majecki op. cit., p. 165, Olszewski PPR... op. cit., pp. 306, 308, Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 271.

22 Ćwik op. cit., p. 198.

23 Ibid., p. 198; Olszewski PPR... op. cit., p. 306.

24 Instrukcja KC PPR dotycząca działalności agitacyjnej w obwodzie wyborczym, 1.12.46, PPR...i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 173; Uchwała Sekretariatu KC PPR o konieczności rozbudowy form organizacyjnych w miejskich i wiejskich organizacjach partyjnych, January 1947, PPR...i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., p. 22.

25 Ćwik op. cit., p. 192; Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 380; Rechowicz Pierwsze... op. cit., p. 93.

part in door-to-door canvassing.²⁶

The Party also paid special attention to expanding ORMO in the immediate pre-election period. A Central Committee circular issued in October instructed Party committees to assign quotas of members to ORMO in order to increase its overall strength from 70,000 to 150,000 by 1 December. The PPS and SL were also to be asked to provide recruits. Units were to be formed in each town, rural commune and place of work.²⁷ Although the target strength does not appear to have been reached, 106,000 ORMO reservists were deployed on election day.²⁸ In other words, some 60,000 Party members were placed under arms for the campaign.²⁹

The Party apparatus in the state bureaucracy was also mobilised to ensure that the organs of central and local government were pitched against the opposition. Thus, publicity on behalf of the Bloc parties was co-ordinated and distributed by the Ministry of Information and Propaganda.³⁰ More fundamentally, the communists, with the support of the other Bloc parties, made maximum use of their majorities on the KRN and in the provincial national councils to make certain that the administration of the elections would be firmly under their control. The electoral law was carried by the KRN on 22 September by a majority of 306 to 42. Apart from providing for a distribution of seats which discriminated in favour of the Bloc by overrepresenting the western and northern territories and industrial centres where the PSL was less well organised, the law allowed wide scope for manipulation and malpractice. The main criticisms made by the PSL were as follows.

26 Kuśmierski op. cit., p. 247.

27 Okólnik KC PPR w sprawie działalności ORMO, October 1946, PPR...i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., pp. 149-51.

28 Plikas op. cit., p. 255.

29 At the beginning of 1947, 56% of ORMO were members of the PPR, Syzdek op. cit., p. 371.

30 Kuśmierski op. cit., p. 249.

First and foremost, the administration of the elections was entrusted to the electoral commissions whose members were to be appointed by the provincial national councils (and not, as in the referendum, the district national councils on which the PSL was often strongly represented).³¹ As a consequence, the PSL was almost entirely excluded from influence on the conduct of the elections.³² Moreover, the law did not define the rights of tellers. In practice, commissions insisted that PSL tellers obtained certificates of good character from the UB before they were admitted to the count, with the result that in contrast to the referendum, only a handful of PSL and independent witnesses succeeded in attending.³³ The reduced number of polling districts facilitated central control over the count and in rural areas often meant that peasants had to travel long distances in order to cast their votes. The commissions were empowered to strike from the register people alleged to have collaborated with the Germans during the war or to be involved with the underground. Large numbers of PSL sympathisers seem to have been struck off on these grounds.³⁴ These measures and the invalidation of lists of PSL candidates in 10 constituencies (i.e. one fifth of the total), all areas where the peasant movement was particularly active, and the widespread application of open, collective voting on January 19, ruled out any real possibility of the PSL winning a substantial number of seats and ensured that the communists would have free rein to produce a favourable result.

However, the purpose of the election offensive was not only to frustrate the electoral challenge of the PSL, but also to undermine the Peasants as an effective political force.. The administrative apparatus played an

31 S. Wójcik PSL w walce... op. cit., pp. 22, 29.

32 Ibid., p. 33.

33 Ibid., pp. 29, 34.

34 Ibid., p. 33.

important part in this process. From September onwards there was a marked increase in the use against the opposition of what Party historians term 'administrative methods'.³⁵ These included the arrest or repeated detention of PSL activists. According to Wójcik from mid-November PSL sympathisers were summoned to UB and MO offices on a mass scale for so-called 'interviews'. Over 100,000 people were estimated to have received such summonses.³⁶ The wave of arrests which took place from September onwards extended, for the first time since early 1945, to the top leadership of the party. The first major figures to be arrested were Stanisław Mierzwa, vice-president of the Kraków provincial committee, and Karol Buczek, editor of 'Piast' and president of Kraków city PSL, on 23 September.³⁷ By 1 December, according to Mikołajczyk, 22 members of the Supreme Council of the PSL, 7 members of provincial executives, 147 members of district executives and 670 members of commune executives had been taken into custody, along with many thousands of ordinary party members.³⁸ The PSL press was hit particularly hard. The police operation against the PSL press began in autumn 1946.³⁹ On 25 September the UB raided the press department at PSL HQ, sealing off its offices and confiscating various documents. This action was aimed against the PSL's uncensored internal news sheet.⁴⁰ In the following weeks a series of arrests among PSL journalists and a clamp-down by the

35 Cf. B. Pasierb Ruch ludowy na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945-49 (place of publication not given, 1972) p.150, Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 287; Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., p. 259; Wapiński op. cit., p. 161; Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., p. 147.

36 Wójcik PSL w walce op. cit., p. 30.

37 K. Bagiński Cenzura w Polsce, Zeszyty Historyczne 8 (1965), p. 146.

38 Mikołajczyk The Pattern... op. cit., p. 199.

39 Bagiński Cenzura... op. cit., p. 146.

40 Ibid., pp. 146-47.

censor crippled the PSL press.⁴¹

In addition, bureaucratic means were used to apply pressure on voters to support the Bloc, while a purge of the local administration weakened PSL influence and ensured that local government staff worked actively on behalf of the Bloc. In Kielce province, for example:

'... a series of changes were made at prefectorial and vice-prefectorial level. Prefects were replaced in Stopnica, Włoszczowa, Kielce and Sandomierz districts; a whole range of vice-prefects were also replaced. A school was organised at provincial level to train commune secretaries, with the students drawn from people holding sincerely democratic views and above all from the PPR. They were used to strengthen local government, replacing many of the existing PSL officials who had until then acted as chairmen of the national councils in many communes. These changes, made on the eve of the elections, had a positive influence on the attitude to the Democratic Bloc of the lower levels of the administration. To a large degree, they accounted for the active involvement of the majority of state and local government staff in work related to the elections.⁴²

The communists also tried to reduce or isolate the PSL groups on the national councils,⁴³ and in at least one district where this proved impossible the entire national council was dissolved.⁴⁴ In many areas the local and security authorities simply prevented the PSL from operating in the open as a political party. Internal party meetings were frequently prohibited (PSL public meetings had been banned since spring 1946). District executives were suspended or dissolved in more than a dozen areas after September, most of them in the weeks immediately before the

41 Bagiński Cenzura... op. cit., pp. 147-48.

42 Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., p. 257.

43 Wojnowski op. cit., p. 161.

44 Kozik op. cit., p. 217.

election.⁴⁵

A crucial part in the offensive was played by the army and security forces, especially in the rural areas where the Party was weak and the influence of the PSL and the underground most marked. Security operations against the underground were stepped up during the election period and at the turn of 1946/47 the regular army was used as the basis for defence-propaganda groups (grupy ochronno-propagandowe - GOP) which were sent into the countryside, ostensibly to campaign on behalf of the Bloc and to prevent the armed underground from disrupting the elections. 2,300 GOP were deployed between 5-21 December and 2,600 between 28 December and 20 January. In all, 62,438 regular Polish Army troops took part, supported by activists of the Bloc parties, 9,800 KBW troops, 4,600 UB officers, 16,700 Militia and 16,200 ORMO reservists.⁴⁶

In reality the role of the GOP was far from purely defensive. They carried out some 850 operations against the underground, during which 341 alleged members of the underground were killed and over 5,000 arrested.⁴⁷ Their activities were also directed against the PSL. The GOP were instructed to oppose actively PSL propaganda.⁴⁸ The example of Rzeszów province shows what this meant in practice. There the GOP dissolved 75 PSL circles and obtained the resignation from the PSL of 2,555 members. 129 SL, 6 PPR and 3 ZWM circles were established. In addition, 27 commune and 61 village administrators, as well as 9 other officials were replaced.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ The PSL was banned in 29 districts by the time of the election, Korboński Polskie... op. cit., p. 245.

⁴⁶ Plikas op. cit., pp. 253-55 gives slightly different figures for the numbers of KBW troops involved from L. Grot Działalność ochronno-propagandowa wojska polskiego w czasie referendum (30.6.1946r) i wyborów do Sejmu RP (19.1.1947r), Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny 1974 nr. 2 p. 199, quoted here.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 200.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 193.

⁴⁹ Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 280.

The employment of the regular army on such a scale against the opposition was of considerable political significance. It demonstrated that the Party's control over a large section of the army (the troops seconded to the GOP represented about 40% of the army's total strength)⁵⁰ was much more secure than Mikołajczyk had thought. The army occupied a special place in the hearts of many Poles and its wide involvement in the campaign on behalf of the Bloc was of major psychological importance. But above all, the army provided the communists with the resources to make up for the deficiencies in the Party's organisation and popular base in the countryside. On their own, the UB and KBW were not strong enough to do this, while as we have seen, the political reliability of the Militia was often uncertain. The successful use of the army and the extensive paramilitarisation of Party members in ORMO enabled the communists to neutralise the opposition without resorting to extensive direct assistance from the Soviet forces. The Russians were able to keep a low profile throughout the elections. There was no recurrence of the situation of 1944-45 when Red Army and NKVD units were used against the underground on a wide scale. Asked by the British ambassador what part the Russians were playing in the elections, Mikołajczyk spoke only of their role behind the scenes, in the security apparatus, where he believed that the number of Soviet 'advisers' had increased and that they were directing the campaign against his party, and in the top echelons of the Party, which in the shape of Berman was, he claimed, in daily contact with the Soviet ambassador.⁵¹ In his account of the elections published in 1948 he referred to Russians in the security apparatus and the officer corps of the Polish armed forces, but also described the effective and disciplined way the Polish army was used against the PSL.⁵²

50 The strength of the Polish army was 165,000 in April 1947, speech by K. Dąbrowski Sprawozdanie stenograficzne Sejmu Ustawodawczego, Vol. I, 15.4.1947.

51 PRO FO371 56452 N16280.

52 Mikołajczyk The Pattern... op. cit., pp. 201-24.

While it is impossible on the present base of evidence to identify clearly the extent of Soviet activity in Poland at the turn of 1946/47, it is apparent that this activity was well-concealed. What was evident was the onslaught by the Party and its Polish resources against the opposition.

The Democratic Bloc

Alongside the Party-state apparatus, the chief prop of the communists was the national front, now reduced to the alliance of the four 'Lublin' parties: the PPR, PPS, SL and SD. The September Plenum reaffirmed that the Party looked to this alliance as the popular base on which to achieve the programme defined in the 1944 PKWN Manifesto and as a major weapon in the coming offensive against the opposition. The resolution declared that:

'... the Central Committee will endeavour as before to strengthen the close and friendly co-operation of the 4 parties of the PKWN which have formed a powerful centre for the consolidation of all the democratic forces of the nation. That co-operation is and will be the guarantee of the full realisation of the principles of the July Manifesto, the guarantee of a lasting worker-peasant alliance... the Electoral Bloc of the 4 Parties will play a decisive role in the struggle to smash the reaction and in the political stabilisation of the country'.⁵³

The cornerstone of the Bloc was the alliance between the PPR and the PPS. Following the crisis in the united front during the summer, the September Plenum examined relations with the PPS in unprecedented depth. The central importance of the partnership was reaffirmed and 'sectarian and domineering attitudes' towards the PPS (perhaps a reference to the putsch episode) were criticised by Kowalski and others.⁵⁴ But although Gomułka stressed the continuity

⁵³ Uchwała plenum KC PPR 'O najważniejszych momentach sytuacji politycznej Polski', 18.9.1946, PPR... i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 147.

⁵⁴ Ćwik op. cit., p. 178.

of the Party's line on the united front and in particular on the question of the eventual merger of the two parties,⁵⁵ the September Plenum presaged the shift in the Party's position on the PPS which became clear after the elections. Since May 1945 the communists had followed a policy of allowing the PPS considerable freedom to develop as a broadly independent mass party exercising - at least formally - joint hegemony with the PPR within the national front. The PPS was seen as a key factor broadening the base of the front and as a vital ally for the PPR in fending off the challenge of the PSL. However, from spring 1946 as rivalry and political differences between the two workers' parties became more pronounced and the 'centrist' leadership under Osóbka and Cyrankiewicz steered an increasingly independent line as the Matuszewski 'left' lost ground, the communists became seriously alarmed at the trend of events in the PPS. The September Plenum noted these developments and concluded that the Socialists' efforts to reach a compromise with the PSL and their demands for parity in the allocation of offices in the state and economic administration constituted an attempt to capture hegemony for the PPS in the 'democratic camp'.⁵⁶ The Central Committee appears to have questioned the wisdom of allowing the PPS to develop as a second workers' party in 1944-45. Now the time had come to curb its independence and re-emphasise its junior role in the united front. According to Sierocki, the main points of the Central Committee's assessment were as follows:

'Exceptionally favourable conditions for closer co-operation had existed during the period of the PKWN and the Provisional Government. Later the PPS had grown stronger in part because of the absorption of WRN-ite and right-wing elements. In attempting to obtain support in non-proletarian quarters

55 T. Sierocki PPR-owska koncepcja jedności ruchu robotniczego w latach 1942-1948, Z pola walki 1976 nr. 4 (76), p. 18.

56 Ibid., p. 17.

of society, a partial return to the old pre-war traditions of the Socialist movement had occurred within the PPS. History had shown... that the PPS was a nationalist, Piłsudski-ite and anti-Soviet party. It had also been a reformist party, and it still was. Thus for it to gain hegemony... would be a "backward step". Despite the changes that had taken place in the Polish Socialist movement, it had remained an integral part of European social democracy. As in social democracy everywhere, the Western orientation played a great part in its conception of Poland's foreign policy. In domestic policy, the PPS was inclined to make the greatest possible concessions to the PSL in order to achieve the social reconstruction of the country at the least social cost. In the Plenum's view all of this demanded that the future development of the Polish socialist movement would have to be watched very closely, all the more so in view of the recent confrontation with the united front (i.e. the Matuszewski faction - J.R.) elements. The Plenum... confirmed that the PPS "was developing into a regressive political force".⁵⁷

Gomułka seems to have led the attack on the PPS's supposed hegemonistic ambitions, while emphasising the importance of continuing the alliance, with the Socialists playing second fiddle. Again according to Sierocki, 'particularly severe statements about the PPS were to be found in the speech of the Party's general secretary, Władysław Gomułka. He said that the PPS, not being a Marxist party, was unable to bring about socialism.... Therefore the PPS could not exercise hegemony in the workers' movement and would have to be satisfied with the position it had occupied hitherto'.⁵⁸

The objective of a single workers' party was for the first time to be made explicit. The resolution passed at the Plenum declared that

'The strengthening of the united front through joint activity and gradual

⁵⁷ T. Sierocki PPR-owska koncepcja jedności ruchu robotniczego w latach 1942-1948, Z pola walki 1976 nr.4(76), p.18.

⁵⁸ Sierocki Warszawska... op. cit., p. 270.

convergence of the positions of both workers' parties in matters of key importance is a basic objective of the policy of the PPR in aspiring towards the complete political unity of the working class'.⁵⁹

The Party would in future concentrate its attention primarily on fostering co-operation with the grassroots organisation of the PPS 'from below'.⁶⁰ A campaign of joint meetings was to be organised with the purpose of weakening opposition amongst the PPS rank-and-file to the united front. Meanwhile contacts with the leadership would continue and talks would proceed with the aim of reaching a formal agreement on future policy and joint activity. Gomułka warned the Plenum that difficulties could be expected on both fronts. In relation to the campaign of joint local meetings:

'... we must expect obstruction (from) the (PPS) leadership, but not give up. It will be difficult to agree everything with the PPS. We are now raising the question of making an agreement between the leaderships so that certain matters will be formalised. We will pursue this even though it will require concessions from both sides'.⁶¹

At this stage the shift in PPR policy was felt more in terms of the organisational relationship between the parties than on policy or programme. The communists continued to proclaim their commitment to the three-sector economic model, the 3-year economic reconstruction plan and the multi-party system - all basic tenets of the PPS 'centrists' philosophy.⁶² In addition the communists, and in particular

⁵⁹ Uchwała plenum KC PPR 'O najważniejszych momentach sytuacji politycznej Polski', 18.9.1946, PPR...i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 147.

⁶⁰ Syzdek op. cit., p. 365.

⁶¹ Sierocki PPR-owska... op. cit., p. 19.

⁶² Uchwała plenum KC PPR 'O najważniejszych momentach sytuacji politycznej Polski', 18.9.1946, PPR...i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., pp. 143, 146.

Gomułka publicly associated the PPR with 'the best tradition of struggle for Poland's independence' of the PPS, while sharply criticising the KPP's record on the same issue.⁶³ The PPR still hoped to harness the two traditions of the working-class movement but after the September 1946 Plenum the communists were clear that this process would involve the fusion of the two traditions within a single united party, not an indefinite continuation of the partnership of the two separate parties which had developed over the previous two years.

The communists' plans to redefine the character and direction of the united front were at odds with the political strategy of the PPS leadership and anathema to many activists. As we have seen, the 'centrists' had accepted the 4 Party Bloc against the PSL with great reluctance. Though convinced that the united front must continue and anxious to improve co-operation with the communists, the 'centrists' aimed, as Hochfeld had put it, to ensure that the PPS would 'enter the new situation as as strong a factor as possible, with the greatest amount of power' in its hands. They had no intention of acknowledging the hegemony of the PPR, or abandoning the claim of the PPS to play an independent and equal role in the government that was formed after the elections. Even as the party was resigning itself to the inevitability of joining the communists' offensive against the PSL, these objectives were forcibly restated. On 15 September Cyrankiewicz told a meeting of the PPS aktyw in Wrocław that 'The united front... the alliance of equal parties, the PPS and the PPR, is the basis of everything that we are building in Poland. Equal means no mutual suspicions, no hegemony, no disloyalty, no dogma of infallibility in either of the parties'.⁶⁴ The

63 Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone na akademii w Warszawie w 7 rocznicę śmierci M. Buczka, 10.9.1946, Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 223.

64 K. Janowski Kształtowanie się jedności ruchu robotniczego na Dolnym Śląsku (1945-1948), Z pola walki 1971 nr. 3 (55), p. 63.

same day at a huge public meeting in Lodz, Osóbka declared that 'the role of the Polish Socialist Party at the present time is immense, we have taken on our shoulders the burden of raising the banner of national unity... the role that the party should play is in the first rank'. Drobner who also spoke argued that history had given the PPS 'the right to lead the workers' movement and the camp of Polish democracy'.⁶⁵

The differences of outlook were reflected in the 'pact of unity of activity and co-operation' which was signed by Gomułka and Cyrankiewicz on 28 November. The negotiations which had preceded the pact had been long and difficult.⁶⁶ The main problem was the question of hegemony. According to one member of the PPS Supreme Council, the talks had indicated 'that the leadership of the PPR is of the opinion that the PPR is the principal, the leading, the governing party, and the PPS only has to help'. The draft of the pact proposed by the communists had covered the joint offensive against the opposition, merger of the PPR and PPS youth movements, and eventual fusion of the two parties. The PPS counter-proposal had presented its position 'strongly, clearly and independently. If the PPS makes its contribution to the economic reconstruction of the country and the consolidation of democracy, then to the same extent the right to govern should extend to the PPS'.⁶⁷

The pact in its final form fell short of the objectives which the PPR leadership had set out at the September

⁶⁵ Stefaniuk op. cit., p. 120; cf. Syzdek op. cit., p. 359.

⁶⁶ The talks seem to have been initiated at about the time of the September Plenum, Stenogram obrad NMS... op. cit., p. 59. Szwalbe told the Lodz PPS aktyw on 13 October that the pact was being prepared, Stefaniuk op. cit., p. 122. The PPS central executive agreed to negotiations on 25 October, Syzdek op. cit., p. 368. According to some versions, the terms of the pact were outlined by Stalin during a visit by the PPR and PPS leaders to Moscow on 3 November, L.M. Oak Free and Unfettered (Newtown, Montgomery, 1947), p. 23 and "R" The Fate... op. cit., p. 132.

⁶⁷ W. Stawiński speaking to the PPS branch in Widzew, Lodz, 8.11.1946, quoted in Stefaniuk op. cit., p. 124.

Plenum, but extracted important concessions from the PPS in many areas. The PPS reaffirmed its commitment to assist in the offensive against the opposition, undertaking to exert all its strength 'to liquidate the bands of the fascist underground', and to give full support to the security organs in restoring 'calm and the rule of law'. Above all, the PPS accepted the formula that it should 'fight the PSL which has slipped into the role of a legal extension of the reactionary underground'. The PPS also agreed to the principle of 'closer co-operation and joint activity in all spheres of state and social life' and accepted joint party meetings and ideological training. The Socialists were to undertake 'uncompromising struggle against the influence of anti-Soviet and reactionary WRN-ite ideology' within the party. Last, but not least, the communists secured a reference to eventual amalgamation of the two parties, although no urgency was expressed, and it was implied that merger would be preceded by a gradual process of deepening co-operation and ideological convergence.

However, the Socialists seem to have got their way on a number of points. Most important, there was no suggestion that the PPR occupied a leading role in the united front and indeed, the principle that 'both parties, as separate, independent and equal political organisms, will respect each others' organisational structure' was given particular prominence. The PPS right to be consulted was embodied in the provision that 'both parties will agree a line on important political and economic issues before any public statements' were made. The communists reaffirmed their support for the government's moderate economic policy and to the principles of the programme which had been set out in the PKWN Manifesto in 1944. Lastly, the two parties pledged themselves to work for the achievement of the 'worker-peasant alliance'. While no mention was made of the SL, the pact specifically stated that the two parties should 'assist the process of secession of real democrats from the PSL' - a reflection of the Socialists' strongly

held view.⁶⁸

As well as the declaration of principles in the pact, which was published, the two parties reached agreement on various detailed matters set out in an annex to the pact which was kept secret from the wider party aktyw.⁶⁹ Under this annex, both parties undertook to agree their electoral tactics, observe parity in appointments to the electoral commissions and apply severe sanctions (including expulsion) against members who did not comply with the terms of the agreement. Disagreements were not to be revealed in public, though in exceptional cases and as a last resort, differences could be indicated by abstention. The parties agreed on the need to ensure that the 4-Party Bloc obtained a decisive majority in the next Sejm and decided on a preliminary percentage allocation of seats. In the next government the PPR would nominate the president and the PPS the prime minister.⁷⁰ The allocation of certain other portfolios was agreed and the PPS was to have deputy ministers of public security and foreign affairs. The PPR was to receive a vice-presidency of 'Społem', the Socialist-dominated co-operative union. Both sides accepted that the principle of equality should not be interpreted as parity in appointments to posts in the state administration. State officials (including vice-ministers) were to take instructions from their superiors and not from their party. Disputes were to be referred to joint-committees of the two parties. The prime minister's right to allocate funds was

68 Umowa o jedności działania i współpracy między PPR i PPS, 28.11.1946, PPR...i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., pp. 204-207. In the discussion of the pact in the Supreme Council of the PPS on 4 December Osóbka emphasised that the PPS would do all it could to win over the democratic and progressive forces in the PSL, Syzdek op. cit., p. 370.

69 Ibid., p. 369.

70 It seems that the replacement of Osóbka by Cyrankiewicz as prime minister was agreed by the PPS and PPR leaderships at this time. Hochfeld implied this in an article published in Robotnik 7.2.1947.

made conditional on the agreement of the PPR. It was decided to establish joint mediation committees at central, provincial and district levels to sort out disputes between the parties. Finally, they were to co-operate in combating non-union industrial action and apply sanctions against the organisers if they were party members.⁷¹

Party historians claim that the signing of the pact - and by implication the decision to accept the communists' electoral strategy - was greeted with approval by the decided majority of the aktyw and members of the PPS.⁷² But this seems highly improbable. It is most unlikely that the differences of view and the deep mistrust which had existed between the two parties in many parts of the country just a few weeks before could have been dispelled so quickly. Although the pact affirmed the independence and equality of the two parties, the PPS had been forced to give ground to the PPR in a number of important areas, notably on the question of eventual merger. If the degree of active participation by PPS members in the election campaign is anything to go by (an estimated 30% took part),⁷³ it seems clear that the attitude of the majority of the rank-and-file to the pact was hostile, or at best apathetic. However, there seems to have been little open effective opposition to the leadership's line. In part this was because the anti-Bloc right of the party had already been outmanoeuvred by the 'centrists'. The joint-meetings organised by the communists in September and October no doubt helped to isolate the right,⁷⁴ but the main factor seems to have been the activity of the general secretariat under Cyrankiewicz. The powers of this apparatus had been increased in August 1946 when the secretaries of the PPS provincial

71 Sierocki Warszawska... op. cit., p. 275; cf. Syzdek op. cit., p. 369; Sierocki PPR-owska... op. cit., p. 20.

72 Syzdek op. cit., p. 369; Kozik op. cit., pp. 335-36.

73 Syzdek op. cit., p. 375.

74 Ibid., pp. 365-66.

committees had been subordinated to the general secretariat. Since the provincial secretariats had charge over the party organisation at local level, this meant that the entire aktyw was brought under central control.⁷⁵ The general secretariat used these powers to root out local leaders, both on the left and the right, who were critical of the national leadership. In November special delegates from the centre orchestrated the replacement of former-WRN rightists in the leaderships of Kraków and Rzeszów provincial committees.⁷⁶ The biggest purge took place in Upper Silesia where the right which had captured the leadership at the end of September had maintained contacts with the PSL and resisted joint-meetings with the communists. In mid-November the general secretariat reorganised the provincial committee and installed Tadeusz Ćwik, one of Cyrankiewicz's main lieutenants, to supervise the election campaign.⁷⁷ The impotence of the anti-Bloc faction in the face of the 'centrists' party machine was symbolised by Żuławski's resignation from the PPS in November.⁷⁸

Other critics of the pact agreed to abide by it, while playing down its significance. Drobner, who led the criticism at the Supreme Council of the party on 4 December, argued that 'people are losing faith in the PPS and are saying - you have betrayed us, you have sold yourselves for a ministerial portfolio'.⁷⁹ But despite his reservations about joint-training and warnings against unification of the parties, except as a long-term goal, he was satisfied that the pact contained little that was new and voted with the majority for ratification.⁸⁰ No doubt many activists

⁷⁵ Syzdek op. cit., p. 370.

⁷⁶ Ćwik op. cit., p. 180, Kozik op. cit., p. 335, Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 253.

⁷⁷ Kantyka PPS na Śląsku... op. cit., pp. 268-73.

⁷⁸ Ćwik op. cit., pp. 179-80.

⁷⁹ Sierocki Warszawska... op. cit., p. 277.

⁸⁰ Kozik op. cit., p. 338.

were persuaded that the pact was the best compromise that could have been obtained in the circumstances and that it was essential to maintain party unity around the 'centrist' leadership if its strategy of preserving the PPS as an independent, equal partner of the PPR was to have any chance of success.

The Socialists' agreement to the offensive against the PSL and the pact certainly did not imply any retreat from this strategy. Indeed the 'centrists' efforts to establish a strong and separate organisational and ideological identity for the PPS were at their most intense in the later months of 1946 and the first half of 1947. Particular attention was paid to associating the party with the historical and patriotic traditions of the pre-war PPS. In November, for instance, mass meetings were held throughout the country to celebrate the 54th anniversary of the foundation of the PPS.⁸¹ The leadership did not miss a chance to point out the contrast between the record of the PPS on the national question and that of the KPP. Thus Osóbka publicly contradicted the view that the PPS had been responsible for the failure of the left-wing government formed in Poland at the end of the First World War, arguing that much of the blame lay with the communists 'who had an incorrect attitude to the problem of Poland's independence'.⁸² Attempts were also made to define the party's position within the broader context of socialist theory. The 'centrists' were anxious to show that their rejection of Western social democracy did not imply acceptance of the sovietisation of Poland. In December Rusinek told an International Socialist Conference in Prague that:

'Until a short time ago there were disagreements in the Marxist camp on the question of the route to power.... We are familiar with two models and both turned out to be wrong. The first, advocated by orthodox Marxists... declared that the "dictatorship

⁸¹ Stefaniuk op. cit., p. 132.

⁸² Robotnik 23.10.46.

of the proletariat" is the only correct and the only possible road to socialism. This "infantile leftist" conception divided the socialist camp. The reformists, whose error lay in an excessively mechanistic view of the development of economic relations, gained the upper hand.... The reformists were deprived of dialectical thought by fear of the dictatorship of the proletariat and led astray by a falsely conceived legalism.... The orthodox communists applied their one formula to every country without regard to the objective conditions of the given country... both conceptions... were false in the sense of there being only two roads to socialism. For history has shown us a third road, and that third road means for Poland - the Polish road...⁸³

For the Socialists the essential feature of the Polish road was the preservation of a substantial degree of individual liberty and political and economic pluralism. The election offensive was viewed as a necessary, but temporary evil. Once the elections were out of the way and the PSL no longer posed a threat to the left's hold on power, constitutional safeguards would be introduced and the machinery of repression would be wound down. As Hochfeld put it the task of the new system of government was to 'build up the sphere of freedom and civic liberty, to liquidate... the transitional limitation of those freedoms and liberties'.⁸⁴

The main outward sign of the Socialists' campaign to widen their influence and counter-balance the communists within the national front was the recruitment drive launched in August with the goal of increasing membership of the PPS from 250,000 to 500,000 by the end of 1946 and to one million during 1947.⁸⁵ In fact, the recruitment effort only began in earnest in October; nevertheless by early 1947 membership had reached almost half a million and by the end of the year approaching three quarters of a million. Details

⁸³ Robotnik 15.12.46.

⁸⁴ Robotnik 23.10.46.

⁸⁵ Robotnik 27.8.46.

of the relative strength of the two parties by province at the time of the elections are given in Table Eleven. The growth of the PPS caused disquiet amongst the communists who found themselves in competition with the Socialists for members in many industrial areas and suspected that a substantial proportion of the PPS recruits were former supporters of the PSL who now saw the PPS as the best means to oppose the communists.⁸⁶ The drive was to be a major factor in the renewed crisis in relations between the parties after the elections, but it was not until mid-1947 that the PPS called a halt to recruitment on such a mass scale.

Table Eleven

PPS and PPR Membership by Province at the Turn of 1946/47⁸⁷

Province/City	PPR Membership (Jan. 1947) ^a	PPS Membership (Date as shown)
Białystok	6,040	1,600 (Jan or Feb) ^b
Gdańsk	17,601	20,237 (1 Jan) ^c
Kielce	37,558	28,610 (end Feb) ^d
Kraków	28,563	44,500 (end Jan) ^e
Lublin	16,071	7,143 (Jan or Feb) ^b
Lodz - province	25,762	16,319 (Jan) ^f
Lodz - city	25,032	23,908 (Jan) ^f
Olsztyn	11,305	6,027 (end Dec) ^g
Pomorze	61,061	42,471 (Jan or Feb) ^b
Poznań	66,604	43,000 (Jan) ^h
Rzeszów	9,213	11,417 (end Dec) ⁱ
Szczecin	30,971	25,199 (Jan or Feb) ^b
Śląsk-Dąbrowa	88,352	67,462 (1 Jan) ^j
Warsaw - province	42,697	26,563 (Jan or Feb) ^b
Warsaw - city	29,034	29,160 (end Dec) ^k
Wrocław	60,016	45,255 (end Dec) ^l
TOTALS	555,880	438,871

⁸⁶ Stefaniuk op. cit., pp. 133-34; Syzdek op. cit., p. 375.

⁸⁷ Sources: a. PPR...i 1946 - i 1947 op. cit., p. 212;
b. PRO FO371 66093 N6349; c. Przywuski op. cit., pp. 166-68; d. Naumiuk Początki... p. 273; Ćwik op. cit., pp.

contd...

The PPS leaders believed that their party's role in the election offensive would have major significance both for its own future and for the viability of 'the Polish road to socialism'. They feared that if the national front - and in practice this basically meant the PPR-PPS alliance - proved inadequate as a means of overcoming the opposition, the communists would resort to repression on a much wider scale and the forced construction of socialism. If this happened, there would be little place for an independent PPS; the communists would rest their rule on the security apparatus and a far greater degree of direct Soviet support. This linkage between the maintenance of the Socialist-communist bloc and Polish self-government lay behind Cyraniewicz's warning just before the elections that 'the simple truth is that the question of the united front... lies at the root of the problem of Poland's independence'.⁸⁸ The PPS therefore made concerted efforts to demonstrate its cohesiveness and effectiveness as a political force in the elections, and hence its continuing value to the communists as a partner. A month before polling day special conferences were organised to instruct PPS local government officials on their duties. The activists were told to co-operate closely with the PPR in accordance with the November pact and to play a full part in ensuring a favourable outcome, by for instance helping to organise open voting.⁸⁹ On 6 January the entire party membership was ordered to report to local branches to be allocated tasks for the election period.⁹⁰ Non-participants were threatened with

contd...

192-93, 208; f. Stefaniuk op. cit., pp. 281-82; g. Wojnowski op. cit., p. 176; h. K. Robakowski Rola i działalność PPS w Wielkopolsce i na Ziemi Lubuskiej w latach 1944-48 (Poznań, 1973), pp. 49-50, 59; i. Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 250; j. Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... op. cit., p. 80; k. Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 80; l. Janowski Kształtowanie się jedności ruchu robotniczego na Dolnym Śląsku (1945-48) Z pola walki 1971 nr. 3 (55), p. 60.

⁸⁸ Robotnik 7.12.46.

⁸⁹ Robotnik 23.12.46.

⁹⁰ Stefaniuk op. cit., p. 138.

severe party sanctions.⁹¹

However, the mobilisation of the PPS was only partly successful. The aktyw undoubtedly played a key role in the management of the elections. The PPS representatives on the KRN and the provincial national councils collaborated with the PPR to make sure that the electoral commissions were monopolised by loyal adherents of the Bloc. Some disputes occurred where the communists feared that nominees put forward by the PPS could not be relied upon absolutely,⁹² but none of these led to a break-down in co-operation. Despite the provisions of the November pact, the PPS did not generally achieve parity with the PPR on the commissions, but whether this was due to the PPR rejecting PPS nominees, or the PPS being unable to find enough suitable candidates, is unclear. Nevertheless, the PPS role was considerable, and a good deal greater than that of the communists' other allies. It is claimed that a total of 15,000 Socialists were appointed to the commissions.⁹³ In areas where the PPS was strong, its share almost matched that of the PPR: in Upper Silesia it had 703 full members (PPR - 848); in Lodz city 308 (PPR - 316).⁹⁴ A few local commissions consisted entirely of PPS members: 19 out of 291 in Wrocław province, for instance.⁹⁵ Elsewhere the PPS was well represented: in Kielce province it had 26% of commission chairmanships (PPR 54%, SL 20%, SD 1%);⁹⁶ in Kraków province 16% of commission members belonged to the PPS (PPR 58%);⁹⁷ in Lublin province 20% of members were in the PPS

91 Robakowski op. cit., p. 126.

92 Ibid., p. 126; Naumiuk PPR... op. cit., pp. 429-31.

93 Syzdek op. cit., p. 375. This figure presumably includes alternative members.

94 Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... op. cit., pp. 142-45; Stefaniuk op. cit., pp. 134-35. These figures are incomplete: an unknown number of PPS and PPR members are classified as 'trade union' nominees.

95 Janowski PPS... op. cit., p. 123.

96 Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., p. 245.

97 Ćwik op. cit., pp. 198-99.

(PPR 68%, SL 10%, SD and non-party 2%);⁹⁸ in Olsztyn 22% (PPR 62%, SL 13%, SD 3%).⁹⁹ The communists' control over the electoral apparatus depended on the PPS.

However, the PPS was unable to mobilise the bulk of its rank-and-file members. Although PPS members appear to have been more active than the SL or SD, and there was a better turnout than there had been in the referendum, in total only about 30% of PPS members seem to have participated in the campaign.¹⁰⁰ In most provinces the PPR achieved a mobilisation of between 60-80% of its members.¹⁰¹ Party historians attribute the difference to the tighter organisation and discipline of the PPR,¹⁰² but it is likely that dissatisfaction with the Bloc in PPS quarters was also a major factor.

To sum up, the agreement forged between the PPS and the PPS to manage the elections and crush the opposition was unstable. Both parties accepted that harsh measures must be adopted to ensure that power remained in the hands of the left, but beyond this immediate objective, their views diverged on the role the PPS would play in the 'Polish road to socialism'. The PPS hoped to assure its future influence by making itself the indispensable link between the communists and the nation. But its contribution in the election offensive, though important to the communists, was primarily in the bureaucratic sphere, in the electoral commissions, the national councils and the central and local administration. The PPS was far less successful in giving real substance to the national front by rallying mass

98 Olszewski PPR... op. cit., p. 306.

99 Wojnowski op. cit., p. 182.

100 20% had taken part in the referendum, Syzdek op. cit., pp. 344, 375.

101 For example, 80% in Białystok and Kielce, 70% in Gdańsk, 61% in Lublin provinces; Majecki op. cit., p. 171, Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., p. 278, Wapiński op. cit., p. 135, Olszewski PPR... op. cit., p. 309.

102 Syzdek op. cit., p. 375.

popular support to the Democratic Bloc. Indeed, only a minority of its own members responded to the leadership's call to active participation in the campaign.

The SL and the SD were certainly much less important to the communists as partners than the PPS was. Both were widely regarded, even within the Bloc, as appendages of the PPR,¹⁰³ with little genuine popular following. Kowalski, the SL leader most trusted by the communists, complained that in PPS circles the SL was viewed as a 'non-existent party' without support amongst the peasant masses.¹⁰⁴ However, especially from mid-1946, the communists looked to the SL to provide the rural base of the national front. The PPR did its utmost to foster its expansion. The high degree of PPR intervention in the affairs of the SL and the forced character of the SL's growth is well-illustrated by the 'plan of activity' of the PPR committee for Kolo district for September 1946. The committee was to:

'continue to lend assistance in organising SL circles.... Call a conference of SL members on 20 September for the purpose of electing a District Committee of the SL. Man this meeting with our members... sort out the matter of the local headquarters between the SL and the PSL.... Arrange for PSL members at the local level to go over to the SL'.¹⁰⁵

The campaign to expand the SL seems - on paper at least - to have had a significant effect in the period preceding the elections. By late 1946 it is estimated to have had 200,000 members, about the same number as in 1945 before the PSL was formed.¹⁰⁶ Much of the growth appears to have

¹⁰³ Zambrowski, writing in 1971 after his expulsion from the PZPR, distinguished between the 'full independence' of the PPS and the 'considerable (znaczna) independence' of the SL and SD; Zambrowski Dziennik op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁰⁴ Halaba Stronnictwo... op. cit., pp. 195-98.

¹⁰⁵ Pierwsze lata władzy ludowej w dokumentach PPR... op. cit., p. 322.

¹⁰⁶ N. Kołomejczyk i B. Syzdek Polska w latach 1944-1949 (Warsaw, 1968), p. 162.

taken place amongst the settlers in the western territories. Membership of the SL in Lower Silesia was said to have jumped from 20,000 in August to 52,000 in January,¹⁰⁷ and in Upper Silesia from 4,800 in October to 25,800 in December 1946.¹⁰⁸ However, the allegiance of many of these recruits seems to have been only formal. In Upper Silesia, the increase in the number of members with party cards was just 144, the others simply 'declared' that they would join,¹⁰⁹ and the SL was able to provide only 71 activists for the 6,600 places on the electoral commissions. The pressure to make such declarations became particularly intense as the election campaign got fully underway. Meetings were organised at which the audience were called on to proclaim publicly that they were leaving the PSL to join the SL.¹¹⁰ But such growth, generated by the arrival in the villages of army and police units or by pressure on settlers in the western territories who were economically dependent on the government, did little to broaden the base of the Democratic Bloc. The role of the SL in the election campaign was limited¹¹¹ and its membership remained notoriously inactive unless prodded by the PPR.¹¹² The communists subsequently recognised that the SL was incapable of winning over many of the peasants they regarded as 'democratic' and after Mikołajczyk's flight they allowed the reconstructed PSL to operate as an alternative rallying

107 N. Kołomejczyk Niektóre problemy rozwoju partii politycznych na Ziemiach Zachodnich w latach 1945-46, Z pola walki 1964 nr. 2 (26), p. 175.

108 Gołębiowski Pierwsze lata... op. cit., p. 346.

109 Ibid., p. 346; Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... op. cit., pp. 142-45.

110 Kozik op. cit., pp. 360-61.

111 Cf. Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... op. cit., pp. 142-45; Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., p. 278; Kozik op. cit., op. cit., p. 362; Majecki op. cit., p. 171; Wapiński op. cit., pp. 135-36.

112 Kozik op. cit., pp. 416-17.

point until 1949.¹¹³ Moreover, even where the SL succeeded in recruiting ex-PSL supporters it was sometimes not strong enough to prevent them shifting the party to the right, leading to tension with the communists.¹¹⁴

The SD was even less of a factor in broadening the national front. It was not a mass party. In 1947 its national membership was only 27,783.¹¹⁵ Its recruits were largely drawn from office-workers, shopkeepers, craftsmen, with a smattering of teachers and professionals.¹¹⁶ The party was over-represented in the KRN and the provincial and town national councils, partly because of the relative abundance of well-educated people with administrative skills in its ranks. By the second half of 1946 the liberal-conservative wing of the SD led by Jerzy Langrod and Prof. Adam Krzyżanowski, which was strongest in Krakow, had lost out to the staunchly pro-communist faction.¹¹⁷ There seems to have been no major opposition to the 4-Party Bloc and Krzyżanowski was amongst those re-elected on the Bloc list. Even so, the SD seems to have been able to provide only a few score activists in most provinces during the election campaign¹¹⁸ and in at least one area some of its members

¹¹³ Cf. Uchwała Sekretariatu KC PPR oceniająca przebieg obchodów Święta Ludowego, May 1948, PPR...i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., pp. 234-37.

¹¹⁴ Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., p. 164.

¹¹⁵ N. Kołomejczyk Polska na drodze ku demokracji socjalistycznej, Studia i materiały z dziejów Polski Ludowej Vol. 12 (1978), p. 64. The SD had 2,740 members in Kraków province at the end of January 1947; about 1000 in Rzeszów province at the end of 1946; less than 800 in Lublin province and about 300 in Olsztyn province in the second half of 1946; Kozik op. cit., p. 369, Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 254, Olszewski PPR... op. cit., p. 322, Wojnowski op. cit., p. 185.

¹¹⁶ P. Winczorek Miejsce i rola SD w strukturze politycznej (Warsaw, 1975), p. 107.

¹¹⁷ Stronnictwo Demokratyczne w latach 1937-1965 (Warsaw, 1967), pp. 57, 63;64; Kozik op. cit., pp. 167-69.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Majecki op. cit., p. 164; Wapiński op. cit., pp. 135-36; Wojnowski op. cit., pp. 182, 185; Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 272; Olszewski PPR... op. cit., p. 306, Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... op. cit., pp. 142-45.

refused to take part.¹¹⁹

In addition to the 4 Bloc parties, the PSL 'Nowe Wyzwolenie' and the reconstructed Party of Labour were tolerated as legal opposition parties within the national front and indeed in some areas they put forward candidates on the Bloc list and were admitted to the national councils, inter-party consultative committees and electoral commissions.¹²⁰ The attitude of the PPR leadership to these parties was lukewarm. Gomułka speaking to a Party audience characterised them as 'free marksmen' (wolni strzelcy) and stated that the PPR would not campaign against them or 'scare the game away from their field of fire'.¹²¹ But the communist rank-and-file were often hostile. The Wrocław provincial committee described 'Nowe Wyzwolenie' as a partner for the PPS against themselves and the SL and claimed it would become 'a second PSL, a shelter for reactionaries fleeing before our pressure from the PSL'.¹²² In Białystok province SP activists were arrested or beaten up.¹²³ Nevertheless, 'Nowe Wyzwolenie' established provincial and local branches during the autumn in preparation for the elections. Party historians in Poland are agreed that the new grouping made no real impression in the villages.¹²⁴ The party won 397,754 votes (3.5%) and 12 seats in the elections. After the elections the PPR lost all interest in 'Nowe Wyzwolenie'. The pro-PPR faction

¹¹⁹ Kozik op. cit., p. 371.

¹²⁰ Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... op. cit., pp. 142-45; Janowski PPS... op. cit., p. 123; Stefaniuk op. cit., pp. 134-35.

¹²¹ Gomułka Przemówienie na uroczystym posiedzeniu łódzkiej organizacji PPR z okazji przyjęcia 50-tysięcznego członka partii, 1.1.47, Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., pp. 334-35.

¹²² Sprawozdanie KW PPR za IX-X 1946 cited in Pasierb Ruch... op. cit., pp. 148-49.

¹²³ CAHSD ZG SP Akcja wyborcza 1946-47.

¹²⁴ Majecki op. cit., p. 162; Olszewski Początki... op. cit., pp. 260-61; Kozik op. cit., pp. 363-65; Wojnowski op. cit., p. 185; Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., pp. 143, 169; Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... op. cit., p. 86; Wapiński op. cit., p. 131.

led by Tadeusz Rek seceded to the SL in February 1947. In May the communists admitted that the party 'had no real influence or significance at the grassroots'.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, the pro-PPS rump soldiered on until October, when it also joined the SL.

The 'Zryw-ite' SP had continued activity after the departure of Popiel and his followers in July despite the open disapproval of the Church. The communists and Socialists also courted independent Catholic opinion. In November the Party press began carrying a number of articles restating the communists' position of absolute freedom of religion as a quid pro quo for the political neutrality of the Church.¹²⁶ On 23 November an interview which Bierut had given Ksawery Pruszyński in which he made a clear bid for a modus vivendi between Church and State was published, attracting wide interest. Bierut denied any fundamental conflict between the aspirations of Church and State and argued that the Church had failed to respond to the genuine shift in the attitude of the left in regard to religion and its attempts to reach a 'serious and long-term understanding'. The chief obstacles to such an understanding, he claimed, were the Germanophile tendencies of the Vatican and the use of the pulpit by certain elements of the clergy to make attacks on the government. But, he added that the ruling camp was open to discussion on making a new Concordat and was willing to allow a separate Catholic grouping in the next Sejm.¹²⁷ The pro-government fringe of the Catholic camp led by 'Dziś i Jutro' enthusiastically took up Bierut's call for a modus vivendi¹²⁸ and talks involving Cyrankiewicz, Władysław Wolski, the communist deputy Minister of Public Administration, Julia Brystygirowa of

¹²⁵ Okólnik Sekretariatu KC PPR w sprawie Świąta Ludowego, May 1947, PPR...i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., p. 81.

¹²⁶ Głos ludu 15.11.1946.

¹²⁷ Rzeczpospolita 23.11.1946.

¹²⁸ Wójcik Spór... op. cit., p. 59.

the Ministry of Public Security and a number of Catholic activists including Stefan Kisielewski were held on the proposed Sejm grouping.¹²⁹ At one stage it was suggested that up to 48 Catholic deputies might be elected.¹³⁰ However, this initiative seems to have been scotched by Hlond¹³¹ and in the event only 3 independent 'progressive Catholics' were elected on the Błoc list. The SP won 17 seats and 530,000 votes (4.7%). But apart from a mild success in Lodz city where it won 29% of the votes and 3 out of the 10 seats, it failed to capture more than a small part of the Catholic vote. This was true even in its strongholds like Silesia and Kraków and despite the fact that in many areas it was the only tolerated alternative to the bloc parties. The results were viewed by the 'Zryw-ite' leadership as a setback and sparked off a spate of infighting and ideological clashes within the party which lasted until its disbandment in 1950.¹³² The attempts of the majority led by Stefan Brzeziński to revive a genuine Catholic labour party on the lines of the former National Workers' Party¹³³ were frustrated by Widy-Wirski and his followers who saw the role of the SP as no more than a 'transmission-belt' to Catholic tradesmen and artisans.¹³⁴ A telling indication of the inability of the SP to find any real grassroots following is the fact that by 1948 three-quarters of its income was provided by the government.¹³⁵

129 S. Kisielewski Wspomnienia polityczne Krytyka 4 (1980) pp. 143-45.

130 Ibid., p. 144.

131 Ibid., p. 145.

132 Bujak op. cit., pp. 332-34.

133 Brzeziński described the SP as having been founded 'on the organisational framework of the National Workers' Party', not mentioning the Christian Democratic tradition, Sprawozdanie stenograficzne... op. cit., 8.2.1947 col. 50.

134 Bujak op. cit., pp. 320-23.

135 Ibid., p. 362.

In sum, the political base of the national front at the turn of 1946/47 was little wider than it had been in May 1945. There had been some gains: the PPR had doubled its membership and the PPS had established a genuine mass following. But the growth of the PPR had been concentrated in the cities and the western and northern territories; much less progress had been made in the rural areas of eastern and central Poland. The expansion of the PPS had been accompanied by a weakening of the united front, which though patched up for the elections, was fundamentally unstable. The national front had lost ground too, notably within the peasant movement. The mainstream of the movement which the SL had to some degree represented until the formation of the PSL remained solidly behind Mikołajczyk. Also, links with the Catholic camp had weakened markedly during 1946. The true difference between May 1945 and January 1947 lay not so much in any real broadening of the base of the national front, but in the strengthening of the bureaucratic and coercive resources at the disposal of the communists: the Party apparatus, the security forces and the army, the network of cadres in the central and local administration and in the management of industry and the trade unions, the leaderships of the allied parties and other social and economic institutions. The communists owed their victory over the opposition not, as Party historiography suggests, to a massive spontaneous shift of popular support to the national front; nor to direct Soviet intervention as many had feared, but above all to the mobilisation of the state-Party apparatus and to a more limited extent the apparatuses of the allied parties, particularly the PPS.

'The Reactionary Bloc'

The Supreme Council of the PSL met on 6 October to discuss the offer of a compromise that was no longer on the table. In his keynote speech Mikołajczyk made light of the expulsion of the PSL from the inter-party consultative committee the week before, but made plain his view that a deal

was out of the question as long as the communists insisted on hegemony. He regarded the issue as one of confidence in his leadership:

'I should like to emphasise that at least as long as I am responsible for carrying out the policy of this party, I personally will never sign an understanding which on our part would allow the PPR and its satellites an entirely unjustified majority. You must decide in this matter. If you decide differently, I as a loyal member of the party will submit to that decision, without however taking any further responsibility for the policy of the party.¹³⁶

An attempt by Wycech to keep the question open was overwhelmingly defeated, attracting only 5 votes against 115 with two abstentions (including that of Kiernik).¹³⁷ The minority bowed to this decision.

The general tone of Mikołajczyk's speech had been sombre. He warned the council that 'without doubt we have difficult days ahead of us' and admitted that 'in the hearts of some faith in the future had already been shaken'.¹³⁸ However, he argued that on balance the results of the PSL's activity had been positive and that it was right to carry on with the policy of opposition:

'The question arises - what next?... Do we really tell ourselves that there is no chance? And then what? We know the political results we have obtained; but in the conviction that our activity and contribution remained essential to the interests of the Polish state, we know also that we cannot and must not cease our fight...'.¹³⁹

The cornerstones of his strategy remained the same. He continued to place faith in the resilience and political

¹³⁶ Jutro Polski 15.12.1946.

¹³⁷ PRO FO371 56447 N13136.

¹³⁸ Jutro Polski 15.12.1946.

¹³⁹ Jutro Polski 1.12.1946.

indispensability of the peasant movement:

'Is there really no balance on the credit side? There is. There is the most important achievement, namely that we exist, we have survived, we remain active and will endure. There is a second: we are the main object of interest; they hate us and rage at us but they take account of our existence and our position in a great many issues, because it is not possible to jump over or pass by the presence of the peasantry and its representation - the PSL'.¹⁴⁰

The resolution passed by the Council declared that if the party remained united 'the unyielding attitude of the peasant ranks will convince our political opponents of the futility of applying violence and coercion...'¹⁴¹ Just a month before polling day Mikołajczyk was still hoping that despite the repression the PSL would manage to secure 20-30% of the seats.¹⁴²

He also continued to believe that international pressure and the danger of internal destabilisation would constrain the communists and prevent them from taking effective measures against his party. At the Council he reaffirmed his support for close links with the USSR.¹⁴³ On 10 October he sent a lengthy memorandum to Stalin in a bid to short-circuit the pressure the communists were placing on the PSL.¹⁴⁴ At the same time he called on the British and Americans to step up economic pressure - pointing out that with economic prospects for the coming year verging on the 'catastrophic' and Soviet aid disappointing, the government would soon be forced to turn to the West for assistance.¹⁴⁵ But these overtures produced little result.

¹⁴⁰ Jutro Polski 8.12.1946.

¹⁴¹ Jutro Polski 1.12.1946.

¹⁴² PRO FO371 56452 N16279.

¹⁴³ Jutro Polski 8.12.1946.

¹⁴⁴ A translation of the text is in Mikołajczyk The Pattern... op. cit., pp. 339-41.

¹⁴⁵ PRO FO371 56447 N12480.

Not only did Stalin ignore the memorandum, but the Soviet 'advisers' in the security apparatus were reinforced and Mikołajczyk was forced to recognise that the Russians were not disposed to intervene on his behalf.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, when on 18 December Mikołajczyk delivered a protest against the election malpractices to the three Yalta powers, he was dismayed to discover that at first the Americans would not accept it.¹⁴⁷ The British and Bliss Lane managed to reverse this refusal and a series of exchanges between the three Powers began, culminating in the Soviet statement of 13 January which bluntly rejected the protest and accused the PSL of involvement with the underground.¹⁴⁸

Morale in the party fell as the extent of the repressive measures became apparent and as doubts grew if the falsification of the elections could in fact be frustrated. Mikołajczyk himself had warned the party to expect an 'exodus of the intelligentsia from our ranks',¹⁴⁹ and in November toyed with the idea of a change of tactics: a boycott of the poll combined with a peasant strike, in other words a return to the methods employed to oppose the Sanacja in the 1930s.¹⁵⁰ In the end, the party executive decided on 8 January to go ahead and contest the elections boycotting them only in those constituencies where its lists had been invalidated.¹⁵¹ The party seems to have been sustained in its resolve by a determination to go down fighting and the fact that it continued to enjoy massive support in the country. For although the PSL had suffered heavy organisational losses, political forces which had hitherto occupied a middle position rallied to the PSL as

146 PRO FO371 56452 N16280.

147 Ibid., N16289.

148 A. Bliss Lane I Saw Poland Betrayed (3rd ed., Boston, 1965), pp. 231-37.

149 Jutro Polski 15.12.1946.

150 PRO FO371 56451 N15238, N15295.

151 Jutro Polski 26.1.1947.

the country polarised between the Bloc and the opposition. This process was most apparent within the peasant movement itself where no significant open opposition to Mikołajczyk developed until after the elections. Even Party historians admit that the PSL remained strong in the countryside. In Kielce province for instance '... the PSL still had a considerable membership... in Ostrowiec constituency its strength in autumn 1946 was estimated at about 15,000... in Radom constituency at about 10,000... the PSL-ites controlled the majority of commune and village administrator appointments in all the constituencies... the PSL was a relatively numerous organisation during the election period ... it still possessed a great many sympathisers in society'.¹⁵² In Lublin province 'despite a weakened organisation the influence of the peasant right on the countryside ... was still quite large'.¹⁵³ In Rzeszów province in January 1947 8 prefects (out of 17), 120 commune administrators (out of 120), 900 village administrators (out of 1,244) belonged to the PSL.¹⁵⁴ The PPR committee in Gdańsk province reported on 19 October that it 'could not yet speak of a crisis in the local PSL at grassroots level'.¹⁵⁵ Although the party's activists were prevented from operating in the open, it seems to have continued activity on a semi-conspiratorial basis in many areas.¹⁵⁶ This concealed network was sufficiently effective to ensure that PSL lists were presented in all 52 constituencies.¹⁵⁷

The most important ally of the PSL was the Catholic

¹⁵² Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., pp. 259-60, 263.

¹⁵³ Olszewski PPR... op. cit., p. 298.

¹⁵⁴ Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 284.

¹⁵⁵ Wapiński op. cit., p. 131.

¹⁵⁶ Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 429; Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 257; Olszewski PPR... op. cit., p. 278; Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., p. 260. Wójcik confirms that the PSL's electoral organisation operated in secret, PSL w walce... op. cit., p. 28.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 32.

church. The Bishops' September declaration calling on the faithful not to vote for parties whose outlook was 'inimical to... Christian morality or the Christian view of the world' was followed by a pastoral letter from Hlond on 20 October which, as he told the British, was intended 'to make it quite clear that the voters should vote for the Polish Peasant Party although the Episcopate do not feel that this party is 100% satisfactory from their point of view'.¹⁵⁸ Hlond's hostility to the formation of an independent Catholic grouping in the Sejm seems to have been connected with the desire not to split the opposition vote.¹⁵⁹ In January the Bishops issued a sharp rebuke to the 'Dziś i Jutro' group for weakening the unity of the 'Catholic front' and trespassing on the prerogative of the hierarchy by publicly supporting the Bloc. This was intended as a final warning.¹⁶⁰ Also, despite his personal support for the Oder-Neisse line, Hlond was unresponsive to government suggestions that he should use the opportunity of a lengthy visit to Rome at the end of 1946 to mediate between the Vatican and Warsaw on the question of recognition of Poland's western frontier.¹⁶¹ According to emigre sources, Hlond's main preoccupation during his talks in Rome was to make preparations for a new wave of pressure on the Church and possibly persecution which he expected after the elections.¹⁶² The Bishops' endorsement of the PSL was accompanied at local level by overt and often active support from the overwhelming majority of the clergy.¹⁶³

The PSL also received support from the Socialist

158 PRO FO371 56447 N12483.

159 Kisielewski op. cit., p. 145.

160 Popiel op. cit., pp. 274-75.

161 GSHI Ambasada RP Paryż A46:1.

162 Ibid., Ambasada RP Watykan A44 48:2 (1947) 2.

163 Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 282; Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., pp. 263-64, 269.

followers of Zygmunt Żuławski who stood as an independent on the PSL list in Kraków city. It was hoped to run independent Socialist candidates in Lodz and Częstochowa too, but the PSL lists in both cities were invalidated.

The PSL's other ally was the underground opposition. For although the party condemned the armed underground and vigorously denied the communists' allegations that the two movements were linked, as we have seen, in social and political terms there was much common ground between the PSL and the illegal opposition and to an important degree the strategies of each of the movements depended on the existence and activity of the other. The communists undoubtedly exploited the presence of the underground to justify repression of the PSL, but it is clear that the armed resistance was a major obstacle to the communists in the small towns and villages, where it gave teeth to the wider opposition movement. Beyond this, the PSL argued that its existence as a legal opposition kept the underground in check and that the suppression of the party would be followed by a violent destabilisation of the sort that had occurred in spring 1945. Mikołajczyk told the October party Council that he wished to

'emphasise what even our opponents must recognise, that the existence and sacrifices of the Polish Peasant Party protect Poland from chaos, and maybe from fratricidal struggle, because they sustain the belief of millions of citizens that it is still possible and necessary to resolve political problems through legal means... I fear that the aim of those who call for the banning of the PSL is not the normalisation of relations in this country, but the outbreak of internal disorder so that by bloodshed they can achieve totalitarian power'.¹⁶⁴

There is ample evidence that the underground remained a force to be reckoned with in many parts of the country in the second half of 1946. More supporters of the government, troops and officials were killed by the armed

¹⁶⁴ Jutro Polski 8.12.1946.

underground in the summer and autumn of 1946 than at any time since early 1945. One estimate puts the total membership of the underground, including small groups and loosely-linked organisations at approaching 100,000 at the end of 1946.¹⁶⁵ Although full-scale offensive operations by the guerillas became rather less common as the year wore on, they did not cease.¹⁶⁶ Indeed the presence of the underground remained a major problem for the communists in the eastern and central provinces. In Kielce province for instance:

'... the armed underground sharply increased its activity after the referendum.... In July in Pińczów district, it destroyed the offices of 18 commune committees, murdered several Party activists and beat up about 60 others. Even the district committee offices in Pińczów were closed temporarily for fear of terrorist attacks. In Czystochowa district too almost the entire Party organisation was terrorised. Commune committees and village circles of the Party did not meet and their secretaries and members... went into hiding or sought help from the district committee. The terror of the reaction was particularly evident in Kozienice, Radom and Iłża districts.... The head of the agricultural section of the Kielce provincial committee of the PPR wrote that "in these districts Party members live in fear of their lives and property; they very rarely visit their homes and keep on the move. If the reaction continues to terrorise our members it will be difficult

¹⁶⁵ L. Smosarski Reakcyjne podziemie zbrojne w latach 1945-1948, z dziejów Polski Ludowej (Warsaw, 1966), p. 385. Using Ministry of the Interior data, F. Kubica has calculated that some 60,000 people belonged to armed groups in 1946 (compared with 80,000 in 1945 and 46,000 in 1947), Czapla W walce... op. cit., pp. 193-94. Walichnowski points out that this must be an underestimate of the numbers involved in the underground (which extended beyond the military organisations) as a whole, Walichnowski op. cit., p. 332. Some 55,000 people gave themselves up in the amnesty in spring 1947.

¹⁶⁶ For examples, guerillas attacked St Michael's prison in Kraków on 18 August, releasing more than 200 prisoners, PRO FO371 56446 N10746; on 24 September about 20 KBW troops and militia were killed in an ambush by guerillas commanded by Hieronim Dekutowski ('Zapora'), Caban

to get them to carry out the duties they will be assigned in connection with the forthcoming elections".¹⁶⁷

In Lublin province:

'... the organisation went through a period of stagnation between April and autumn 1946 in terms of the growth of its membership. In the villages of Łuków district, PPR members continued to conceal their membership of the Party. As a result of underground terror and the inability of the district authorities to organise members who had signed up, there was a complete break-down of contact between the PPR district committee and the rural areas. Many of the most active PPR members fled to the western and northern territories... some went into hiding in other provinces; the district committee was in touch with 60 members (out of 230), losing contact with the others for more than a year. A similar situation existed in several other areas controlled by the underground. In response to pressure from Party organisations the provincial committee of the PPR agreed not to send instructors to them in case this would reveal them to the neighbourhood'.¹⁶⁸

Finally, in Warsaw province, the PPR provincial committee reported late in 1946 that:

'From September the activity of the bands has increased, reaching unprecedented intensity. Innumerable attacks, with robberies and assaults are directed against Party members and the public security organs. The attacks have taken on a mass character. For instance in Sokołów and Gostynin districts where they are more and more audacious,

contd...

i Machocki op. cit., p. 375; WiN units commanded by 'Jastrzab' carried out a series of daring raids on towns in Lublin province between late October and the end of December, *ibid.*, p. 380, Walichnowski op. cit., p. 228.

¹⁶⁷ Naumiuk PPR... op. cit., pp. 424-25.

¹⁶⁸ Olszewski PPR... op. cit., p. 164.

e.g. a 30-strong band attacked the town of Wyszaków and roamed around it for 24 hours...¹⁶⁹

In the event, the underground did not prove to be a major disruptive factor in the elections.¹⁷⁰ By January 1947 guerilla activity had declined very significantly (see Figure Two and Table Twelve). Party historians argue that the social base of the movement collapsed as the elections approached. According to this view popular revulsion with 'mass atrocities' committed by the underground, growing support for the Bloc and the increased effectiveness of security operations against the guerillas combined to undermine its hold on the villages and small towns.¹⁷¹ In fact there seem to have been three main reasons why it was unable to respond to the communists' election offensive. First, there was in practice little that the underground could do to affect the outcome of the elections, which depended above all on the effectiveness of the communists' control over the electoral apparatus. Given the presence of the army, security forces and ORMO, it was a relatively straightforward task for the PPR to ensure the polling stations were defended from attack and to control the conduct of the voting and the count. Secondly, the underground seems to have been seriously weakened by the security forces' operations in the period before the elections. Although Party historians attribute the upsurge of underground activity in September-November to an 'offensive' by the underground,¹⁷² it seems more probable that many of the incidents occurred as the security forces stepped up their activities. During October and November incomplete

¹⁶⁹ B. Dymek Pierwsze lata władzy ludowej na Mazowszu, Kurpiach i Podlasiu 1944-1948 (Warsaw, 1978), p. 158.

¹⁷⁰ The underground carried out 40 attacks on members of electoral commissions on 71 polling stations during the election campaign, Walichnowski op. cit., p. 243.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 222.

¹⁷² Smosarski op. cit., p. 388.

figures show that over 2,500 'members of the armed underground' and suspects were arrested, and 344 killed in clashes with security units.¹⁷³ The GOPs arrested some 5,000 more and killed 214 in December and January.¹⁷⁴ The losses were particularly heavy in the political and military leadership of the movement. The president of WiN, Niepokólczycki and 17 other members of the supreme command were arrested on 18 October. A new supreme command under Wincenty Kwieciński was rounded up in early January. WiN networks in the provinces were also devastated by arrests. In Lublin province, 879 WiN members were uncovered in September and October. Amongst those arrested were the deputy-commander and propaganda chief of the province, 2 area, 7 district, 4 sub-district and 13 local commanders, the commanders of 3 armed units and 19 liaison officers.¹⁷⁵ WiN provincial commands in Bydgoszcz, Katowice, Olsztyn and Białystok were rounded up between September and December.¹⁷⁶ The National Party networks in Kraków, Rzeszów, Gdańsk and Bydgoszcz were broken by arrests in the second half of 1946 and the national leadership was detained in December, bringing an end to the activity of the party in Poland.¹⁷⁷

These factors and the sheer practical difficulty of conducting guerilla activity in harsh winter conditions no doubt account for much of the fall-off of violence in December and January. But, thirdly, political considerations were also important. Much of the former AK underground, notably WiN, had seen its struggle as complementary to the legal opposition and had pinned its hopes on the election. Armed resistance was primarily small-scale and defensive in purpose. The raison d'etre of the movement was not to mount a guerilla insurrection against the

¹⁷³ Walichnowski op. cit., p. 223.

¹⁷⁴ Turlejska W walce... op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁷⁵ Caban i Machocki op. cit., p. 122.

¹⁷⁶ Czapla W walce... op. cit., p. 71; Wojnowski op. cit., p. 139; Majecki op. cit., p. 168.

¹⁷⁷ Pilacinski op. cit., p. 219.

Table Twelve
Activity of the Armed Underground, 1946-47¹⁷⁸

Month	'Terrorist' Attacks	Robberies	Total	Killings on the Government Side
Jul 1946	355	569	924	356
Oct 1946	324	890	1214	234
Nov 1946	369	971	1340	271
Dec 1946	316	550	866	117
Jan 1947	213	287	500	179
Feb 1947	195	369	564	125
Mar 1947	-	-	463	104

communists which had no chance of succeeding against such unfavourable military odds, but to sustain the spirit of opposition to the PPR and ensure that the elections were conducted fairly.¹⁷⁹ Even the more right-wing underground groups which looked to the National Party or the Government-in-Exile were sceptical about the value of widescale armed activity. The command of the military arm of the National Party, the NZW, had unanimously recommended the suspension of guerilla activity as early as March 1946.¹⁸⁰ The Government-in-Exile was flatly opposed to armed struggle, fearing that the communists would take advantage of this to provoke an insurrectionary outburst before the elections. In a declaration to the homeland issued in October 1946 it called on guerilla units to leave the forests. While urging passive resistance, it warned against 'armed action, which in present circumstances can bring nothing except defeat', adding that 'the Polish question... is organically linked with the overallly political situation of the post-war world. That situation contains within it the seeds of inevitable changes... preserve those forces essential for survival'.¹⁸¹ With the defeat of Mikołajczyk and the consolidation of the communists' hold on power a large part of the ex-AK left the underground during the amnesty in February-April 1947. But few of them were permanently reconciled to the new order and between 1948-56 many suffered persecution. Those diehards who did not take advantage of the amnesty in some cases continued guerilla activity into the 1950s; others who believed that conflict between East and West was inevitable thought in terms of conserving their strength for more favourable times.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ See page 202.

¹⁸⁰ Pilacinski op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁸¹ GSHI PRM E/20.

¹⁸² For underground activity after 1947, see Walichnowski op. cit., Chap. 9; Caban i Machocki op. cit., S. Wałach Świadectwo tamtym dniom (Kraków, 1974) and Był w Polsce czas... (Kraków, 3rd ed., 1978), Kluź op. cit.,; Majecki op. cit., Chap. 7.

The decline of the armed underground was due not to any sudden collapse of its social base as the elections approached. The underground remained a major force until early 1947. It was the crushing of the PSL which destroyed the political environment in which its activity had made sense in 1945-46.

The lines on which the country polarised at the end of 1946 were essentially the same as the divide which had existed in early 1945 before the formation of the Government of National Unity. Ranged against the 'Lublin' parties was a broad opposition movement which despite its internal differences was united by its refusal to accept communist leadership of the government. This movement embraced the mainstream peasant movement, almost in its entirety, the Church and the overwhelming majority of the Catholic camp, the underground remnants of the AK and the National Party and a significant part of the Socialist party. There is no doubt that in 'free and unfettered' elections the PSL would have secured a landslide majority. As it was, Mikołajczyk lost the struggle for power but ensured that the PPR was unable to rest that power on the broadly-based national front which the Party had endeavoured to create since 1942.

The Elections

By January 1947 the local organisation of the PSL had been 'broken, dispersed and paralysed' in many areas. Nonetheless, the party still made its presence felt not only in its rural redoubts, but also in urban centres. In Warsaw, the PSL:

'campaigned vigorously... mainly by means of whispered propaganda and gatherings in private apartments and in front of churches. PSL members also distributed a great deal of literature, put up posters and organised public meetings.... Clashes between PPR and PSL canvassers were frequent'.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Hillebrandt i Jakubowski op. cit., p. 381.

In Lublin students of the Catholic University organised a 3-day strike which also spread to secondary schools and the secular university.¹⁸⁴ In Silesia where the PSL was unable to distribute leaflets legally it found other means: in Będzin literature was given out in a cinema while a film was showing.¹⁸⁵ In Wrocław province:

'slogans calling (on the electors) to vote for the PSL appeared on the walls of Kłodzko on 17 January... leaflets also appeared in Jelenia Góra and Dzierżoniów. The next day more PSL leaflets showed up in Milicz, Lwówek, Trzebnica, Jelenia Góra, Strzelin, Zgorzelec, Żagań and other districts... the culprits were not found'.¹⁸⁶

In Katowice in the last week before the election the PSL:

'obtained a couple of lorry-loads of propaganda material and sent out their people to post it up in the centre. The material was put up around the clock. The PPR organised a day and night rota in reply: as soon as a PSL poster appeared it was torn down'.¹⁸⁷

In the countryside the PSL was prevented from campaigning in many districts, but in some it had greater success. In Rzeszów province, for example, it only managed to conduct its campaign on a mass scale in Krosno, Łańcut and part of Gorlice districts.¹⁸⁸ In Lublin province:

'the PSL was not able to organise mass propaganda in constituencies 16 (Zamość) and 17 (Chełm) at all and essentially conducted individual campaigning only... the party achieved wider activity in constituency 18 (Siedlce) where it organised public meetings.

¹⁸⁴ Olszewski PPR... op. cit., p. 310.

¹⁸⁵ Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... op. cit., p. 136.

¹⁸⁶ Pasierb Ruch... op. cit., p. 152.

¹⁸⁷ Rechowicz Pierwsze wybory... op. cit., p. 136.

¹⁸⁸ Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 281.

A considerable part of the local government administration was drawn into the campaign on behalf of the PSL in this area'.¹⁸⁹

The difficulties which faced the PSL may be illustrated by the experience of the Białystok provincial committee of the Party of Labour, which was regarded as part of the loyal opposition and therefore presumably treated more tolerantly than the PSL itself. Its report to Warsaw on the progress of the election campaign dated 16 January is worth quoting at length:

'Despite immense difficulties, the campaign has developed extremely well and augurs the very best results. The local inhabitants scramble for SP voting cards. On account of the success of our campaign at the local level, hindrance from representatives of the Bloc parties and the security organs has increased. SP posters are torn down or covered up by the ZWM as soon as they are put up and the only possibility that remains is direct leafleting at the doorstep, at markets and in front of churches. In addition, a number of people have been persecuted or given the sack for stating that they are going to vote for the SP list. Among others, engineer Budryk, who although not a party member, said he was going to vote for list number 2, was sacked from the Białystok power station.

Because small businessmen are joining the SP, several craftsmen have been arrested in the past few days, amongst others the President of the chamber of commerce, Krukowski and Wojtasz. It is said that Krukowski has been released.

In addition, on 16 January 1947 while he was giving out the party's eve of poll leaflets in the market place of Wysokie Mazowieckie, several individuals claiming to belong to the UB came up to Włodzimierz Gustyn, inspected his identity card, took him outside the town, took all the party's propaganda and burnt it, after which they beat up Gustyn severely and told him not to show himself in the district again. Besides beating him, they took all his documents. The Provincial Committee has reported this incident to the Military Procurator.

¹⁸⁹ Ciszewski PPR... op. cit., p. 310.

Despite our great success, the Provincial Committee cannot guarantee how the elections will turn out since up to now not one of our tellers has been authorised (to attend the count - J.R.), so that the Party has no possibility of checking the results of the election'.¹⁹⁰

On polling day, January 19, the authorities did their utmost to ensure that voting was open. The conduct of the poll in Zory in Upper Silesia as reported by the local circle of the SP was probably fairly typical:

'There were no screens at all in the polling stations. The voting itself took place in full view. Nobody could avoid voting openly. Every voter was spied on by PPR members of the Electoral Commission, Militiamen, army officers etc... the chairman of the Local Commission did not give the envelopes to the voters, but every voter had to place their ballot paper in the envelope which the chairman held in his hand with him looking at the ballot paper they had cast. No one but members of the PPR sat on the Electoral Commissions. If someone handed over a folded ballot paper it was immediately taken out of the envelope and unfolded to see if the voter had voted for a list other than number 3 (the Bloc list - J.R.). No-one was allowed to fold their ballot paper which had to be placed in the envelope with the number visible.

Tellers were not admitted because the prefect had refused to sign their certificates of good character, despite the fact that the MO had given some of them a positive recommendation. Prefect Suchań did this deliberately so as not to allow any of the other parties' tellers into the polling stations where they could interfere with open voting and witness the count...'.¹⁹¹

The communists considered that open, collective voting had been one of the most important factors in producing a favourable result.¹⁹² In Kielce province about 90% of the

¹⁹⁰ CAHSD Akty SP: ZG SP Akcja wyborcza 1946-47. The SP was officially credited with 3.1% of the votes in this constituency.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Uchwała Sekretariatu KC PPR o konieczności rozbudowy form organizacyjnych w miejskich i wiejskich organizacjach partyjnych, January 1947, PPR...i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., p. 22.

of the voters were said to have voted this way.¹⁹³ In Lublin province the proportion seems to have been between 30-45%¹⁹⁴ and in Rzeszów province an average of 30%, chiefly employees of offices, factories and institutions and many villages.¹⁹⁵ According to PSL sources the arrangements made by the Bloc for open voting broke down in many parts of the country.¹⁹⁶ There is some confirmation of this in Party sources. Open voting failed in Kraków, Tarnów and other major towns in Kraków province, for instance.¹⁹⁷ In Rzeszów and Wrocław provinces there were cases of organised open voting for the PSL.¹⁹⁸ In Kielce province where the PSL boycotted the poll after its lists had been invalidated the UB estimated that about 10% of the electorate refused to vote. In some areas of the province, however, the entire population stayed at home.¹⁹⁹ But even where the PSL was able to upset the Bloc's voting arrangements it was unable to loosen its hold on the count. This ensured that the PSL was unable to repeat the local successes it had achieved in the referendum: in Kraków, for example, the official results gave the PSL-Żuławski list only 27% of the votes.²⁰⁰ The official returns for the whole country are set out in Table Thirteen.

How far the real results of the election, let alone the votes that would have been cast in 'free and unfettered' elections, differed from the official returns is impossible to say. PSL tellers witnessed the count through to the end

193 Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., p. 268.

194 Olszewski PPR... op. cit., p. 312.

195 Olszewski Początki... op. cit., p. 286.

196 Wójcik PSL w walce... op. cit., p. 34.

197 Ćwik op. cit., p. 200.

198 Olszewski Początki... op. cit., pp. 286-87; Pasierb Ruch... op. cit., p. 152; Janowski PPS... op. cit., p. 125.

199 Naumiuk Początki... op. cit., pp. 268-69.

200 Ćwik op. cit., p. 202.

Table ThirteenOfficial Results of the Election, 19 January 1947²⁰¹

	VOTES (%)	SEATS
Democratic Bloc	9,003,682 (80.1)	394*
PSL	1,154,847 (10.3)	28**
Party of Labour	530,979 (4.7)	12
PSL 'Nowe Wyzwolenie'	397,754 (3.5)	7
Others	157,611 (1.4)	3***

TURNOUT 89.9%

* PPS 116; PPR 114; SL 109; SD 41; SP 5; PSL 'NW' 5; others 4.

** Including Z. Żuławski, elected as an independent socialist.

*** Progressive Catholics

in only about 100 polling districts. In some 1,100 more information was obtained from other witnesses. According to these data, 68% of the votes were cast for the PSL and 22% for the Bloc.²⁰² At all events, the official returns could not change the fact that the popular base of the communist camp remained much narrower than the Party had hoped when it embarked on the national front strategy.²⁰³ But nor could the PSL figures alter the reality that the elections marked the consolidation of communist rule for decades to come.

'The New Stage'

The aftermath of the election confirmed that the struggle for power in Poland had been settled, albeit at the cost of alienating the great majority of PSL supporters from the national front. Mikołajczyk at first refused to accept defeat, rejecting suggestions from the PPR and

²⁰¹ Góra Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa... op. cit., p. 219; Kuśmierski op. cit., p. 252.

²⁰² Wójcik PSL w walce... op. cit., p. 35.

²⁰³ Writing in 1971, Zambrowski recalled the 1946 referendum and the 1947 elections as 'bitter experiences' for the PPR leadership, Zambrowski Dziennik op. cit., pp. 92-93.

PPS that he should leave the country²⁰⁴ and persevering with his policy of uncompromising opposition to the new government. The majority of the party stood with him. The PSL supreme council endorsed this line when it met on 1/2 February, declaring that the new order was illegal and temporary.²⁰⁵ Mikołajczyk and his followers in the Sejm assumed a position of outright opposition to the government, warning that the country was ungovernable without the PSL and that the political tensions and economic difficulties which had been fuelled by the elections would soon propel Poland into 'indescribable chaos' and 'anarchy'.²⁰⁶

But Mikołajczyk's strategy was in ruins. The PSL's protests over the conduct of the elections were ignored by the authorities. The reaction of the West to the results was confined to some mild economic reprisals and formal protests over the non-fulfilment of the Yalta agreement. The widespread belief - encouraged by Mikołajczyk - that the Great Powers would intervene decisively on his behalf was rudely disappointed. In fact, the West abandoned Mikołajczyk without ceremony. The British broke off all contact for several months. When Gainer, the new British ambassador, met Mikołajczyk in May, he admitted his discomfort:

'whichever way you cut it, we have in effect inevitably dropped Mikołajczyk since the elections. This of course we did deliberately first because we wished to avoid embarrassing Mikołajczyk, and secondly because it seemed more politic from our own point of view'.²⁰⁷

The PSL had reaffirmed its commitment to close relations between Poland and the Soviet Union,²⁰⁸ but the elections

204 PRO FO371 66092 N2923.

205 Ibid., 66091 N1500.

206 Sprawozdanie stenograficzne... op. cit., 4.2.1947, col. 37, 8.2.1947, col. 60.

207 PRO FO371, 66093.

208 Chłopski Sztandar 9.2.1947.

had made it perfectly clear that the Russians had no further interest in coming to terms with Mikołajczyk. The party continued to operate legally, despite the fact that much of its local organisation had been dissolved or driven into semi-conspiracy. The leadership seems to have hoped that it would be possible to preserve the basic core of the party organisation until circumstances improved or a crisis developed which would force the communists to recognise that they needed the PSL. However, despite serious economic difficulties in early 1947,²⁰⁹ the political situation was characterised by stabilisation, not crisis. In June the British embassy reported that Poland had 'seemed calmer in the last three months than at any time since 1945'.²¹⁰ The upsurge of political violence which the PSL had warned would be the inevitable consequence of its suppression did not take place. As we have seen, underground activity tailed off after the elections; where it continued the security forces were well able to keep it in check. The PSL itself was allowed little opportunity to regroup the opposition. Attacks by the communists on the party made its continued functioning as an independent centre of opposition virtually impossible. The party press was tightly censored, in the countryside branches were disbanded, premises closed and records destroyed, while many leading activists were under arrest.²¹¹

Moreover, the party was seriously split over strategy. At the February supreme council Niećko, Wycech and Banach, supported by a quarter of the delegates, demanded that the PSL should come to terms with the new regime to salvage what it could of the influence of the peasant movement. The move was defeated but the minority, refusing to bow to

²⁰⁹ Jezierski op. cit., p. 98; J. Kaliński Bitwa o handel 1947-48 (Warsaw, 1970), pp. 61-68.

²¹⁰ PRO FO371 66093 N6707.

²¹¹ J. Fajkowski Z działalności ruchu ludowego na Mazurach i Warmii w latach 1945-1949, Rocznik dziejów ruchu ludowego 8 (1966), p. 266.

the decision, organised themselves into a faction known as the PSL-Lewica (PSL-Left) which began to publish its own newspaper, 'Chłopi i Państwo'. The rebels represented a genuine current within the peasant movement, drawing their supporters mainly from its economic, social and educational wing which was suffering as the political wing moved further and further into opposition. In March the leading rebels were expelled and in following months more expulsions took place. The 'leftists' carried their campaign to the rank-and-file of the party, but despite the credentials and record of their leaders, seem to have encountered great difficulty in breaking down the loyalty of the grassroots activists to Mikołajczyk's hard line.²¹²

The flight of Mikołajczyk from Poland with American and British help on 20 October 1947 brought an end to the opposition activity of the PSL. The party remained in existence until 1949 under the leadership of the 'leftist' group which assumed control of the party organisation and press immediately after Mikołajczyk's departure. The communists hoped that the 'reborn PSL' would help to make up for the deficiencies of the SL as a vehicle for winning peasant support and extending the government's influence in the countryside, but little was achieved. Some leading figures in the PSL had not hitherto openly opposed Mikołajczyk, such as Czesław Poniecki, president of the Kielce provincial organisation, Andrzej Witos and Kiernik, who returned from a visit to the USA to resume the party chairmanship, threw in their lot with the new executive. But evidence on how far the rank-and-file followed their lead, though very thin, suggests that most members stood aloof from the new organisation. In Kielce province, for instance, PSL membership in spring 1948 was just 2,300 - compared with 47,000 two years earlier.²¹³ In Olsztyn membership in late 1948 was one tenth of that in late 1946.²¹⁴

²¹² See, e.g., Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., pp. 171-72.

²¹³ Naumiuk PPR... op. cit., pp. 349, 439.

²¹⁴ Fajkowski Z działalności... op. cit., pp. 261, 267.

In Poznań, where at its peak the PSL had had between 40-70,000 members, by early 1949 it had just 5,000.²¹⁵ In the latter case as Z. Hemmerling admits, 'despite the generally favourable attitude of the administrative authorities to the reborn PSL, organisational work did not produce the results expected. The reason for the lack of confidence was the fact that a dozen or so activists of the former PSL were still in prison.'²¹⁶ Another factor was the suspicious attitude of local communist and SL activists, who despite central policy obstructed the revival of the PSL.²¹⁷ After two years of existence when the 'reborn PSL' was merged with the SL to form the United Peasant Party (Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe - ZSL) in November 1949 its verified membership was only 25,600.²¹⁸

In the countryside the influence of the PSL opposition remained strong despite the election defeat and the suppression of party activity. A telling indication of the failure of the national front to generate any fundamental shift in allegiances at grassroots level was the way that PSL supporters continued to dominate the rural local government apparatus long after the party organisation had ceased to function. In PSL strongholds it took two years for the communists to establish a grip on the lower-level national councils. In April 1947 special commissions were attached to district national councils to carry out a purge.²¹⁹ In November, Warsaw issued a new circular complaining that commune councils were still overloaded with Mikołajczyk

²¹⁵ Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., pp. 106-07, 194.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 183.

²¹⁷ Dobieszewski i Hemmerling op. cit., p. 189; Uchwała Sekretariatu KC PPR oceniająca przebieg obchodów Święta Ludowego, May 1948, PPR...i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., pp. 236-37.

²¹⁸ J. Fajkowski (ed.) Krótki zarys historii ruchu ludowego (Warsaw, 1969), p. 253.

²¹⁹ Okólnik KC PPR w sprawie pracy administracyjno-samorządowej na terenie powiatów, April 1947, PPR...i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., p. 73.

supporters, rich peasants and right-wing 'independents'. The circular gave detailed instructions on how to expel such elements and ordered the formation of special Party 'triumvirates' to reorganise the councils, adding that in communes where 'there are no Party members at all', a triumvirate from a neighbouring commune should carry out the purge.²²⁰ H. Słabek concludes from a study of the representation of the various parties in village local government that despite its losses during 1947, the PSL remained a significant force until at least early 1948. In Kraków, even then it had 51% of village administrators; in Lublin, 29%, in Warsaw, 21%, and as Słabek points out this index to some degree underestimates the influence of the PSL. It was in spring 1948 that the PSL was finally dislodged from the village councils.²²¹

The liquidation of the peasant opposition left a political vacuum in the countryside which the communists, SL and 'reborn PSL' were unable to fill. The Party lacked any grassroots organisation in much of rural central and eastern Poland. As late as the end of 1948 PPR cells had been established in only 45% of villages; in Białystok province 85% of villages had no Party branch.²²² The SL remained weak and inactive. In September 1947 by which time the PSL was no longer a competitor, the paid-up membership claimed by the SL was about 180,000 and two years later the SL contributed just 230,000 members to the ZSL.²²³ Considering the inducements offered to join, this was a far cry from the 500 to 800 thousand members belonging to the PSL at

220 Okólnik Sekretariatu KC PPR w sprawie reorganizacji gminnych rad narodowych, November 1947, PPR...i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., p. 162-66.

221 Ryszka op. cit., pp. 262-66.

222 Szczeblewski Problemy rozwoju... op. cit., pp. 29-30. Gomułka told the June 1948 plenum that the Party had still to overcome the problem of organising itself in the countryside. He admitted that 'our Party does not sit in the countryside, or sits weakly...', Przemówienie tow. Wiesława... op. cit., p. 69.

223 Fajkowski Krótki zarys... op. cit., p. 253.

its peak. The great majority of PSL supporters refused to compromise, replacing the active opposition of 1945-46 with passive disengagement from politics. A few weeks after the elections Zambrowski admitted the problem in terms which laid bare the deep gulf between the Party and rural opinion:

'despite the defeat of the reaction and the PSL in the elections, the seeds of their ideology still weigh on the consciousness of the peasant masses. Distrust of the working class, political separation from the town, unwillingness to contribute through contingents to the reconstruction of the democratic state, a selfish and vegetative attitude to economic problems, apathy and hostility towards the momentum for reform of the progressive forces of the nation, suspicion towards the political ideas of peace and democracy - all these and similar failings disseminated by the PSL in the countryside will exert their influence on the outlook of the peasant masses for a long time to come'.²²⁴

The brittle character of the agreement made between the PPR and PPS in November 1946 became obvious after the elections. As we have seen, the PPS viewed the election offensive as a historical necessity, justified in order to avoid what it regarded as the potentially disastrous consequences of a PSL victory. With the elections out of the way and the struggle for power resolved, the Socialists believed that the government camp should resume its efforts to win over a broad base of popular support for socialism by offering a moderate and pluralistic economic and political programme and relaxing the exceptional repressive measures that they had deemed necessary during the elections. In essence, the PPS favoured taking up again the broad national front strategy where it had been left off in late 1946.

In the post-election discussions of the Polish road

²²⁴ R. Zambrowski Na nowym etapie Nowe drogi 1947 nr. 2, p. 13.

to socialism the PPS argued that it should proceed in broadly evolutionary fashion on the basis of popular consent. Though rejecting classical parliamentary democracy, the Socialists proclaimed the strengthening of social control over political and economic institutions and the safeguarding of the rights of the individual vis-à-vis the state as fundamental features distinguishing the 'Polish road' from the dictatorship of the proletariat.²²⁵ In the economic sphere the PPS stood by the three-sector model in which the private and co-operative sectors would play a major part alongside state enterprise. The road to socialism would be determined, but gradual. Work should begin on laying the foundations 'at the quickest possible tempo, but that tempo should not be achieved at the cost of excessive (original emphasis) social effort, of some kind of new revolutionary upheaval, of demands beyond the capacity of the present generation'.²²⁶ The fundamental condition for the construction of socialism was that

'the majority of the population wanted it and that it was achieved in a way that suited its wishes, traditions, way of thinking, cultural relations and so on. In other words, we do not aim to repeat the course of the Russian revolution, which for Poland would be incorrect, for Poles would be unsuitable, and - what is more important - in the historical circumstances of today would be inapplicable'.²²⁷

In Socialist eyes, the role of the national front and of the PPS in particular was, as before, to secure the active support of the widest possible section of society. The government camp should welcome openly all those who were prepared to work for the reconstruction of Poland on

²²⁵ J. Hochfeld Problematyka nowego okresu Przegląd Socjalistyczny 1947 nr. 3 (17), pp. 4-9.

²²⁶ S. Szwalbe Na nowym etapie Przegląd Socjalistyczny 1947 (17), p. 3.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

'democratic' lines, with party affiliation and ideological allegiance very much a secondary consideration. Hochfeld expressed this attitude when he wrote that:

'the role of non-party citizens, who work and think honestly - even if sometimes critically - must increase... we need the active participation of all citizens'.²²⁸

As for its own role, the PPS stood for strict observance of the November 1946 'unity of activity' pact, emphasising that co-operation should be on an equal basis and that each party should respect the independence and organisational integrity of the other. The Socialists reaffirmed their commitment to eventual unification with the communists, but insisted that this had to be preceded by a gradual - and bilateral - process of deepening collaboration and ideological convergence. It would be 'a long-term process' which 'could not be by-passed artificially' or 'accelerated by any kind of pressure'.²²⁹ In sum, the PPS leaders saw no reason to modify in any major way the general strategy which they had pursued consistently since the end of the war and which for much of that time the communists had also proclaimed.

However, the communists did not contemplate a return to the broad national front of mid-1944 or mid-1945. The Party's evolution away from this approach towards the use of force had been a response to its inability to undermine the opposition by non-coercive means. The communists were acutely aware that the election offensive had not solved this dilemma. They rejected the Socialists' view that, as Gomułka put it

'... the electoral victory of the democratic bloc has automatically solved all the problems of the further construction of People's Poland; that the working class and democratic government are no longer threatened by any danger; that the reaction in Poland has disappeared,

²²⁸ Robotnik 11.2.1947.

²²⁹ S. Szwalbe Na nowym etapie Przegląd Socjalistyczny 1947 nr. 3 (17), pp. 3-4.

or at least has been so weakened that its existence is hardly to be seen; that in short the elections have solved the problem of class struggle in Poland'.²³⁰

Force - 'the class struggle' - was essential, for the opposition in spite of its setbacks was still a real threat to the new order:

'... despite its electoral defeat, the reaction continues to represent a serious danger to the people's power and with favourable circumstances could rapidly recover its strength... any underestimation of the strength of the reaction and its potential by party organisations and the state apparatus should be regarded as harmful'.²³¹

This sense of the insecurity of the foundations of the new government in terms of popular support, shaped the strategy of the PPR as it crystallised in 1947. The strategy was in essence a continuation and development of the aggressive, hardline stance of 1946, applied to the tasks of eliminating the influence of the 'reaction' in society and preparing the ground for the 'Polish road to Socialism'. The Party's principal task was to press on with the campaign it had launched in September 1946:

'to mobilise all the parties of the democratic bloc for the further march forward on the road to People's Democracy, to the consolidation and development of our social system.... After the victory, after the destruction of the enemy, our party must not rest on its laurels since this would give the enemy the opportunity to regenerate its strength'.²³²

230 Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone na akademii pierwszomajowej w Warszawie, 30.4.1947, Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 412.

231 Gomułka Z przemówienia na plenum Komitetu Centralnego PPR, 13.4.1947 r, Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 391.

232 Ibid., p. 388.

The communists still claimed that the new order rested on a broad front of workers, peasants, working intelligentsia and, to a limited extent, craftsmen.²³³ In practice, however, they looked to the state apparatus and the Party to drive Poland towards Socialism. Less and less emphasis was placed on the national front. This is not to say that the communists abandoned the national platform. The Polishness of the PPR was strongly underlined in 1947. But the stress was on the Party itself as an active, disciplined, ideologically-committed movement which would be able to carry the Polish revolution forward despite its limited support amongst the nation as a whole. The priority was no longer to draw forces outside the Democratic Bloc into the government camp, but to ensure that the zeal of the Bloc parties was not diluted by ideologically alien elements and to break the influence of such forces in society.

The central role which the communists expected the state apparatus to play in the building of Socialism was made very clear in the exchanges between the two workers' parties over the character of the 'Polish road' in the months following the elections. In referring to the state apparatus both sides had in mind, principally, the 'apparatus of state coercion', in other words the security forces.²³⁴ Replying to Hochfeld's call for 'institutional checks' on the power of the state bureaucracy, Roman Werfel stated the Party's view that, for all the differences between the 'Polish road' and the class Marxist-Leninist path to Socialism:

'... the fundamental question for the victory of the working class remains the problem of breaking up the old bourgeois apparatus and putting in its place the workers' own apparatus - or in countries such as Poland - a

²³³ R. Werfel Istota naszego państwa i problem biurokracyzmu, Nowe drogi 1947 nr. 3, p. 118.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 114.

state apparatus of all the common people (ogólno-ludowy) which will defend the people's power against every attempt to overthrow it'.²³⁵

Far from limiting the state, Werfel declared that

'... we must strengthen, expand, improve and make more efficient the state apparatus... we must not do anything which might weaken or undermine it, or reduce its significance...'.²³⁶

As for the danger of the bureaucracy losing contact with the people, Werfel argued that this was not inherent in the nature of the state, but arose from the human and ideological vestiges of the old bourgeois order. It would cease to be a problem as the old ideology was rooted out and cadres drawn from the working classes were drafted in.²³⁷ In the meantime it could be combated 'only on the basis of strengthening the apparatus of the people's state';²³⁸ 'institutional checks' would be positively harmful.²³⁹ On grounds both of theory and practical politics, the communists saw a security apparatus, powerful and unfettered (except by Party control), as indispensable.

The other pillar of 'People's Poland' would be the Party. This would not be the PPR of 1946, but the new united Party formed from the merger of the PPR and the PPS. The April 1947 Plenum identified the relationship of the two parties as the key factor in Poland's development and initiated campaigns to prepare the PPR to accommodate the PPS and to break down resistance within the PPS to 'organic unification'. After the Plenum, recruitment to the PPR was reined back and a verification and vetting of the existing

²³⁵ R. Werfel Istota naszego państwa i problem biurokracyzmu, Nowe drogi 1947 nr. 3, p. 118.

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 122.

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 125.

²³⁸ Ibid., p. 125.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 130.

membership was carried out.²⁴⁰ The declared aim was to transform its following 'from a party of PPR sympathisers into a party of PPR members; moving the focus from indices of numerical growth to qualitative criteria'.²⁴¹ At the same time the Central Committee launched a major programme of political education designed to 'strengthen the ideological backbone' of PPR members, and in particular to find and train potential cadres to reinforce the Party aktyw.²⁴² Initially, the communists' pressure on the PPS to make a serious start on the process leading to merger met fierce opposition. From June onwards, the PPS leadership accepted the principle, but fought a rearguard action to defer the actual merger as long as possible. In March 1948 Cyrankiewicz abruptly changed course and agreed on behalf of the PPS that the merger should begin. In December - after further delay caused by the leadership crisis in the PPR - the Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza - PZPR) was formed.

As the leading role of the Party was underlined and the independence of the PPS curbed, the significance of the national front decreased. The stress laid on ideological criteria in recruitment to the PPR was echoed in the other parties of the Democratic Bloc. Recruitment had continued on a mass scale in the first months after the election, but the communists suspected the motives or at least the political commitment, of many of those who jumped on the bandwagon.²⁴³ The April Plenum reversed the 'open doors' policy of the previous two years. Great emphasis was

²⁴⁰ Kantyka Na drodze... op. cit., p. 293; Instrukcja KC PPR w sprawie wymiany tymczasowych legitymacji członkowskich na stałe, 27.5.1947, PPR...i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., pp. 83-85;

²⁴¹ Kantyka Na drodze... op. cit., p. 293.

²⁴² Gomułka Z przemówienia na plenum Komitetu Centralnego PPR, 13.4.47, Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 395.

²⁴³ R. Zambrowski Na nowym etapie Nowe drogi 1947 nr. 2, p. 14.

placed on the danger of infiltration of the Democratic Bloc by 'reactionary' elements, which it was claimed were attempting to subvert the national front from within.²⁴⁴ Forces in society which the Party had sought to co-exist with since 1944, notably the Church, now came under attack. At the April Plenum Gomułka called for a rooting-out of

'... the old, harmful and up to now only partially combated historical traditions, the daily impregnation of the nation's spirit with reactionary ideology by the Church; the education of youth, especially university youth, according to old idealist and reactionary academic conceptions...'²⁴⁵

By the second half of 1947 campaigns were underway in the schools and higher education. The aim was to evolve 'Marxist teaching methods to destroy the ruinous influence of the reaction on children and working class youth (and) to develop in them a socialist view of the world...' ²⁴⁶ By September the Episcopate was expressing its disquiet at what it considered was a 'deliberately directed hidden struggle with God and the Church' and called the Faithful to its defence.²⁴⁷ The same radical and aggressive stance on the part of the PPR was seen in many other areas as the communists abandoned the policy of building alliances with the existing political and social movements and sought instead to sweep them aside by transforming the nature of Polish society.

In many ways the campaigns initiated in 1947 were the precursors of the Stalinist offensives of the period after 1948. However, in 1947 they were placed firmly within a national context. They were undertaken not in conformity with the Soviet model of socialist construction, but because in the Party's view they were essential to the 'Polish road

²⁴⁴ Gomułka Z przemówienia na plenum Komitetu Centralnego PPR, 13.4.1947, Artykuły... Vol. II, op. cit., p. 388.

²⁴⁵ Gołębiowski Pierwsze lata... op. cit., p. 348.

²⁴⁶ Okólnik Sekretariatu KC PPR o udziale partii w działalności RTPD, 22.10.1947, PPR...i 1947 - xii 1948 op. cit., p. 142.

²⁴⁷ Listy pasterskie episkopatu... op. cit., pp. 52-55.

to Socialism'. It was in this national perspective that the essential continuity of the Party's line with the objectives it had pursued since 1942 was apparent. Gomułka was in the fore in proclaiming the national platform, but in 1947 he spoke with the authority of the leadership as a whole. The general assumption was that having so recently found a 'national' solution to the struggle for power, there was every advantage in maintaining the national course as Poland moved towards Socialism. It was also assumed that Stalin held the same view - not only Gomułka, but the wider leadership too were puzzled by the implications of the establishment of the Cominform in September 1947²⁴⁸ and carried on much as before. Gomułka told the inaugural meeting that in contrast to the old KPP, which had 'committed a great many errors... particularly on the national question', the PPR was a party of national independence (partia niepodległościowa). This had helped it immensely to broaden its political base in the working class and the nation as a whole.²⁴⁹ As for the Polish-Soviet alliance, the key was to show that it was justified 'from the point of view of Polish raison d'etat'.²⁵⁰ After the Cominform session, the PPR insisted that its policies would remain unchanged:

'In the future as in the past, we will fight resolutely and without compromise to defend peace and to safeguard the interests of Poland.... The communist and Marxist parties

²⁴⁸ Berman told the August-September 1948 Plenum that there had been mention 'of certain hesitations, of a lack of understanding of the new situation a year ago at the September session of the Information Bureau when we were unable at first to grasp the point of an open, public co-ordination of revolutionary forces on an international scale', Nowe drogi 1948 nr. 11, p. 113. In 1956 he told the October Plenum that 'we had a different view on the Information Bureau than the Soviet comrades and we defended our position. I recall that I was sharply criticised by Zhdanov...', Nowe drogi 1956 nr. 10, p. 90.

²⁴⁹ Narada... op. cit., p. 58.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

of all countries stand guard over peace, freedom and the independence of nations... There is no question of the Soviet Union and the other People's Democracies intending to force their political systems on other nations.... The Polish Workers' Party has shown that... it is building a strong and independent Poland; that it places the preservation of her independence and sovereignty above everything else. As far as the interests of the People's Poland are concerned... our Party knows no compromise'.²⁵¹

In this conception, the united Party of the working class was to be the vanguard of the Polish revolution and the internal mass base on which it would rest. The alliance with the PPS - 'the foundation of People's Poland... the principal motor of all (its) victories and successes',²⁵² had been by far the most important fruit of the national front strategy and would provide the driving force on the 'Polish road to Socialism'. The Gomułka leadership aimed not simply to liquidate the PPS as a rival party and potential source of opposition, but to harness its constituency and national traditions for the new Party. Unification would be based on an ideological platform of Marxism-Leninism and nationalism; it would not be 'mechanical'.²⁵³ It would require a revision of attitudes on both sides.²⁵⁴

The volte-face by the PPS leadership in March 1948 may well have been prompted by the fear that the relatively favourable conditions for merger offered by Gomułka might not long remain on the table.²⁵⁵ If so, the fears were

²⁵¹ Gomułka Przemówienie na manifestacji we Wrocławiu, 25.11.1947, Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., pp. 486-89.

²⁵² Gomułka Przemówienie wygłoszone na akademii pierwszomajowej w Warszawie, 30.4.1947, Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit. pp. 411-12.

²⁵³ Gomułka Jedność 'mechaniczna' czy ideologiczna? Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., pp. 431-41.

²⁵⁴ Gomułka Z przemówienia na plenum Komitetu Centralnego PPR, 13.4.1947, Artykuły... Vol. II op. cit., p. 395. Gomułka argued that the Party should learn 'Polish Marxism'.

²⁵⁵ J. Holzer ('W. Pański') Agonia PPS op. cit., p. 21.

well-founded. On June 3, as the crisis in relations between the Soviet and Yugoslav communists was breaking, Gomułka addressed the Central Committee of the PPR on the question of the ideological platform of the new united Party.²⁵⁶ He failed to carry the leadership with his conception. Polish Stalinism had finally eclipsed the national front strategy.

²⁵⁶ Przemówienia tow. Wiesława... op. cit., pp. 54-71.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

The communists' offensive against the PSL and the underground in the period leading up to the elections and the rapid decline of organised opposition in their aftermath, marked the close of the struggle for power which had begun during the Nazi occupation and continued during the liberation. After 1946 the leading role of the PPR in the state was assured. The Socialists' attempt to preserve an element of pluralism from within the government camp had collapsed by 1948. Despite leadership crises and outbreaks of popular discontent in 1956, 1968 and 1970-71, it was not until the advent of Solidarność more than three decades later that the communists again faced a major challenge to their monopoly of power.

The events of the turn of 1946/47 thus represented the culmination of the national front strategy which the Party had tried to pursue with varying degrees of consistency since its formation in 1942. The essence of the strategy, as stated by the Central Bureau of Polish Communists in July 1944, was twofold. Its first purpose was to establish a 'truly national government supported by the majority of the people'. The national front was to embrace the workers, peasants, intelligentsia and petit-bourgeoisie and a substantial part of the 'middle-bourgeoisie'. In other words, the communists aimed to win over much of the existing 'London' camp, leaving the diehard 'reactionaries' isolated and without a significant social base. Such a national front would provide a real bond between Polish communism and the nation and form the 'point of departure on the road to changes in the system'. Through this regrouping the Party would be able to achieve the second purpose of the strategy: to create a balance within Poland that would allow it to 'smash the reaction' with its own internal forces, that is principally by political means and without

being forced to turn to the Soviet Union for direct military assistance.

As we have seen, the communists encountered immense difficulties in putting this strategy into action and were repeatedly forced to modify their course. Virtually nothing was achieved in underground Poland. The attempt to establish a broad coalition around the PKWN in 1944 went off course within weeks. A combination of factors: its own insecurity, its numerical and organisational weakness and Stalin's doubts about its capacity to keep control of events, or even of its partners in the PKWN, caused the Party to rely directly on the Soviet presence to crush the underground. By spring 1945 the PPR leadership found itself facing incipient civil war. In the provinces the security forces and Party hardliners followed the lead of Soviet advisers rather than the Central Committee. The May Plenum reasserted the leadership's authority and steered the PPR back to the broad national front strategy that had in effect been suspended since October 1944.

Between June 1945 and February 1946 the national front strategy appeared to come close to fruition. There seemed to the communists to be a real, albeit a steadily diminishing, possibility that the London wing of the Government of National Unity led by Mikołajczyk, or at least a substantial part of it, could be drawn into the national front under PPR hegemony. The attitude of the PSL to a joint electoral bloc was the test. However, Mikołajczyk had different plans. He aimed at the reconstruction of the coalition government under PSL leadership with the communists and their allies as the junior partner. He believed that the PPR would be too weak to prevent this unless the Soviet Union intervened directly on its behalf, and that in the final analysis Stalin would prefer to accept the new government than run the risk of internal destabilisation in Poland and economic reprisals from the Western Powers.

Following the break-down of talks on an electoral bloc in February 1946, the PPR concluded that it was unrealistic to hope for a deal with Mikołajczyk. It began to prepare

for the confrontation with the opposition which it now believed to be unavoidable. The Party tacitly accepted that its strategy had failed to detach the peasant movement and other sections of the London camp from the 'reaction'. According to PPR propaganda, the PSL intended to fight the elections in an alliance with the 'reaction'; it would therefore be allowed no further part to play in political life. However, the 'centrist' leadership of the Party's only significant ally, the PPS, continued to believe that a broad national front, including the PSL, was attainable. This led to severe strains between the two parties. But the communists were unwilling to sever their partnership with the PPS leaders, although in mid-1946 they appear to have come close to doing so. Such a rift would have spelt a return to the isolation in which the Party had found itself in the spring of 1945. For this reason, and perhaps because the Russians were not yet ready to run the risk of a show-down between the PPR and the PSL, the communists held their fire while the Socialists vainly attempted to resurrect the broad national front. In September 1946, it became clear that neither the PPR nor the Peasants were interested in a compromise. The PPS, appeased by undertakings on future policy and the distribution of power in the government to be formed after the elections, took the only course which it considered was open to it, and fell in with the communists' offensive against the PSL. It saw this as the only way to preserve some influence over the PPR after the elections and avoid the danger of Soviet intervention.

The results of the offensive demonstrated that the Party had succeeded - probably beyond its expectations - in achieving what was intended as the second purpose of the national front strategy. The communists had built up sufficient resources to be able to mobilise the state-Party apparatus: the PPR rank-and-file, the bureaucracy, the army and the security forces to overcome the opposition without having to call in the Red Army to help. Undoubtedly Soviet advisers played an important part behind the scenes, but

their role was well-concealed and the Red Army was able to maintain its low profile. The Polish communists had consolidated their hold on the state with their own resources without provoking a major internal crisis, economic collapse or a break-down in relations with the West. Mikołajczyk's confidence that they would be unable to do so had proved unfounded.

However, the national front per se had contributed little to this victory. The PPS leadership and aktyw played an important part in managing the elections, but neither the Socialists nor the communists' other allies were able to draw the masses with them. The first purpose of the national front strategy: to rally the support of the majority of the nation and to isolate the 'reaction', remained unfulfilled. Contrary to the view put forward by Party historians, the PPR had won the struggle for power despite the continuing narrowness of its popular base, not because it had succeeded in enlisting the support of the majority of the Polish nation. The Party's recurrent resort to force to deal with its opponents, the unity of the peasant movement even in defeat and the dominant position of the PSL in rural local government in many areas, the strength of the underground opposition, the disastrous results of the referendum in those urban areas where the count was conducted fairly, the absence of Party organisation across many rural parts of eastern and central Poland into the late 1940's and the critical attitude of the Church, all belie the official interpretation that a widescale movement of opinion took place in the months before the election to produce a landslide in favour of the bloc. Whatever shift in opinion there was seems to have come after the election offensive when active opposition gave way to resigned acquiescence and disengagement from politics. Indeed, the polarisation of forces in Poland at the turn of 1946/47 seems to have put yet another barrier between the Party and large sections of the nation.

The reasons for this failure were then largely internal. The national front strategy assumed that it would be

possible to achieve a national consensus for the Party's vision of the future and that this would provide the climate in which it would be possible to neutralise the 'reaction' by political rather than coercive means. However, the communists were unable to achieve that internal consensus and were therefore obliged to use much greater repression than they had intended to consolidate their power. This is not to say that external factors, notably Soviet influence, did not play an important part in shaping the communists' tactics and not only its strategy - during 1945-47. We do not have the evidence to gauge accurately the extent of that influence, but it is safe to assume that it is considerable. However, one need look no further than the obvious inadequacy of the national front as an instrument to secure state power for the communists to explain the strategy's lack of success. Stalin's diktats were in this sense secondary.

Party historians imply that if only the PPR had been allowed to persevere with the strategy after 1948, free of outside interference, it would have been possible, with time, to achieve an 'historical compromise' in Poland in which a genuine mechanism of consent between the nation and Polish communism might have been established. But there is little substance to this. The essential features of the post-1948 phase were shaping up by 1946-47. The Party had been propelled away from the national front and a harder, more aggressive and totalitarian course was in the ascendant by the time of the elections. As Zambrowski wrote many years later, while 1948 marked the 'great turn' to Stalinism in Poland, the road leading to the turn runs directly back to the crushing of the opposition at the time of the elections and the radicalisation of the Party's line in their aftermath.¹

In a longer-term perspective, the failure of the national front meant that the new political order was thus

¹ Zambrowski Dziennik... op. cit., p. 71.

fundamentally flawed from the start. The communists held the state, but outside the Party-state bureaucracy and the apparatus of coercion they lacked any firm internal basis on which to realise their social and economic objectives. The historic achievement of the Polish Workers' Party and the national front strategy was the creation of a political system which was, and has remained, one of the more effective in Eastern Europe in neutralising opposition and managing crises with its own internal resources. But that system has been one of the least successful in establishing a mechanism of consent between rulers and ruled or in creating the conditions for economic and political stability. The roots of this failure lie firmly in the formative years of 'People's Poland' between 1944 and 1947.

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VI. NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

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Jaime Reynolds

'Lublin' versus 'London' — The Party and the Underground Movement in Poland, 1944–1945

On 8 May 1945 the German Reich capitulated. On the same day in eastern Poland 'units of the armed underground about 300 strong attacked the town of Grajewo (Bialystok province), where they destroyed the buildings of the County Militia Command, the court house and the prefecture. They attempted also to capture the Security Police Office. A detachment of the 11th Regiment of the Army of the Interior was despatched to assist the defenders. During the fighting the attackers suffered considerable losses and were forced to withdraw.'¹

In Poland hostilities did not end in 1945. Incidents such as the one recounted were still occurring as late as 1947 and armed resistance to the communist authorities was being offered, albeit on a sporadic and localized scale, a decade after the war had ended. Poland, alone amongst the European People's Democracies, experienced not only open, legal opposition to the installation of a Soviet-sponsored, communist-led government, but also widescale underground opposition and guerrilla warfare.²

This article is concerned with the first year of this struggle: from the formation of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) by the communists in Lublin in July 1944, until the construction of a coalition government of 'National Unity' — containing members of the 'bourgeois' parties, most prominently the Peasant Party (SL), as well as the communists and their allies — in June 1945. During this period 'Lublin' was faced by the 'London camp': the military and political apparatus of the wartime anti-German underground loyal to the Government-in-Exile in London. In spite

of internal conflicts and severe reverses in 1943 – 44, this movement remained intact and posed a great obstacle in the way of 'Lublin's' attempts to win popular support. This configuration of forces persisted until mid-1945, after which a more narrowly-based underground operated alongside a strong legal opposition movement grouped around Mikolajczyk's Polish Peasant Party (PSL).

Apart from the attention paid to the 'Polish question' as a problem of wartime and postwar international relations and a few studies of the Warsaw uprising, very little has been published in English on the first years of People's Poland. This is in spite of the fact that many Polish and émigré historians have written on various aspects of the subject and the availability of a considerable amount of documentary material. While the answers to many questions remain locked inside Party and Soviet archives, we can at least begin to check some of our assumptions against the accessible evidence.³

Here, we shall examine the way in which the strategies pursued by 'Lublin' and 'London' developed and affected one another and show how the communists sharply altered course twice during these months, in October 1944 and May 1945. We shall suggest that these turns were related not only to the *external* pressures on the Party leadership exerted by shifts of policy in Moscow and moves on the diplomatic scene, but were prompted to a significant extent by the *internal* political situation the communists faced within Poland itself. This is not to say that direct Soviet influence on the Party's line was secondary or irrelevant; 'advice' from the Kremlin and Soviet officials attached to the 'Lublin' apparatus carried immense weight. It was not, however, the sole determinant factor, but rather one factor amongst several which collided or coincided with one another in shaping the Party's strategy and tactics. Prominent amongst these was the communists' fear of the underground and it is with this that we shall be primarily concerned in this article.

The Polish question was transformed in 1943. First, it became increasingly obvious after Stalingrad that the German occupation would be lifted not by Poland's Western allies, but by the 'ally of her allies': the Soviet Union. Second, the Polish communists, with Soviet assistance, began to dispute radically the legitimacy of the Government-in-Exile and prepare their own administrative network and armed forces to take power in the wake of the westward advance of the Red Army.

It was in these circumstances that the cold war between the tiny Polish Workers' Party (PPR) and more or less the entire remainder of the underground began to escalate into serious violence. In the summer of 1943 units of the NSZ, the National Armed Forces, a right-wing nationalist grouping on the fringe of the 'London camp', began to 'cleanse' the countryside of 'subversive and criminal bands'. On 9 August one of its detachments slaughtered twenty-six communist partisans and four civilians near Borów (Lublin province).⁴ This incident is frequently taken as marking the opening shot in the protracted struggle between the PPR and the wartime underground and its postwar legatees.

The running battle between the extreme Left and Right, which continued unabated during the second half of 1943 and early 1944, was highly embarrassing for the 'London' mainstream and its Home Army (AK).

While the right-wing nationalists of the NSZ argued that the underground should prepare to continue its war with the occupant, whether Nazi or Soviet, by destroying pro-Soviet and communist forces operating in conspiracy, this strategy was not one which the Government-in-Exile and the AK could adopt if it was to maintain any standing with the British and Americans as well as keep open the possibility of a compromise with the Soviet government.

The 'Tempest' Plan

The tactics of the AK and the civilian organs of the underground towards the advancing Soviet armies as set out definitively in General Bor-Komorowski's order of 20 November 1943 were therefore to mobilize and offer assistance to the Red Army, in this way presenting the Soviets with the dilemma of either de facto recognizing 'London' as an ally, or repressing 'friendly' AK units, thereby risking friction with the Western powers. The basic objective of operation 'Tempest', as the plan was code-named, was encapsulated in the following passage of Bor's order: '...I have ordered commanders and units, which will participate in fighting the retreating Germans, to reveal their presence to the Russians. Their task... will be to manifest through their action the existence of the Republic.'⁵ These tactics were not intended to assist the Russians, whose aim, Bor wrote, 'is the destruction of the independence of Poland, or at least its political subordination to the

Soviets',⁶ but as a means to bolster the Polish cause amongst the Western allies. As he put it, 'by giving the Soviets minimal military help we are creating political difficulties for them.'⁷

'Tempest' began in January 1944 when the Red Army crossed the prewar frontier, but reached its peak during the huge Soviet offensive which began in late June and swept rapidly across the eastern *kresy* and during the second half of July into the territory to the west of the Curzon line which Moscow recognized as Polish. AK units were mobilized in German-occupied areas with instructions to capture towns shortly before they fell to the Russians and establish Polish administrations there; they were then to welcome the advancing Red Army as hosts and reveal their forces to the local Soviet command. The tragic culmination of this plan was the Warsaw uprising, launched on 1 August in the expectation of imminent Soviet entry into the capital.

In fact the commitment to revealing AK detachments to the Russians, though extensive, was not total. Bor, in the report he sent to Sosnkowski, the Supreme Commander in London, enclosing his order of 20 November, had added that, 'in case of a second Russian occupation, I am preparing in the utmost secrecy the skeleton command network of a new clandestine organization...it will be a separate network unconnected with the AK organization, which has to a large degree been uncovered to elements in Soviet service'.⁸ The new clandestine organization received the cryptonym, 'Nie', and according to Party historians was responsible for a number of the attacks on supporters of the Lublin Committee which occurred the following autumn.⁹ Not only 'Nie' remained underground; large sections of the AK were critical of the policy of leaving the conspiracy and reporting to the Russians. This was especially true of units linked with the National Party, on the anti-Soviet right of the 'London' spectrum, belonging either to the National Military Organization (NOW) or that part of the NSZ which had been merged into the AK. These formations retained a good deal of autonomy inside the AK and widely opted out of 'Tempest'.¹⁰ Finally, the extreme-right, National Radical wing of the NSZ, which had remained outside the AK, was, as we have seen, pursuing its own private war with the communists.

The 'National Front'

While 'Tempest' was marked by an air of desperation, attempting to salvage something from a most unwelcome conclusion to five years of underground warfare, the strategy which the Polish communists hoped to realize in mid-1944 displayed an almost unreal optimism. The Party was committed to constructing a 'broad national front' in which it would play the leading role: a Polish version of Tito's movement in Yugoslavia. The PKWN was intended as the focus of a coalition of 'democratic' parties which would stretch deep into the 'London camp' to include Mikołajczyk's Peasant Party, the Socialists and even, it was hoped, the more moderate National Democrats. A discriminating policy was to be adopted towards the underground. As Radkiewicz, in charge of Public Security, later put it, 'we tried to differentiate between elements in the AK — fighting above all the NSZ, the most fascist, then the Piłsudski-ite, Sanacja core* of the AK, while towards the Peasant Battalions we were very moderate'.¹¹ By stressing the need for national unity and the defeat of Germany, the communists hoped to detach a large part of the rank-and-file of the AK, which would be used as the basis for a big expansion of the Polish Army under Soviet command, leaving the 'reactionary' sections of the AK officer corps and the right of the 'London camp' isolated.

In the initial weeks of its existence, the tasks of the PKWN would be to form a local administrative structure, create a new police force, organize supplies of food for the Red Army and make a start on land reform to win the support of the rural poor and the peasantry. Further underground activity would be outlawed, the bulk of the AK recruited into the Polish Army, with the NKVD on hand to deal with those remaining in conspiracy or resisting conscription. Paralleling efforts to mount a coalition of internal forces, the possibility of a deal with Mikołajczyk and his following in the Government-in-Exile would be left open.

The July 1944 version of the 'national front' was heavily influenced by the ideas of those Polish communists who had spent the war in the Soviet Union and reflected their confidence that a regrouping of political forces at home was imminent. The underground Party leadership in Warsaw which had been trying for

*This refers to followers of Józef Piłsudski, whose military regime (the 'Sanacja') governed Poland from 1926-39.

more than two years without success to escape its isolation was less sanguine. Nevertheless, it was the émigré view which prevailed during the first phase of liberation and this was summed up in a letter sent by the leadership of the Moscow group to the underground Central Committee on 18 July, just a few days before Lublin was taken. In internal policy, the letter warned against excessive radicalism which would alienate the peasantry and prevent the new government winning the support of the majority of the nation, seen as essential if 'the formation of a powerful reactionary underground, possessing a significant social base' was to be avoided. The strategic objective, wrote the émigré communists, was 'the creation of such an internal balance within which we shall be able to smash the reaction with our own internal forces'.¹²

The Strategies in Action

Under the 'Tempest' plan, the Polish underground forces were to offer co-operation with the Red Army, but insist on retaining their identity as an integral part of the Polish Armed Forces loyal to the London government. The AK and its civilian network were, moreover, to negotiate solely with the Russian military authorities and hold aloof from any direct dealings with Lublin representatives.¹³ It was on these points that 'Tempest' came into collision with the national front strategy of the communists.

Already in the eastern *kresy* 'Tempest' had set into a pattern of failure.¹⁴ The Russians, unwilling to accept the political conditions implicitly tied to the co-operation proffered by the AK, had presented the Poles with the ultimatum of either joining General Berling's largely Soviet-officered Polish Army or disarming and dissolving their units. The advance across the Bug into territory recognized by Moscow as Polish and the priority given to broadening the base of the PKWN, which now for the first time became directly involved in the confrontation, nevertheless made what happened in the Lublin region something of a test-case.

Lublin city itself was captured from the Germans in fighting between 23 and 25 July. Once shooting had died down, the AK and the Government Delegate for the city, Wladyslaw Cholewa, began, in accordance with 'Tempest', to take over the local administration. Proclamations were pasted up, the town hall occupied, State

Security Corps (the underground's police force) patrols stationed in the streets and recruitment offices for the 'Lublin Battalion' of the AK opened. On 25 July the first PKWN representatives arrived, led by Edward Ochab, and the next day General Berling and Aleksander Zawadzki arrived at the head of regular Polish units. On the same day attempts were made, by Radkiewicz it seems, to open talks between the PKWN and the 'Londoners', who in line with 'Tempest', refused to enter negotiations with anyone except the Soviet military authorities. On 27 July a meeting took place between General Kolpaczka, commander of the Soviet sixth army, Cholewa and Colonel Tumidajski, the area AK commander. Kolpaczka issued the usual ultimatum: the AK forces had either to join the Polish Army fighting with the Red Army, or lay down their arms. The 'London' representatives followed their instructions and chose the latter alternative, adamantly refusing to recognize the PKWN.

It is worth noting that this meeting lasted until 29 July, whereupon Cholewa and Tumidajski were allowed to leave, though under surveillance. Apparently Radkiewicz and the Russians had not yet excluded the possibility that the underground leaders might revise their position. If this was the case, these hopes were entertained for only four or five days as the process of disarming AK units in the region got underway. On the one hand the 'Londoners' were alarmed by reports of arrests and deportations of AK officers and the internment of units, while on the other, PKWN security officials became convinced that the AK was handing over only a proportion of its arms and disbanding only a part of its network. In both cases these fears were probably well-founded.

The 'Nie' organization has been mentioned, and in February instructions were issued which spoke of a 'second subsidiary network of civil and military leaders... which will remain underground, trying to establish contact with the Polish authorities and informing them of the fate of revealed representatives...'.¹⁵ There were besides numerous AK units, particularly those linked with the nationalist right, which disagreed with the 'Tempest' strategy and did not come into the open. On the other side, the communists were not averse to using limited force in order to loosen what they saw as the hold of reactionary officers over the democratic mass of the AK. In practice this task was frequently left to NKVD detachments charged with providing security behind the front. These units were hardly

suites to drawing the fine distinctions such a policy assumed and from the start bloody clashes occurred between AK forces and those of the NKVD attempting to disarm them.¹⁶

The mutual suspicions were greatly intensified by the outbreak of the uprising in Warsaw on 1 August, which was interpreted in Lublin as a dire threat to its position, demanding a new aggressive stance to replace the flexibility and optimism of the first week of power. On 3 August Radkiewicz put the Security Department's view of priorities to the PKWN: '1/Mobilisation into the army of the broad mass of the AK. 2/The arrest of the AK commanders. Our tactics — offensive...the AK is attempting to seize Warsaw, to install its army and administration.'¹⁷ The repercussions of this tougher line were felt in Lublin immediately. On 2 August Radkiewicz had told the PKWN that 'the AK command in Lublin formally agreed to lay down its arms, but did this only partially... We must commence determined activity, with the probable use of repression. The AK has begun illegal work...'¹⁸ The next day Tumidajski and Cholewa were brought in for further talks with the Russians with PKWN spokesmen in attendance. The 'Londoners' attempted to clarify the uncertainty over the treatment of their men, refusing once more demands that they subordinate their troops to the PKWN until such time as an agreement was reached between the Committee and Mikołajczyk, then in Moscow. The two men were thereupon arrested and despatched into imprisonment somewhere in the Soviet Union.¹⁹

The episode was duplicated in many other places: Zamość, Przemyśl, Rzeszów, Białystok and dozens of other towns and villages. In general, the confrontation lasted a few days before the Soviets intervened decisively and cleared out the AK authorities. The course of events in Lublin demonstrated the inevitability of conflict between the two sides as they carried out their instructions, for although both strategies aimed at avoiding an open clash, they were more concerned with extracting *de facto* recognition from the other of their claim to rule Poland. The outcome of the manoeuvring in July and August 1944 was hardly satisfactory for either side: the PPR captured the administrative machine, but thanks to Soviet military power, not the support of a broad 'national front'; 'London' demonstrated its military and administrative presence, but also its total powerlessness in the face of Soviet backing for the PKWN.

Despite these setbacks to their respective strategies, neither side

openly abandoned its tactics. 'Tempest' continued until October, fizzling out as the Soviet-German front stabilized. Amongst the communists, the initial jolt of the Warsaw uprising gave way within a few days to a calmer appraisal of the situation. The arrival in Lublin of Gomulka and other leaders of the underground Party was followed by reassertions of the broad national front line. In his first speech to the Party *aktyw* on 5 August, Gomulka warned 'do not alienate other groupings...invite [them] to co-operate...by pursuing such a policy we deprive the conservative element of its weapons, we can isolate the reaction from the masses still under its influence'.²⁰ Over the following weeks the leadership persevered with this line, sustained by the Russians' apparent preference for a deal between Lublin and Mikołajczyk's following as well as the distinct possibility of the Red Army relieving the 'London' insurgents fighting in Warsaw. But on the ground, the strategies of both sides soon began to modify in the face of realities.

Having witnessed what had happened in Lublin and elsewhere, AK officers on the ground were most unhappy about carrying on with the policy of revealing their forces to the Russians. At least one commander wired Warsaw to confirm whether this order remained in force, adding that 'there is strong opposition amongst my officers and men'.²¹ Białystok AK, under the command of Colonel Liniarski, disobeyed the order en masse.²² By September, Bor himself had apparently dropped this aspect of 'Tempest' and began ordering AK concentrations to disperse and partisan units to dissolve. On 26 September he transmitted this message to Rzeszów command: 'Do not organise any conspiratorial AK units. Dissolve partisan detachments under Soviet *occupation* [my emphasis — J.R.] Disperse the troops...'²³

Although Bor was by this time referring to the Soviet presence as an occupation, there is no satisfactory evidence that the 'Nie' network was activated. Its command was pinned down in Warsaw and communications with the outside severely disrupted. Bor, who was gambling on the Red Army relieving the insurrection in the capital, repeatedly and categorically forbade provincial commands to fight the Russians.²⁴ Clashes occurred all the same; orders to avoid conscription were misinterpreted by some units, which resisted with force or occasionally assassinated recruitment officers.²⁵ Shoot-outs also took place between NKVD detachments and AK units in the process of dispersal or remaining in conspiracy.²⁶ In some instances, AK officers disobeyed Bor's orders to dissolve and stayed

underground to defend the population against marauding Soviet troops.²⁷ By the end of the year the Russians were claiming that some 300 Red Army officers had been killed.²⁸

Such bloodshed, by no means all the work of the AK, was minimal in comparison with the level it was to reach in early 1945. But together with the growing feeling amongst party activists that they were being overwhelmed by the sheer inertia of the administrative machine, as well as fears for the allegiance of the armed forces, this violence reinforced the arguments of the hardliners in the PPR who were demanding a more radical solution to the problem of the underground.

The October Turn

The Party's moderation towards the Home Army and the 'democratic' wing of the London camp was maintained until early October. Its line was then abruptly transformed. By November a concerted effort to crush the AK was underway, an aggressive land parcellization campaign spearheaded a general radicalization of policy, while any deal with London had been indefinitely postponed. Although lip-service was still paid to the construction of the national front, in practice from October 1944 to May 1945 this strategy was submerged. Instead, the Party pursued a narrowly-based, radical course which relied heavily on the repression applied by its own meagre security forces, greatly reinforced by Soviet units and advisers.

The 'October turn' was sudden and drastic. As late as 26 September the Party leadership had affirmed that its objective was 'not only the maintenance, but also the broadening of the national front...[and] unification of the nation, conceived as the active solidarity of all the main strata of the nation, of all the democratic parties'.²⁹ To the distaste of Party militants, repressive measures were kept to a minimum. Edwarda Orłowska, secretary for Białystok province, complained of local activists coming '...to us from the districts and saying "What sort of power is this?" *Volksdeutsche* and traitors walk about the town. *Endeks* [National Democrats — J.R.] openly make trouble and nothing happens to them... Why so far has there been no death sentence? Ruthless repression should be applied against the leading (AK) commanders.'³⁰ From what other speakers at the same meeting said, it

is clear that the Party *aktyw* was not generally even armed at this stage.³¹

The level of arrests was restrained too. At the end of September Radkiewicz reported that only 3,000 (including 1,500 Home Army) people had been detained, most of whom had been pressed into the army. He admitted though that 'so far as arrests by the Soviet authorities are concerned, we do not have full data or information'.³² In the army itself the stress was on integrating not only AK troops, but officers too. An instruction to *politruks* of the 1st Army dated 25 September ordered them to engender 'an atmosphere of friendly concern and fraternity' around AK officers, 'strongly emphasising the factor of national unity'. While noting the danger of hostile infiltration, it warned against the use of 'police surveillance methods'.³³

Land reform, which the communists saw as the key to capturing the allegiance of the peasants, was handled with the same restraint and was entrusted throughout the summer and early autumn to Andrzej Witos, head of the PKWN Department of Agriculture. Witos was a member of the Peasant Party, not noted for his radicalism. He planned gradual land reform 'in the majesty of the law' and was sceptical whether this would be administratively possible before the end of the war. Nonetheless, the communists gave him a free hand and as late as 26 September stressed in a Central Committee circular that estate workers committees (organized and often manned by the Party) should co-operate with Witos' Land Offices.³⁴

During the following week the Party shifted its stance fundamentally. On 28 September amended instructions were issued to activists in the countryside claiming that 'even amongst some district officials of Land Offices and estate administrators, just those to whom the state has entrusted the implementation of land reform, there is a desire to delay and deflect it. . .'. Estate committees were now advised to keep a close eye on Witos' administrators and special Land Reform Commissions were to be created in order, amongst other things, 'to nip in the bud every attempt to obstruct the reform by lackies of the reactionary landowners'.³⁵ This was just a portent. On 4 October Radkiewicz, addressing the PKWN on security matters, digressed to announce the Party's altered strategic perspective. Claiming that 'a new situation, a new distribution of forces has arisen', he argued that there was now 'a distinct dividing line [between] the two centres: the PKWN and London, without

any dividing line between Mikolajczyk and Sosnkowski' (leader of the London diehards). The attempt to differentiate between the various elements in the Home Army had not, he said, 'been confirmed by reality' and the divide between 'the PKWN and on the other side *all* the opponents of the PKWN', demanded that 'hitherto haphazard repression' give way to 'a period of planned, intensive work'.³⁶ A few days later, the land reform campaign was set in motion; Witos was dismissed and an improvised apparatus, led by special commissars with sweeping powers, forged ahead with the parcellization of the estates. Party militants were allowed off the leash against the underground also. On 9 October Gomulka declared that 'the state must reply to the terror; the time has come to begin the counter-attack'.³⁷ A Decree for the Defence of the State was issued at the end of the month, introducing draconian penalties for 'subversion'. By mid-November a local commissar could report that 'peoples courts have been set up; 30 AK have been shot, 500 arrested'.³⁸ In the army the volte-face was particularly dramatic. The 'open-doors' recruitment policy of the summer was abandoned, Gomulka stating bluntly that 'the AK on which not so long ago we were determined to construct the Polish Army, have in the overwhelming majority of cases turned out to be hostile elements'.³⁹ In November *politruks* received instructions contrasting sharply with those issued a few weeks before. 'Friendly concern and fraternity' towards the AK were now grounds for suspicion: 'Every political worker', the order demanded, 'must understand that today there is no room for any compromise with the AK in the army... treat advocates of a "neutral" or conciliatory attitude to the AK as AK members unless they immediately engage in active struggle with the AK.'⁴⁰

The Party's change of direction in October 1944 meant that in Poland the foundations of communist power were laid in conditions of virtual civil war and overt reliance on Soviet force of arms. This outcome was at odds with the strategy pursued by the communists (both inside Poland and in Soviet emigration) during the war, or indeed later in 1945-48 in Eastern Europe generally. What prompted this apparent aberration?

With the abandonment on 22 September of attempts by the Russians and Berling's troops to establish a bridgehead on the west bank of the Vistula, it became apparent that the Red Army would

not be used to relieve the uprising in Warsaw.⁴¹ Until then, this possibility had governed the political situation. As we have seen, Home Army command restrained its forces outside the capital in order not to antagonize the Soviets, while Lublin was half-prepared for early entry into a coalition with part at least of the London camp and the incorporation into its army of thousands of armed, battle-hardened insurrectionaries. With the stabilization of the Soviet front on the far bank of the Vistula and the collapse of the last pockets of resistance on the other side a few days later, the political situation was transformed. Whereas during the summer the PKWN had been able to some extent to capitalize on the patriotic elation which greeted the German retreat, the Soviet failure to save the uprising aroused a wave of popular hostility and bitterness towards the new authorities which undermined their appeal to national unity. Moreover, it would be several months before the advance could resume, until which time the PKWN would have to maintain its grip on power and establish a political base by means other than patriotic slogans and calls to battle against the Germans.

The implications of the Warsaw fiasco were sensed immediately in Lublin and doubtless discussed by the PKWN at a secret session held on 23 September.⁴² But the Party seems to have been perplexed by Soviet policy and uncertain how to tailor its own course to the new circumstances. The leadership's resolution of 26 September was perhaps intended to head-off questioning of the Party's general line until Soviet intentions were known, but the questioning continued anyway. The next day, for instance, Rola-Zymierski showed the way the wind was blowing in a speech to the PKWN:

... the operation which the AK is undertaking in the terrain is becoming increasingly strong and determined. I have instructed that all materials be examined and am determined to take a clear position on this matter. So far we have sought a conciliatory way of dealing with the problem. As a result of the hostile activity of the AK and other organizations we were unable to achieve this. The state of affairs which has arisen in this country cannot be tolerated. The Polish population is living under terror and we do nothing about it. I feel we can no longer be passive observers.

Radkiewicz who spoke next supported this call for a more aggressive approach.⁴³ The next day, as we have mentioned, the Central Committee issued its amended and toughened instruction on land reform.

These moves preceded formal consultations to clarify Stalin's attitude. On 28 September a PKWN delegation flew to Moscow, staying until 3 October. The visit, as its leader, Bierut, reported on his return, 'was the result of our doubts over the general situation arising from the checking of activity on the Polish front and the failure of the Warsaw operation'.⁴⁴ Stalin, in his remarks to the full delegation, attributed the halting of the Soviet advance solely to military logistics and denied any political motives.⁴⁵ However, in conversations with its communist members, he bluntly expressed his dissatisfaction with their political performance, particularly over land reform, and signalled a change of course. According to Bierut's subsequent report to the Politburo, 'Stalin cannot see revolutionary method in our approach. . . . He sharply criticised our softness, that up to now not one landowner has been imprisoned. . . . As he put it "get better or get out"'.⁴⁶

Hitherto, Soviet pressure had consistently tended to restrain the radicalism of the Polish communists and stress the overriding importance of avoiding contention with the West over Poland. Now suddenly Stalin was reprimanding the Poles for their cautiousness. However, while it is clear that Stalin's intervention was a critical factor prompting the 'October turn', it would also seem that a significant and growing section of the Polish Party had reached the same conclusion before the delegation's departure. Stalin's injunctions obviously demanded an urgent display of aggression from the PPR leadership, which complied without delay, but for much of the *aktyw* and at least part of the upper echelons of the Party, Stalin was simply at last allowing them to go in the direction they favoured and which they believed the political situation demanded.

Many of the Party activists, especially those charged with establishing the authority of the PKWN outside Lublin, had for some time been calling for a more aggressive line. These cadres were keenly aware of just how narrow was the support for the Lublin regime and felt increasingly exposed and powerless as the underground dispersed back into conspiracy. Sporadic assassinations, passive resistance and the continued domination by London sympathizers of large parts of the militia, local government and even the security apparatus set up by the communists, aroused the fears and suspicions of such beleaguered cadres. These doubts were heightened by a growing feeling of *immobilisme* and wasted opportunity, especially over land reform, as well as the ambiguous and unreliable attitude of the communists' supposed allies amongst the

Peasants and Socialists. The outlook of these militants was shaped both by their awareness that time was short in which to install an adequate state machine before the Red Army continued its advance and by deeply-rooted ideological traits. Veterans of the prewar Communist Party of Poland (KPP) who constituted the backbone of the *aktyw* of the PPR in many cases found the new national front strategy altogether too liberal and gradualist. Internal Party reports frequently made reference to the distaste of older communists for the tactics they were expected to apply. Ex-KPP cadres who had joined the PPR after liberation had, according to one report from Praga, 'a whole range of sectarian prejudices from the period of KPP work and it is difficult for them to adapt themselves to our Party's system of work in the current situation'.⁴⁷ At Party meetings, hardliners found a receptive audience for their criticisms of the mildness of the official line. One of them, Witold Konopka, drew applause at a conference of the *aktyw* held on 10–11 October when he demanded that 'alongside campaigning against the AK, we must of course shoot at them and gaol them. By not shooting we are encouraging the enemy's impudence'.⁴⁸ Another KPP stalwart and prominent figure in the PPR leadership, Leon Kasman, encapsulated the mood of the militants: 'Our Party has succumbed to the parliamentary disease. With power in our hands, we have not applied terror towards the reaction. . . . We showed our enemies softness — not a single head has fallen. . . .'⁴⁹

Some modern Warsaw historians have argued that this sectarian strain in the Party extended into the top leadership where it was represented above all by Jakub Berman, Hilary Minc, Roman Zambrowski and Stanislaw Radkiewicz, all of whom had spent the war years in Moscow and were judged to be particularly subservient to the Soviets. The national front strategy, on the other hand, so it is claimed, was identified with the section of the Party which had fought underground in Poland during the war and amongst whom Gomulka was the leading figure. The 'October turn' is presented as a victory for the hardline 'Muscovite' faction over the 'native' supporters of the national front.⁵⁰

In fact, the differences within the Party leadership over strategy tended to cut across the wartime divide. Thus the leading 'hawk' in the Politburo seems to have been Bierut, who had been in Warsaw from 1943. His views corresponded to those of a vocal hardline element amongst the rank-and-file of the underground PPR. On the other hand, as we have seen, the 'broad' national front strategy in

the form crystallized in July 1944 had been largely the product of the Moscow emigration, closely reflecting Soviet requirements. The underground PPR inclined to a more radical 'democratic' national front and had been criticized for sectarianism by the Moscow group because of this. The 'October turn' in many ways vindicated the position of the 'natives' against the émigrés, and for all the differences in outlook between them, it was Bierut and Gomulka who took the lead in orchestrating the 'turn'. Moreover, the 'democratic' character of the national front was once again accented.

Ideological undercurrents and differing political backgrounds apart, by mid-September all sections of the Party were increasingly disturbed by accumulating evidence of what was taken to be a wide-ranging conspiracy by London to overthrow the PKWN. Reports from local branches were alarming; rumours were put about that the PKWN would resign on 15 September; that the Germans were about to return; that the Western allies were on their way or that a coup d'état was imminent.⁵¹ The PKWN deliberating on the situation in Warsaw gave serious consideration to the possibility that Mikolajczyk was about to parachute into the city and establish his government there.⁵² Disquieting reports were received from the army too. On 16 September the deputy-commander (political) of the 5th Infantry Division described the progress of political work amongst the civilian population:

The AK, infuriated by this campaign, has gone onto the counter-offensive... a peasant PPR member of the organizational committee was badly wounded. The AK distributes masses of leaflets threatening those answering the call-up with death and makes armed attacks on conscripts... The civilian authorities are timid and lack imagination. In Lukow there is no garrison commander... the Militia is completely helpless. It must be stressed that the reserve of the population towards us is dictated to a large extent by fear of AK terror... The troops still look on the PKWN with reserve, unconvinced of its permanence, and the majority still hope for an agreement with the London 'government'. AK activity has a depressing effect on the troops... Almost 100 percent of the soldiers are fanatically religious...⁵³

A particularly worrying aspect of what was seen as a concerted campaign by the AK to undermine the PKWN was its apparent success in dissuading trained officers from joining the army. Rola-Zymierski informed the PKWN on 18 September that while the

general mobilization was going according to plan, only 960 of the 2,400 officers required had been recruited.⁵⁴

These fears did not abate. On 29 September the Governor of Białystok province filed a particularly disturbing report: 'the AK is beginning to activate very intensively here... setting up armed detachments. In the Białowieża forests these are thought to number 17,000. Other large forests have their units too... Unconfirmed rumours are circulating that a large-scale armed demonstration is being prepared, with 14 November or another later date being mentioned.'⁵⁵ The Party leadership seems to have expected an insurrection against the PKWN timed to coincide with Mikolajczyk's arrival in Moscow for talks in mid-October.⁵⁶ His previous arrival in Moscow in August had been immediately followed by the outbreak of the Warsaw uprising, which the communists were almost certainly right in regarding as no mere coincidence.⁵⁷ The desertion of whole units from the army — some 3,000 troops in all from the Second Army during October⁵⁸ — culminated on the night of 12/13 October with the desertion of much of the 31st Infantry Regiment, apparently at the instigation of ex-AK officers,⁵⁹ and was seen as confirmation of such fears.

The picture which emerges is that by late September 1944 the leadership of the PPR was encountering increasing difficulties in convincing the rank-and-file of the correctness of its moderate course. The apparent reactivation of the AK and the hardening of the Soviet attitude to the prospect of a deal with London seemed to remove both the internal and external props of the national front strategy. Once Stalin had given the signal, the Party with alacrity jettisoned the line it had pursued for almost three years.

The 'October turn' was viewed in various ways by the different sections of the Party. For the militants it represented the final abandonment of a tactical stance dictated by international considerations but which seemed to them to have little relevance to the situation on the ground or basis in revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. The indications are, though, that for the leadership, the 'turn' was intended as a short-term tactical detour within rather than a departure from the national front strategy. It was anticipated that a further attempt to reach agreement with London would take place when this suited Soviet foreign policy and when Lublin had strengthened its internal position and weakened that of its rivals. Bierut, in talks with Stalin on 12 October, in reply to the

latter's enquiry whether Lublin favoured an agreement with Mikolajczyk, said 'we want to reach an understanding, but we would prefer that this took place later'.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the emphasis would be on winning over the masses — especially the peasants through land reform, 'from below'. Deals 'from above' with the bourgeois parties could await more favourable circumstances.

This was the intention, but the 'October turn' had a momentum of its own which was to sweep the Party rapidly into positions quite incompatible with the national front.

The Underground and the Aftermath of 'Tempest'

The widespread belief within the PPR that the underground was not only still a military threat, but was also sufficiently belligerent to contemplate a rising against the Lublin Committee was quite mistaken. In fact, as we have seen, by September and October, the AK Command was ordering its units to disperse and cease conspiratorial activity. With the capitulation of Warsaw on 3 October, Bor went into German captivity along with many of his staff, while his successor, General Leopold Okulicki, escaped to begin organizing a new command in the Czystochowa region. This command was cut off from a large part of the AK network and also viewed very suspiciously by government circles in London. Okulicki was regarded by many as a reckless officer too closely identified with Sosnkowski, the effective leader of the opposition within the emigration to the kind of concessions which might allow a deal with the Soviet Union. Okulicki's appointment was not officially endorsed until shortly before Christmas, by which time Mikolajczyk's government had been replaced by one composed of critics of his policy of seeking an agreement at the cost of concessions on the eastern frontier. In the meantime, General Tatar exercised temporary command of the AK by radio from England.⁶¹

Apart from these command problems, after the failure of the uprising and 'Tempest', the underground was in no state to undertake offensive operations. In the liberated zone of Poland, where several million Soviet troops were stationed, this would have amounted to suicide. In his 'Guideline for activity during the winter period 44/45', issued on 26 October, Okulicki admitted 'the great confusion and chaos' in the AK ranks and the need to 'overcome fatigue and a certain kind of stupor'. He laid stress on the impor-

tance of grouping together all military organizations under the AK, and preparing for the worst by adapting the conspiracy so that it could 'last out a possible Soviet occupation'. There was to be no armed resistance to the Russians, although the policy of revealing AK units was now specifically abandoned.⁶²

These instructions no doubt failed to reach many '*akowcy*' in the field, but with very few exceptions, underground detachments were disinclined to take on Soviet and communist forces; their objective was rather to elude NKVD round-ups or conscription by dispersing to their homes or into the forests and sitting out the winter until the Red Army resumed its offensive in the spring. Equally, the military formations linked with the right-wing National Democrats, the National Military Organization (NOW) and the NSZ had in general opted-out of 'Tempest', scattering their troops and burying their organization in deep conspiracy. In spite of Okulicki's calls for unity, the *endeks* were gradually detaching themselves from the AK and in November the National Military Union (NZW) was created, envisaged by its founders as a rival framework for the nationalist forces. Even the extreme National Radical NSZ were relatively quiet in 'Lublin Poland', though in German-occupied territory they continued their war with communist and Soviet partisans.⁶³

The ascription of the overwhelming difficulties of the PKWN in late 1944 to underground activity had then very limited validity; such difficulties had their origin in the objective weakness of the PPR and the narrowness of its influence, rather than subversion or sabotage.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the case for striking at the AK while it was weakened and the Russians were at hand was persuasive and this consideration may have lain behind much of the militancy drummed up in October.

The Counter-Attack

The 'Lublin' counter-attack, as Gomulka had defined it, lasted until May 1945. While continuing to employ the rhetoric of the 'national front', the communists in fact unleashed a campaign of terror designed to destroy the same underground forces which a few weeks before they had been courting. By early 1945 Party propaganda was equating the AK with the Gestapo.

Inevitably, the work of hunting down AK suspects was largely left to NKVD units. The Polish 'Internal Armies' amounted to only

slightly over 2,000 men⁶⁵ at this time and Stalin had told Bierut, Osóbka and others at a meeting on 18 October that Polish forces could not cope with the security problem and the Soviet Army would have to play a bigger role than hitherto.⁶⁶ From mid-November to mid-January the Soviet and Polish forces were deployed for what was described as 'offensive operations' or 'disarming the terrain'. This involved mass identity checks on males aged between 16 and 50 and the arrest of suspects. It is not possible to gauge accurately the extent of these arrests: fragmentary official figures covering three districts in the southern part of Lublin province put the number of detainees at 664, but, especially where Soviet troops were used, it is probable that the round-ups were much greater.⁶⁷ At the same time, as we have seen, executions of AK officers began.

This campaign was transformed by the renewal of the Red Army's advance on 12 January, which by the end of the month had liberated the bulk of central Poland. Suddenly, the communists found themselves with huge new expanses of territory to administer, while simultaneously their protective Soviet shield disappeared westwards. By no means all the Russian units pursued the German retreat, but the military resources at the disposal of the PPR shrank dramatically just at the moment when the demands made upon them multiplied. Compounding this shortage of manpower, the Party's radical line left the communists isolated with a considerably narrower front of allies than the previous summer. After January therefore, the PPR was engaged in an attempt to terrorize the underground from a position of profound weakness. Party membership and the strength of militia and security organs mushroomed during the first months of 1945, but their political reliability remained extremely uncertain. The security apparatus and militia were still riddled with members of the underground,⁶⁸ while the Internal Army, soon to be renamed the Internal Security Corps (KBW) was only partly formed and trained by May 1945, when Moczar, one of its organizers, stated bluntly that it was not yet ready to take on the underground. What could happen when ill-prepared troops were deployed was mentioned by Gomulka: 'the 3rd Battalion of the Internal Army went out into the terrain and 2,000 people deserted'.⁶⁹

This vulnerability left the Party very heavily reliant on the remaining Soviet cover and those Polish security forces it had at its disposal. The employment of Soviet troops against the AK was an

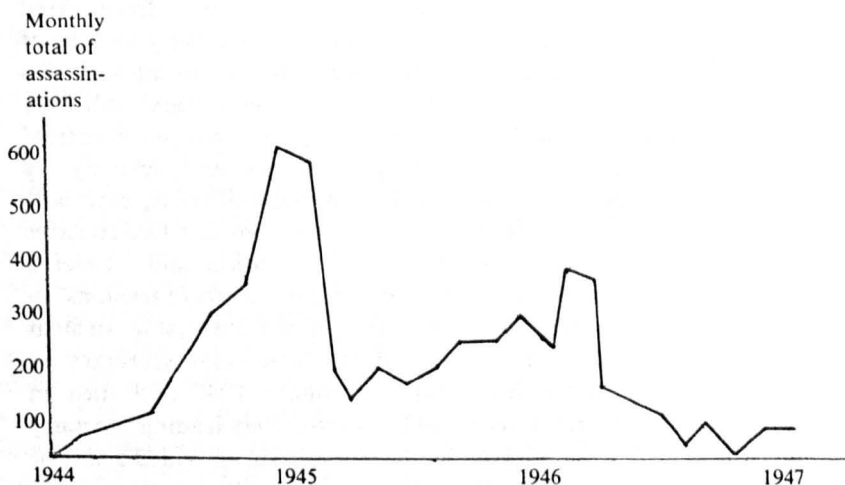
embarrassing necessity which came under heavy criticism at the May 1945 Plenum. Even Radkiewicz agreed that it was 'unfortunate that two Red Army regiments were sent to Białystok; Poles should be used against the AK. The attitude that the Red Army will establish order for us here is bad.' The Central Committee was also alarmed by the tendency of some local Party chiefs to ignore the Politburo and pursue their own line using security organs and the Russians. The UB apparatus, conscious of its key role in protecting the Party's hold on power, began to slip from beneath Party control. Gomulka went so far as to warn 'that a second state is beginning to grow up over our heads. The security organs are making their own policy, with which no-one is supposed to interfere.'⁷⁰

Such tendencies, denounced as 'sectarianism', arose from a kind of siege mentality which gripped the *aktyw* in the early months of 1945. The apparatus set up in the wake of the Soviet advance was extremely shaky. In many areas Party 'commissars' ruled by decree, while local cells functioned in conspiracy, or elsewhere tried to exclude opponents from local councils and security by monopolizing all positions of power. In many districts, especially in the countryside, the authorities operated from fortified enclaves amidst often hostile populations. This isolation and suspicion seriously hindered political work and began to create tensions inside the Party, where hardline critics of the leadership such as Konopka or Włodzimierz Zawadzki, provincial secretary in Rzeszów from September 1944 to January 1945 and then in Kraków, a KPP veteran who had been effectively leading the party in 1938 when it was dissolved by the Comintern, provided a sort of 'left' opposition to the Politburo.⁷¹

But the clinching argument against the policy of terror was that it began to look self-defeating. The round-ups which began in November continued into spring 1945 on a big scale. Émigré sources claim that as many as 50,000 members of the AK were arrested and transported to Siberia at this time,⁷² but there is no way of course of verifying this figure. Claims that some 8,000 people were incarcerated in Lublin castle at this time are plausible enough in view of official data revealing 1,646 arrests by the UB and MO alone in Lublin province between January and April. In the same operations, over 300 members of the underground were killed.⁷³ Internment camps were set up for the AK at Skrobow, Rembertów, Piotrków and elsewhere. But as Figure 1 clearly demonstrates, the repression, far from breaking the underground,

contributed to the massive irruption of armed resistance in the spring. In fact, when the Central Committee Plenum met in May, the leadership attempted to reassert its control over a security apparatus which had itself lost its grip on the underground. Gomulka concluded the Plenum by saying that the existence of 'certain elements of crisis' was undeniable. 'In the reactionary camp there is a crisis, but we have been unable to narrow its base. We are unable to fight the reaction without the Red Army. That says something about [our] base.'⁷⁴

FIGURE 1
Assassinations of Government Supporters and Officials (1944-47)



Source: Computed on the basis of a sample of data from 'Polegli w walce o wladze ludowa' (Warsaw 1970).

'London' and the Soviets

Gomulka was right. The hard line had weakened and scattered the underground without seriously undermining its support and prestige amongst the bulk of the population. Mass arrests and internment created an atmosphere of tension and hostility to the communists in which clandestine activity proliferated and the underground, like a hydra, sprouted new members as fast as the security forces picked off the old.

In spite of the repression, the stance of the underground remained generally defensive; resistance was offered on a sporadic and unplanned basis. Official historiography lays great emphasis on the 'Nie' organization which it credits with an influence and degree of coherence it did not possess. In fact, the first three months of 1945 witnessed the virtual disintegration of the underground, with its leadership endeavouring to pick up the pieces, while rapidly coming to the conclusion that some kind of compromise had to be reached with the Russians. Non-recognition of the 'Lublin' authorities and the conviction that the PPR was merely a Soviet puppet ruled out any direct approaches to the Polish communists.

Okulicki at this time gives the impression of a man swept along on an irresistible tide of events. On 19 January he ordered — to the surprise and puzzlement, it seems, of London, most of the AK as well as the communists — the disbandment of the AK. Émigré historians claim the decision was unpremeditated and conditioned by the mood of defeatism within the movement and the urgent need to sanction its members' flight from NKVD round-ups.⁷⁵ Party historians argue rather that it had been planned in advance and was designed to prune down the AK, leaving only the dependable cadres of the 'Nie' organization: the skeleton of the new anti-Soviet resistance.⁷⁶ Okulicki's order had indeed been ambiguous about the next step: 'We do not want to fight the Soviets, but we will never agree to live except in an entirely sovereign, independent, justly governed Polish state. The present Soviet victory has not ended the war...' President Radzkiewicz, endorsing Okulicki's order on 8 February, attempted to dispell the uncertainty, stating specifically that armed activity had ceased.⁷⁷

The order added to the confusion and fragmentation reigning in the underground in the aftermath of the Soviet advance. Many of the conspirators, like the Russians, did not believe the order and simply ignored it, and began to repair and regroup the organization. In Białystok, for instance, Colonel Liniarski disobeyed the order and set up an independent 'Citizens' AK',⁷⁸ while the nationalists, who radically disagreed with the decision to disband, took further steps to revive their own military networks. And of course Okulicki himself did not cease activity, forming a central command for 'Nie', which apart from this never really got off the drawing-board.⁷⁹

The centrifugal processes at work in the military arm of the underground were matched by fission within its political leader-

ship, at home and in London. In November Mikolajczyk, ready to settle with the Lubliners on terms favoured by the British and Americans, was dumped as Premier of the Government-in-Exile and replaced by the intransigent Arciszewski. Mikolajczyk's Peasant Party went into opposition and following the commitment of the 'Big Three' at Yalta in February 1945 to the creation of a Polish coalition government, it succeeded in winning over Delegate Jankowski and most of the underground political leaders to Mikolajczyk's line. By March 1945 the London camp was dividing in two, just as the communists had intended nine months earlier, with the peasant movement and the centre groupings searching for a way out of conspiracy and entry into coalition with the PPR, while the intransigents were left isolated. Significantly the former AK, as represented by Okulicki, with some reservations, fell in with Jankowski.

The talks held between the Russian military command in Poland and the fifteen underground leaders headed by Jankowski and Okulicki at the end of March, which terminated with the arrest of the fifteen and their disappearance to the Soviet Union where they were put on trial in June, demonstrated the risks which the AK and the Delegatura were prepared to take to promote a deal. Okulicki had at first refused to participate, but finally caved in to Jankowski's persuasion and Russian insistence on his presence.⁸⁰

While much has been published in the West about the arrest and trial of the fifteen, we know nothing for certain about the motives of the Russians in seizing the Poles or how and at what level the decision was taken. But as the criticisms directed at the NKVD and the Soviet military authorities at the May Plenum showed, the affair was an enormous affront and embarrassment to the Polish communists. According to Jankowski's successor as Delegate, Stefan Korboński, who, it is worth noting, clearly had sources of information deep inside his opponents' camp, 'Lublin government circles consider the arrest of the fifteen by the Soviets a great mistake. They themselves are washing their hands of it. . .'.⁸¹ They had little choice but to accept the *fait accompli*, but in an extraordinarily clumsy way the Russians had closed what seemed to be a promising opening for the PPR to escape from the political impasse into which it was drifting.

The coup certainly multiplied the difficulties facing the com-

munists and must have significantly contributed to the irruption of underground violence in April, May and June which brought Poland to the brink of civil war. Other factors too prompted the upsurge of guerrilla activity: the season — spring was suited to partisan warfare; the mass arrests, which propelled thousands of young men into the forests; and the realization that militia and security posts, or even prisons and internment camps often represented easy targets. The use of Red Army units and 'workers' brigades' to collect contingents from the peasants also aroused a great deal of conflict. These factors accounted equally for the activation of Ukrainian nationalist insurgents in south-east Poland. But besides, Yalta seemed to promise a new phase and the end of the communist monopoly in the administration. The defeatist, defensive mood which had weighed on the underground for months began to give way to a more offensive and hopeful one.

Soviet attempts to stamp out the resistance continued unabated. On 26 April London heard that 'The pacification has begun of Garwolin, Lukow, Lubartów and Zamość districts. The Soviet Army surrounds villages and transports all the men, other than youngsters and the elderly, eastwards. The arrests numbering between ten and twenty thousand have provoked a mass exodus to the forests and the formation of irregular armed units, which nevertheless adopt a passive attitude, only defending themselves when attacked. The Soviet Air Force bombed the Czemiernickie forests.'⁸² The report, even if exaggerated, indicates accurately enough the degree of fear and terror sweeping the countryside. By no means all the armed units remained passive either. On 24 April, guerrillas overran the town of Pulawy, massacring the local security policemen. A couple of days later the same happened in Janów, then Kozienice, then Grajewo. These were sizeable towns. Militia posts in the countryside faced an unenviable task — on the night of 27/28 March formidably armed and trained UPA (Ukrainian nationalist) units simultaneously wiped out the entire system of militia stations in Lubaczów and Jarosław districts, while in Białystok province, according to official data, some forty militia offices had been demolished by March.⁸³ In May pitched battles took place between security forces and ex-AK units led by 'Orlik' (Marian Bernaciak) and 'Lupaszko' (Zygmunt Szendzielarz). The latter was to continue his war with the communists until 1949.

The 'May Turn'

In mid-April, against this background of escalating violence, came the first clear signs that the communist leadership was edging away from its hard line. Włodzimierz Zawadzki, who was depicted as the embodiment of 'sectarianism', was replaced as provincial secretary in Kraków, by Aleksander Kowalski, a more conciliatory figure and a firm supporter of Gomulka's leadership and the 'national front' strategy. Then in early May the Politburo began to tone down its radical economic policy, abandoning experiments with 'workers' control' and proclaiming the prerogatives of private industrialists. The decisive volte-face occurred at the Central Committee Plenum on 20-21 May, when the leadership more or less unanimously condemned the radicalism of recent months and rallied once again to the broad national front suspended in October.

The turnaround fitted in with international developments: Yalta, the end of the war and the patching up of the differences between the allies which had delayed progress in forming the projected Polish coalition government, but it preceded Hopkins' placatory trip to Moscow* and to an important degree seems to have been the outcome of an internal debate within the PPR, stretching over several weeks. While the documentary evidence available makes it clear that Stalin was directly involved in the October 1944 'turn', material on the May 1945 Plenum suggests that his role on this occasion was more detached. By May Stalin appears to have been allowing the Poles greater scope for independent action and the chief obstacle to adopting a more moderate line was the autonomous activity of Soviet officers and 'advisers' in harness with hardliners in the Party and UB. As Finkielsztajn told the Plenum: 'there is a difference between Stalin's position on our sovereignty and the way the Soviet people on the ground look at the matter'.⁸⁴ The May 'turn' was conditioned, it appears, as much by the internal political crisis arising from the narrowness of support for the PPR and the upsurge of political violence, as well as ideological strains inside the Party, as by broad international considerations.

Immediately following the Plenum, changes took place on the military and security fronts. In order to reduce the government's

*Hopkins flew to Moscow on 25 May.

reliance on Soviet policing, the formation of the Polish security corps, the KBW, was speeded-up and three regular army divisions were deployed in eastern Poland. On 31 May Radkiewicz ordered a 'mini-amnesty', releasing from internment those AK prisoners thought not to be actively hostile to the authorities, a category which covered mainly the Peasant Battalions, the armed wing of the Peasant Party. The discriminating policy towards the AK was back, replacing what for six months had been the obligatory line 'of condemning the AK from beginning to end, without distinction between leaders and led'.⁸⁵

These measures, the change of attitude and the political regrouping in June, which they anticipated, contributed to the sharp fall-off in guerrilla activity during the summer as the forest units disbanded and men returned to their homes or fled abroad, concealed by the huge migration of refugees across central Europe in the weeks and months following the German surrender.

The End of the Underground State

The agreement reached between Mikolajczyk and 'Lublin' representatives in Moscow at the end of June 1945, under which Mikolajczyk was to return to Poland as vice-Premier of a coalition government, in effect marked the end of the underground state formed in 1939/40, which had survived, battered, until mid-1945. At a meeting in Kraków on 27 June, the political leadership of the conspiracy formally disbanded and announced this publicly on 1 July.⁸⁶

The military underground, commanded by Colonel Jan Rzepecki since Okulicki's arrest, had been reorganized as the Armed Forces Delegation (DSZ), in part because the 'Nie' organization was now known to the Russians, but also it seems as a more strictly military formation than its predecessor, firmly subordinated to the underground political leadership. While setting itself the task of 'liquidating particularly harmful persons' and 'armed resistance to the nation's destruction as well as the depopulation and devastation of the country', the DSZ sought to curb unco-ordinated resistance and two appeals were issued in May to this effect. The DSZ succeeded in gathering together rather more of the old AK network than had 'Nie', but a considerable part, including the nationalists, remained outside, and its organization was still far from complete

in August 1945, when, following the dissolution of the underground state, it followed suit.⁸⁷

These events ended the first chapter of underground resistance to communist rule in Poland, but as Figure 1 shows, violent opposition continued at a high level until early 1947 and in a sporadic, localized way until the early 1950s. The final traces of the movement survived until the amnesty of 1956-57. The change of Party strategy in May 1945 solved the political crisis but the narrower security problem remained.

Nevertheless, in 1944-45 the struggle, as party historians admit, showed many of the characteristics of a civil war. Until mid-1945 the Government-in-Exile functioned as an internationally recognized political centre; the British allowed it direct radio contact with Poland; inside the country a secret parliament united all the major non-communist parties; locally, 'London' ran affairs and its military arm, fragmented and weakened though it was, remained intact and was able to command the loyalty of the vast majority of underground soldiers. Above all, as Gomulka admitted, the 'London' camp maintained its social base. The fighting, even allowing for the Soviet role and spontaneous resistance on the part of underground groups, took place against the background of the existence of two rival governments, each with its own state apparatus. After mid-1945 this was no longer the case, the bulk of the guerrilla movement pinned its hopes on Mikolajczyk's opposition capturing the governing machinery which had its origins in Lublin. The Government-in-Exile carried on, but ceased to constitute an effective rival to the Warsaw authorities.

The policy of the Polish communists towards the underground from mid-1944 to mid-1945 corresponded neither to the consistent pursuit of a broad national coalition of progressive groupings presented in official historiography, nor to the unrelenting persecution of the 'London' underground depicted in the majority of émigré and Western studies.

Rather the strategy meandered between these two alternatives. From July until early October 1944 a genuine attempt was made to fragment 'London' and win over its more radical leaders and rank-and-file supporters. From October until about May 1945 the Party adopted a much more aggressive posture towards the underground and applied a policy of terror towards the AK, which not only

abandoned any further attempt to exploit divisions in the conspiracy, but denied that they existed, treating 'London' as a uniform reactionary bloc. In May 1945 this line of indiscriminate hostility was replaced by what was in essence a revival of the earlier 'national front' line.

The 'turns' in October and May were prompted not simply by directives from the Kremlin, but rather by the imperatives of changes in the internal political situation in Poland resulting from Soviet policy, the activity of Soviet forces, the paucity of the human resources at the disposal of Lublin and the need to adapt to the unanticipated consequences of earlier strategies. The failure of the Red Army to assist the AK in Warsaw in September 1944 together with the increasing difficulty of constructing a 'national front' and maintaining PPR hegemony within it, propelled the Party into adopting a radical and belligerent stance, aiming at destroying the underground. This stance forced the Party into almost total reliance on Soviet military power and its own security apparatus. Moreover, rather than solving the 'AK problem' it led by the spring to an upsurge of political violence which the communists, with the narrowness of their support, were unable to manage. It was this crisis which enabled the leadership to silence the hardliners and security men and swing the Party back to the broad national front.

Notes

1. T. Walichnowski, *U źródeł walk z podziemiem reakcyjnym w Polsce* (Warsaw 1975), 132.

2. There were, however, major guerrilla movements in those countries incorporated into the Soviet Union: the Ukraine and Lithuania in particular. See V. S. Vardys, 'The Partisan Movement in Postwar Lithuania' in his *Lithuania under the Soviets* (New York 1965), 85-108; Y. Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic: The Ukraine after World War II*, ch. IV.

3. Particularly valuable are the Archiwum Studium Polski Podziemnej (London) which contains a wide selection of material relating to the underground, which is normally available for scholars up to July 1945. A selection of documents on the Party and the Lublin Committee (1944-45) has been deposited at the London School of Economics and published in translation. The author would like to thank Dr Antony Polonsky for allowing him access to this material. (Henceforth referred to as 'LSE'.)

4. Z. S. Siemaszko, 'Grupa Szańca in NSZ', *Zeszyty historyczne* 1972/21, 12.
5. *Polskie Sily Zbrojne w II wojnie światowej*, Vol. III: *Armia Krajowa* (London 1950), 556.
6. *AK w dokumentach*, Vol. IV (London 1977), nr. 709, Bor to Sosnkowski, 22, July 1944.
7. J. Ciechanowski, *The Warsaw Rising of 1944* (Cambridge 1974), 166.
8. *Polskie Sily...*, op. cit., 556.
9. Walichnowski, op. cit., 119.
10. See I. Caban i E. Machocki, *Za władze ludu* (Lublin 1975), 53-55 for the position in Lublin province, and M. Turlejska (ed.), *W walce ze zbrojnym podziemiem 1945-47* (Warsaw 1972), 220-221 for the situation in Rzeszów province.
11. *LSE* Radkiewicz to PKWN, 4 October 1944.
12. A. Przygoński, *Z zagadnień strategii frontu narodowego PPR 1942-45* (Warsaw 1976), 292.
13. See further: Ciechanowski, op. cit.
14. Ibid., 190-211.
15. Ibid., 188.
16. L. Grot, 'Działanie LWP przeciwko zbrojnemu podoziemiu w latach 1944-47' in Turlejska, op. cit., 12-13.
17. *LSE* PKWN, 3 August 1944, Radkiewicz.
18. Ibid., 2 August 1944, Radkiewicz.
19. This account is based on Caban i Machocki, op. cit., 36-39; *Polskie sily...*, op. cit., 626; S. Korboński, *Polskie państwo podziemne* (Paris 1975), 165; K. Kersten, *PKWN 22 VII — 31 XII 1944* (Lublin 1965), 30-31, 47.
20. *Archiwum ruchu robotniczego* (henceforth *ARR*), Vol. I (Warsaw 1973), 357.
21. *AK...*, op. cit., nr. 1050, Cdr. Zoliborz to Cdr. Warsaw okreg, 12 September 1944.
22. H. Majecki, *Białostoczczyzna w pierwszych latach władzy ludowej 1944-48* (2nd edn. Warsaw 1977), 44.
23. '*AK...*', op. cit., nr. 1163, Bor to podokreg Rzeszów, 26 September 1944.
24. Ibid., nr. 985, Bor to Nowogrodek okreg, 2 September 1944.
25. Ibid., nr. 1052, Mikołajczyk to Bor, 13 September 1944.
26. Turlejska, op. cit., 13.
27. *AK...*, op. cit., nrs. 1065, 1089, 14, 16 September 1944.
28. *LSE* Bierut to Politburo, 17 December 1944.
29. *PPR vii 1944-xii 1945. Dokumenty* (Warsaw 1959), 30-37.
30. *ARR*, Vol. 1, op. cit., 364.
31. Ibid., 373.
32. *LSE*, op. cit., Radkiewicz to PKWN, 4 October 1944.
33. I. Blum, 'Sprawa 31pp', *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny*, 1965/3.
34. *PPR viii 1944...*, op. cit., 39-41.
35. Ibid., 42-45.
36. *LSE*, op. cit., Radkiewicz to PKWN, 4 October 1944.
37. Ibid., Gomulka to Politburo, 9 October 1944.
38. Ibid., Konopka to conference of aktyw, 12-13 November 1944.
39. Ibid., Gomulka to Politburo, 29 October 1944.
40. Blum, op. cit.
41. Z. S. Siemaszko, 'Sprawa Berlinga', *Zeszyty Historyczne* 1976/38, 224-229.

42. *LSE*, op. cit., PKWN, 24 September 1944.
43. E. Puacz, 'Powstanie warszawskie w protokołach PKWN', *Zeszyty historyczne* 1966/10, 177-178.
44. *ARR*, Vol. 1, op. cit., 351.
45. *Ibid.*, 352.
46. *LSE*, op. cit., KC, 9 October 1944, Bierut.
47. B. Hillebrandt i J. Jakubowski, *Warszawska organizacja PPR 1942-48* (Warsaw 1978), 216-217.
48. *LSE*, op. cit., Konopka to conference of *aktyw*, Lublin, 10-11 October 1944. In a letter to the editors of *Archiwum ruchu robotniczego* (Vol. ii, 370), Konopka later denied that he had called for an intensification of repression against the AK.
49. *LSE*, op. cit., Kasman to Politburo, 9 October 1944.
50. J. Borkowski, 'Nie tylko pod Lenino', *Miesięcznik literacki* 1972/4, 87-91.
51. E. Olszewski, *Początki władzy ludowej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1944-47* (Lublin 1974), 67.
52. Puacz, op. cit., PKWN, 15 September 1944.
53. *Organizacja i działanie bojowe LWP w latach 1943-45*, Vol. IV, ed. I. Blum (Warsaw 1963), 358.
54. *LSE*, op. cit., PKWN, 18 September 1944.
55. Majecki, op. cit., 46.
56. *LSE*, op. cit., Bierut to Politburo, 22 October 1944.
57. Ciechanowski, op. cit., 273.
58. W. Wolczew, 'Podziemie burżuazyjne na lubelszczyźnie wobec organizacji LWP w okresie PKWN' in *20 lat LWP* (Warsaw 1967), 332.
59. Blum, op. cit.; Z. Żalusi, *Czterdziesty czwarty* (Warsaw 1969), 409-423.
60. Przygoński, op. cit., 327.
61. W. Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski* (London 1960), Vol. III, 778-792. J. J. Terej, *Na rozstajach dróg* (Wrocław 1978), 272-285.
62. *Polskie sily...*, op. cit., 910-914.
63. See note 9. On 8 September 1944 the NSZ slaughtered nearly 100 Soviet and AL partisans at Rżabiec, powiat Włoszczowa (Walichnowski, op. cit., 133).
64. See Żalusi, op. cit., 459-463 and Majecki, op. cit., 46.
65. J. Czapla, 'KBW w latach 1944-45', *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny*, 1965/3.
66. Przygoński, op. cit., 344.
67. Turlejska, op. cit., 14.
68. Several of the best-known anti-communist partisan leaders active in 1945-47: 'Ogień' (J. Kuraś), 'Bury' (R. Rajs), 'Wołyniak' (J. Zdziarski), A. Zubryd, 'Mścislav' (M. Wadolny), for instance, were in 1944-45 members either of the army, militia or UB.
69. *LSE*, Gomulka to KC Plenum, 20-21 May 1945. Moczar also.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Ibid.* Zawadzki was expelled from the Party in November 1945.
72. *Polskie sily...*, op. cit., 926.
73. *Archiwum Studium Polski Podziemnej (SPP)* File 52, L.dz.K. 2404/45 Korboński to London, 27 April 1945. Caban i Machocki, op. cit., 97.
74. *LSE*, Gomulka to KC Plenum, 20-21 May 1945.
75. Pobóg-Malinowski, op. cit., 854-855; Korboński, op. cit., 215.

76. J. Czapla (ed.), *W walce o utrwalenie władzy ludowej w Polsce 1944-47* (Warsaw 1967), 51-52, Walichnowski, op. cit., 120.
77. *Polskie sily...*, op. cit., 925-927.
78. Majeckie, op. cit., 113; Pobóg-Malinowski, op. cit., 877-878 analyzes the extent to which the order was ignored.
79. Czapla, op. cit., 52-53; Pobóg-Malinowski, op. cit., 878-882.
80. *Archiwum SPP*, File 52, L.dz.K. 1802/45 Rzepecki to Anders, 5 April 1945; Korboński, op. cit., 220-222; Pobóg-Malinowski, op. cit., 856-873 discusses in detail developments in London and within the underground leadership, November 1944—March 1945.
81. *Archiwum SPP*, File 52, L.dz.K. 3346/45, Korboński to London, received 11 June 1945.
82. Ibid., File 52, L.dz.K. 2313/45 Korboński to London, 26 April 1945.
83. R. Szpala, 'Z dziejów MO i SB w pierwszych latach władzy ludowej w pow. Bielsk Podlaski', *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny*, 1977/4, 187.
84. *LSE*, L. Finkielsztajn to KC Plenum, 20-21 May 1945.
85. Ibid., H. Kozłowska.
86. Korboński, op. cit., 239. For text of declaration, see *Zeszyty historyczne* 1965/8.
87. Czapla, op. cit., 53-59; Pobóg-Malinowski, op. cit., 882—88; Korboński, op. cit., 229-230.

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COMMUNISTS, SOCIALISTS AND WORKERS: POLAND 1944-48

By JAIME REYNOLDS

Introduction

MUCH has been written about the workers' 'uprisings' in Poland in 1970-71 and 1976, as well as the workers' councils movement of 1956-58.¹ There is, however, virtually no published material on the earlier phase of industrial unrest (that which lasted from 1945 until at least the beginning of 1948)—an episode ignored even by otherwise well-informed students of the Polish 'workers' opposition'.²

Why is this? Primarily, of course, because the authorities took great pains at the time to conceal the details of this phenomenon, and Polish historiography is not yet sufficiently liberalized to handle such a subject openly. Secondly, Western observers had considerably greater difficulty in obtaining information about internal events in Poland in the immediate postwar years than is the case today. Moreover, it is the far Left which has most profusely examined working-class dissidence in Eastern Europe since it apparently confirms their critique of state socialism.³ In the 1940s, on the other hand, the Left generally preferred to turn a blind eye to the problem.

Perhaps, too, the working-class unrest which was evident immediately after the war has been neglected because it raises some awkward questions—in particular, if Polish state socialism was in fact established in the teeth of opposition from a significant proportion of the prole-

¹ See, in particular, *Dokumenty. Poznań 1956—Grudzień 1970* (Paris, 1971); Ewa Wacowska (ed.), *Rewolta Szczecińska i jej znaczenie* (Paris, 1971); *Ruch oporu. Dokumenty* (Paris, 1977). In English: D. Lane and G. Kolankiewicz (eds.), *Social Groups in Polish Society* (London, 1973), is useful on 1956-59 and 1970-71, especially the chapters written by the editors. An article by Peter Green in *New Left Review*, no. 101-102, February-April 1977, pp. 69-108, 'The Third Round in Poland', is informative on the 1970s. *Dissent in Poland 1976-77* (London, 1977) contains documents in translation.

² This is true of Peter Green's article. There is mention of the Lodz strike in J. Malara et L. Rey, *La Pologne d'une Occupation à l'Autre, 1944-52* (Paris, 1952).

³ For the Marxist critique of East European state socialism see J. Kuron and K. Modzelewski, *A Revolutionary Socialist Manifesto* (London, n.d.); C. Harman, *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe* (London, 1974); also *Poland 1970-71: Capitalism and the Class Struggle* (Detroit, 1977). *Hungary 1956* by Bill Lomax belongs to the same school. See D. Lane, *The Socialist Industrial State* (London, 1976), ch. 1.

tariat, its capacity to overcome and neutralize this threat must be considered very seriously. It is not only in the present decade that the Party has had to reckon with the workers: the problem has existed from the very beginning of its rule.

In this article I shall describe the way in which relations between the workers' parties and the class they claimed to represent developed in these years—and then consider the relevance of this period to later outbreaks of labour unrest.

The Political Context

The Red Army, together with several Polish divisions trained in the USSR, liberated Poland with two offensives—one in the spring and summer of 1944, the second starting in January 1945. During the first, a communist-dominated Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) was installed in Lublin under Soviet sponsorship to administer that portion of the country—roughly one-third—then freed from Nazi occupation. This government carried on until mid-1945, recognized by the Soviet Union, but not by either the Western allies or the bulk of the Polish underground, which as before regarded the Government in Exile in London as the only legitimate authority. In June 1945 this confusion was largely resolved when Stanisław Mikołajczyk, leader of the Polish Peasant Party (PSL), the most important of the 'London' parties, returned to Warsaw with various other émigré politicians and became Deputy Prime Minister in a coalition Provisional Government of National Unity, accepted by all the Allied Powers. The Premier was a socialist, Osóbka-Morawski, and the other deputy premier was Władysław Gomułka—the Secretary-General of the communist Polish Workers' Party (PPR).

There followed—until the elections of January 1947—an intense and violent struggle for power between Mikołajczyk's PSL, backed by the British and the Americans, and the PPR, which enjoyed the rather more effective support of the Soviet Union.

A key factor in this struggle was the position of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the leadership of which maintained an uneasy alliance with the communists throughout the period, culminating in the amalgamation of the two parties in 1948. The PPS is of particular interest to us as it was a rival working-class party competing with the communists in the industrial centres, while the Peasant Party dominated the countryside. Moreover, although the post-1945 PPS broke with its prewar anti-communism and many of its old leaders were excluded from political life, it retained a fierce sense of identity and a distinctive, albeit Leftist, social-democratic outlook—nowhere more evident than in its continued

commitment to economic pluralism. Far from being a communist 'satellite' led by 'stooges', it represented a major obstacle to the PPR version of state socialism.

Mikołajczyk's opposition was rapidly undermined following the 1947 elections, which were rigged to ensure his defeat. The communists, in partnership with the socialists, thus established a firm hold on state power, and during 1947-48 the foremost question concerned the nature of the socialism which was to be built. The policy divergences between the two parties—to some degree hidden during the fight to secure the Left's hold on the government apparatus—now revealed themselves. As the communists launched their first offensives on the economic front the socialists conducted a furious rearguard action. By late 1947 the onset of the Cold War and the formation of the Cominform intensified Soviet pressure on the PPR leadership and the possibility of some specifically Polish road to socialism receded as Stalinist models were adopted. The PPS opposition collapsed early in 1948 and, a few months later, Gomulka, who had resisted elements of the new line, was replaced by the more compliant Bierut as Secretary-General of the PPR. By the end of the year the first collectivization drives were under way and details of the six-year heavy industrialization plan began to emerge.

It was against this background of violent political change that Polish industry itself underwent a series of shocks and upheavals after the war. By 1945 some 65% of industrial plants had been destroyed, national income, which stood at 17.7 milliard zlotys in 1938, had fallen to 6.8 milliard, while the population had declined from 35 million to 24 million—a loss which disproportionately severely affected the skilled labour force.⁴ By 1948 production had largely recovered or exceeded prewar levels, investment and expansion were proceeding on an unprecedented scale, the pattern of ownership had been transformed, a huge influx of labour from the countryside contrasted with chronic unemployment in the 1930s, and determined efforts were being made to alter the worker's whole attitudes and perception of his interests.

For the sake of clarity, I have divided the period into four phases, demarcated by changes in the communists' strategic outlook. The first, from July to October 1944, sees them during their initial weeks in government, improvising desperately to make some impact on the welter of problems before them. The second, lasting until May 1945, was marked by a radicalization of the party's policy aimed at mobilizing the peasants through land reform and the workers by giving them effective control over their factories. In some ways this phase resembles the 'War Communism' adopted by the Bolshevik Party in Russia between 1918 and 1921. The third phase, from June 1945 to April 1947

⁴ *Polska Ludowa 1944-50* (Ossolineum, 1974), pp. 279, 285, 341.

was one of relative normalization in industry as the struggle for power between the PPR and PSL raged. Finally, from spring 1947, the mines and factories began to feel the first impact of Stalinization.

Phase One: July to October 1944

The first period of PKWN administration was marked by a high degree of political and economic chaos and the tendency of the PPR to regard industry as a low priority.

The territory liberated in 1944 was, in any case, underdeveloped industrially, and the communists, already overstretched by the immediate tasks of forming local administrations, establishing a police force, recruiting for the army and finding food for millions of Soviet troops, were generally prepared to leave industrial recovery to local initiative for the time being. Moreover, the Party's strategy at this stage was predicated on the need to win over elements from the bourgeois camp by promising an early restoration of factories to their private owners, and nothing was said about the role of the workers.⁵

In the industrial areas the workers who remained faced immense difficulties. The economic system was in ruins—three rapidly depreciating currencies were in circulation, transport and raw materials were lacking, the labour force had dispersed and often machinery and buildings had been wrecked during the offensive. In many cases the prewar owners had long since disappeared, so when their German supervisors retreated the workers simply carried on, electing a committee to act in place of the management—frequently this had existed underground during the occupation anyway—and making a start on repairing equipment, contacting the authorities and resuming production. The PKWN representatives encouraged such initiatives, without being in a position to assist very much—indeed, many of the politically reliable workers were poached by the army, party or police, and the Party does not appear to have issued instructions on the functions of the factory committees until 2 October.⁶

Phase Two: October 1944—May 1945

These instructions, which stressed the 'great role' to be played by the factory committees, including representation on the management with the director and delegates of the local administration, were

⁵ A. Przygonski, *Z zagadnień strategii frontu narodowego PPR 1942-45* (Warsaw, 1976), p. 290. The PKWN Manifesto made no mention of workers' councils, while laying great stress on the need for an early restoration of private ownership (*Manifest PKWN*, reprint, Warsaw, 1974, p. 20).

⁶ *PPR VIII.1944—XII.1945. Dokumenty* (Warsaw, 1969), pp. 57-61, 'Instrukcja KC PPR w sprawie pracy członków partii w związkach zawodowych', Lublin, 2 October 1944.

symptomatic of the general radicalization of PPR strategy during October. A few days later the PKWN withdrew its decree providing for the early reprivatization of factory ownership,⁷ and shortly afterwards a 'revolutionary' land reform was launched, accompanied by the dismissal of several members of the Lublin Committee.

The communists, faced with a crisis in the army and a rising wave of opposition activity, abandoned their strategy of constructing a 'wide national front' including bourgeois groupings, and adopted aggressive, radical tactics designed to win over the workers and the poorer peasantry. The concession of effective workers' control in the factories was part of this package.

The tactical character of this move was demonstrated by the reluctance of the PPR to institutionalize the development by defining in law the precise role of the factory councils. Thus a draft decree ready in October was withdrawn in order to be radicalized,⁸ but the PKWN was still discussing the matter fruitlessly in December, despite the socialist Drobner's insistence that 'the working class demands the speeding-up of the decree'.⁹

The main reason for the delay seems, however, to have been the desire to produce a decree which would meet the needs of the more industrialized regions, as yet still occupied by the Germans.¹⁰ Anyway, within days of the liberation of these areas a decree was passed which largely recognized the existing situation—the councils retaining their wide powers, including participation in management.¹¹

The problems posed by this arrangement soon became evident. Frequent conflicts arose between the factory director, together with his technical staff, on the one hand, and the factory councils representing the manual workers, on the other. The workers' representatives considered that the managements had failed to adjust their thinking to the new order in industry and were refusing to allow the councils an adequate say in decision-making.¹² The specialists in return argued that the councils undervalued their role. A particular bone of contention was the councils' tendency to reduce differentials and productivity bonuses, as well as excluding non-manual staff from a share in profits.¹³

⁷ *Polska Ludowa 1944-50*, p. 311.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 313n.; D. Lane and G. Kolankiewicz (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁹ LSE documents. Extracts from the protocols of sittings of the PKWN, July-December 1944. AURM, t.1. Sittings of 12 and 28 December; Drobner's comment is from the latter.

¹⁰ K. Kersten, *PKWN* (Lublin, 1965), p. 132.

¹¹ *PPR VIII.1944-XII.1945* . . . , pp. 267-75, 'Dekret Rady Ministrów, O utworzeniu rad zakładowych', Warsaw, 6 February 1945.

¹² D. Lane and G. Kolankiewicz (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 91—quoting report of KCZZ for April 1945 (from J. Gołębiowski, 'Problemy nacjonalizacja przemysłu', in *Uprzemysłowanie ziem polskich w XIX i XX wieku* (Warsaw, 1970), p. 514.

¹³ *PPR VIII.1944-XII.1945* . . . , pp. 145-52, 'Uchwała plenum KC PPR w

Evidently, the party's radical line often unleashed an ultra-radical response from the workers, which according to some commentators was 'anarcho-syndicalist' in character.¹⁴ This overreaction was tolerated as long as the Party was furiously expanding its membership, but in May it was to be condemned by the Central Committee as 'sectarianism'.

Apart from the over-radicalization of the councils, the PPR also had to reckon with the danger of their take-over by anti-communist elements. This threat grew in March and April when the material conditions of the workers sank to a new low level. Real earnings in the first half of 1945 were less than 10% of their 1938 level,¹⁵ and the towns were swept by severe food shortages, only partially relieved by the despatch of workers' brigades into the countryside to collect quotas from the peasants. Minc, the Industry Minister, told the May plenum of the PPR Central Committee that there had been some 'progress'—'a month ago there was no bread in Lodz, now they're calling for dripping'.¹⁶ Short protest strikes and absenteeism were widespread,¹⁷ and in this atmosphere there was a marked revival of underground activity. In some country areas the level of violence reached civil war proportions, while in the industrial regions the illegal anti-communist section of the Socialist Party, known as the WRN, pursued a policy of operating within the trade unions and workers' councils to turn dissatisfaction with material hardship against the government and the PPR.¹⁸ Since many of the activists of the legal wing of the PPS were indistinguishable from the WRN, the communists tended to monopolize the factory councils and trade union committees—excluding the socialists by

sprawach gospodarczych', Warsaw, 26 May 1945.

¹⁴ W. Góra, *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa 1944-47* (Warsaw, 1974), p. 129. See also B. Syzdek, *PPS w latach 1944-47* (Warsaw, 1974), pp. 261-2.

¹⁵ *Polska Ludowa 1944-50*, pp. 357-8, also p. 367.

¹⁶ LSE documents. Extracts from the protocols of the Central Committee plenum of the PPR, 20-21 May 1945, AZHP.

¹⁷ See, for instance, T. Sierocki, *Warszawska organizacja PPS, 1944-48* (Warsaw, 1976), p. 171; J. Kantyka, *PPS na Śląsku i w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim w latach 1939-48* (Katowice, 1975), p. 185; E. Wojnowski, *Warmia i Mazury w latach 1945-47* (Olsztyn, 1970), p. 91.

The report of the Lodz Party Committee to the Central Committee for April/May 1945 (see *Z pola walki*, 1971, no. 4, pp. 287-8) contains this description of the position in the local factories:

Against the background of food-supply difficulties strong tension of feelings in the factories. In the period of this report, especially in the past few days, a dozen or so brief strikes in Lodz, Pabianice, Konskie . . . The strikes last as long as the shop-floor meetings which the works' councils call immediately the stoppage begins . . . Factory cells display complete impotence towards the strikes. As a rule the meetings are very stormy; the workers, and especially the women workers, heckle the speakers; they shout: 'Fine democracy, when there's nothing to eat'; 'The parasites stuff themselves as always, and the worker starves', etc. . . . It is clear that the strikes are initiated by people sent in by the Reaction . . .

¹⁸ Kantyka, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-2, reveals that Pużak, leader of the WRN, was active in Silesia in March 1945. Pużak's own account was published in *Zeszyty historyczne*, 1977, no. 41, pp. 128-31.

force.¹⁹ This practice was also to be condemned as 'sectarianism' in May, but its prevalence was inevitable in view of the weakness of the communists' organization and the Party's siege mentality at the time.

Phase Three: May 1945 to April 1947

It was this sense of political isolation, together with the renewed prospect of a deal with Mikołajczyk, which prompted the communists' change of strategy in May 1945. The radicalism of the preceding months was criticized, the need for a rapid return to private ownership reaffirmed,²⁰ and directions issued to share power with the allied parties at all levels.

So far as industry was concerned, the PPR leadership decided that the time had come to reduce the powers of the factory councils. In the interests of 'efficiency' the Central Committee called for 'the increased and strengthened authority of the director, engineer and foreman', which was spelt out as meaning that, while the management and factory council jointly decided questions concerning the employment and laying off of workers as well as the material and cultural affairs of the work force, 'the director alone decides all matters related to the economic and technical management of the concern as well as matters relating to bonuses'. On pay, the Central Committee rejected egalitarianism in favour of wages linked to productivity and skills, with a share of the profits going to non-manual personnel. Finally, there were promises to improve the food supply.²¹ These resolutions amounted to the abolition of workers' control. The councils lost their hold over the purse strings and organization of production, and were left with the role of attending to the social welfare of the work force.

Apart from the motives mentioned earlier, the need to raise production and productivity weighed heavily. In April the index of industrial production stood at only 19% of its 1937 level.²² Gomułka identified the cause as 'the lack of discipline, the demoralization in the working class'.²³ It is difficult to assess how the 'working class' received the constriction of the powers of the factory councils. Production rose very rapidly during the remaining months of 1945, but strikes and protests remained a recurrent feature.²⁴ What evidence there is suggests

¹⁹ LSE documents. May 1945 plenum, speech of Sowiński—suggests that provincial party organizations had to force local committees not to monopolize factory councils. See also Syzdek, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

²⁰ *Polska Ludowa 1944-50*, p. 315, Ministry of Industry circular, 15 May 1945.

²¹ *PPR VIII.1944-XII.1945 . . .*, 'Uchwała plenum . . .' (see footnote 13).

²² I. Kostrowicka, Z. Landau and J. Tomaszewski, *Historia gospodarcza Polski XIX i XX wieku* (Warsaw, 1975), p. 486.

²³ LSE documents. May 1945 plenum, speech of Gomułka. See also Gomułka's interview in *Trybuna Związkowca*, 1 June 1945, reprinted in his *Artykuły i przemówienia*, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1962), pp. 288-92.

²⁴ See, for instance, J. Naumiuk, *PPR na Kielecczyźnie* (Warsaw, 1976), p. 359.

that it was shortages and opposition to the communists rather than discontent over the diminished role of the workers' councils which provoked trouble, although the councils and not the trade unions were most prominent in airing this unrest. In September, for instance, Gomulka was obliged to listen to a barrage of criticism at a meeting of representatives of the councils in Lodz, before replying with a fighting speech.²⁵

Another consideration which may have prompted the communists' move away from workers' control was their decision to relax their hold on the councils—elections to which began in May and continued until November. It soon became clear that the PPS was making substantial gains at the expense of the communists²⁶—a development the PPR viewed equivocally. While recognizing that their isolation could be overcome only by conceding a greater share of power to their political allies, the communists sought to prevent the process from going too far, and to ensure that their opponents were excluded. The communists were identified with government policy and factory management, while the socialists resumed their traditional 'trade-unionist' outlook and were involved in organizing many of the strikes, being active, for example, in opposition to a ministerial decision to cut rations, which led to a strike threat at the Cegielski works in Poznan—scene of the workers' riots in June 1956—in August 1945.²⁷ All this threatened the PPR with the loss of its influence over the working class. Thus, while Zambrowski, head of the party Secretariat, wanted 'to give the workers the opportunity of free, secret elections, wherever it is possible',²⁸ he also warned that 'the PPS is growing numerically because it leads the defence of the interests of the working class and wins over members'.²⁹ It is known that in a number of cases the local party officials decided that free elections were impossible and intervened to increase the communists' share of seats,³⁰ and everywhere strenuous efforts were made to avoid contests by nominating joint PPS-PPR lists. There were also cases of draconian measures being taken against socialists involved in organizing strikes—one Tadeusz Borowiec was sentenced to ten years for his part in leading a strike by loom operators at a mill in Pabianice in July.³¹

See also footnote 27.

²⁵ Gomulka, *op. cit.*, pp. 360-7; 'Nasze trudności i drogi ich przezwyciężenia' (Lodz, 13 September 1945).

²⁶ Sierocki, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

²⁷ K. Robakowski, *Rola i działalność PPS w wielkopolsce i na Ziemi Lubuskiej w latach 1945-48* (Poznan, 1973), pp. 83-84; see 'Sprawozdanie KM PPR w Poznaniu za okres od 15 IX do 15 X 1945', *Z pola walki*, 1971, no. 4, p. 316, for the aftermath of this strike.

²⁸ LSE documents. Posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC PPR, Extracts, AZHP 190: II, 17 June 1945.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 23 June 1945.

³⁰ *Jutro Polski*, 20 January 1946, reports such an incident in elections held at the Państwowy Zakład Przemysłu Bawełnego, 26 November 1945. The report is based on *Robotnik*, 8 December 1945.

³¹ D. Healy (ed.), *The Curtain Falls. The story of the socialists in Eastern Europe*

In 1946 the connection between industrial unrest and political events in the country became even more marked. In the spring there was a discernible increase in dissatisfaction in the industrial areas³²—partly, no doubt, due to inflation, which began to accelerate from late 1945, but probably linked also to the intensification of political tension between the communists and Mikołajczyk. Certainly, the PPR tried to pin the blame on the Peasant Party: in a joint declaration issued with the PPS in Warsaw in June, they alleged that

trouble-makers, hiding under the label of the PSL, are trying to arouse a strike atmosphere, spread artificial dissatisfaction and ferment . . . and smash the unity of the trade union and workers' movement.³³

There may have been a large element of truth in this; curiously enough, the Peasant Party did enjoy a considerable degree of support even in urban areas and also in some trade unions—the tramway and local government workers, for instance. Moreover, after a conversation with Mikołajczyk in May, the British ambassador reported to London that he 'gathered . . . that if he [Mikołajczyk] is ejected from the Government he will try to cause any resultant disturbances to take the form of strikes nominally for higher wages rather than a political outburst'.³⁴

Nevertheless, the attacks on the PSL, with their emphasis on the need to maintain working-class unity, were at the same time a thinly disguised

(London, 1951), p. 58. Pabianice was a stronghold of Szczerkowski (WRN); Syzdek, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

³² Sierocki, *op. cit.*, pp. 267–9; Naumiuk, *op. cit.*, p. 181. J. Gołębiowski, *Pierwsze lata 1945–47* (Katowice, 1947), p. 331, quotes this laconic report of the Silesian Militia Command for January 1946:

In connection with big shortages in food supply and the existence of too great a discrepancy in rations and wages between the workers and the colossally swollen white-collar and management apparatus . . . it is even possible to talk of a certain wavering in the mood of the working class . . .

This perhaps refers to strikes in the coalmines in late 1945. See *Z pola walki*, 1971, no. 4, p. 339.

³⁴ PRO FO371 56439 N.6245/34/55/15 May 1946; Mikołajczyk went on a speaking tour of industrial Silesia in April 1946 and encouraged PSL activists to campaign amongst the workers and gain representation on the works councils. These efforts seem to have been frustrated successfully by the communists. See Gołębiowski, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

In Gdansk too oppositionist elements were active. According to the Provincial Committee of the PPR (report 19 October, 1946):

For nearly a year both ports have been causing us a lot of difficulty and problems. In practice we have been continually balancing on the edge of a strike. Criminal elements, unconnected with the working class either in the past or present, have crept into the ports. The only bait for them was the opportunity to steal. It was an element which with difficulty accepted the political or educational influence of union organizations. This state was skilfully fuelled by openly hostile elements, frequently connected with foreign intelligence.

(R. Wapiński, *Pierwsze lata władzy ludowej na wybrzeżu gdańskim* (Gdansk, 1970), p. 86.)

warning to the socialists to keep in line and also suggest that the PSL tactics were aimed at exploiting the sensitive relations between the two workers' parties at their tenderest point—in industry. A series of elections to trade-union executives in mid-1946 which were marked by socialist gains further raised the temperature.³⁵ This pattern of the communists—to some extent in harness with the socialist central leadership—endeavouring to restrain the grassroots PPS activists in the factories, was confirmed by one of the points of the pact signed between the two leaderships in November. In the unpublished addendum it was agreed that

the leaderships of both parties held the position that all actions undertaken to the detriment of the position of the trades unions will be jointly combated, and in relation to their initiators, if they are in the party, the most severe organizational measures will be applied.³⁶

The implications of this agreement became clearer in January 1947 when the factory councils were merged with the trade unions and given additional tasks in raising productivity.³⁷ The trade union apparatus was by this time a centralized body covering virtually the entire labour force, responsible for coordination and political work in industry. The merger thus brought the factory councils—up to then independent, decentralized organs—into this hierarchy, which within the next two years was transformed into a 'transmission belt' executing party policy rather than articulating and defending the workers' interests. From the start the communists had held a dominant position in the upper echelons of the union organization, but the PPS scored another round of successes in elections in early 1947, and formed a majority on many of the executives at lower levels.³⁸

The year 1946, however, was generally speaking a year when some degree of economic normality was restored. Production regained prewar figures,³⁹ wages rose considerably and prices were steady. The emphasis was on satisfying consumption needs—primarily, no doubt, in order to win support for the government as it prepared for a show-down with the opposition.

This recovery was interrupted early in 1947 by a burst of inflation—wages and prices shooting up by over 20% in the first half of the year.⁴⁰ One obvious reason for this was the severity of the winter, followed by spring floods and a summer drought, which together disrupted trans-

³⁵ Sierocki, *op. cit.*, p. 175. In Silesia, for example, PPS strength on works councils surpassed that of the PPR in August 1946 (Gołębiowski, *Pierwsze . . .*, p. 308).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

³⁷ *Polska Ludowa 1944-50*, p. 347. The decree was amended on 16 January 1947.

³⁸ Sierocki, *op. cit.*, pp. 175, 180, 284.

³⁹ This was true of basic industrial products; full recovery came in 1947-48.

⁴⁰ *Polska Ludowa 1944-50*, pp. 358-9.

port, reduced the harvest, and led to shortages. But, apart from natural disasters, hold-ups in the release of Western investment credits due for the end of 1946 and difficulties encountered in reaching the targets of the first eight-month plan—especially in the coal industry—hit the production of industrial consumer goods. The growth of rural purchasing power after the abolition of quotas in mid-1946 also fuelled inflation.⁴¹

The effect of this on the workers was a drop of 10–15% in real wages,⁴² and in December 1946, when the government postponed payment of the traditional end-of-year bonus,⁴³ and again early in 1947 when an attempt was made to end rationing on certain items, there were waves of protest.⁴⁴

In the middle of April the Central Committee of the PPR met in Warsaw to discuss the party's response to the economic crisis, and a month later Minc launched the so-called 'battle for trade'.

Phase Four: April 1947—December 1948

The 'battle for trade', although ostensibly motivated by economic considerations, had strong political overtones. Its central feature was a drive against private traders together with the expansion of the state sector in retail distribution. But the offensive against 'speculators' and 'rich peasants' also served to smash the last remnants of Mikołajczyk's opposition. In the first four months of 1947, the Special Commission to Combat Malpractices and Speculation sent some 24,000 people to labour camps without formal trial.⁴⁵

The main significance of the 'battle' for our purposes is that for the first time the economic policies of the communists and socialists seriously and openly diverged. Until the April plenum the numerous conflicts between the two parties had been chiefly concerned with squabbles over their respective share of influence and office in industry and central and local government. Where economic disputes had arisen it was frequently the PPS which had taken the more radical line, but now the communists were calling into question the whole future of the mixed economy, one of the tenets of PPS policy. Clashes over economics—centring on the pace of industrialization, the balance between investment and consumption and the role of cooperatives—were matched by dissension over the powers of the Sejm, the guarantee of civil rights and debates in the parties' theoretical journals about 'socialist humanism'.

The fundamental incompatibility between the long-term objectives of the communists and socialists was becoming apparent. For the PPR

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

⁴² Góra, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁴³ *Polska Ludowa 1944–50*, p. 309.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 366; J. Naumiuk, *Początki władzy ludowej na Kielecczyźnie 1944–47* (Lublin, 1969), pp. 181, 234.

⁴⁵ A. Jezierski, *Historia gospodarcza Polski Ludowej* (Warsaw, 1971), p. 116.

the class antagonisms present under capitalism, expressed in strike action and the organization of structures to defend working-class interests, no longer existed once ownership had passed into the hands of the state and its own control over the political system had been consolidated. Thus any independent activity amongst the workers predicated on the view that antagonisms between labour and the state would continue was regarded as obsolete and reactionary. The days of the PPS, still wedded to economic pluralism and anxious to safeguard the rights of the individual against the power of the state, were clearly numbered, and in May Gomulka announced that the time had come to begin the process of 'organic unification' of the two parties.⁴⁶ This attack came at a time when the socialists' support amongst the workers was discernibly surpassing that of the communists. In Warsaw, for instance, the results of elections to the executives of 26 unions at the turn of 1946-47 saw the PPS increase its share of seats from 29.5% to 42.7%, while the PPR share fell from 52.2% to 40.8%, in spite of various devices to prevent this happening.⁴⁷

The connection between the fate of the PPS and the future position of the workers in industry became increasingly obvious in the second half of 1947.

The socialist leadership vigorously opposed the merger proposals and trade programme in May and June, but at the end of that month it retreated, dropping its fundamental objections to the communists' economic strategy and reaffirming its commitment to eventual 'organic unification', without specifying when this would take place. The full reasons for this collapse are unclear, but the arrests of several prominent right-wing socialists in June were hardly coincidental.⁴⁸

Even after this compromise had been reached at national level, tension between the two parties in the factories continued at a high pitch. Once again the communists applied pressure on the socialist leaders to discipline local activists engaged in organizing strikes.⁴⁹ Besides this, the PPR launched a campaign of joint works meetings with the PPS during the summer, aimed at identifying and neutralizing oppositionists.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ For Gomulka's speech, see *Artykuły i przemówienia*, vol. 2, pp. 397-422. For discussions of the differences in outlook between the PPS and PPR, see, for instance, K. Ćwik, *Problemy współdziałania PPR i PPS w województwie krakowskim 1945-48* (Cracow, 1974), pp. 223-7; Kantyka, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-13; Sierocki, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-89.

⁴⁷ Sierocki, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁴⁸ H. Roos, *A History of Modern Poland* (London, 1966), p. 231. Sierocki, *op. cit.*, pp. 381-3 gives a fairly full account of the meeting of the PPS Supreme Council, 30 June 1947, which ended the crisis.

⁴⁹ *PPR I. 1947-XII. 1948. Dokumenty* (Warsaw, 1973), 'Okólnik KC PPR i CKW PPS w sprawie przeciwdziałania próbom wywołania strajków', Warsaw, 6 June 1947, pp. 268-70.

⁵⁰ Ćwik, *op. cit.*, p. 230; also 'R', 'The Fate of Polish Socialism', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 28, no. 1, October 1949, p. 136.

Having brought PPS leadership into line, the communists unveiled the next stage of their economic programme, the centrepiece of which was *współzawodnictwo*—a form of socialist competition modelled closely on the Stakhanovite system in the Soviet Union.

The movement began in earnest in July with the appeal of Wincenty Pstrowski, a coalminer from Zabrze in Silesia, to his workmates. Pstrowski had recently overfulfilled his norm by a record 270% and now challenged others to exceed this performance. Accompanied by a loud fanfare of publicity, Pstrowski and other heroes of labour were paraded and decorated at galas and trade-union gatherings, while in the mines and factories work-rate became an index of political dependability.⁵¹

The objective of these schemes was simply to improve productivity and labour discipline at a time when living standards were falling as consumption was held down to provide for the sharply increased investment targets set for 1947.⁵² The pressure on the standard of living was further intensified by Poland's rejection of Marshall Aid in July at Soviet behest.⁵³ Indeed, the supply of aid and loans from the West had largely dried up by this stage.⁵⁴ Thus, between the second and fourth quarters of 1947 average earnings fell by over 20%, while prices remained constant or rose—the increase in the case of meat and meat products amounting to over 20% in the final three months of the year.⁵⁵

The reaction of the bulk of industrial workers to *współzawodnictwo* was, predictably, hostile. It provoked a storm of protest, which, in some cases at any rate, escalated into violent strikes—we shall see what happened in the case of Lodz in a moment.

The socialists often shared this hostility, 'drawing attention to the workers' lack of interest in the movement', 'maintaining that *współzawodnictwo* utterly destroys the physical strength of the workers' and 'that it was developing to the detriment of the working class and instead of benefits brought the state material losses'.⁵⁶

It seems, then, that in the autumn of 1947 the communist leadership was confronted by the concerted and vociferous opposition to its economic policy of much of both the working class and the PPS—as well as some of its own membership. Unfortunately, there is very little accessible information on the extent, duration and methods by which this resistance was overcome. It does appear, however, that to the list: Poznan, 1956; Szczecin, 1970; Radom, 1976, we should add: Lodz, 1947.⁵⁷

⁵¹ J. Roszko, *Prawda o górniku Pstrowskim* (Warsaw, 1975).

⁵² *Polska Ludowa* 1944–50, p. 304. Investment increased from 2.0 milliard zlotys to 2.8 milliard zlotys, 1946–47.

⁵³ Góra, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁵⁵ *Polska Ludowa* 1944–50, pp. 358–9; Jezierski, *op. cit.*, p. 509.

⁵⁶ Robakowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 92–93.

⁵⁷ Perhaps we should also add Gdansk, 1946. Against a background of continual

'Red' Lodz, the centre of Poland's textile industry, has a tradition of working-class militancy dating back to the nineteenth century and evident as recently as 1971.⁵⁸ The influx of large numbers of rural immigrants seeking employment after the war did not dampen this militancy—indeed, the 'worker-peasants' were regarded as a particularly volatile element in the labour force.⁵⁹ The same was true of the high percentage of women workers in the mills. In both 1945 and 1946 there had been strikes in Lodz—in each case with anti-Semitic overtones: another local tradition,⁶⁰ and, as has already been mentioned, it was on the Lodz workers councils' delegates that Gomulka vented his annoyance at strikes and protests in September 1945. Moreover, relations between the PPS and the communists had been especially strained here, and the loyalties of many of the PPR members in the textile industry were divided.⁶¹

The course of the disturbances in Lodz can be traced by a careful reading of *Głos ludu*, the organ of the PPR, although considerable efforts were made to conceal what was happening.⁶² The strike seems to have taken place during the second half of September, but it was not until 11 October that this was admitted publicly, when Gomulka, speaking to the PPR Central Committee, explained what had occurred:

Our party has always had the courage to speak the truth, even though that truth was bitter. We cannot not say a few words of truth to those

tension in the ports (see footnote 34), the dockers, on 10 August 1946, struck in protest at the arrest of three of their colleagues for stealing corn, although attempts to introduce a new contract system and cut down on pilfering—in response to demands from UNRRA—lay behind this. In the resulting disturbances one UB officer was killed and two others wounded. The ports returned to normal after railway and shipyard workers had been brought in to break the strike. In the aftermath of the strike 74 dockers were sacked and 189 had their right to work and live in Gdansk withdrawn. See Wapinski, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

⁵⁸ The tradition of working-class militancy in the Lodz textile industry manifested itself in major strikes in May 1892, May 1905, 1927/28, August-September 1932, April-May 1933 and 1936. Generally associated with these were wildcat occupation strikes, street demonstrations and clashes with the police. See further: A. Prochnik, *Bunt łódzki w roku 1892* (Warsaw, 1950); B. Wachowska, *Strajki okupacyjne w łódzkim okręgu przemysłowym w latach kryzysu gospodarczego 1929-33* (Lodz, 1967); L. Kieszczyński, *Ruch strajkowy w przemyśle włókienniczym okręgu łódzkiego w latach kryzysu gospodarczego 1929-33* (Lodz, 1969).

⁵⁹ By 1950 one-third of Lodz's population were postwar rural immigrants—(D. Lane and G. Kolankiewicz (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 93. J. Kądzielski, in *O problemie modelu rewolucji kulturalnej* (Lodz, 1964), p. 84, has further details, noting that the bulk of the increase was in 1945-47.

⁶⁰ For the strikes see: *Protokoly KC* (1945) for 20 September, *Zeszyty historyczne*, 1973, no. 24, pp. 137-8; and PRO FO371 56455/N10598/34/55/19 August 1946. On Lodz anti-Semitism, see P. Lendvai, *Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe* (London, 1971), pp. 154-62.

⁶¹ Robakowski, *op. cit.*, p. 136; Syzdek, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-7.

⁶² Inevitably, any discussion of strikes in Poland is frustrated by the patchiness of source material. The following account of the Lodz strike of 1947 is based largely on official—and therefore heavily censored—press reports, speeches by Party leaders and circumstantial evidence. Necessarily it contains gaps, and the author would welcome any observations or corrections from readers.

Lodz millworkers who a dozen or so days ago, under the influence of hostile agitation, left work. As is well known, this took place at the Poznanski⁶³ works in connection with the transfer of several spinners to operating a larger number of looms. The protest action against working on an increased number of looms threatens the interests of the workers themselves, is harmful to the state and for the completion of the economic plan . . .⁶⁴

The fact that this statement was published shows that the trouble in Lodz was of considerable dimensions; that news of it had spread in spite of the black-out and that the abundant newspaper items concerned with the Lodz mills which had appeared over the previous month must be read in a new light. It also indicates that the party leadership had taken a tough line with the strikers.

The events at the Poznanski works were the spark which ignited an already highly combustible atmosphere. First, as we have seen, real earnings fell sharply after the summer of 1947, a drop felt especially acutely in Lodz since prices, exceptionally, rose there by 4% in the second half of the year.⁶⁵ Second, production at the mills appears to have been sluggish for several months in spite of claims that targets had been overfulfilled. This was due to shortages of raw materials and the disappearance of workers into the countryside during the harvest, but also, as was frankly admitted, to stoppages and a lack of urgency in overcoming difficulties.⁶⁶ Third, September was 'Rebuilding Warsaw Month', to which everyone was expected to contribute by working unpaid on at least one Sunday. On 12 September the Lodz factory councils issued a call to the millworkers to devote Sunday (21 September) to the cause, adding that this would constitute 'a blow against the barbarian German imperialists'.⁶⁷

The call clearly met with a hostile response from workers in many areas, for on 17 September the Central Council of the Trades Unions (KCZZ) announced that

As a result of numerous queries by the trades unions . . . the devotion of one day's work on behalf of the rebuilding of Warsaw on 21 September has turned out to be impracticable for technical reasons in a whole range of industries . . .

⁶³ There were more than 20 state-owned mills, manufacturing chiefly cotton, in Lodz at this time. The Poznanski works (PZPB no. 2) in the centre of the city was the second largest. The Scheibler works (PZPB no. 1), employing over 9,000 workers, was the biggest factory in Poland. Central direction was in the hands of a Central Office for the Textile Industry (CZPW), the director-general of which was a young communist, Walenty Wende. ⁶⁴ *Głos ludu* (organ of the PPR), 12 October 1947.

⁶⁵ *Polska Ludowa* 1944-50, p. 351.

⁶⁶ *Głos ludu*, 21 September 1947.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12 September 1947.

Where the extra Sunday was not worked, the KCZZ recommended a collection of voluntary contributions for the rebuilding of Warsaw on 30 September or 1 October (pay day) . . .⁶⁸

Nevertheless, on 21 September *Głos ludu* announced that

The Lodz world of labour is devoting the gross wages of one day of work to the rebuilding of Warsaw. That day will be Sunday, 21 September . . .⁶⁹

In fact, it seems that the Lodz mills had already been at a standstill for several days when this statement was issued.

The main cause of the trouble was, however, *współzawodnictwo*. After the coalmines, the textile industry was the next sector of industry in which the Party attempted to implement socialist competition, and here it met with stiff opposition from the mass of the workers. Prior to Pstrowski's appeal there had already been some attempts to organize so-called 'work-races' amongst the women mill workers by the Communist Youth Union,⁷⁰ but from September the campaign was stepped up. A contest began between Stakhanovites in the mines and the mills, while the industrial and sports pages of newspapers became increasingly indistinguishable, displaying such headlines as 'Geyerowcy go for a winner—Whole team wants to beat Szajbler', or 'Lodz Victors League Table' *ad nauseam*.⁷¹

In fact, the number of workers who joined the scheme was tiny. Figures were not given, although *Robotnik* managed to let slip on 20 September that only just over 100 weavers were involved out of a work force numbering tens of thousands.⁷² Two months later, Sokorski, Secretary of the Polish TUC, was still complaining that the number of competitors was much too small.⁷³ One of the chief reasons for this was that the Stakhanovites were by no means as popular with their work mates as they were with the press, facing the disapproval, if not ostracism, of the remainder of the shop floor and many supervisors.⁷⁴

Regardless of claims that the movement was voluntary and spontaneous in character, the methods by which it was extended were simply intimidatory. A series of meetings was held in the mills during the first weeks of September at which particular workers and foremen pledged themselves publicly to enter the competition and then called individually on their less enthusiastic fellows to follow them. At the Poznanski works a meeting of weavers on 9 September decided 'unanimously' and 'without

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 September 1947.

⁷⁰ Roszko, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁷¹ *Robotnik* (organ of the PPS), 20 September 1947.

⁷² *Głos ludu*, 10 November 1947.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 4 September, 20 October, 1947.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 21 September 1947.

⁷⁴ *Głos ludu*, 30 September, 20 October, 1947.

long discussion' to join the scheme and two days later a similar meeting was held amongst the foremen.⁷⁵

The objections to *współzawodnictwo* voiced through the factory councils and trade unions, as well as by PPS and some PPR shop-floor activists, were time and again answered in the Party press over the next months and boiled down to three basic points.⁷⁶ First, there were doubts as to the practicality of such methods in Polish conditions—in plain words, was it feasible to transplant Soviet mechanisms for enforcing work discipline and raising productivity to Polish industry, where the workers had 50 years' experience of combating not dissimilar attempts made by capitalist employers? For many workers the distinction between *współzawodnictwo* and capitalist work rationalization was difficult to detect. Besides, in view of the physical state of both labour force and machinery, the practicality of significantly increasing productivity, except in the very short term, without damage to health and a decline in the quality of output was questioned. Second, the subject of pay inevitably arose. The workers wanted a much tighter commitment on the part of the Party and government that higher work rates would be rewarded with higher pay and that overfulfilled norms would not be raised. At the same time there was a great deal of suspicion that paying big performance bonuses would inject an element of arbitrariness into the pay structure, since obviously output depended on a whole range of factors quite independent of the effort of the individual operator. The Party line—underlined after the disturbances in Lodz—was that *przodownicy* (leading workers) should receive high wages, privileged working conditions and exemption from taxes.⁷⁷ Third, there was a persistent fear that higher productivity would result in lay-offs. This fear arose out of the massive overemployment⁷⁸ in the mills and the fact that the main thrust of the *współzawodnictwo* campaign was directed at reducing the ratio of operators to looms.

The course of events in Lodz during late September and early October remains very hazy. Censorship prevented any but the most cryptic reports from appearing in the press and official pronouncements admitted only a minor dispute at the Poznanski works.

According, however, to the correspondent of *The New York Times*, who visited the city on 23 September, the strike had begun on the 15th when the day shift at the Poznanski mill stopped work in protest when a group of *przodownicy* began working four machines instead of two. That evening the strikers were joined by the night shift and some 6,000 occupied the factory. Police cordoned off the mill and arrested about 80 of the strike leaders. This sparked off sympathy stoppages at seven

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 11, 13 September 1947.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1, 20 October 1947.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 20 October 1947 (Minc speech).

⁷⁸ PRO FO371 56446/N10746/34/55/23 August 1946.

or eight other mills until about one-third of the work force (at least 40,000 workers)—the bulk of them women—were idle. At the time of the correspondent's visit 5,000 of these were still on strike at the Poznanski, Biederman, Buehle and Campe Albrecht factories. Unconfirmed reports suggested that two women had been killed in clashes between strikers and non-strikers. Other rumours that 12 workers had died were officially denied a few days later.⁷⁹

The strike could not have come at a more embarrassing time for the Politburo since it coincided with the inaugural meeting of the Cominform, attended by Zhdanov and a host of high-ranking communist dignitaries, at the Silesian resort of Szklarska Poreba. This fact may account for the delicacy with which the strike was handled while the meeting was on.

The initial reaction—apart from the arrests—took the form of applying pressure through the Party organizations and issuing exhortations to return to work. On 19 September a conference of the heads of the economic sections of provincial committees of the PPS and PPR was held in Warsaw, at which it was decided to extend socialist competition in the textile industry and press on with transferring spinners from minding one loom each to minding several.⁸⁰ The following day a meeting of 250 communist and socialist activists in the management of the mills took place to bring the two parties into line behind the *współzawodnictwo* campaign, suggesting that the attitude of some of the socialists was equivocal.⁸¹ Meanwhile, at Szajbler's, and no doubt elsewhere, huge posters appeared proclaiming that 'Every Hour Lost Hits the Three-year Plan'.⁸²

The attempt to end the strike through political channels seems to have continued for over a week, culminating in the signing of an agreement on Tuesday, 30 September at a meeting of representatives of management, trades unions, *współzawodnictwo* committees and the factory councils. The main point of the agreement was that 'work races' within the industry would begin the next day and continue until the end of the year. The only hint of a concession to the strikers announced that other factors apart from output alone would be taken into account in the contest.⁸³

What happened next is tantalizingly unclear. According to émigré sources police units were used to crush the strikers' resistance⁸⁴ and in

⁷⁹ *The New York Times*, 25, 26 September 1947.

⁸⁰ *Głos ludu*, 20 September 1947.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 29 September 1947. This meeting was addressed by Kazimierz Witaszewski, communist Chairman of the Polish TUC, Tadeusz Cwik of the PPS, and Władysław Bienkowski of the PPR (*Dziennik Polski* (London, 30 September 1947)).

⁸² *Głos ludu*, 30 September 1947.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1 October 1947.

⁸⁴ *Jutro Polski*, 17 January 1948, 24 October 1948. See also Malara & Rey, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-5.

view of the availability of firearms in the immediate postwar years, such an operation could well have involved a considerable degree of violence. All we can wring from the official press is that on 5 October Marshal Rola-Zymierski, Minister of Defence and Commander-in-Chief of the Army, together with General Zarzycki, a high-ranking officer of its political apparatus, were in Lodz for a presentation ceremony at the Geyer works. Their presence and Zymierski's speech, in which he said that he received a banner from the workers as testimony of their 'attachment to the army and understanding that the army stands guard over the achievements of the working class and Polish democracy', strongly suggest some military involvement in dealing with the strike.⁸⁵

The following day a government instruction was issued ordering substantial cuts in the prices of a whole series of manufactured consumer products,⁸⁶ which suggests that the strikers had not been totally routed, but had forced the government into making some concessions. The authorities were certainly concerned that what was happening in Lodz might spread to other industrial centres and from 4 to 7 October the third anniversary of the formation of the police forces was celebrated at short notice with parades and shows of strength—presumably to deter any emulation.⁸⁷ No celebrations had been held in 1946, and in 1948 only two days were devoted to them.

Once the position stabilized, the Party leadership restarted its political campaign. Gomulka made three major public speeches during October and visited Lodz on the 26th.⁸⁸ Minc also spoke, answering criticisms of *współzawodnictwo*,⁸⁹ and on 8 November a 'National Conference of Multi-loom Operators' was held in Lodz, the audience of 1,000 Stakhanovites hearing speeches from Sokorski and Szyr, the Deputy Minister for Industry.⁹⁰

In the industry itself yet another round of meetings got under way; the local PPR-PPS economic *aktyw* met on 11 October, 'in the presence of representatives of the leaderships of both workers' parties', the PPR *aktyw* met on the 19th, and on the 21st a plenum of the factory councils was held. Meetings in the mills resumed towards the end of the month.⁹¹

The reason for all this frenzied activity was quite simple: the strike had ended, but the Party still faced stiff resistance to *współzawodnictwo* from the bulk of workers,⁹² while its image had been severely tarnished by events during recent weeks. As was the case in later crises, the Party sought to recover its position and press on with its economic policy with a mixture of concessions, coercion and appeals to reason and patriotism. Much effort was devoted to reassuring the workers that their fears about

⁸⁵ *Głos ludu*, 6 October 1947.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 October 1947.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 21 October 1947.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 22, 27 October 1947.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 7 October 1947.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 21 October 1947.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9, 10, 11 October 1947.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 29 October 1947.

the dire consequences of *współzawodnictwo* were groundless,⁹³ while Gomułka in particular stressed the economic necessity of raising production and spelt out the perilousness of Poland's international situation.⁹⁴ The carrot of big bonuses and better working conditions was also repeatedly dangled in front of would-be *przodownicy*.⁹⁵

Simultaneously, the necessity 'to combat as severely as possible . . . economic sabotage consistently carried out by reactionaries and enemies of People's Poland . . . ' was proclaimed. These 'reactionary provocateurs' were, one supposes, leaders who had come to the fore during the strike, and the terms in which they were described leave no doubt that most of them ended up in gaol.⁹⁶

The factory councils also came in for criticism and attempts were made to drive a wedge between workers and councils⁹⁷—preparatory to a full-scale purge of opponents of *współzawodnictwo* in the coming elections. This line of attack, still evident some months later,⁹⁸ demonstrates the problems these bodies posed for the Party and the difficulty it faced in dislodging and silencing well-entrenched workers' spokesmen from these organs.

Many of these representatives were socialists and, as has already been mentioned, there is evidence that the PPR-PPS alliance was under severe strain during the strike and that the communists' first concern was to whip the socialists back into line. The PPS leadership in Warsaw publicly, at any rate, backed *współzawodnictwo* and called for the strikers to return to work.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, there was an ambiguous, cryptic tone to the language used in several of the reports appearing in *Robotnik*, the socialists' newspaper,¹⁰⁰ and shortly after Lodz the PPS, like the Czech Social Democrats, briefly asserted its independence. Despite communist pressure to set a deadline for the merger of the two parties, the leadership at the PPS Congress in December 1947 studiously avoided fixing any timetable. Cyrankiewicz, the Secretary-General, went so far as to declare that 'the PPS was, is and will be necessary to the Polish nation'. Shortly afterwards he emphatically assured a delegation of party activists from Silesia that 'there was not and was not going to be a merger, and if there had to be, it would be

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1 October 1947.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12, 20 October 1947.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 October 1947.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14, 20 October 1947.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22 October 1947.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20 January 1948, 'Generalne pranie, Nieróbstwo i oderwanie się od spraw robotników nie mogą być metodami pracy Rady Zakładowej'.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 October 1947.

¹⁰⁰ For instance, on 2 October, *Robotnik* informed its readers that 'in spite of obstacles in the shape of temporary shortages of electrical energy, a continuing, stubborn battle is in progress between particular factories for first place in production . . . ' See also footnote 72.

taken care of by the head and not the arse' (*bedzie zalatwione przez glowy a nie 'd(upy)*).¹⁰¹

It appears that the PPR also had to contend with a revolt in its own ranks. The membership of the Lodz party organization dropped by nearly one-fifth during the second half of 1947. This was connected with the nation-wide verification of members at that time, but the purge in Lodz was markedly more drastic than elsewhere and, while other local parties rapidly recovered in 1948, Lodz city recruitment stagnated.¹⁰²

Whether there were any further outbursts of industrial protest after Lodz is uncertain—in all probability there were, albeit of a disorganized and despairing kind. The performance of Lodz mills continued to draw Party criticism throughout 1948.¹⁰³ Very little is known about strikes between 1948 and 1956 although these clearly took place—there were, for instance, violent disturbances in the Silesian coal industry in 1951.¹⁰⁴ The PPS ceased to function as a significant counterweight early in 1948, although the formal merger was delayed until December. The trade union-factory committee apparatus was brought under centralized control and it was the Party committee in each concern which increasingly made the decisions.¹⁰⁵ *Współzawodnictwo* was extended—not, however, under the inspiration of Pstrowski, who proved an unfortunate choice as a Stakhanovite super-worker, dying in April of the same year. The lot of the workers did improve substantially during 1948, with wages up nearly 40% and prices down by over 20%—although real income was still about one-third less than prewar levels. Good harvests, increased investment outlay, and a big improvement in the output of consumer goods combined to push up living standards.¹⁰⁶ The year 1948 was, then, a breathing-space for the workers—ahead lay the six-year plan.

Conclusion

The main conclusion arising out of the preceding account is an obvious one: between 1944 and 1948 Polish industry regularly experienced expressions of working-class discontent, which frequently took the form of strikes, of which some were certainly violent. Much of

¹⁰¹ Kantyka, *op. cit.*, pp. 337–9.

¹⁰² *PPR I.1947–XII.1948* . . . , p. 287, załącznik I. See also Secretariat's criticisms of low membership in Lodz mills, 10 March 1948, *ibid.*, pp. 211–12. Several prominent figures in mill management and the trade unions were expelled from the party at the end of September (*Dziennik Polski* (London), 2 October 1947).

¹⁰³ *Głos ludu*, '5 minut wcześniej—5 minut później—niełatwe sprawy PZPB Nr. 2 w Łodzi', 27 July 1948; 'Krajowa narada aktywu włókienniczego PPR piętnuje błędy w pracy administracji przemysłu i związkach zawodowych', 6 October 1948.

¹⁰⁴ Malara & Rey, *op. cit.*, pp. 275–6.

¹⁰⁵ *PPR I.1947–XII.1948* . . . , pp. 211–14, 'Instrukcja Sekretariatu KC PPR w sprawie Wzrostu partii w zakładach przemysłowych'.

¹⁰⁶ J. M. Montias, *Central Planning in Poland* (Westport, Conn., 1974), p. 68.

the discontent was due to material hardship, but in very many cases it assumed a political character—sometimes in the shape of opposition to the government and PPR, at other times in terms of the incompatibility of the communist conception that industrial relations had entered a new era with the abolition of private ownership and the socialist view that conflicts of interest between worker, management and state remained and should be allowed organized expression. It comes as no surprise that the outlook of the PPS was more in line with the mood of the bulk of the labour force, and that the PPR was forced eventually to neutralize the trades unions, factory councils and finally the PPS before it could impose its industrial philosophy.

But how relevant are the experiences of 30 years ago to the disturbances of the 1970s? The contrasts are apparent enough; 1944-48 was a period of political disorder and instability. Significant non-communist parties were operating independently of the PPR and in varying degrees in opposition to it—above all, there existed an alternative workers' party. In 1956 and again in the seventies it was political rigidity and economic stagnation which fuelled the crisis, while the absence of any other channels for discharging discontent apart from the Party and trade union bureaucracies amplified the frustration which manifested itself in rioting and direct appeals to the Party leadership, and prompted the mobilization of workers' councils against the atrophied Party-union apparatus.

Moreover, the Communist Party has greatly changed in character since the late 1940s. Its leaders then showed much greater confidence and aggressiveness—the qualities of men fighting for power with history, and Stalin, on their side. Today a different generation of leaders who have risen to the top via the Party bureaucracy or industry have to cope with the problems of running an immensely more sophisticated economy, satisfying the rising expectations of a mobile, educated, largely urban population and maintaining the fine balance which allows a degree of political and intellectual pluralism while retaining the reins of power firmly in the hands of the Party.

Nevertheless, with due respect to the altered historical environment, it would be a mistake to discount the relevance of the immediate postwar years for two main reasons. First, the character of these disturbances has remained remarkably constant. The Party leadership tries to push up productivity and dampen down consumption, only to be confronted by a spontaneous wave of strikes and violent protests against rising food prices and shortages. The workers' councils and shop-floor Party activists line up with the strikers. The Politburo responds with a mixture of concessions, draconian repression and direct appeals to the workers. Internal and external enemies are blamed for fanning the

flames—1947 or 1976? Second, the experience of the 1940s is the initial chapter of the story of the stormy relationship between Poland's Communist Party and its working class—without it, the tale is incomplete.

Thus it was the failure of the PPR to mobilize the bulk of the proletariat in its support during the first phase of its rule which prompted the resort to coercive and undemocratic methods of maintaining labour discipline, which hardened into the regimentation of the Stalinist years and has left its mark to the present day. This was not simply a mindless translation of Soviet models to Polish conditions, but was rather a similar reaction to the same problems which bedevilled Soviet communism in the twenties and thirties. The parallels between Soviet experience in industry between 1917 and 1921 and that in Poland are very strong.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, the trend was clear before Poland lurched towards Stalinism in 1947–48.

Moreover, by examining labour-Party relations over a 30-year period a somewhat different picture emerges than if we concentrate our attention only on the 1970s. Thus, instead of concluding that the long-term stability of the Polish political system shows signs of breaking down in recent years, one is tempted to conclude that it is the periods of stability rather than of crisis which are abnormal—that the years 1972–75 rather than 1970–71 or 1976 were exceptional.

The three decades of People's Democracy in Poland have been characterized by sporadic crisis, interspersed with periods of contained discontent and stagnation and, infrequently, of stability and rapid economic growth. The political system is perhaps one of the most efficient in Eastern Europe in neutralizing opposition and managing crises, but one of the least effective in creating the conditions for long-term expansion and political stability.

Finally, we should note that the Party at any rate has no doubts about the continuing relevance of the experience of its first four years to current circumstances and assiduously cultivates a smokescreen of political myth which has disguised so long the details of relations between the PPR, PPS, and the workers.

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¹⁰⁷ See L. B. Schapiro, *The Origins of the Communist Autocracy* (2nd edn., London, 1977), esp. chs. XIV, XV, XVI.

APPENDIX

PPR MEMBERSHIP AND ITS SOCIAL COMPOSITION

Date	Total Membership	Workers	%	Peasants %	Others %
July 1944	c. 20,000 ^a	?		?	?
December 1944	c. 34,000 ^a	?		?	?
January 1945	69,239 ^a	?		?	?
April 1945	301,712 ^a		56.1 ^c	36.7	7.2
August 1945	193,329 ^a	96,646	53.5 ^d	33.8	12.7
December 1945	235,300 ^a	143,103	61.0 ^e	28.1	10.9
December 1946	555,888 ^b	359,529	64.7 ^f	23.2	12.1
June 1947	848,821 ^b	?		?	?
December 1947	820,786 ^b	473,905	57.7 ^f	21.6	20.7
June 1948	997,024 ^b	568,376	57.0 ^g	22.3	20.6
September 1948	1,006,873 ^b	577,585	57.3 ^f	22.1	20.6

PPS MEMBERSHIP AND ITS SOCIAL COMPOSITION

1939	30,000 ^{+h}	?		?	?
December 1944	7,663 ^h	?		?	?
April 1945	124,428 ^h	?		?	?
June 1945	156,832 ^h	?		?	?
December 1945	194,107 ^h	?		?	?
Late 1946	283,300 ⁱ		60 ⁱ	?	?
March 1947	500,000 ^j	?		?	?
June 1947	660,000 ^k	?		?	?
December 1947	700-750,000 ^k		62 ^k	14	24
September 1948	607,000 ⁱ		57.8 ⁱ	9.8	32.1
December 1948	513,000 ^k		61.4 ^k	9.5	30.1

^a N. Kołomejczyk, *PPR 1944-45* (Warsaw, 1965), pp. 275-7.

^b *PPR I.1947-XII.1948. Dokumenty* (Warsaw, 1973), p. 287.

^c Kołomejczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 286; statistics for 49% of membership.

^d *Ibid.*; statistics for 93% of membership.

^e *Ibid.*; statistics for 99.7% of membership.

^f *PPR I.1947-XII.1948. Dokumenty*, p. 288.

^g *Ruch robotniczy w Polsce Ludowej* (Warsaw, 1975), p. 40.

^h A. Reiss, *Z problemów odbudowy i rozwoju organizacyjnego PPS 1944-46* (Warsaw, 1971), pp. 69, 117-19, 188-9, 316-17.

ⁱ W. Góra, *PRL 1944-74* (Warsaw, 1974), pp. 216, 276.

^j K. Ćwik, *Problemy współdziałania PPR i PPS w woj. krakowskim 1945-48* (Cracow, 1974), p. 210.

^k B. Syzdek, *PPS w latach 1944-48* (Warsaw, 1974), pp. 380, 407, 437.