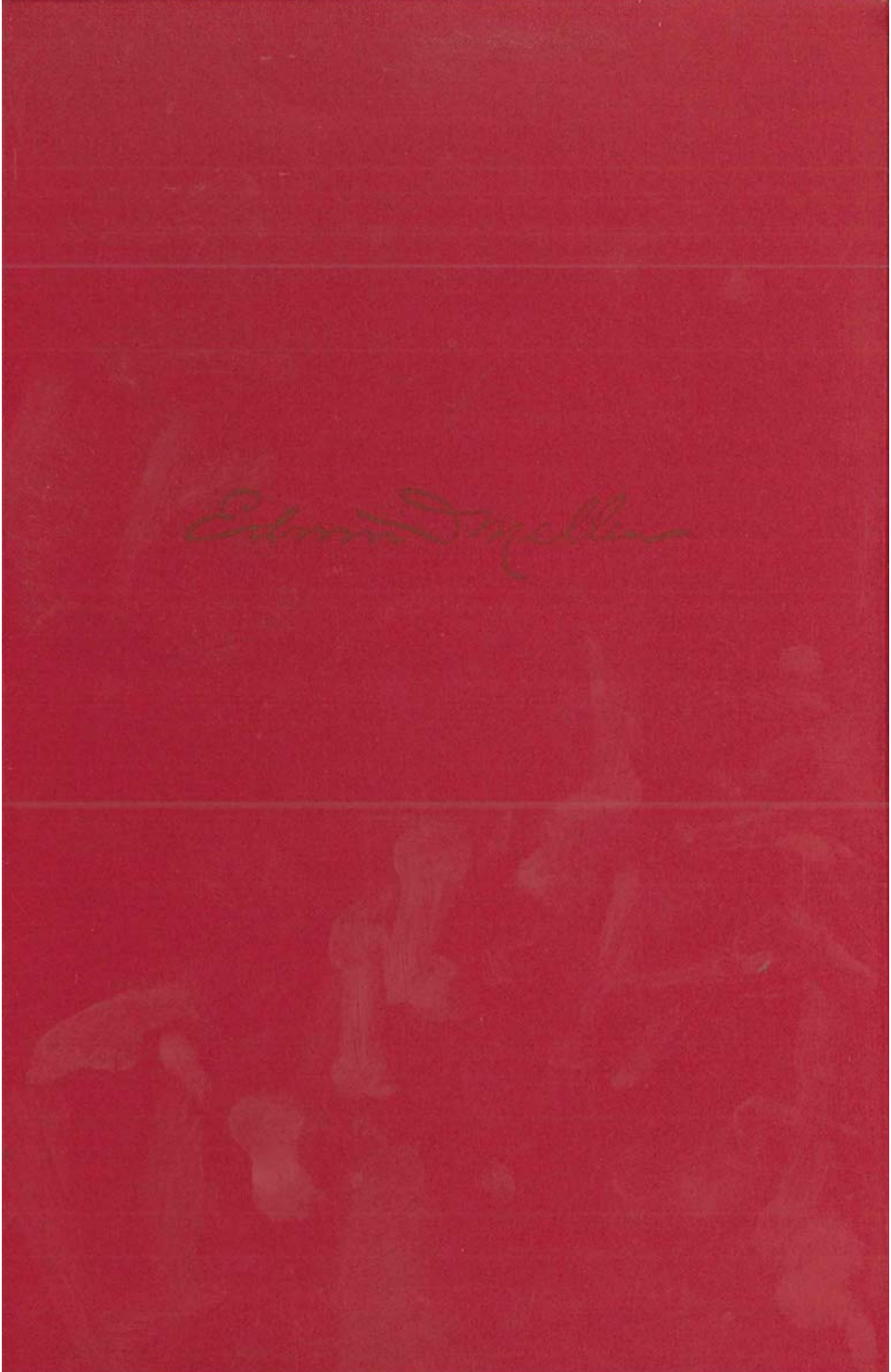

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF POLAND 1918 - 1929

A Study in Political Ideology

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Preface

Focusing on the ideology and history of the Communist Party of Poland in the twenties, this study is the second part of a project on the Communist Party of Poland from its foundation in 1918 to the end of the factional struggle in 1929. The first part of the project was published as a bibliographic biographical study on the Communist Party and related revolutionary organizations.

My work on Polish communists goes back several years to my studies at the University of Pisa and to the time I spent as a researcher at the University of Warsaw, thanks to four annual fellowships granted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During my time in Poland I had the opportunity to do research in different archives, most of all in the Central Archives of the Central Committee of the Unified Polish Workers' Party, now closed and its contents transferred. During these years, and later, I also had the opportunity to collect archival materials from different sources in Poland and elsewhere. These materials now form part of the RAGS Collection in Volterra, Italy, a private collection in continuous growth.

My studies on Polish and East European political history continued at the Freie Universität in Berlin, and then during my doctoral program at Columbia University, from which I received four annual fellowships. Finally, in 1992, I was granted a postdoctoral fellowship under Title VIII from

Hoover Institution at Stanford University to continue my work on Polish communists and related topics.

It is impossible here to thank all the people who helped in my studies cand research. At the University of Pisa I wish to thank Professor Giuseppe Dell'Agata, Director of the Institute of Slavic Studies, and Professor Paolo Cristofolini, Professor of Philosophy at the Scuola Normale Superiore. For the period spent at Warsaw University I am deeply grateful to Professor Andrzej Garlicki, former Director of the Institute of History, and to Dr. Mirosława Pałaszewska for her invaluable help in bibliographic work. For the years of my doctoral studies at Columbia University I wish to express my deep gratitude to Professor Joseph Rothschild, my sponsor; Professor Jacob Wim Smit, my advisor; and Professor Mark von Hagen. At the Hoover Institution of Stanford University I wish to thank Dr. Richard Staar.

Without their help, their generosity, their patience, this work, as well as my studies and research, would not have been possible. To them goes the credit for the possible merit of my intellectual production. My errors remain my sole responsibility.

Introduction *.

Toward the end of 1918, in the aftermath of the First World War, Poland reappeared on the map of Europe in consequence of wide-ranging historic and political events such as the destructive war, the accompanying end of the Romanov, Hohenzollern, and Habsburg Empires and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

Poland was reborn into an intricate historic situation and a near-chaotic reality. The Treaty of Versailles (1919) would leave crucial problems such as the highly politicized ethnic issue and questions concerning frontiers unresolved.

In this near-chaotic environment, the Polish workers' movement also had to be reconstructed. It appeared to have been decimated by the war, fragmented by different occupiers, and politically divided between reformers and revolutionaries. The revolutionary wing of the workers' movement was itself divided between social democratic revolutionaries and revolutionaries of the socialist left. Their nominal unification, just a few weeks after the rebirth of the country, marked the beginning of the history of communism in Poland.

In interwar Poland, the Communist Party of Poland expressed the aim of attempted unification of the several revolutionary components of the workers' movement. In association with the Party and under its auspices

were various legal revolutionary and radical organizations. In addition, and outside the workers' movement, there were revolutionary groups that made reference to the Communist Party and its ideology, and these included the revolutionary and radical peasant groups.

The revolutionary parties of the ethnic minorities gave Ukrainians and Byelorussians a direct link to the Party, often in the form of autonomous organizations, and were not very different from the Communist Party of Poland in terms of ideology. The revolutionaries of the Jewish minority however, were usually in the main Communist Party, comprising a substantial percentage of its members and even more so of its leaders. This fact gave rise to the popular Polish concept, nourished by conservatives and the Catholic church and widespread during the interwar Republic, of "Żydokomuna" (Jewish Communist Conspiracy). It expressed the notion of the negative, alienated, and subversive nature of both communists and Jews. This view of the communists as foreign agents and of the Jews as outsiders articulated new fears concerning communism as well as the older anti-semitism of Polish society.

From its beginnings the Party was an organization in which militants and single bodies enjoyed autonomy. The Party did not experience secessions from within itself; on the contrary, splinter groups from other worker and peasant parties found a home in its ranks, and brought with them their own political perspectives. From an ideological standpoint the Party was of varying political texture, and at times, even divided into distinct factions. For this reason, from its beginnings, the Party had difficulty adapting to the political and organizational norms of the Comintern and later had difficulty sustaining them; yet eventually it would end up as a contrived expression of the wishes of the Comintern.

In the political arena the Communist Party of Poland as a whole was actually a tiny entity. Its membership fluctuated at around a few thousand

members -- ten thousand at its highest. In terms of political influence within society as whole, the Party's range was very limited and it never attracted a majority of the working class to its political positions. The Party became known mainly thanks to its intensive propaganda activity, to the dedication of its militants, and to its resilience in the face of police persecution. It gathered strength both from operating in a society such as the Polish Second Republic, whose political spectrum was highly fragmented, and from communism's prominence elsewhere. The Communist Party was in plain view because of its threat (real or alleged) as a spreader of communism, as a subversive element, and finally as a supposed threat to the existence of the Polish nation. Repressive activity by the State against the Party and its offshoots was exerted from this perspective.

This study, will analyze the development of the ideology of the Communist Party of Poland. The analysis is overwhelmingly based on documents issued by the Party through the proceedings of its bodies, conferences, and congresses, through the theoretical and organizational pronouncements of its press, and through the writings of its leaders. Productive use has also been made of a vast quantity of other materials in the collections of the Central Archive of the Central Committee of the Unified Polish Workers' Party in Warsaw and in other archives in Poland.

Sources.

Reliable documentation is a crucial problem for the study of the Communist Party of Poland. Many documents were not preserved due to the Party's illegal status. At some times (for example around 1920) the Party left few written documents. At the end of its history the Party was not only shut down but also scattered and physically destroyed by the Comintern, and these circumstances prompted a further loss of documents. Other losses occurred because of the Nazi occupation and the Second World War.

As for the surviving documents, part of them in collections in Poland have not yet become accessible, nor have those in Soviet collections, which include the archives of the Comintern. From the analysis of these documents it may perhaps be possible, some day, to reconstruct with greater precision than now the history of the Communist Party of Poland.

The largest collection of extant Party documents is found in by the Central Archive of the Central Committee of the Unified Polish Worker Party *(Centralne Archiwum Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej - CA KC PZPR)* in Warsaw, (now shut pending a transfer of facilities). This archive has received materials from Soviet archives from the end of the 1950s. Other institutes in Warsaw also possess documents concerning the Communist Party. Among these are Archives of New Documents *(Archiwum Akt Nowich - AAN)*, Central Military Archive *(Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe - CAW)*, Museum of the History of the Polish Revolutionary Movement *(Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Rewolucyjnego - MHPRR)*. The Central Archive *(CA KC PZPR)*, together with other institutions connected to it, has published a series of informative materials and catalogues on the archive collections, bibliographic and biographical materials, and has organized seminars and conferences.

Among the materials published, of particular interest is the series *Informator o zasobie mikrofilmów* (Catalogue of the Microfilm Collection), published from 1964 on. Also of interest is the catalogue *Polska Prasa Rewolucyjna* (The Polish Revolutionary Press) 1918-1939, edited by M. Krych in 1965. Published by the Central Direction of State Archives in 1970, worthy of note is *Komunistyczna Partia Polski. Informator o materiałach archiwalnych z lat 1918-1939* (Communist Party of Poland. Catalogue of Archive Materials for the years 1918-1939).

Among the reprinted Party documents, of fundamental importance are the protocols of the Second Party Congress (1923), published in the review *Z Pola Walki* (From the Battlefield) in 1958, and later re-edited and published as a book in 1968. Also published are the complete proceedings of the Fourth Party Conference (1925) in two volumes in 1972. Other collections of documents, also of a local character were published in the 1960s and 1970s.

The theoretical party organ, *Nowy Przegląd* (New Review) was reprinted in full editions in various volumes between 1957 and 1966. Many documents, including manifestos and leaflets, appeared in the series *Archiwum Ruchu Robotniczego* (Archive of the Workers' Movement) published since 1973. *Dokumenty i Materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich* (Documents and materials for the history of Polish-Soviet relations) published since 1962, and *Z dziejów stosunków polsko-radzieckich* (From the history of Polish-Soviet relations) published since 1965. Other documents appeared in the review *Teki Archiwalne* (Archival Folders) from 1959 on.

Another important source is the anthologies of writings of the party leaders reprinted from 1965 on. The writings of Wera Kostrzewa appeared in 1961, those of Adolf Warski in 1958, and those of Henryk Walecki in 1967.

Literature.

The secondary literature on the Communist Party of Poland is thin. In English, there is just one book on the subject: M. K. Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*. Cambridge, Mass., 1959 and 1976. This study is a general outline from 1832 to 1973. The author's attention is not focussed on the period 1918 to 1938, which is scanned briefly. As the author himself states, the book was written without consulting archives

in Poland. Yet this study has served as the common reference for all authors who have addressed the topic in studies on more general themes. References to the Communist Party of Poland exist in various works on different topics not central to my theme, such as, for example, the works of E. H. Carr and Isaac Deutscher. In German, worthy of note are the studies by G. W. Strobel, although they are only partially relevant to the beginnings of the Communist Party of Poland. A brief bibliography of the sources of the Party, edited by F. Tych and A. Kochański, appeared in French in *Annali Istituto Feltrinelli*, Milan, 1960. Among Soviet scholars, I. S. Jazborowskaja studied the Polish Party and ideological questions, and W. S. Niewolina and F. I. Firsow wrote on relationships between the Party and the Comintern.

Polish studies on the Communist Party published in Poland may be divided into three periods. The first period, that of the Second Republic, is concurrent with the total existence of the Party, from 1918 to 1938. This literature is clearly divided into two categories: on the one hand, there are the writings of the Communist leaders, and on the other, there are the studies produced by the state security apparatus. In the first category are the writings and attempts at historic analysis by the party leaders themselves during their activity. A. Warski's *Pięć lat KPRP* (Five Years of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland), presented as a political report to the second party congress of 1923, is the first concrete attempt at historical analysis of the Party. Also of historical character is W. Mickiewicz-Kapsukas *Jak powstała Partia Komunistyczna na Litwie* (How the Communist Party arose in Lithuania), published in *Z pola walki* (From the Battlefield), Moscow, 1929. Studies of this sort can be found in the writings of Communist leaders in reprint form in Poland from the end of the 1950s.

The most renowned study in the second category is by J. A. Reguła: *Historia Komunistycznej Partii Polski w świetle faktów i dokumentów* (History

of the Communist Party of Poland in Light of the Facts and Documents), 1934. This study, written by a police agent who infiltrated the Party, has for decades served as a general reference on the subject in the West among Polish émigrés and also in Poland where, officially, it was ignored. Also of interest is A. R. Keller's *Komunistyczna Partia Polski i podegłe jej organizacje czyli komunistyczna organizacja w Polsce* (The Communist Party of Poland and the Organizations under its power, namely the Communist Organizations in Poland), 1934, a manual for the use of security bodies. In the same genre is A. Stapiński's *Wywrotowe partie polityczne* (Subversive Political Parties), 1933, with various reprintings.

The second period of Polish historiography is presented in studies of the wartime and postwar Stalinist era. In this period (up to 1965) the directive of the Comintern dissolving the Polish Party was still in force, and historians did not address the topic directly. The few studies produced were highly ideologized and, indeed distorted by tampering and censorship of the sources. Representative of this period is T. Daniszewski's *Historia ruchu robotniczego w Polsce* (History of the Workers' Movement in Poland), 1951. Another example is F. Kalicka's *Powstanie Krakowskie 1923* (The Insurrection of Kraków of 1923), 1952, which attributes a leading role to the Communists in events that had actually occurred without their participation. Even the few archival documents published in this period suffer from this practice of tampering and distortion. Such is the case of the first collection of Party documents: *KPP uchwały i rezolucje* (The Communist Party of Poland, deliberations and resolutions), three volumes published respectively in 1953, 1955, and 1956 (the third volume is less distorted than the others), for use in party schools by the Institute of the History of the Party of the Central Committee of the Unified Polish Workers' Party.

The third period of Polish historiography begins after 1956 and goes up to the 1980s. The quantity of studies directly involving the Party is limited, and the totality of studies was produced with a more or less orthodox Marxist methodology. Many of them possess a Stalinist orthodox Marxism, others are of a celebrative character, and still others (usually the most recent) seek to present a more objective approach.

Of notable importance is the periodical *Z pola walki* (From the Battlefield) devoted to the history of the workers' movement. Regular publication began in 1958, after two special numbers issued in 1956. The review has published a number of studies on the Communist Party, on its historiography, and on the debate concerning the Party. Various discussions among historians concerning the Party were published in 1963, 1965, and in 1968 (on the occasion of the Party's fiftieth anniversary). The review also published a substantial quantity of documents, memorialistic, and biographical materials. In addition to *Z pola walki*, a major source of biographies of Polish Communists is *Słownik Biograficzny Polskiego Ruchu Robotniczego* (Biographical Dictionary of the Polish Workers' Movement), 1978, of which only the first two volumes have thus far been issued.

Only a few serious analytical studies have emerged from the mass of works produced. The historian J. Kowalski draws on a considerable number of sources, but the utility of his studies is limited by their schematicism and their celebrative bias. In his book *Zarys historii polskiego ruchu robotniczego 1918-1928* (Compendium of the History of the Polish Workers' Movement 1918-1928), published in 1959, he examines the first decade of the history of the party in tones characteristic of the period. His most important works are the study *Trudne lata* (Difficult Years), 1966, concerning Party history for the years 1929-1935, and the volume *Komunistyczna Partia Polski 1935-1938* (The Communist Party of Poland 1935-1938), published in 1975, which deals with

the history of the Party up to its dissolution. The study by F. Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia Robotnicza Polski 1918-1923* (The Communist Workers' Party of Poland 1918-1923), 1968, dealing with the years 1918-1923, is one of the first attempts at a comprehensive analysis of the history of the first years of the Party and of its organizational structure.

Various monographic studies have been devoted to specific aspects of the Party's history. Dealing with the agrarian problem are H. Malinowski's *Program i polityka rolna Komunistycznej Partii Robotniczej Polski 1918-1923* (The Program and Agrarian Policy of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland 1918-1923), published in 1964 and H. Cimek's *Koncepcje i problemy sojuszu robotniczo-chłopskiego w ruchu rewolucyjnym w Polsce 1918-1939* (Concepts and Problems of the Worker-Peasant Alliance in the Revolutionary Movement in Poland 1818-1939), dissertation, University of Warsaw, 1980.

The following studies deal with trade union questions: L. Kieszczyński, *Polityka Komunistycznej Partii Polski w ruchu zawodowym w latach 1936-1938* (The Policy of the Communist Party of Poland in the Trade Union Movement in the Years 1926-1938), dissertation, University of Warsaw, 1979; E. Kołodziej, *Komunistyczna Partia Polski w ruchu zawodowym 1918-1923* (The Communist Party of Poland in the Trade Union Movement 1918-1923), 1978; W. Ratyński, *Lewica Związkowa w II Rzeczypospolitej* (The Trade-Union Left in the Second Republic), 1976.

Studies devoted to the circumscribed topic of legal communist organizations include G. Iwański, *Powstanie i działalność Związku Proletariatu Miast i Wsi 1922-1925* (Origin and Activity of the Union of the Proletariat of the Town and Country 1922-1925), 1974, and B. Dymek, *Niezależna Partia Chłopska 1924-1927* (The Independent Peasant Party 1924-1927), 1972.

The literature published in the 1980s is rather scarce. B. Kolebacz, *Komunistyczna Partia Polski 1923-1929* (The Communist Party of Poland 1923-1929), published in 1985, attempts to cover those years relatively neglected by scholars, with focus on the ideological questions. The first study that contends with the entire history of the Party appeared in 1984: H. Cimek, L. Kieszczyński, *Komunistyczna Partia Polski 1918-1938* (The Communist Party of Poland 1918-1938). As the authors themselves point out, this is a work of general interest and not intended for the specialist.

In 1985 appeared A. Czubiński's *Komunistyczna Partia Polski 1918-1938* (The Communist Party of Poland 1918-1938), a summary sketch of the history of the Party based on existing literature. A study devoted to the analysis of the internal make-up on a statistical basis is Z. Szczygielski's *Członkowie KPP 1918-1938 w świetle badań ankietowych* (The Members of the Communist Party of Poland 1918-1938 in the light of research of inquiries), 1989. Finally a collective study edited by J. Maciszewski, *Tragedia Komunistycznej Partii Polski* (The Tragedy of the Communist Party of Poland), 1989, is devoted to the topic of the dissolution of the Party and related problems.

Even today, a comprehensive and well-organized history of the Communist Party of Poland is still lacking. The totality of existing materials, sources and literature, appears substantial enough at least to trace the history of the ideological development of the Party. The primary purpose of this study therefore, is to attempt an analysis of the Party's political ideology more than to deal with the Party in a stricter historical sense.

* An earlier version of this introduction is contained in: Gabriele Simoncini, *Revolutionary Organizations and Revolutionaries in Interbellum Poland. A Bibliographical Biographical Study.* Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, New York, 1992.

Chapter I

The Revolutionary Struggle (1918-1920)

The Origins

The name "Communist Party of Poland" appears for the first time in an official document of the National Conference of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania *(Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy - SDKPiL)*, held in Warsaw November 14 and 15, 1918. That name was used to indicate the party to be founded through the union of the Polish Revolutionary Social Democracy and the Polish Socialist Party-Left *(Polska Partia Socjalistyczna-Lewica - PPS-Lewica)*.[1]

Just one month later, on December 16, 1918, the Communist Workers' Party of Poland *(Komunistyczna Partia Robotnicza Polski -KPRP)* was created in Warsaw.[2] As one of the first Communist Parties, it distinguished itself at once in that it was the result of a unification and not of a schism, as had been, and would be, the case for almost all the other Communist Parties.[3]

The new party was to emerge in an extremely complex national and international historical context; just as complex was the internal situation of the workers' movement both in Poland and abroad. In the area of social class, the Polish workers' movement consisted at the time of two significant political formations, which, once united, gave birth to the new party, thus unifying the revolutionary wing.

The Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL), a historic revolutionary organization in existence for decades, was

the larger of the two parties. It had been founded in 1893 in Warsaw by Rosa Luxemburg, J. Tyszka, J. Marchlewski, and A. Warski. In 1899, the Lithuanian Social Democrats, with F. Dzierżyński, had merged with the organization. The SDKPiL was founded on the basis of Marxist scientific socialism and had always maintained strictly internationalist principles. The struggle against capitalist exploitation and Tsarist oppression were the fundamental platforms of its political strategy. Its objective was a revolutionary explosion favoring the creation of a proletarian dictatorship, excluding any hypothesis of a "Polish bourgeois republic". The strength of this party lay in the Warsaw proletariat and in the industrial concentrations of the former Kingdom of Poland.[4]

The Polish Socialist Party-Left (PPS-Lewica) was founded on the historic Polish Socialist Party. In Vienna in 1906, the Ninth Congress of the Polish Socialist Party split into two factions, one of which was the nationalist reformist socialists with Józef Piłsudski; F. Perl and W. Sławek had founded the Polish Socialist Party-Revolutionary Fraction *(Polska Partia Socjalistyczna-Frakcja Rewolucyjna)*. On the other side were the International Revolutionaries led by P. Łapinski, F. Sachs, B. Szapiro, and H. Walecki, who had founded the PPS-Lewica, and under whose influence the socialist trade-unionists remained (to be liquidated by the Tsarist authorities one year later). In 1908, at its First Congress, the Party reclaimed as its own the strategy of the struggle against oppression on the principles of international socialism. It was decisively opposed to nationalism and would not adopt the slogan of Polish independence, which it judged to be unrealistic. The immediate objective of the Party was to found a democratic republic in Russia with vast autonomy for the Kingdom of Poland. H. Walecki and W. Kostrzewa were members of its directorate.[5]

In the autumn of 1918 the two parties had already traveled down the road of strategic revolutionary collaboration, and by and large, they were

finding common ideological ground. In 1908, at its Sixth Congress, the SDKPiL had declared that the unity of the workers' parties in every country was a fundamental precondition for the victory of the proletariat. That unity was to be based on common political platforms and on common tactical principles.[6] Despite this general declaration of principle, unity with the PPS-Lewica was not sought, and in fact, its political line was strongly criticized, although common actions within the context of the workers' movement were not ruled out. The national conference of the SDKPiL decided, in 1910, on the encouragement of meetings for discussion with the PPS-Lewica for the purpose of an eventual rapprochement. Such decisions were documented in the resolutions of the Tenth and Eleventh Congresses of the PPS-Lewica.[7]

But the times were not favorable; the weakened condition of the workers' movement and the atmosphere of reaction instilled by Stolypin did not bode well for unification. It was not until 1912 that a reawakening of the workers' movement in Russia and Poland once again posed the question of unification to the divided revolutionaries. The directorate of the SDKPiL took the initiative in June 1914, addressing a letter, and later, a communique, to all party members and the PPS-Lewica on the question of unification:

> The question of the mutual relationship of the two fractions of Polish socialism (SD and PPS-Lewica) is a question of the entire workers' movement and socialism in Poland.[8]

The SDKPiL directorate again proposed to the directorate of the PPS-Lewica a discussion campaign in the press conducted by the two parties and the joint production of materials for the purpose of attaining a platform for unification.[9] Also, in June 1914, the question of the unification of the two Polish groups was discussed at the conference of the International Socialist Office.[10]

The path towards possible unification was interrupted at the outbreak of the First World War, which led to a period of crisis and division in the

international workers' movement. The two Polish parties were obviously also subject to these pressures, but they nevertheless found a common ground in their similar stand on the war, which was judged to be strictly imperialist in nature, with all participating governments at fault. The two parties soon found themselves in alignment in the political battle against the war. Even on the day of the war's outbreak, September 1, 1914, the directorates of the two parties, together with that of the Bund, published a manifesto condemning the war, protesting mobilization, and affirming revolutionary slogans against the Tsar and for a democratic republic.[11]

Immediately afterward, the two parties jointly published a manifesto, "To the Polish Proletariat", in which their absolute opposition to the war was emphasized:

> To the policy of the war of everyone against everyone else, the proletariat states its solid international opposition, founded on the fraternal revolutionary spirit, on the common ground of aspiration to the destruction of the present system of exploitation and oppression, and on the introduction of the socialist system.[12]

In this same period, the two parties and the Bund founded a new body, The Interparty Workers' Council *(Międzypartyjna Rada Robotnicza - MRR)*, in order to intensify and promote revolutionary activity among the people and to promote the process of unification of all revolutionary organizations. The new political body was a success; it was able to influence various workers' organizations in major cities, but this experience of unity was short-lived, for in March 1915 it was terminated by disagreement on the question of participation in local administrative bodies *(Komitety Obywatelskie)*. The SDKPiL opposed such participation, but the PPS-Lewica and the Bund favored it. Collaboration between the three political parties was again

sought, but not achieved after the withdrawal of Czarist troops from Polish territories in 1915.

Despite this sorry experience of the MRR, collaboration between the parties was pressed at the grass-roots and local levels, among the trade unions, and in workers' refectories. In June 1915, the directorate of the SDKPiL again stated its position regarding unification:

> The current revolutionary situation has rendered meaningless many of the old prejudices resulting from different evaluations of the paths and time needed for development.[13]

After the act of November 5, 1916 and the creation of the Provisional Council of State *(Tymczasowa Rada Stanu)* by the German and Habsburg occupying authorities, the two parties assumed political positions which were critical both of the new Polish "puppet" government and of the prospects for future independence. In essence, the national question was couched in the prospect for autonomy for the Kingdom of Poland with an autonomous Sejm. All this was in the context of a more general struggle for the attainment of a Russian democratic republic, a struggle which saw the Polish proletariat collaborating with the Russian. The prospective resolution of the Polish national question became intertwined with the revolution throughout the Russian empire.

Both parties placed all their hopes in the fight against the Czar and in the advent of the social revolution. Thus, they put aside the national question, which in any case was a great source of stimulation and fascination that cut across social classes and insofar as it ushered in the prospect of a rebirth of the Polish national state.

Towards the end of 1915, the PPS-Lewica introduced the idea of independence *(Usamodzielnienie*: to make oneself independent) for the Polish territories at its party conference. This principle of independence was based on the short-term prospect of a halt in the progress of the workers' cause as

a result of the war. A victory by one of the partitioning powers would, furthermore, in all likelihood cause the occupation to continue until after the end of the war. On this basis, objectives were determined which would defend national and political freedom and the fight against the occupiers for the right to a broader Polish autonomy.[14] The SDKPiL was opposed to the principle of *usamodzielnienie,* considering it unrealistic and even opportunistic.

In reality, neither party appreciated the true value and importance of the prospect of independence for the Polish masses after more than a century of occupation. Furthermore, in their clear opposition to the politics of the bourgeoisie and the nationalist reformism of the PPS, they condemned any form of an active fight for Polish independence as unnecessary since they were convinced that the defeat of the occupiers would in any event entail the liberation of the Polish territories. Thus, their decision to focus all their efforts on preparing the people for the outbreak of a general Europe-wide revolution became the basis of their political strategy.

A remarkable change in the Polish revolutionaries' prospects and sense of reality came with the overthrow of the Czar and the Russian Revolution of February 1917. The workers' movement was revitalized and was at the center of a new wave of economic and political struggle in which the SDKPiL and the PPS-Lewica found space for considerable expansion. This radicalization overtook even the PPS-Frakcja, which felt itself obliged to add the slogan "People's Democratic Republic" to the principle of an independent Poland.[15]

At this time, the activity of SDKPiL and PPS-Lewica groups in Russia and in the Polish centers of the Ukraine and Byelorussia proved an important element. Even though these groups remained autonomous organizations, they were in fact part of the revolutionary process and gravitated to the political strategy of the Bolshevik Party. This experience of the Polish

revolutionaries within the Russian revolutionary movement, which was to continue within the Bolshevik movement, had important consequences for the fate of the Polish communists and revolutionaries.

Both Polish revolutionary parties threw themselves enthusiastically into the battle for the Russian revolution. The SDKPiL aligned itself from the outset with the Bolshevik positions. In the PPS-Lewica, things were different. In general, it considered the Bolshevik tactics to be unacceptably Blanquist and it preferred the internationalist Menshevik position. The directorate of the PPS-Lewica eventually authorized the territorial subunits of the Party to decide locally whether to collaborate with the Bolsheviks or the internationalist Mensheviks.

With the success of the Bolsheviks' October revolution and the promulgation by the Soviet government of the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia, the two Polish parties reached the point of a confrontation on the question of Polish independence.[16] The SDKPiL took an active part in the revolution and in the structures of the new Soviet power, as well as in the internal workings of the Bolshevik party. The PPS-Lewica instead, openly criticized the ever greater hegemony of the Bolshevik Party and its tactics. It aligned itself with the opposition in the Soviets and fought against what it judged to be the extremism and excesses of the Bolsheviks.[17]

Despite these differences, the two Polish parties continued on the path towards their unification amidst the frantic process of revolution. The PPS-Lewica actually set the agenda in March 1918, and was to set the stage for the official entry of both parties into the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), where they comprised the Polish Section.

In the Polish territories the activity of the two parties became more intense. In January 1918, a jointly organized general strike had been successful. By midyear, their revolutionary activities had become greater and

both the SDKPiL and the PPS-Lewica had greatly expanded their influence among the workers.[18]

The road toward unification now went beyond the mass struggle, and it was precisely among the workers that the two parties began to settle their differences in accordance with current conditions. On the ideological plane this tendency was generally the same, but some differences remained. At the end of 1917, the PPS-Lewica had pronounced itself totally in favor of the October revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Nevertheless its political line was still not completely Bolshevik and important reservations remained, particularly on the weighty questions of the passage from the democratic bourgeois to the proletarian revolution and the red terror. Another source of disagreement concerned the Bund. For the SDKPiL, this was a nationalist Jewish party leaning to compromise with the bourgeoisie, whereas the PPS-Lewica was more sympathetic, and had, in the past, carried out many joint actions with the Bund. Despite these problems, the tendency to unify was nonetheless sanctioned in the name of the higher interest of the proletariat, and was certainly promoted at the grass-roots level as well as by the Party directorate.[19]

In general, from the beginning of 1918 onward, the debate over unification became intensified by polemical over both tactical and ideological questions. But the debate was soon shelved as attention focussed on revolutionary events in Germany and Austria, which both parties enthusiastically endorsed. Unification was almost achieved by November of that year. The most important leaders had returned to Polish territory from German detention camps and from Soviet Russia, where many had participated in the victorious revolution. In Berlin, Rosa Luxemburg and L. Tyszka had been discussing the question of unification with H. Walecki.[20] The Party directorate of the PPS-Lewica made a formal proposal of unification to the SDKPiL:

> The current conditions separating the revolutionary forces in the socialist camp, and contributing to its weakness and disorganization by internal struggle, must be eliminated at once.[21]

A few days later, the Interparty Council *(Rada Międzypartijnna)*, which would arrange for a closer collaboration leading toward formal unification, was founded. It had the task of preparing the Congress of unification. Simultaneously, the two parties called for the creation of Workers' Councils on the Russian Soviet model. This was considered the correct response to the defeat of the Central Powers in November 1918, and was proposed in the expectation of a coming struggle for power between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in a future independent Polish state. A program for these Councils was presented in the manifesto "To the workers of the town and the country", which defined the political program of the workers' class on the eve of Polish independence. The basic principles were 1) Expropriation of the bourgeoisie and socialization of the factories, mines, and landholdings. 2) Introduction of the eight-hour day (six in the mines). 3) Free education and medical assistance. It was further stated that the Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Councils were to be the instrument for the creation of the workers' government: the dictatorship of the proletariat.[22]

The final months of 1918 witnessed a rapid flow of events in the Polish territories. The revolutionary movement proceeded hand in hand with the continuous radicalization of the people, not only workers, but also peasants. The experiment of the Workers' Councils, begun in Lublin, spread rapidly to all the major areas of worker concentration in the country. The larger councils spawned the People's Militia, which soon became the Red Guard.[23]

The radicalized peasants proclaimed the short-lived "Republic of Tarnobrzeg," where Revolutionary Committee took over and a peasants'

people's militia was formed.[24] On November 7 in Lublin the Provisional People's Government of the Polish Republic was born, an offspring, with socialist leadership of the political forces linked to Piłsudski. The government published a detailed manifesto of democratic reforms, in radical populist tones.[25] This first government was followed, within a few days, by a second one, under the guidance of the socialist Moraczewski, which moderated the radical program of the preceding government, and would shortly adopt a stance of social repression.

The SDKPiL and the PPS-Lewica jointly opposed this nominally socialist government, which they viewed as intended to stem the danger of social revolution, and, thus, a betrayal to the bourgeoisie.

The theoretical work of both parties focussed now on the Workers' Councils and on the conclusion of the unification process. This time the conferences and discussions achieved a uniformity of views and the PPS-Lewica actually aligned itself with the positions of the SDKPiL and the victorious Russian Bolsheviks on most issues.

In the general political debate, Warski's was a distinctive voice. He proposed a critical analysis of the recent past of both the PPS-Lewica and the SDKPiL, whom he accused of not having been able to come up with a program adapted to the peculiar situation of the country, and of lacking appropriate forms of organization for the working class. But the greatest point in Warski's dissent lay in his different evaluation of the revolution. While the official line of both parties predicted the imminent outbreak of the proletarian revolution, Warski expected a revolution of bourgeois-democratic nature. In his view, the Polish situation was not such that the people could be brought into a direct struggle for socialism. Nevertheless, Warski favored a unification of the two parties.[26] Yet another point of convergence of the two parties was in the stand they took against the wave of anti-Jewish

pogroms, intended by reactionary forces to channel mass revolutionary energies into xenophobic nationalism.[27]

The unification process was already complete at the grass-roots level, the activists and the workers themselves no longer making a distinction between the two groups; the prevailing political commonplace was that the SDKPiL was the big brother whose authority had at long last been recognized by the PPS-Lewica little brother. The frantic political activity was furthermore a factor that tended to override ideological subtleties and theoretical differences in favor of practical action.

On June 15 1918, the Twelfth Congress of the PPS-Lewica and The National Conference of the SDKPiL were opened in tandem. Speakers at the former were W. Kostrzewa and H. Walecki, and at the latter, Leon Ferszt. In general, a unity of views was struck with the lone exception of Warski. The following day, work continued on the founding congress of the new party.

At this time, the estimated membership in the two parties did not exceed 5,000. But the number of active sympathizers, collaborators, and revolutionaries in the political area of the two parties was far greater.[28] The newly unified party, named the Communist Worker Party of Poland, soon experienced a period of growth in terms of both members and political influence with the people.

The First Congress

The founding congress of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland lasted only a few hours and was actually an aftermath of the previously held congresses of the two uniting parties. All questions of an ideological, political, and organizational nature were considered resolved in those previous meetings. The Congress was held under the sway of revolutionary enthusiasm. Warski opened the proceedings, and reports in the name of the two parties were given by H. Walecki and H. Stein-Domski.[29] The Congress ended with a message of greeting from the German Spartakusbund.[30]

The name chosen for itself by the party was an apt self-description. It was a strictly working-class and urban party. It deemed proletarian power to be an absolute need, and as such did not contemplate a worker-peasant alliance, nor the "phasing" of the revolutionary process. The Congress's documents are limited, but sufficient to present the Party in its essence; they are by and large a political analysis of the two parties prior to the Congress.

The platform adopted made it clear that the Party, was as much a revolutionary party as it was working-class. Social revolution was defined as a present-day problem, arriving from Germany in a Europe now without borders.

> At the moment of the international social revolution that breaks the principles of capitalism, the Polish proletariat refuses every political slogan such as autonomy, independence (*usamozielnienie*), self-determination... For the international field of the social revolution, there is no question of frontiers.[31]

Internationalism became one of the ideological pillars of the new Party's political platform and Polish nationalism was rejected. This stance

demonstrated the influence of Luxemburgism, and expressed an unrealistically mechanical concept of the development of capitalism.

Assuming an imminent revolutionary process, the new Party placed particular emphasis on its Workers' Councils, a very recent phenomenon whose rapid expansion was reminiscent of the triumphant Russian experience. Faith in the revolutionary prospect of the Workers' Councils led the party to an utter rejection of parliamentarism, which meant a boycott of the first general elections of the reborn Poland in January 1919.

This stance was a sad misreading of the actual situation in Poland. Even though some radicalization of workers was undeniable, the bulk of the working class was not prepared or willing to undertake a revolutionary struggle for proletarian power. In the aftermath of the war and its immense suffering, the working class was substantially weakened in terms of numbers and commitment.[32]

In general, the new party program was weak on strategic political questions. The form of the new proletarian state was never fully explained. No political force besides the proletariat was considered. The land question was treated in simplistic fashion by the terse statement that the agrarian economy would be reconstructed according to the principles of community ownership of the means of production, including the land itself.[33]

The new Party adopted relatively unchanged the old SDKPiL platform. It lacked serious engagement with the new reality of an independent Poland. Revolutionary utopianism was thus holding the Party back from adapting itself to the changing reality. For example, the Party's position on the national question was untenable, both on a mass level and within the working class itself. Furthermore, it underestimated the influence of the Church and of the large landholders on the people. And it exaggerated the extent of mass resentment against the bourgeoisie.

In accordance with the political platform of the Congress, the party issued a manifesto, "To the proletariat of Poland" *(Do Proletariatu Polski)*, in which it appealed to the workers to throw themselves into the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat through the creation of Councils of Delegate Workers of the town and country:

> If you've had enough of everything, of misery and vagrancy, if you do not want war against your brothers, the heroic workers of Russia...then stay under the flag of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland.[34]

The Congress ended with the election of a Central Committee, which included the major leaders of the two unified parties excepting Warski.[35]

The Beginnings

The Communist Workers' Party of Poland, even though it came into being in a very intricate historical situation, found itself enjoying a relative advantage over its prewar predecessors: the general expansion of the workers' movement and its spontaneous radicalization, both in the Polish territories and on an international scale. This factor was important for a party born in illegality and forced to devise its political strategy as an outlaw party. It could avail itself of an atmosphere of loosened repression in order to begin operating in a variety of political and social instances of legality or semi-legality. The Party had inherited a solid tradition of underground struggle from the years of Tsarist rule and German occupation. Through long years of struggle, the revolutionaries had succeeded in maintaining a presence in the political arena and now new prospects were opening up for the new party.

In some respects the Communist Workers' Party was not a new party, for its members were still the revolutionary utopians or romantic anti-Tsarists of previous decades, with their militant tradition of struggle and with specific and rigid ideological convictions. At the moment, the Party was a stranger to Bolshevik strategy (with a few exceptions) and to Leninist thinking, first and foremost the Leninist theory of the Party. The Party was, and would remain for years to come, essentially a revolutionary organization of social democratic-revolutionary character, very "Polish" despite its "internationalism," and decidedly Luxemburgist in its ideological approach.

During the first months of its existence, even in the face of the first blows of repression from the new Polish republic, the Party was remarkably productive and attempted to create legal or semi-legal organizations such as clubs, trade unions, and associations in addition to various attempts at a legal

press. Though the Party was never officially declared illegal, repression against it was continual and took different forms, from arrest of members, to preventive arrest, to imprisonment for long periods, to physical destruction of meeting-places, to assaults or murders of militants, and to provocations.[36] In the first week of January 1919, the government decreed a state of emergency, during which the Communists experienced the first wave of harsh repression under the short-lived Moraczewski government.

The organizational structure of the Polish Communist Workers' Party stemmed directly from the former structures of the SDKPiL and of the PPS-Lewica and initially was confined to the territory of the old Kingdom of Poland. But shortly the Party enjoyed an expansion both of structure and of political influence thanks to the efforts of the Workers' Councils.

Growth was demonstrated by the legal revolutionary press in both propaganda and analysis. For about a month after the founding congress, the party organ was *Sztandar Socjalizmu* (Banner of Socialism), a daily with a circulation of 10,000 copies. Its shutdown by the government was followed by the weekly *Przełom* (The Breach), also short-lived, and later by another publication on a national scale titled *Nowiny Krajowe i Zagraniczne* (National and Foreign News).[37]

In view of the shakiness of the local press, the party maintained a series of illegal publications as link between the people and party members. Of great popularity was the weekly *Gromada* (The Host) with a circulation of 10,000. Other illegal publications were aimed at specific sectors of the work force. *Czerwony Sztandar* (Red Banner), the official party organ, first came out in October 1919. Pamphlets and brochures such as *Rozmowa Macieja z Jędrzejem* (A discussion between Maciej and Jędrzej) attained considerable popularity. The legal and illegal party press was generally coordinated by the Central Editorial Office *(Centralna Redakcja),* which brought together the best party leaders and theorists.[38]

The first party organizations were born in the context of a destroyed industry and a shrunken working class, and were concentrated in the few still active factories and in the railroads. There was also a residual clientele in the urban-based sectors such as construction workers, cobblers, waiters, shop and even office workers. The Communists made some inroads among the unemployed, in the veterans' union, and in certain specialized trade unions.[39] In the first months of 1919 the Communist Workers' Party of Poland claimed 1,000 members in the Warsaw organization *(Komitet)*. In this period, it obtained 14,000 votes for the election of urban Workers' Councils and later, at the demonstration during the 1919 May Day celebration, it mobilized 8,000 workers.[40]

The Party's activities in Warsaw were carried out on the basis of neighborhoods. Neighborhood Councils *(Komitet Dzielnicowy)*, in turn, were subdivided into various cells *(Koło)*. Communication between such bodies and the Party center were conducted through oral and written reports, the latter being infrequent and dealing mostly with financial questions.[41] The Warsaw Committee was subdivided into functional sectors: trade unions, technical, cultural-educational, youth and Jewish. Its own organ was *Sztandar Komunizmu* (Banner of Communism) and it had been the first organization to announce the creation of a party school.[42] Several prestigious and popular Communist leaders operated out of the Warsaw Committee.[43]

The largest and strongest party organization was, from the beginning, that of the Dąbrowa mining basin. This was the only area of the old Kingdom of Poland where mining and industrial production functioned almost normally and where the working class had not been dispersed. Hence, the Communist Party there achieved considerable influence, and its Committees among the mine workers proved to be particularly strong and class-conscious.[44] About 2,400 Party members were registered in the cells in February 1919. The Party organization legally published, its official organ,

Komunista (The Communist). The Party's Dąbrowa basin organization attained remarkable success among women, indicated both by the large number of female members as well as by substantial numbers of women active in demonstrations and various organizations under Communist influence.[45]

With about 600 members, the party committee of Łódź represented the third largest Communist force. Its propaganda activity was quite intensive, consisting of various legal and illegal publications in addition to its organ, *Komuna* (Commune).[46] Communist influence was concentrated in the textile industry (which predominated in this area), in the trade unions of the metal and lumbering industries, and among such sectors of the urban proletariat as tailors, cobblers, and barbers. Other Communist organizations were founded in Kalisz, Koniń, Piotrków, Płock, Lublin, Radom, Wrocław, Częstochowa, Białystok and later, Kraków.

In February 1919, the central structures of the Party registered organizations in 80 localities of the old Kingdom of Poland, for a total of 7,000 to 8,000 members. Not included in this statistic were the Communist Party of Eastern Galicia, the Communist Party of Upper Silesia, the Communist organization of the Wilno region, and other organizations of the eastern provinces.[47] The circulation of Communist periodical publications at this time is estimated at about 24,000, with twice that number of posters and leaflets.[48]

Besides the statistics produced by the Party in February 1919, Party membership at midyear is usually estimated at about 10,000 (the Polish Socialist Party at that time counted about 24,000 members). This was about a tenth of the number of workers then in industry, which at the time amounted to about 100,000 in the territories of the old Kingdom of Poland. Concerning the social component in the Party, no data were published, but it may be assumed that it was overwhelmingly of proletarian composition.

The organizational structure of the Party was dealt with by the founding congress.[49] Organizational structure was not stressed at that moment, due to the prevalence of revolutionary enthusiasm on the one hand, and, on the other, to the already existing organizational structures of the two component parties. In reality, the organizational structures were created afterwards; only at the Second Congress, held after five years, were they formalized.[50] The First Congress presented a Leninist concept of the Party and its organization in very generic terms. The principle of democratic centralism was not yet formally acknowledged. Over time, the ruling bodies of the Party came to conduct themselves more or less in accordance with the principle of democratic centralism. The illegal and repressed nature of the Party caused its organizational structures to oscillate between democratic centralism à la Lenin and democratic procedures.

The cell *(Koło)* was the basic organizational unit of the Party. All the cells belonged to the various Regional Committees and were composed of members who were required to accept the Party's programs and deliberations, and to pay dues. The cells were in direct contact with the working class and were organized by region and/or profession. In the beginning, the professional cells were few, and confined to the Dąbrowa basin.

The cell structure was a political fact, but the necessity that the cells remain implicitly linked to economic production had already been stressed in the past by the Social Democracy. This concept of the cells was also a basic element of the Leninist idea of the Party. Furthermore, efficient functioning of the cells was crucial to the continued existence of the Party. Therefore, from the beginning, centralizing and bureaucratizing tendencies, as well as direct supervision of the cells by Party organizations, were evident.

In May 1920 the First Party Conference took up the problem of the relations between the cells and the Party central organizations, and the division of labor among them. The discussion focused on the Leninist

principle of democratic centralism. The Conference acknowledged that an improper use of democratic centralism by Party institutions tended to limit and suffocate the cells, threatening their existence. The resolutions of the Conference stated that the principle of democratic centralism must be based on the adherence by members to principles of internal democracy.[51]

A balance was sought between the activity of the cells and the application of the not always well received principle, of democratic centralism. The Conference intentionally did not impose any specific rules for the existence or creation of the actual cells. In fact, at least for several years, many cells continued to operate in spontaneous fashion, not pursuing or presenting an internal coherence. They were often formed far from the world of work, and therefore relegated to a limited political role.

The problem of the cells was dealt with by Kostrzewa, in 1923, at the Second Party Congress, a turning point in the organizational policy of the Party.[52] On this occasion, an attempt was made to deprive the cell of its primary function, strictly defined as agitation and propaganda. The cell was to be redefined as more closely linked to class reality and more structured. Therefore, more attention would have to be paid to criteria for membership, for discipline, and also to a more exacting application of the principle of democratic centralism. The cell was to be more of an organizational structure and less of a propaganda group. It was also to be, for the Party, a constant and accurate indicator of the moods of the masses.

This redefinition of the cell enabled the Party to establish a more coherent relationship with the working class instead of operating from the outside with propaganda, strikes, and demonstrations. Priority was given to cells composed of workers from the same factory, though cells not directly linked to productive situations, such as neighborhood cells, were also kept in existence.

In the countryside, the Party did not envision the organization of cells. Political work was here entrusted to militants (*mąż zaufania*) who were active in a single town or village, propagandizing, recruiting new members, organizing revolutionary activity, and keeping Party organizations informed of the situation in the countryside. These single militants had the right to participate in regional Party conferences.[53]

By and large, the Second Party Congress sought to confer on the cell a greater sense of urgency, striving to render it more efficient, consistent, disciplined, and productive in political terms; and thus it was emphasized that Party members were to be active and involved in the mass movement. Such was the direction of the Leninist path, and, as a consequence, the reorganization of the Party to satisfy the standards of the International at the beginning of the 1920's.[54]

The cells as a whole constituted the area or neighborhood organizations headed by an Area Committee *(Komitet Dzielnicowy)*. Over these were placed district organizations guided by a District Committee *(Komitet Okręgowy)*, and, finally, the regional organizations headed by Regional Committees *(Komitet Obwodowy)*. The committees answered to the authority of the Central Committee and were represented in the Party Council.

Ten territorial organizations had participated in the First Founding Congress. They were not well defined and rather vague in structure. By the time of the Second Congress there were sixteen territorial organizations, well-defined and structured. Of recent development were the Wilno organization and the organizations of Białystok, Grodno, and Nowogrod. Other Communist parties or organizations separately present in various provinces will be discussed in another part of this study.

The highest authority of the Party was the Congress *(Zjazd)*, whose delegates were chosen from district conferences on the basis of one for every one hundred registered members. The Congress had the right to amend or

change the Party program and to abrogate the decisions of Party organizations. The deliberations of the Congress were binding for the entire Party, including the Central Committee.

The First Founding Congress created the Party Council *(Rada Partyjna)* which represented an expanded center of political direction with respect to the Central Committee and tended to increase the political weight of Party Organizations. In it were Central Committee members, district organization delegates, and representatives of central sectors in joint status. The highest Party body was the Central Committee *(Komitet Centralny)*. A General Secretary was not yet envisioned, nor even a Political Bureau. The principle of collegial leadership was operative.[55]

In keeping with the Statute, the Central Committee was elected by the congress and was the leadership body, at the top of the entire Party structure. Its functions were channelled in various directions. It could issue directives to the various Party organizations, take control of their activities, receive from them information and reports, press activity of the central Party structures, co-ordinate activity among the organizations, oversee financial matters at the central level, and enforce discipline within the Party. The Central Committee was to meet in plenary session twice a month, maintain a political analysis of the current situation and issue resolutions, deal with organizational affairs, and reply to requests received from the Party organizations.

Shortly afterwards, a Secretariat *(Sekretariat)* was created to deal with current affairs and current organizational problems. Its task was to implement the resolutions of the plenary sessions of the Central Committee together with instructions, communiqués, and the like. In addition, it was to summon Party conferences and councils. The Secretariat also oversaw the political activities of the individual Party organizations. The importance of

this body tended to increase when the Central Committee found difficult to carry out its task for reasons such as police repression.

As a consequence of the waves of arrests at the beginning of 1920, several members of the Central Committee moved abroad. Among these were Warski, Walecki, and Kostrzewa. Soon friction developed between these leaders and the Central Committee members still in the country. A decision was reached to form a Foreign Sector *(Wydział Zagraniczny)* of the Central Committee. But this did not solve the problem, since the Foreign Sector in Berlin came to usurp the role of a veritable Party leadership. It corresponded with the Comintern and the Polish Bureau of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). It composed theoretical material for use at home and abroad, transmitted materials from the Comintern to the Party itself, and reported on Polish developments to the Comintern.[56]

Toward the middle of 1921, Warski, Kostrzewa and others moved from Berlin to Danzig, for easier communications. They became the virtual governing center of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland. Though on a personal level contacts between them and the "domestic" members of the Central Committee remained close, political pressure mounted to have a united Central Committee back inside the country.[57]

This question of the Central Committee, of its organization and of its role, was resolved at the Second Party Congress in 1923, where it was restructured as two separate bodies: The Political Bureau and the Organizational Bureau. The former remained divided into foreign and domestic branches. The latter became a replacement for the Secretariat and had the task of supervising the organization of the Party at home. The Organizational Bureau did not, however, succeed in functioning as expected and after a short time returned to the old Secretariat.

The Party also consisted of a vertical structure of Sectors *(Wydział)* parallel to the various committees: Central, Regional, District. This was an

important element of the Party organization, and it played a vital role in Party affairs. These sectorial structures were formed gradually in response to specific requirements of Party affairs. They were a legacy of the PPS-Lewica, in which the sectors were designed for the assistance of the Party leadership for specific types of political work.

The sectors were created by the Central Committee and were directly accountable to it. Normally, one member of the Central Committee participated in the leadership of a sector. The supervisors of the sectors participated with a consultative vote in the congresses and at Party conferences. The sectors were meant to respond to specific needs and assignments, to react promptly and appropriately to the requirements of the political struggle. They were closely linked to everyday activities within the workers' and mass movements.

Sectors created within the first year after the founding of the Party were Workers' Council Affairs, Trade Unions, Agriculture, Army, Jews, Culture and Education, and Technical (known as: *Centrala Techniczna*). Others were soon added to these: Prisons, Cooperatives, Youth, Women, and even a German Sector which did not, however, carry on any actual activity. In time, the Workers' Council Affairs Sector was eliminated and the Youth Sector was replaced by the Union of Communist Youth.[58] One of the more important sectors was undoubtedly the Trade Union Sector. Its tasks were the promotion of Party policy in the trade unions, the editorship of a trade union press, and the production of agitation and propaganda materials.

The Party had initially underestimated the value of union activity, but after its failed experiment with the Workers' Councils, it focused its attention on trade unions. It aimed at direct Communist intervention in trade unions and organized Communist fractions *(Komfrakcje)* within them.[59] These Communist Fractions, a key component of the Communist strategy in the

class struggle, had the task of spreading ideological propaganda and the Party program among the union rank and file. Sometimes several fractions were formed within a union and would form links among themselves. This was usually achieved in trade unions having a sizeable number of members and fractions, and especially in key sectors such as mining, mechanics, and the railroads. The Communist fractions did not have an easy time and were criticized from within the Party itself where many viewed them as closed structures with limited capability of penetrating the masses. As a result, Red Fractions *(Frakcje Czerwone),* which were deemed more flexible, more open, and less conspiratorial, were organized alongside the Communist Fractions in 1921. These appealed to sympathizers and radicals who were not Party members.[60] In essence, the fractions were the Party's direct link with the working class, with much of the success of the Communist strategy depending on them.

Another important sector was the Agrarian *(Wydział Rolny [Wiejski])*, created at the beginning of 1919 to deal with one of the most controversial and touchy problems for Polish Communism. The agrarian question (and by extension, the question of the alliances within the proletariat) was practically ignored by the Party at the beginning, and only at the Second Congress was it to gain a hearing in theoretical and strategic terms. The direction of this sector was shared by various Party leaders, who disagreed among themselves on the agrarian question. Hence the Central Committee abolished this sector after the Third National Party Conference in 1922. The Party "line" was in fact responsible for the inaction of the Agrarian Sector. The small-holder peasants were ignored with the Party's attention focused on the hired agricultural workers who were unionized in the Agricultural Workers' Trade Union monitored by the Trade Union Sector. After the Second Party Congress and the changed Party line on the agrarian question, a new Agrarian Sector *(Wydział Wiejski)* was established, with a better-defined

organization and greater operative capability to press Party political activity.[61]

The Jewish Sector *(Wydział Żydowski)* was one of the first to be created at the beginning of 1919 as a demonstration of the importance ascribed to the Jewish proletariat.[62] Many Party leaders and members were Jewish and this led to the notion widespread throughout Polish society, of the despised "*Żydokomuna*" (an offensive label meaning "Jewish Communist Conspiracy"). After the merger of the Kombund with the Communist Party (1923), the Jewish Sector gained importance in the coordination of revolutionary work in the large urban concentrations of Jews and petty bourgeoisie.

This sector had a better organized structure than the others. From 1922 on, it even had an internal statute, besides having its own secretariat, a plenum, and a Jewish National Council. The secretariat, consisting of some members with prior approval from the Party Central Committee, was composed of an organizing secretary, an editor, a Yiddish language education specialist, a cultural sector specialist, and a youth sector specialist. The members of this secretariat also served in other roles in the various sectors and governing bodies of the Party. This facilitated the coordination of general Party political activity with specific activities among the Jewish population.

The Jewish Sector was primarily responsible for carrying on agitation and propaganda activity among the Jewish populace, paying particular attention to Jewish workers. A particular task assuming considerable importance was the struggle against Jewish nationalism, which meant open conflict with the Jewish nationalist parties and a heated competition against the Bund, a Jewish socialist movement considered too nationalist by the Communists.

With the merger of the Party and the Kombund, the Jewish Sector was transformed into the Jewish Central Bureau *(Centralne Biuro Żydowskie)*. This new body had the task of continuing the work in the Jewish sector and responding to pressures from many Jewish Communists demanding a Jewish Communist Party separate from any other. It had in fact a great deal more power than its predecessor and more autonomy in its activity. It remained, however, a sector like the others in a formal sense, its function being to help the Central Committee, whose authority remained paramount.

The procedures governing the election and administration of the Jewish Bureau were more flexible and open than the norms for other Party Sectors and organizations. This was due to a greater attention on the part of the Party towards ethnic minorities, an attention that grew as opinions on the national question evolved. The Second Party Congress dealt in particular with the intricacy of the Jewish component in the revolutionary movement, and its resolutions re-emphasized the importance both of the activity of the Jewish masses and the need to maintain specifically Jewish structures and organizations in the Party.[63]

The Party was itself generally multi-ethnic and multi-lingual, and therefore felt obliged to adapt itself to that thorny reality. The Third National Party Conference in 1921 adopted a resolution for the creation of Technical Sectors at the central and territorial levels. These sectors had the task of delivering agitation and propaganda materials in languages other than Polish. The Jewish Sector enjoyed considerable autonomy, presumably due to the fact that the Jewish ethnic minority did not pose the problems presented by the Ukrainians and the Byelorussians, or, on a different plane, by the Germans.

Despite acknowledgement by the Party of the multi-ethnic nature of the revolutionary and Communist movement in Poland, it remained committed to the principle of a single Communist Party. Toward this

principle, the Polish Communists maintained their firmness even when the Comintern hesitated or wavered.

Thus, the Sectors varied among themselves but generally matched the description given above. At times, they were small bodies that consisted of few people carrying on scanty activity. At other times, they were short-lived or their activity was infrequent or even only on paper. The Women's Sector, for example, was constantly coming and going, achieving a regular development only after several years.[64] The Army-Agitation Sector was capable of acting with consistency because of an atmosphere favorable to a general radicalization. The Youth Sector was replaced in 1922 by the Union of Communist Youth *(Związek Młodziezy Komunistycznej)* a nominally separate organization which, however, continued to be guided by the Party. It was built on the organizational networks of the youth groups of the old SDKPiL and PPS-Lewica.[65]

The Youth Union held its founding congress in 1922, during which it stressed the political guidance of the Communist Party, despite its separate identity. The right of Communist Party leaders to participate in Union business was guaranteed, though the Union leaders' participation in Party business was not initially envisioned. After the Second Congress this was changed and representatives of the Union were admitted to the Party congresses with the right to vote.[66] At the moment of its founding, the Youth Union had a membership of about one thousand, which grew to four thousand by year's end. The following year (1923) the Union continued to grow politically and numerically thanks to its uniting with other revolutionary youth groups.[67]

So far we have discussed the Communist movement only on the territory of the old Tsarist share of partitioned Poland. The Polish Communist movement did not initially blend into a single organization. The process of blending the Communists in the three partitioned regions

developed slowly over a period of years, and in a way never reached complete success.

In Eastern Galicia, formally acquired by the Polish state only in 1923, the Communist Party of Eastern Galicia *(Komunistyczna Partia Galicij Wschodniej)* arose autonomously towards the end of 1919. This party, whose roots lay in the mass radicalization which followed the fall of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, was formed by groups of Communists, most of all Ukrainians, and groups of internationalist revolutionary social democrats. Reduced in numbers and also in political might, it was easy prey for repression, first by the Ukrainian nationalist Petruszewicz and later by the Polish authorities. The Party actually grew only after the brief presence of the Red Army in the western Ukrainian lands in the course of the Polish-Soviet War of 1920, during which the population underwent a fresh process of radicalization. During 1920, the Communist Party of Poland also attempted to bring the Galician Communists into its organization. Thus arose two competing orientations among Galician Communists, one favoring political and organizational independence from the Polish Party, the other preparing to accept union with it. From the contiguous Ukrainian Soviet Republic the Ukrainian (Bolshevik) Communist Party also intervened in the question coming out in favor of leadership by the Polish Party until the Galician lands were part of the Polish state.

In 1921, the Comintern in Moscow sought to impose an organizational settlement of this issue.[68] It recognized the Communist Party of Western Galicia as an autonomous organization, but within the Communist Workers' Party of Poland. The Galician organization retained, on the one hand, its own name and Central Committee, and on the other, it became one of the many territorial organizations under the authority and political direction of the Polish Party. All the active Communists in Western Galicia were to be inscribed in the ranks of the Galician Party, which kept its autonomous

internal elective system and right to decide on current affairs related to local politics. At the meetings of the Comintern the Galician Party was supposed to participate as part of the Polish delegation, but it instead participated separately at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920.

The Comintern's attempted resolution of this matter was opposed by the Central Committee of the Polish Party, which insisted on the principle of the state-wide centralization of the Communist movement in multi-ethnic states. The question was implicitly political, and in this case it was a question of how the Polish Party would treat the ethnic and national minorities who were not granted by law an autonomous political role. The Leninist principle of the right of peoples to self-determination was only recognized at the Second Polish Party Congress of 1923, and even thereafter had an uneven fate. After a period of uncertainty and temporary arrangements, the question of the Galician Party was again raised at the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921. It declared members of the Galician Party to be automatically members of the Polish Party.[69]

The Polish delegates restated their Party line, avoiding any reference to the self-determination of the Ukrainian people. For them, the Galician Communists, and in particular the Ukrainians, were to give priority to the struggle against Ukrainian nationalism, allegedly the greatest enemy of the revolution. Thereupon, a general conference of the Communist Party of Western Galicia attempted to settle the question. This, however, led to near paralysis, owing to the arrest by the Polish authorities of the conference participants.[70] The Second Congress of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland then transformed the Galician Party into the Communist Party of the Western Ukraine *(Komunistyczna Partia Zachodniej Ukrainy [KPZU])*, conceding to it the right of autonomous organization and political decision-making power within the general line of the Polish Party, and assigning to it the task of covering a vast area of Poland's eastern territories (Wolyn,

Polesie, and part of the Chełm region) where the Ukrainians constituted a majority of the population. The Polish Party Congress adopted the Leninist slogan of the right of self-determination for all peoples, and conceded to the Ukrainians and Byelorussians of Poland the right to secede and join their respective Soviet republics.

Similarly, the Second Congress ruled on relations with the Byelorussian and Lithuanian Communists. As with the Ukrainians, their autonomous parties were authorized under the political direction of the Polish Party. The Communist Party of Western Byelorussia *(Komunistyczna Partia Zachodniej Bialorusii)* combined the previous organizations of the Communist Party of Byelorussia *(Komunistyczna Partia Bialorusii)* and part of the Communist Party of Lithuania *(Komunistyczna Partia Litwy)*, active until that time, but which had had sporadic contact with the Polish Communists and had been rather limited as far as activity and organization were concerned. Another element of the new party was the old organization of a so-called Communist Party in the Byelorussian and Lithuanian lands.[71]

The Byelorussian Party was now granted a status similar to the Ukrainian Party, with its own Central Committee. This represented a big step forward in the organization of Byelorussian revolutionaries, who, even while operating in a difficult, agrarian setting, attempted to profit from instances of popular radicalization, and who now expanded by absorbing some other revolutionary organizations.[72]

In Upper Silesia, the origins of the Communist Party were closely linked to the German Communist Party. The Communist Party of Upper Silesia *(Komunistyczna Partia Górnego Śląsku)* was created towards the end of 1920 out of the union of the elements of three revolutionary organizations: the Communist Party of the Silesian Land *(Komunistyczna Partia Ziemi Śląskiej)*, the Independent Social Democratic Party *(Niezależna Partia*

Socjaldemokratyczna - USDP), and the Spartakusbund. The Party combined Polish and German proletariat without ethnic distinction.[73]

Given the peculiar ethnic and geopolitical situation (Upper Silesia was not yet part of the Polish State, pending a plebiscite), the Polish and German Communist Parties came to a temporary agreement by which the Silesian Party retained its independent structure and an organizational link with the German Party. The first congress of the Party gave the picture of a localized but respectable revolutionary organization with some political and numerical strength.[74]

The autonomous existence of this Party was, however, discussed in many quarters. It was a legal party (by virtue of a specific law), a condition which allowed it intensive activity and a real penetration of the local proletariat. Its internal organization was not based on the cell, but on a system of groups, each with a fixed number of ten members. Each group elected a delegate having responsibility for political, organizational, and propagandistic matters and for maintaining ties with the Party. The activity of the Party was tolerated for a time even after the acquisition of Silesia by Poland. It commanded a considerable political force of over 4,000 members and forty party organizations.[75] Eventually, this Silesian Party became part of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland at the latter's Second Congress. It then was reduced to the status of a Regional Organization, like all the other Regional Organizations of the Polish Party, although documents signed with its old name continued to circulate until at least 1925.

The Workers' Councils Movement

The revolutionary experience of the Councils of Worker Delegates of Town and Country was, for the Communists, a preliminary battle ground, and their first actual effort to seize power. The Party was actually completely engaged in the council movement, throwing all of its force into it until the middle of 1919, when the Councils ended in failure.[76] The Workers' Councils had arisen towards the end of 1918, partially of their own accord and partially through the political initiative of the SDKPiL, the PPS-Lewica, and other worker parties. In general the Councils were a workers' organization in which all the political components of the Polish workers' movement could be found. The Communists were its left wing and a major competitor against the reformist and anti-revolutionary Polish Socialist Party for leadership of the movement. In between, there were also the left-wing socialists (a minor element) who often aligned with Communist positions, and on the right, the National Workers' Party *(Naradowa Partia Robotnicza)* which represented a conservative and nationalist orientation in the Polish workers' movement.

Another conspicuous element of the Councils was the Jewish workers' parties, which represented the complex labor world of Poland's Jewish population. The Bund was by far the largest and most important of these. As an old and prestigious socialist party, it wavered between revolutionary and reformist positions. Its strength lay in its conception of the uniqueness and autonomy of the Jewish proletariat. But this was also the basis of its differences with the Communists. This question had profound theoretical implications which had long been a point of contention between the Russian Bund and the Bolsheviks. Lesser Jewish groups were the Fereynikte and the Poale Zion, the former essentially revolutionary and the latter, a left-wing

Zionist party. Generally, the Jewish workers' parties were torn between reformist and revolutionary strategies, and this was the cause of a long series of internal splits and of mergers with non-Jewish parties.

The Workers' Councils had a certain degree of success in the Polish labor movement although they never actually posed a challenge to the power of the State. Nor did they cause a split "dual power" situation as in Russia. They managed to spread their influence in all the major centers of the urban proletariat and in some cases in the countryside, where they allied themselves with revolutionary outbursts of agrarian radicalism. There were more than one hundred Workers' Councils on a national scale, and in the factories, some of which succeeded in achieving a certain degree of local political power, while others managed to eke out some success in the economic and trade-union areas.[77]

From a theoretical perspective, the Communist idea of the Councils was revolutionary: the Councils were expected to be the organizing body and the guiding force behind the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, the only true proletarian government. They were also to be responsible for mobilizing popular sentiment for secondary objectives such as the eight-hour work day, the struggle against the high cost of living, and questions concerning the immediate needs of the working people. The Councils were deemed to be a class organizational structure, with all worker organizations and institutions to fall under their authority.

The Party's concept of the Councils was thus essentially all-encompassing. Yet they were to be strictly proletarian and revolutionary in character. Of course, they failed to fulfill such expectations. Towards the end of the experience with the Councils, Warski offered a more open concept:

> The task of the Councils...is to gather the working masses of urban workers and peasants without distinction of convictions and give these masses the possibility, to the extent of current

> developments, to take their own destiny and the country's destiny in hand, and to create a true democracy of the people, and not a formal bourgeois democracy.[78]

Organizationally, the Party created the Council Affairs Sector *(Wydział do Spraw Rad)*, whose task it was to supervise Party activity within the Councils. There is no direct documentation concerning this sector. However, it appears that its members carried out their activity mostly directly within the other central Party bodies and at the level of the Territorial Committees. The leaders of the Party acted within the Councils.[79] The Communists were in tight competition with the Socialists for control of the Councils. The two parties were initially evenly balanced there, but gradually the balance shifted in the Communists' favor. The Communists held the majority in the Dąbrowa industrial basin.[80] The Socialists initially had a majority in most of the Councils until they left them to form their own councils.

The conflict between Socialists and Communists in the Councils was ideologically and theoretically irreconcilable. The Socialists, thinking in the context of a bourgeois parliamentary republic, tended to limit the role of the Councils to economics, and more typically, to trade unions, denying any possibility of the Councils' playing a political role. This line was constantly stressed, even after the failure of the Socialist government of Moraczewski, when there was a wave of attacks on the working class by the new Paderewski government. The Socialists opposed more militant forms of struggle by the Councils, including general strikes. They shunned a revolutionary perspective.[81]

At the beginning of 1919, the Communist Party published a pamphlet of instructions addressed to active members of the Councils, in which it prescribed the structure of the Councils. In many cases the Communists were able to build the organization or to define it in terms of their

programs.[82] The structure of the Councils was to be based on the Committee formula (factory, mine, and farm committees), grouping the most class-conscious workers and forming a vital point of contact between the Councils and the worker masses. The committees elected delegates to the Councils. At the grass-roots level, the committees had the task of representing the interests of the workers to the heads of business concerns; in particular they were to seek control of hiring and firing, working conditions, production and income, pay-scales, etc.

The Councils were generally a direct expression of the workers and their needs. They operated within a wide variety of sectors. In addition to specifically political matters, they tried to take responsibility for all matters pertaining to workers inside and outside the workplace. There were, for example, Housing Committees *(Komitety Domowe)*, organized for the purpose of dealing with problems of housing such as the rent speculation and evictions.

The Councils were also active in areas of solidarity and subsistence, especially in the face of unemployment, which in 1919 was aggravated by the return of workers from Germany and Russia, and had become a major social problem. To relieve the unemployed, the Councils demanded the reopening of factories that had been shut, the introduction of a third work shift, a program of public works, and social assistance such as unemployment benefits and rent exemption.

In the countryside, especially in the Lublin region and in the eastern provinces, the Councils gained a following. Under Communist influence, these Councils demanded the expropriation and socialization of the land with the installation of a dictatorship of the proletariat, which meant, locally, the hired agricultural workers.[83]

A key question of revolutionary strategy was the arming of the Councils in view of the fact that they were to be instrumental in the taking

of power. According to the Russian model, a Red Guard *(Gwardia Czerwona)* which would be the armed wing of the Councils and the proletariat needed to be formed. The question was not easily resolved, as there already existed worker self-defense groups for political demonstrations and to ward off provocations, but these did not constitute an armed force of the proletariat. In many cities, there also existed a People's Militia *(Milicja Ludowa)*, set up and managed by the Socialist Party, but this was not actually an armed body of workers with revolutionary intent, but rather a party militia. The Communists tried to organize a Red Guard, but without success. In Warsaw, a semi-legal armed worker group was set up. Although numerous at the beginning, it was never a Red Guard and it soon disbanded.[84] Indeed, the Communists succeeded in forming a real Red Guard only with the Workers' Council of the Dąbrowa industrial basin. The example is relevant for this Council was the most important of all, representing a large region with a large worker population. The political importance of the Red Guard was considerable, but it was short-lived; from November 1918 (even before the official foundation of the Communist Party), until the end of the following December, it carried out security functions and exercised revolutionary vigilance, but eventually disbanded in the face of maneuvers by the Polish Army, without ever having fought.[85]

The activities of the Councils incited a spate of repression aimed primarily at the Communists, and in the wake of which they sponsored an intense protest campaign aimed at the freeing of political prisoners, which met with success in some cases; the government declared a limited amnesty.[86]

The political strategy of the Communists aimed, on the one hand, at spreading the Councils as much as possible through the masses, and on the other, at coordinating and centralizing the Councils in order to acquire sufficient strength for the taking of power. Therefore, they pressed for the

creation of a centralized Council authority and for the first national congress of all the Councils, to be held in May 1919.

A political platform prepared for the congress summarized the political views of the Communists toward the Councils. The basic slogan was that of building, through revolution, a "Polish Republic of the Councils of Worker Delegates of the Town and Country." At the outbreak of such a revolution, fraternal relations with other socialist republics were envisioned in order to combat the common enemy, i.e., international imperialism. Other demands included the abolition of militarism and the creation of the people's militia and the Red Army, as well as abolition of the national Sejm and of the local administrations, with their powers transferred to the Workers' Councils. On the social plane, the immediate enactment of a six-hour workday was demanded, together with protection and inspection of work under the control of the Councils and enactment of socialized health insurance. Demands were made for social reforms in education, housing, welfare, and elimination of illiteracy, and in the economic sector, for the elimination of public debts with due exceptions to be regulated by the Councils. Demands were also made for nationalization of banks, mines, and large industrial and business concerns. And finally:

> Nationalization of the large and small peasant agrarian economies, lakes and forests and every source of energy without compensation. The small agrarian economies remain the property of their original proprietors until they themselves agree to join the socialist agrarian cooperatives.[87]

The Party denied the peasants any role in the revolutionary process; they were viewed as prospective enemies for being conservative property-owners and potential starvers of the revolutionary urban working class.

Over all, the document claimed the inevitability of the revolutionary process against oppression. The bourgeoisie was judged incapable of finding

a way out of the "anarchy" and chaos of war. The Polish government, along with the parliament, were described as servants of foreign imperialism intent on destroying revolutionary Russia. The Socialist Party was harshly attacked and accused of playing the government's game with its "independence" ideology, which allegedly played into the hands of the reactionaries; consequently, it was branded the worst enemy of the workers' movement. The document then closed in a tone of revolutionary enthusiasm:

> The greatest task facing the Councils is the life and death struggle against imperialism which brings Poland and the entire world nothing but bloody chaos and barbarism, and there is no other way out of this capitalist hell for the working people, none but the freedom which only the international social revolution brings...[88]

But the Socialist Party retained its majority on the Councils. It had long since decided not to let the Communist perspective have its way. Even in the general strike of March 1919, the Socialists withdrew their support (previously given) on the eve of the strike itself. As the prospect of a national congress of the Councils drew nearer, the Socialist Party decided to opt for a new political line, introducing the concept of autonomous workers' councils of a socialist character, separate from the others.[89] Because of the popularity of the workers' councils at that moment, this proposal drew negative reactions from a variety of quarters. Widespread criticism was heard at the grass-roots level, even in many socialist environments. The Jewish groups, the Bund and the Ferajnikte, were also opposed. Moreover, the leadership of the Socialist Party was also up against a substantial leftist group within the Party, a group which ended up splitting from it.

The Communist Party attempted to save the Councils and lashed out at the Socialists with the accusation that their maneuver was a ploy intended to destroy the movement.[90] The government, in turn, unleashed a wave of

repression against the Councils. Their centers were occupied and closed by the police, their members arrested. In July 1919 the movement was snuffed out in the last bloody demonstration promoted by the Warsaw Council.

In the face of this situation, the Communists gave up trying to save the Councils and abandoned the political strategy based on them. But the experience of the Councils endured as an example of a school of revolution that had in a short time achieved much and generated leaders. The defeat of the Council movement was a clear indication that revolutionary prospects were fading in Poland, and that the Communist Party would soon face a new reality.

The Trade Union Movement

The Workers' Councils were not the only form of labor organization in Poland. A strong trade union movement was in existence at the beginning of the State. By the end of 1919 it had more than a million worker members.[91] A majority of them belonged to Class Trade Unions *(Klasowe Związki Zawodowe)*, representing the most traditional sectors of the proletariat and in general supporting radical and revolutionary positions. The Communists found a following in these trade unions and managed to achieve political control over a number of them, mostly in the region of the former Kongresówka.

Thus, the class trade unions, like the Workers' Councils, were torn between revolutionaries and reformists. In order to pull the trade unions into their domain, the Communists created a special body named the Council of the Trade Unions *(Rada Związków Zawodowych)*, while the Socialists operated through their own Central Commission of Trade Unions *(Komisja Centralna Związków Zawodowych)*.

In a context of rather acute social instability, with vast segments of a population in ferment, the young Polish state soon acknowledged the strength of the trade unions and accorded them legal status as official representative bodies of the working classes.[92]

Communist policy concerning trade unions was, from the beginning, based on two strategic objectives: to promote the unification of the trade union movement, and to bring it under the authority of the Councils of Workers' Delegates of the Town and Country. Both objectives expressed political principles and were vigorously pursued.

The Party Council *(Rada Partyjna)* of January 1919 dealt with the trade union question and favored the promotion of a political campaign

geared to handling trade union politics through the Workers' Councils. The framing of this position was kept in general terms, since it would not be appropriate for the Communists to seek the full subordination of the trade unions to the Workers' Councils because the majority of the Councils were then controlled by Socialist reformists.[93]

Regarding the question of trade union unity, the Communists achieved two sets of results. The first was obtained at the national council of trade unions in March and again in July in the Temporary Central Commission of Class Trade Unions *(Tymczasowa Komisja Centralna Klasowych Związków Zawodowych)*, where the Communists were able to get a declaration of unity passed.[94] In the resolutions of the conference the principle of unity was pursued and trade unions were described as bodies independent of the parties and their political dissensions. Additionally, it was declared that the trade unions must respect the revolutionary requirements of the proletariat and must collaborate with the Councils of Worker Delegates.[95] This last point was fought for by the Communists and hailed as an important victory for their cause, but in reality it had lost its political significance since the councils were weakening and were still mainly under socialist control.

On the organizational plane, trade union unity was not easy to achieve as the Socialists attempted to slow down the process where they did not have a majority and the Communist threat was considerable. In many labor sectors, two separate unions continued to operate, one affiliated with the Communists and the other with the Socialists. This was the case in such sectors as construction, chemicals, tobacco, and lumbering. The dissension was also territorial, the Communists having the majority in Warsaw and the Socialists in Kraków. Where unity was achieved, the trade unions were organized into Councils of Trade Unions *(Rady Związków Zawodowych)*, bodies which enjoyed some autonomy and were intended to coordinate the struggle of trade unions at the local level.

On the political plane, dissension was evident. The Socialists considered trade unions to be bodies for the attainment of economic social rights. In general, their strategy was to confine union gains to the economic sphere and not let them spill over into the political. As a consequence the strike was envisioned as an economic, not a political weapon, to be misused in a political general strike.

The Communist view of the trade unions was, however, quite different:

> ...In the first place, they must take a direct part in the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat at once, bring all their influence to bear in the service of all revolutionary activity, leading to the social revolution, to revolt, the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the second place, they must become, after the revolution, as a body of the Council of Delegate Workers, one of the bodies of the proletarian government for the regulation of production.[96]

The Communists viewed the trade unions as an instrument for the realization of their revolutionary political platform. The two parties could cooperate up to the level of economic demands, but not beyond, since this was indeed the upper limit of the Socialist stance. For the Communists, however, the economic realm was but a springboard for the politicization of struggle and of the trade union movement. They sought to instill a political content into the Trade union movement. They were indeed the promoters of the economic struggle, but they manipulated it for political purposes and only later did they realize the value of economic demands and of protecting the housing and working conditions of the working class. Similarly, the trade unions were viewed by the Communists as a plausible lever for revolutionary agitation and propaganda. They strove, wherever they could, to draw the unionized workers into revolutionary action.

The trade union question was dealt with by the Second Party Council *(II Rada Partyjna)* in September 1919. It created the Communist Fractions *(Frakcja Komunistyczna*, better known as the *Komfrakcja)* for the purpose of raising the revolutionary profile in the trade unions. The fractions were composed of young militants who acted on instructions from local party organizations. Their primary task was to promote the Party's political program and revolutionary ideas among the unionized workers. Thus, they were primarily bodies of agitation and propaganda. Their activity was often effective; the fractions had some members in every class trade union, and the Communists had some strength in many of them. In Warsaw, for example, they claimed a majority in the important Council of Trade Unions. Also in Łódź, the Communists had a comfortable majority in the central direction of the textile workers' union. They also enjoyed a strong position in the metal workers' union and in the major mines of the Dąbrowa mining district.[97]

But the Railroad Workers' Union was under socialist control and there the Communists were not able to pose an effective opposition. In this labor union, the Communist fraction took on the name of Class Fraction of the Left *(Frakcja Lewicy Klasowej)* and under that name it vainly sought to carry out concrete revolutionary activity. At the national congress of the union held in Lwów in November 1920, this fraction drew only a limited number of members and did not win any representation in the union's central structure. This outcome bode ill for the Party, as the Railroad Workers' Union was one of the largest union and of prime importance in the Polish workers' movement.

The Communist Party initially ignored Poland's agrarian problem and did not pay much attention to agricultural workers. But it eventually grasped the importance of this segment of the proletariat, which, although not part of the urban movement, nonetheless had its importance within the totality of the proletariat. The Communists poured their efforts into this group and

attributed to it prime importance for the revolution in the countryside. From the beginning, their role had been stereotyped (in other words, the agricultural workers had been seen as a revolutionary island in the reactionary sea of peasants), assumed, and seen as a cut-and-dried aspect of the revolution. In its emphasis on the agrarian proletariat, the Communist Party paid only limited attention to the peasant sector as a whole and to the agrarian problem as such. Even Leninist principles with respect to revolutionary alliances and the role of the peasant class were essentially ignored until the Second Party Congress of 1923.

The Agricultural Workers' Union consisted of three major political elements: the Communists, the Socialists and the Polish Peasant Party "Liberation" *(PSL Wyzwolenie)*, which was organized on a territorial basis and on the unit of the farm circle *(koło folwarczne)*. The various farm circles made up the district section *(Oddział powiatowy)*, and at the head of the union was the Central Direction *(Zarząd Główny)*.

Shortly after its foundation, the Agricultural Workers' Union demonstrated considerable strength among more than one hundred thousand members with strong anti-landowner tendencies. It thus posed a serious problem for the landed classes and the government, which had not yet begun to address the agrarian problem with proper reforms. From the spring of 1919 on, a wave of strikes swept through Poland's countryside. The Agricultural Workers' Union held three congresses in a few months, and its importance within the peasant movement grew.[98] At the Union's Second Congress, the Communists succeeded, with the full support of the leftist socialists, in polling a majority on their proposal to expropriate the large landholdings without compensation. They also joined the Union's leadership on an even footing with the other political groups. This was a great success which, however, was not replicated at the Third Congress held a few months later. At that point the Communists, who in the meantime had been

decimated by repression, were excluded from the leadership of the Union. Six months later, at the Fourth Congress, the Communists became still more isolated despite their having been quite active at the grass-roots and local levels. This waning of Communist effectiveness soon became a generalized phenomenon throughout the Polish labor movement.

Exploiting a special set of circumstances created by the Russian-Polish war of 1920, the state authorities sharpened their repression of the trade unions, which were progressively stripped of much of their strength. Their activity was greatly reduced and their energy was re-directed into bureaucratization (which the Communists did not fail to denounce in their press). Revolutionaries were attacked for their involvement in the trade unions, and their ability to act legally or even semi-legally was annulled. Forced to act in absolute illegality, the revolutionaries became easy prey for the state's repressive apparatus anytime they appeared in the trade union arena.

At the First Congress of Class Trade Unions, held in May 1920, the Communists fielded less than thirty percent of the delegates. The Communist fraction proposed a highly detailed political platform that included the struggle against the high cost of living, and for wage increases, and health care subsidies. Nevertheless, they were not able to gain leadership representation proportionate to their numbers, and the number of their delegates at the Congress was probably even lower than their actual strength since the delegations had been tampered with in order to exclude revolutionaries.[99]

This situation had political consequences inside the Communist Party, which had been a supporter of economic demands. Now other theories would gain ground. These were practically anti-labor, extremely "leftist", and reflected the ideological development of the International Communist movement of their period.

Notes

1. "Uchwały Konferencji Krajowej SDKPiL." *Z Pola Walki*, No. 16. Moskwa, 1934. p. 212.

2. The name "Communist Workers' Party of Poland" placed clear emphasis on its strictly proletarian, urban and class-conscious nature. The name of the party was to be changed to "Communist Party of Poland" in 1925 as a result of a closer consideration of the peasant component in the revolutionary process.

3. The already-existing communist parties, besides the Bolshevik Party, were the parties of Austria (November 20 1918), of Holland (November 17, 1918), and of Hungary (November 20, 1918). Shortly afterward, the Communist Party of Germany came into being (December 30, 1918).

4. For more information on the SDKPiL, see: Feliks Tych ed., *Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy. Materiały i dokumenty*. Vol. I, II. Warszawa, 1957, 1962. Also: Bronisław Radlak, *SDKPiL w latach 1914-1917*. Warszawa, 1967

5. On PPS-Lewica see: *PPS-Lewica 1906-1918. Materiały i dokumenty*. Vol. I, II. Warszawa, 1961, 1962. Also: Feliks Tych, *PPS-Lewica w latach wojny 1914-1918*. Warszawa, 1960.

6. *Sprawozdanie z VI Zjazdu SDKPiL*. Kraków, 1910. p. 11. Also: *Robotnik*, No. 214, September 1906.

7. *X Zjazd PPS*. s. l. , 1908. p. 10. Also: *XI Zjazd PPS*. Kraków, 1912. p. 3.

8. Feliks Tych, *PPS-Lewica w latach wojny 1914-1918*. Warszawa, 1960. p. 183.

9. Ibid., p. 185 et seq.

10. *Głos Robotniczy*, No. 7, October 14, 1916.

11. B. Szmidt ed., *Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy. Materiały i Dokumenty 1914-1918*. Moskwa, 1936. p. 3.

12. Ibid., p. 4.

13. Ibid., p. 29.

14. *Sprawozdanie z Konferencji Partyjnej odbytej w styczniu 1916 r.*. Piotrków, 1916. p. 47.

15. B. Ziemięcki, "W Warszawie podczas okupacji niemieckiej." *Księga pamiątkowa PPS*. Warszawa, 1923. p. 201.

16. Walentyna Najdus, "Z Działalności polskich organizacji robotniczych w Rosji w 1917 r.." *Z pola walki*, No. 1, 1958. pp. 70-83.

17. *Materiały archivalne do stosunków polsko-radzieckich*. Vol. I, Warszawa, 1957. pp. 257-260.

18. In March and April the Warsaw organization of the SDKPiL registered 115 meetings with 2,242 present, distributing 15,000 leaflets in Polish and 1,000 in Yiddish. The Łódź organization counted 109 meetings with 1,756 present in the first three months of 1918. Data quoted from the Świetlikowa on the basis of data published in *Czerwony Sztandar*. Franciszka Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia Robotnicza Polski 1918-1923*. Warszawa, 1968. p. 24 et seq.

19. *Głos Robotniczy*, August 15, 1918.

20. J. Kancewicz, "Maksymilian Horwitz-Walecki." *Z pola walki*, No. 4, 1958. p. 525. Also J. Ciszewski, "Wspomnienia z roku 1918." *Z pola walki*, no. 7/8, Moskwa, 1929.

21. "Do zjednoczenia." *Głos Robotniczy*, No. 79. November 7, 1918.

22. *SDKPiL. Materiały...* p. 307 et seq.

23. Henryk Bitner (Bitcz), *Rady Delegatów Robotniczych w Polsce w 1918-1919 r.*. Moskwa, 1934. Reports the following data, p. 15:

		Workers	Delegates	Socialists	Communists	Jewish	Nationalists
Industrial factories	150	11,381	235	131	86	5	13
Urban firms	49	7,129	110	37	72	-	1
Communic.	31	5,760	100	54	43	-	3
Professions	72	20,094	427	91	104	173	59
Nonaffiliated			179	-	-	-	-
Sympathizers			112	78	33	-	1
Total	303	48,364	1,163	391	338	178	77

On the subject of Worker delegates see also Zygmunt Rybicki, *Rady Delegatów robotniczych w Polsce 1918-1919.* Warszawa, 1962. And *Rady Delegatów robotniczych w Polsce 1918-1919. Materiały i dokumenty.* Vol. I, II. Warszawa, 1962, 1965.

24. Z. Trawińska, A. Ciulik, *"Republika Tarnobrzeska" w świetle faktów i dokumentów.* Rzeszów, 1958.

25. The manifesto promised: 1) Equality for all citizens. 2) Unification of the Polish state in all the ethnic Polish lands. 3) Institution of the Sejm. 4) Freedom of thought, the press, word, assembly and to strike. 5) Eight-hour workday. 6) Expropriation and State control of large and medium landholding. 7) Nationalization of mines, salt mines and oil industry. 8) Worker participation in company management. From K. M. Kumaniecki, *Zbiór ważniejszych dokumentów do powstania Państwa Polskiego.* Kraków-Warszawa, 1920. p. 127 et seq.

26. Warski was isolated in his position on the Revolution; his article was published only after some hesitation and with the notation that it was simply for discussion. A. Warski, "Niech zyje zjednoczenie!" *Nasza Trybuna*, No. 5, December 13, 1918.

27. "Przeciw nagonce pogromowej." *Głos Robotnizcy*, No. 85, November 27, 1918.

28. F. Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia...* p. 38. Also indicates that the total membership of the two parties was not more than 5,000.

29. H. S. Kamieński, *Z walk proletariatu polskiego podczas wojny imperialistycznej 1914-1919.* Moskwa, 1925. p. 74. Also *Sprawozdanie ze Zjazdu Organizacyjnego Komunistycznej Partii Robotniczej Polski (zjednoczonych SDKPiL i PPS-Lewicy).* Warszawa, 1919. And *KPP Uchwały i rezolucje.* Vol. I, Warszawa, 1953. pp. 33-57. This latter text is not reliable; it contains incomplete and manipulated documents.

30. "List Związku Spartakusa do I Zjazdu KPRP. 13.XII.1918, Berlin." *KPP uchwały...* pp. 57-58.

31. *Sprawozdanie ze Zjazdu Organizacyjnego...* p. 9.

32. In mid-1919 the workers of the largest industries in the territory of the former Kingdom of Poland were fewer than 80,000, representing about

fifteen percent of the more or less 500,000 employed in 1914. Statistics cited from various sources in F. Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia...* p. 43.

33. *Sprawozdanie ze Zjazdu Organizacyjnego...* p. 6.

34. Ibid., p. 12.

35. The Central Committee was composed of six members from the SDKPiL: Franciszek Grzelszczak, Franciszek Fiedler, Władysław Kowalski, Adolf Zalberg-Piotrowski, Szczepan Rybacki, Henryk Stein-Domski, and six members from the PPS-Lewica: Józef Ciszewski, Wera Kostrzewa (Maria Koszutska), Stefan Królikowski, Maksymilian Horowitz Walecki, Wacław Wróblewski, Henryk Iwiński. Warski, not elected to the Central Committee, was elected to the Central Editorial Bureau (Centralna Redakcja) together with F. Fiedler, H. Stein-Domski, and W. Wróblewski.

36. "Przeciw gwałtom kontrrewolucji. Nowy pogrom." *Sztandar Socjalizmu*, No. 4, December 22, 1918.

37. About legal and illegal party press see: Maria Meglicka, *Prasa Komunistycznej Partii Robotniczej Polski w latach 1918-1923*. Warszawa, 1968.

38. Members of the Centralna Redakcja were Julian Brun, Józef Ciszewski, Franciszek Fiedler, Wera Kostrzewa, Henryk Lauer, Jerzy Ryng, Henryk Stein-Domski, Henryk Walecki, Adolf Warski, Włacław Wróblewski and others. Works produced by the Centralna Redakcja were printed by the Central Technical Sector (Centrala Techniczna) directed by Lucjan Ferszt and later by Jan Lubieniecki and Aleksander Fornalski.

39. *Sztandar Socjalizmu*, No. 5, 7, 9 of December 24, 28, 29, 1918.

40. *Sprawozdanie z Rady Partyjnej zwołanej w połowie lutego 1919 r.*. Warszawa, 1919. p. 15.

41. R. Jabłonowski, *Wspomnienia 1905-1928.* Warszawa, 1962. p. 254.

42. *Czerwony Sztandar*, No. 2, December 27, 1918.

43. In the first years of Party existence members of the Komitet Warszawski included among others Zygmunt Balicki, Leon Ferszt, Roman Jabłonowski, Wacław Kwiatowski, Bronysław Marks, Aleksander Lewandowski, Jan Paszyn, Antoni Podniesiński, Bolesław Półgrabek, Leon Purman, Stanisław Rongers, Jerzy Ryng, Piotr Sankowski, Abram Wajcblum-Karolski, Wlacław Soboń, Władyslaw Stein-Krajewski, Władysław Szaleńczyk, Zygmunt Wardęski, Walerian Wolski.

44. Mines: Kazimierz, Kostanty, Niwka, Paryż, Piaski, Reden, Renard, Saturn, Staszic. In *Komunista*, No. 12, February 12, 1919.

45. Ibid., No. 11, February 9, 1919.

46. The Communist Party in Łódź had 600 members and 19 organizations of which three were Jewish. The Communist Fraction in the Worker Council had 980 members in March 1919. In the first months of the year the Party organization distributed about 250,000 leaflets, 3,000 brochures, and published different periodicals in many copies per single issue: *Komunista* and *Gromada*: 1,000, *Sztandar Socjalizmu*: 800, *Cum Kampf* (in Yiddish): 150. In *Komuna*, No. 2, March 27, 1919; No. 3, April 13, 1919; No. 5, May 27, 1919.

47. *Sprawozdanie z Rady Partyjnej zwołanej...* p. 16.

48. *Gromada* was published in 9,000 copies; *Przełom*: 6,000; *Komunista*: 6,000; *Sztandar Socjalizmu*: 3,000; *Cum Kampf* in Radom: 200. In: *Zprawozdanie z Rady Partyjnej zwołanej...* p. 17.

49. "Tymczasowa ustawa organizacyjna." *KPP uchwały...* pp. 50-52. Also F. Świetlikowa, "Z badań nad strukturą organizacyjną Komunistycznej Partii Robotniczej Polski w latach 1918-1923." *Z pola walki*, No. 1, 1959. pp. 31-38.

50. "Statut KPP." *II Zjazd Komunistycznej Partii Robotniczej Polski. Protokoły obrad i uchwały*. Warszawa, 1968. pp. 535-543.

51. "Zasady i taktika Partii Komunistycznej." *Ważniejsze uchwały Partii od Zjazdu Zjednoczeniowego w Grudniu 1918 do Konferencji Partyjnej w kwietniu 1920*. Warszawa, 1920. p. 16.

52. Maria Koszutska (Wera Kostrzewa), "Partia komunistyczna jako kierowniczy sztab rewolucji." *II Zjazd Komunistycznej Partii Robotniczej Polski.* Warszawa, 1968. pp. 259-274. And also the following discussion: pp. 275-295.

53. "Projekt organizacji na wsi." *II Zjazd...* pp. 547-48.

54. *Diejatelnost Ispolnitelnogo Komiteta i Prezidiuma Ispolnitelnogo Komiteta Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala ot 13.VI.1921 do 1.II.1922.* Petrograd, 1922.

55. *Zprawozdanie ze Zjazdu Organizacyjnego...* p. 13.

56. *Sprawozdanie Wydział Zagranicznego KC KPRP za pierwsze półrocze 1921 r.*. AC KC PZPR.

57. CA KC PZPR, 158/V-3.

58. *Sprawozdanie z III Konferencji Partjinej Komunistycznej Partii Robotniczej Polski*. Warszawa, 1922.

59. *Uchwały II Rady Partyinej. (Wrzesien 1919 r.)*. s. l. , s. d. .

60. *Sprawozdanie z III Konferencji Partyinej...* p. 104.

61. *II Zjazd...* p. 461. Also: CA KC PZPR, 158/X-6/3.

62. Members of the Jewish Sector included among others Saul Amsterdam-Enrykowski, Pinkus Bukshorn, Gerszon Dua-Bogen, Salomon Ekstein, Izrael Gajst, Aleksander Lenowicz, Aron Lewartowski, Juliusz Majski, Pinkus Fiszer-Pawin, Izrael Segalewicz, Henryk Zatorski, Abram Waicblum. And as of 1923 Pinkus-Aleksander Minc.

63. *Uchwały II Zjazdu KPRP*. Warszawa, Wrzesień 1923. Also: *II Zjazd KPRP. Protokoły...* p. 522-532.

64. Among others: Estera Golde-Strożecka, Kamila Kancewiczowa (secretar), Ryta Rywosz-Hay, Hanna Wierbłowska.

65. Among the first leaders of the Union of the Communist Youth were Bronisław Berman, Władysław Kniewski, Witold Kolski, Jakub Cyterszpil-Kubowski, Tadeusz Teszner, Włodymierz Zawadski.

66. On the Union of Communist Youth see J. Janicki, *10 lat pod sztandarem Komunistycznego Związku Młodzieży Polski*. Moskwa, 1932. Also L. Krzemień, *Związek Młodzieży Komunistyczney w Polsce. Pierwsze dzieceięciolecie 1918-1928*. Warszawa, 1972.

67. The communist organization of Wilno, Silesia and the Komcukunft a communist secessionist wing from the Jewish youth organization Cukunft.

68. *Sprawozdanie z rady partyjnej*. Warszawa, w maju 1921.

69. CA KC PZPR, 1356/7.

70. J. Kowalczyk, *Wielki proces. Sprawa świętojurska*. Warszawa, 1963.

71. *Sprawozdanie z III Konferencji Partyjnej KPRP*. Warszawa, 1922. p. 57.

72. The Bielorussian Revolutionary Organization *(Białoruska Organizacja Rewolucyjna - BOR)* led by J. Łohinowicz-Korczyk, merged with the KPZB in December 1923. CA KC PZPR, 158/I 1924.

73. F. Hawranek, "Geneza Komunistycznej Partii Górnego Śląska." *Z pola Walki*, No. 3, 1961. pp. 13-37. Also F. Hawranek, "Niektóre problemy organizacyjne KP Górnego Śląska." *Zaranie Śląskie*, z.s. 1a, 1961. pp. 242-260.

74. *Czerwony Sztandar (Organ KPGŚ)*, No. 6, December 24, 1920.

75. F. Hawranek, *Ruch komunistyczny na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1918-1921*. Wrocław, 1966.

76. H. Bitner (Bicz), *Rady Delegatów Robotniczych w Polsce w 1918-1919 r.*. Moskwa, 1934. Bitner was a communist leader of the Council Movement. Also *Rady Delegatów Robotniczych w Polsce 1918-1919. Materiały i dokumenty.* Vol. I, II. Warszawa, 1962, 1965. Also Z. Rybycki, *Rady Delegatów Robotniczych w Polsce 1918-1919*. Warszawa, 1962.

77. For studies on specific Worker Councils see S. Krzykała, *Rady Delegatów Robotniczych na Lubelszczyźnie 1918-1920*. Lublin, 1968. Also A. Andrusieiewicz, *Przemyskie Rady Robotnicze w latach 1918-1919*. Przemyśl, 1977. Also A. Kałuża, S. Poprawska, *Rady Delegatów Roboyniczych w Zagłebiu Dąbrowskim 1918-1919*. Katowice, 1961.

78. A. Michałowski (Warski), "Rozbicie Rad." *Nowiny Krajowe i Zagraniczne*, No. 18, June 24, 1919.

79. Communist leaders of the Worker Councils, among others included, in Warsaw: S. Budzyński, L. Ferszt, G. Grzelszczak, W. Kowalski, M. Kwiatkowski, S. Królikowski, A. Warski, H. Walecki. In the Dąbrowa basin: H. Bitner, L. Purman, L. Szmidt, S. Rybacki. In Łódź: I. Gralak, W. Hibner, W. Zajdel. In Lublin: A. Bida, J. Gutowski, W. Tomorowicz, O. Zagrobski. Two famous Socialist leaders, M. Niedziałkowski and Z. Zaremba, and two famous Bundist leaders, H. Erlich and W. Alter were active in the Executive Committee of the Warsaw Worker Council.

80. In the Worker Council of the Dąbrowa basin out of a total of 405 delegates the Communists had 250, the Socialists 120. In the Executive Committee of the Council, the communists had 15 delegates out of 24, and the Socialists had 9. On the national scale, in February 1919, counting the 9 major council, Warsaw, Dąbrowa basin, Łódź, Lublin, Radom, Włocławek, Płock, Żyrardów, Kalisz, the Socialists had 868 delegates, the Communists

810, the Bund, 251, Poale-Syjon 244, National Worker Union 123, Ferajnikte 42. From *Nowiny Krajowe i Zagraniczne*, No. 6. May 27, 1919. Also H. Bitner (Bicz), *Rady Delegatów Robotniczych...* p. 10.

81. On the opposition to the strike: *Robotnik*, No. 62, June 8, 1919.

82. *Wskazówki dla towarzyzsy pracujących w Radach Delegatów Robotniczych miast i wsi.* Warszawa, 1919.

83. *Gromada*, No. 7, March 1, 1919. Also: J. Gutowski, "Wspomnienia z pracy partyjnej w Lubelskiem w latach 1918-1919." *Z pola walki*, No. 4, 1958.

84. An armed worker unit of one thousand men was organized and trained by Party direction in Praga, out of Warsaw. No relevant documentation exists about it. See F. Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia...* p. 123.

85. The Red Guard in the Dąbrowa basin had eight hundred armed workers, mostly miners from the Hrabia Renard mine. See *Rady Delegatów Robotniczych...* Vol. II, p. 12. Also A. Kałuża, S. Poprawska, *Rady Delegatów Robotniczich w Zagłębie Dąbrowskim 1918-1919.* Katowice, 1961, p. 64 et seq.

86. *Przełom*, No. 3, February 16, 1919. And *Prawda Komunistyczna*, No. 5, March 30, 1919.

87. "Project plataformy politycznej Rad Delegatów Robotniczych." *KPP uchwały...* p. 72.

88. Ibid., p. 75.

89. *Robotnik*, No. 109, February 9, 1919. *Robotnik*, No. 117, March 14, 1919. *Robotnik*, No. 283, June 21, 1919.

90. *Rady Delegatów w niebezpieczeństwie.* Warszawa, 1919. Also A. Michałkowski (Warski), "Rozbicie RDR." *Nowiny Krajowe i Zagraniczne*, No. 18, June 24, 1919. Also "Nasza Taktyka." *Czerwony Sztandar*, No. 5, May 1920.

91. Official government data put at 964,644 the number of registered members in the trade unions, about 60% in the Class Unions, 31% in the Polish Unions, and less than 4% in the Christian Unions, the rest being in minor unions. *Biuletin Ministerstwa Pracy i Opieki Społecznej*, No. 5, December 1, 1919. p. 85. 91.

92. *Dziennik Ustaw RP*, No. 15, February 8, 1919.

93. *Sprawozdanie z Rady Partyjnej zwołanej w połowie lutego 1919.* Warszawa, 1919, p. 8 et seq.

94. *Biuletyn, Warszawska Rada Delegatów Robotniczych*, No. 1/5, August 10, 1919.

95. *Związkowiec*, No. 1/5, August 10, 1919.

96. "Wobec Zjednoczenia." *Czerwony Sztandar*, No. 1, October 1919. p. 5.

97. *Związkowiec*, No. 1/5, August 10, 1919 and No. 2, September 30, 1919.

98. W. Stankiewicz, "Wrzenia rewolucyjne na wsi 1918-1919." *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, No. 1, 1955. pp. 105-142.

99. *Sprawozdanie z I Kongresu Klasowych Związków Zawodowych.* Warszawa, 1920.

Chapter II

The Evolution of the Strategy (1920-1923)

Revolutionary Activity

On the more specific subject of ideological development, the Communist Party found a moment of reflection at the First Conference *(I Ogólnokrajowa Konferencja)*, held May 3, 1920, in Warsaw, against a background of turbulent events. Polish troops had launched an offensive into the Ukraine just a few days earlier, and within a few days would occupy Kiev. In Moscow, the Bolshevik Party was ending its ninth conference, focused on the economic rebuilding of Russia. In Poland, May Day demonstrations had enjoyed substantial participation in Warsaw, in the Dąbrowa basin, and in all the other major industrial centers. Yet the Polish Party was laboring under considerable repression by the authorities and attempted isolation by the other labor parties, especially in the trade union area.

The Conference was brief, but had genuine importance.[1] The resolutions were proposed as a political completion of the first founding congress and of the Party Councils held up to that point. Political dissent was registered on the subject of participation in the elections to the Sejm and, by extension, on the more general and theoretical question of parliamentarism. Accordingly, the Conference did not adopt any resolution on these subjects and instead delegated them to the Central Committee.

The general situation of the revolutionary movement was assessed positively at the Conference: an intensification of the class struggle in the

capitalist countries, which their governments were allegedly not able to stem, was duly noted. In Poland itself, a tendency towards class consciousness followed by an increase in political struggle was discerned. The recent strikes in important labor sectors were cited as proof.

A resolution on the internal situation of Poland opened with the statement that the western bourgeois governments had aggravated her calamitous situation from the aftermath of the World War. After an analysis of the political picture, the resolution concluded with an assessment of the recently begun Polish-Soviet war, which was described as an expansionist attempt aimed at the exploitation of the eastern lands by the bourgeoisie. Piłsudski and "his group of military intelligentsia" were defined as a tool used by western capitalist interests against the new proletarian nation, i. e., Soviet Russia. The war was envisioned as the bearer of a new catastrophe that would end in the outbreak of the revolution.

> This war will, in the end, destroy the economic apparatus of Poland, throw the army, the only defenders of the bourgeoisie, into disarray, and will compel the desperate worker masses to revolutionary action. The fate accorded to the Germans and to Denikin awaits Piłsudski in the Ukraine. The struggle for the Ukraine must end in the struggle for a Polish Republic of the Councils of Worker Delegates.[2]

The Conference resolved that revolutionary activity therefore was to continue, including direct action against the war, and in defense of the Soviet proletarian state. The anti-revolutionary role of the Socialist Party was to be unmasked before the working masses (This was proposed as one of the more urgent tasks.) Concerning the Bund, the Conference expressed satisfaction at the internal movement leftward by the Jewish party, but stressed that relations with it at that moment remained unchanged.[3]

On the organizational plane, the situation in the Party had become difficult. A substantial decrease in the number of members was noted, which was cited in large part as due to repression and also evidence that the Party's policies and slogans lacked attraction for the proletariat. Particularly in the day-to-day struggles of the workers and of the landless peasants, the Communists' stances were virtually irrelevant.

The Conference devoted a resolution to the problem of organization. This document opened with a recommendation to "maintain and develop the democratic character of the organizational structure." The Conference concluded its proceedings by approving the decisions of the Central Committee to enter the International and to adopt the slogan "Polish Republic of the Councils." A new Central Committee of ten members was elected.[4] Many of the questions on the agenda were not dealt with, as the Conference had to close early due to the danger of repression, which at this time was particularly intense. Not only were Communists being arrested en masse, but Socialists, Bund and Poale Zion as well as trade union, cooperative and cultural-association members were also vulnerable. About two thousand Communists were imprisoned at this time, among them a large number of local and central leaders, as well as the entire Central Committee.[5]

Three weeks after the First Party Conference, the Red Army's counteroffensive crossed Polish ethnic frontiers. For the Communists a new phase of the struggle now began and with it, the illusion of a new prospect of seizing power.

The political situation changed in the lands occupied by the Red Army as it pushed ever westward, to the satisfaction of the Polish Communists. Revolutionary Committees *(Komitety Rewolucyjne)* were organized under the patronage of the Soviets with the active participation of Polish residents in Russia and local residents, along with those coming from other parts of

Poland. Sixty-five such revolutionary committees were formed, as well as a number of farm and factory committees.

On Soviet initiative a centralized Provisional Revolutionary Council of Poland *(Tymczasowy Komitet Rewolucyjny)* was founded with headquarters in Białystok, directed by five Polish revolutionary leaders: J. Marchlewski, F. Dzierżyński, F. Kon, E. Próchniak, and J. Unszlicht. This committee sought to coordinate revolutionary action and become a genuine provisional proletarian power in Poland. It published a manifesto addressed to "the working people of town and country," in which it presented a revolutionary program for the creation of the "Polish Socialist Republic of the Councils." In order to emphasize its intended role as the catalyst of "the power of the people," the committee presented all its decisions as though on a provisional basis, valid until the eventual creation of a workers' government by the Congress of Workers' and Peasants' Councils.

The committee tried to create quickly a new power structure and issued a number of decrees and instructions in a wide variety of fields. Factories and landholdings were placed under the control of factory and farm workers' committees. Land distribution was not implemented, but only promised in vague terms for after the revolution. Lenin and Dzierżyński were opposed to the distribution of Polish lands to peasants and in favor of their "socialization," i. e., state management. This choice severely limited the attraction of "the Revolution" in an overwhelming peasant region.

The revolutionary councils achieved some successes among agricultural workers and railroad workers. At the party-political level they attracted a few Socialist Party, Bund, and Poale Zion members. In Białystok, the socialist organization disbanded and was largely integrated into the Communist Party. The Bund organization there opened negotiations with the Communist Party over the possibility of eventual union with it.[6] For the Communist Party, a new era seemed to have dawned, considering that before

the arrival of the Red Army, the Communist organization of Białystok had counted a mere eighty members.[7]

The new members of the Communist Party, coming from other political groups, were the subject of a heated argument between the Communist Party organization and the leadership of the Revolution Committee. The Communists required a period of candidacy before the full acceptance of new members, but the Revolutionary Committee, eager to strengthen its numbers as quickly as possible, sharply opposed this view. Marchlewski attempted to strip the question of its political contents and persuaded the Polish Communists that such precautions for internal security interests were no longer indispensable.[8]

Such questions were abruptly shelved with the demise of the Committee itself, which was dissolved with the retreat of the Red Army from Polish ethnic territory during September-October 1920. The retaking of territory by the Polish Army and the restoration of order portended a period of harsh repression for the revolutionaries, who were swept from the region. Members of the Communist Party and Revolutionary Committees were arrested and imprisoned together with worker and peasant activists. In the Białystok region, the trade unions were dissolved by the authorities. Decimated and weakened, the Communist Party experienced a deep crisis. In the short term, it was forced back underground, out of the legitimate political arena. It was not completely eliminated, however. Some organizations (Łódź, Warsaw, and the Dąbrowa Basin) survived and patched themselves back together. Even in this period of harsh repression, though quite immobilized the Party was able to produce remarkable quantities of press and propaganda material.[9]

On the ideological plane, the failed experiment of "revolutionary power" brought from outside via the Soviet Red Army was often a subject of reflection. So too, given the passive behavior of the peasants, was the

agrarian question. Though the Party did not at that time produce serious theoretical material, Marchlewski's view must be mentioned. Regarding the impoverished peasants as potential allies in the revolution in the countryside, he offered the example of the poor Russian peasants who had not intervened actively against the Russian Revolution, and implied that that attitude might become applicable to Poland. A revision of this view was vaguely proposed by Walecki and Lauer who, while not specifying the terms of their revision, suggested that the failure of every prospect of governmental agrarian reform would lead the peasant masses towards the revolutionary alternative.[10]

At the end of the Polish-Russian War, during the very first negotiations between the two countries, the prospect of the exchange of political prisoners emerged. For the Communists this possibility was important since they estimated the number of political prisoners in Polish jails at about five thousand.[11] Moreover, the exchange of prisoners had significant strategic and ideological implications for the Party. After lively debate, and with some dissent, the Party majority decided to reject an exchange (except for prisoners who were threatened by the death penalty). In the view of the Party, the exchange played to the advantage of the Polish government, which would be in a position to negotiate the question of political prisoners on the level of foreign diplomacy, with the internal political and social problem no longer in the forefront. Moreover, the political prisoners would be directly linked to the interests of a foreign government, i.e. the Soviet, thereby confirming the widespread rumors of their status as agents and representatives of Bolshevik interests in Poland. Further, by not guaranteeing that arrests of Communists would stop, the exchange would deprive the movement of a great number of active and dedicated militants.

The Party Central Committee stressed the principle that the question of freedom for political prisoners should be resolved within the revolutionary process carried on by the Polish masses.[12] But segments of the Party

disagreed. The Łódź, Warsaw, and Dąbrowa Basin organizations and the revolutionary inmates of Pawiak Prison in Warsaw (but not those of the Łódź Prison) as well as the Foreign Sector of the Central Committee of the Party in Berlin favored an exchange. But within a short time, the position against an exchange achieved a consensus, including those in prison. Thus, the Communists demonstrated an impressive dedication to the revolutionary cause, gathering strength from the political engagement of its members. At the beginning of the autumn of 1920, the Party returned to the political scene in street demonstrations, strikes, and other activities of the labor movement. A general resumption of activity favored the re-entry of the Communists.

Toward the end of 1920, after little more than two years of existence, the Communist Workers' Party of Poland had not only succeeded in surviving harsh repression and life in the underground, but represented as well a real and distinct political presence, albeit a minority one, in the workers' movement and in the broader political arena. As has been noted, the most visible activity of the Party was its propaganda, a propaganda spurred on by social events and based on genuine revolutionary enthusiasm. This had also been the limit of the Party's effective activity. It had not always been able to incite social struggles despite its devotion to immediate social revolution. Indeed, this devotion had prompted the Party to neglect objectivity in its analysis of reality and its enunciations of ideology and strategy. The Party often trailed rather than caused historical events, which in the young Poland moved rapidly.

The political platform of the Party remained broad, sketchy, inarticulate, and devoid of real content except for the constant repetition of propaganda slogans. An example can be seen in the effort to promote the proletarian revolution within a strongly agrarian environment while ignoring the agrarian problem. Other evident shortcomings in the Communist strategy

can be seen in its not supporting economic demands and minimal programs in the workers' movement.

In broad terms, however, the Party certainly could claim credit for the dissemination of the revolutionary ideal and for having influenced the mass struggle in revolutionary terms. It had gained a hearing on a proletarian plane, and had also penetrated beyond it. It was certainly an important part of the workers' movement and it pressed the entire working class toward an eventual seizure of power. This commitment to a seizure of power differentiated it from other workers' parties, which were prepared to work within the Polish political system in the interwar era.

The Development of Strategy

The close of the year 1920 spelled the end of a particular phase in the history of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland. Political activity aimed at the taking of power through a revolutionary explosion now drew to a close. Both Workers' Councils and imported revolution had failed. Both these failures now prompted some reflection and reassessment. Criticism of recent revolutionary strategies emerged as the Party groped for more realistic strategies, more tailored to the actual needs of the masses. Yet this review was limited to a select number of leaders and activists.

The general situation in Poland was still chaotic, with glaring and severe economic and social problems. Still, a few signs lent hope for stability. The end of the Russian-Polish War and the Riga peace treaty of March 1921 were certainly a positive result for the young Polish state, whose army had just handed the Red Army its first defeat. In that same month, Poland's constitution was adopted, an event of considerable symbolic and moral import. Finally, the process of the economic integration of the country's former partitions continued hand in hand with territorial integration.

At the beginning of 1921 a Party Council met in Berlin. In an atmosphere of relative optimism, it registered a decline in repression against the Party, the incipient emergence of a fresh leftist opposition within the Socialist Party that seemed to be moving towards the Communists, and, finally, the achievement of Communist leadership of the cooperatives' organization in Warsaw. The Council meeting dealt with the internal Party debate regarding the resolutions adopted by the Second Congress of the Comintern in Moscow (August 1920). The Polish Party focused its attention on the impending parliamentary elections. It had boycotted those of 1919; now the Comintern gave the opposite indication. The Party was divided on

this question, the Warsaw organization declaring itself opposed to participating in the elections, while the Łódź organization favored it by a slim margin, and the Dąbrowa Basin organization was split. The Party Council did not resolve the dilemma, instead appointing a commission to make an appropriate recommendation to an upcoming Party Conference.

The Second Party Conference was held in Warsaw just one month later, in February 1921. Various first-rank leaders and representatives of about ten regional organizations participated, but none from regions east of the Vistula.[13] Conference business was for the most part taken up with the question of participation in the elections. A heated debate arose on this topic, and in the end three different resolutions were adopted. The first, proposed by Grzech-Kowalski, supported the past political line and stated that the notion of participating in bourgeois parliaments was an opportunistic deviation by the International. The second, expressing the views of Królikowski, proposed a boycott of the elections on principle and judged the parliamentary forum as inappropriate for revolutionary aims. The third, endorsed by the majority of the Central Committee, recommended the participation in the elections by the working class. It approved the previous boycott of the elections in 1919, since there was then a real possibility of the non-electoral seizure of power by the Councils. Now, in 1921, however, the Central Committee saw an opportunity to use the electoral campaigns and the parliamentary forum as ways of reaching the broader masses.[14]

The Second Conference was important in the development of Party ideology because, for the first time, it turned its attention to the peasants and to the working intelligentsia, i. e., to non proletarians. This was not actually a change in political program, but it was certainly a turning point in that the Party now did not intend to represent only the proletariat.

Certainly, an important influence in this direction had come from the Second Congress of the Comintern, which had issued resolutions, requested

by Lenin, pertaining to the worker-peasant alliance, along with concrete proposals to promote political activity in the countryside. Its absolute revolutionary efforts in the countryside during the Russian-Polish War had been a lesson. The tone of the Conference's document on the problem was positive and the peasant was described as in the midst of a radicalization process that could explode in a revolutionary leap for the possession of the land.

Reality was quite otherwise, however. There was indeed a radicalization in the countryside, but one inclined towards the division of large estates among the peasants rather than toward social revolution. The peasant classes believed in the new Polish state and in its promise of agrarian reform. Misunderstanding this trend, the Communists nearsightedly persisted in trying to organize the poorest peasants into revolutionary organizations.[15]

The Conference ratified the acceptance of the "21 Conditions" of membership in the Comintern, and from this moment on, the name of the Party included in its title the identification: "Section of the Communist International" (as with all other communist parties). At the close of the proceedings, the new Central Committee of the Party was elected.[16]

A direct continuation of the Conference began a few weeks later, in May 1921, with the Third Party Council.[17] It reiterated the need to struggle for the day-to-day needs of the working class, thus conceding that improved conditions for the proletariat within the capitalist system was possible. The opposite, apocalyptic view, had been responsible for previous neglect of workers' real needs and for their ideological exploitation as a mere springboard to revolutionary struggles.

In essence, political strategy underwent an extensive change. Whereas previously the emphasis had been on the struggle to take power, now it became the struggle to improve the conditions of the workers. The Council meeting endorsed a whole series of potential instruments for the struggle,

culminating in the general strike. This new Party stance led to new practices within the labor movement, more intricate than the former ones. Predictably, the Council called for unity in the labor movement and blamed the Socialists for undermining it.[18] Conflict between the Socialists and the Communists within the Trade union movement was indeed harmful to the unity of the working class. Despite their new resolutions, the Communists, following the directives of the Moscow International, continued to try to confer a "revolutionary character" on the trade unions and to manipulate them as revolutionary links.

The Party's Expansion

The competition between the Communists and the Socialists in the labor movement persisted. In Warsaw, the Communists polled a majority in the elections for the Council of Trade Unions, but the Socialists refused to recognize the newly-elected officers.[19] Thus, for about two years, two separate Councils existed. The Socialists argued that the trade unions should not be party-affiliated. This stance was criticized by the metal workers, construction workers, and the paper industry workers, thus raising the possibility of a split throughout the trade union movement. As previously noted, the Communist Party sought labor unity, albeit as a precondition for future revolutionary activity. The Party's Central Committee and its Trade Union Sector therefore pressed the view that any split or separate activity was only to be considered in extreme circumstances.[20]

The Communist strategy was remarkably successful and the Communist fractions within the trade unions were effective in winning over workers. During 1921, the Communists even succeeded in bringing some of the trade unions under their authority, including the miners in the Dąbrowa Basin, the metal-workers of Radom, Kielce, part of Łódź, Praga, and the Dąbrowa industrial basin, the railroad workers of Warsaw, Radom, part of Poznań, and almost the entire chemical sector. The Communists also made a comeback in the eastern regions across the Vistula River. In Białystok, the leather, construction, and apparel sectors of trade unions came under their control. In many other areas (Poznań, Kalisz, Kielce, Częstochowa, Cieszyn), although they were not in the majority, the Communists maintained a strong presence. The Party was, however, fairly weak in Galicia where deeply-rooted Socialist traditions ruled over the class movements. Nevertheless the

beginnings of a "revolutionary movement" in that area can be dated from this time; in Kraków, Communist fractions now appeared in some trade unions.

The Communists also rebuilt their following in the railroad unions, where they had been decimated by the repression of 1919-20 and played an important role in the strike of February 1921, the first large strike that affected the entire country and one that had an evident political content.[21] At the National Trade Union Congress of August 1921, the Communists had about 75 out of a total of 300 delegates, and some Communist motions obtained as many as 140 votes. In any case, Communist strength in the labor movement was uneven, police repression was fairly unfettered, and the unions themselves often dismissed Communist leaders on the charge that their revolutionary politics was damaging to the unions.[22]

Despite the temporary Communist advance of 1921, the unions were eventually won over to the Socialist cause. With the failure of several summer strikes, the labor movement began to experience a crisis in the autumn. Workers started leaving the trade unions en masse, demoralization spread throughout the movement, and the Socialists expanded their influence among the residue. Even in the "red region" of the Dąbrowa Basin the number of union members dropped, dues-paying fell drastically, and by year's end the miners' union had just two thousand members from a high of several thousand six months earlier. The Communists stepped up their efforts and contributed to raising union membership back up to about thirteen thousand at the beginning of February 1922. By the fall, they had re-established their control of the sector.[23] In Warsaw, the decline was catastrophic in the case of the metal-workers' union, which fell from a membership of five thousand to five hundred. In Łódź, the textile-workers' union, once twenty thousand strong, fell to a membership of practically nil by the end of 1921.

The crisis was also evident in the Jewish labor movement, which had always been split into three parts, each under the influence of a different

party. The three organizations agreed to unity only in January 1922, which diluted the strength of the Communists, who had a following within the Bund.[24]

The Jewish Sector continued operating in the Communist Party, and, as noted previously, enjoyed a certain autonomy in dealing with the problems of the Jewish national minority, apart from labor questions. Correspondingly, the Party had approved of organizationally separate Jewish trade unions. This decision had been opposed by some organizations, such as the Łódź, which viewed this exception as a breach of the principle of labor unity. The Communist Party attempted to achieve solidarity of Polish and Jewish unions in the same economic sectors and in some cases it (tobacco, construction, leather) succeeded. The Party's strong Jewish membership was in practice a liability in view of the nationalistic and anti-Semitic reflexes widespread among the Polish proletariat, sentiments influencing the Communist workers as well. However, the Party attitude concerning the Jews was clear:

> The affairs of Jewish workers must of necessity be closely connected with the affairs of the Party...The ruling bodies of distinct categories of work among the Jews must be linked to respective bodies of the Party. Party organizations must try as often as possible to gather together the comrades of the Polish and Jewish parties in order to break them out of their isolation, which may result from the presence of separate Jewish circles, created for Jewish workers who do not know the Polish language...[25]

For the Communist Party, 1921 was a period of political and organizational growth after the deep crisis of the previous autumn. In general this was not thanks to any wise strategy by the Party but due to the poor quality of life and consequent radicalism of Poland's working class. In terms of numbers, the Party stayed at modest levels, but its strength within

the working class became more reliable. This fact transcended the Party's low numbers.

The Communists' chief bastion remained the Dąbrowa mine basin, where the Party organization now counted scarcely five hundred members, compared to two thousand in 1918. Yet in some mines the Party controlled almost all the miners and in others it had significant strength. The Communists had been able to take advantage of the drop in popularity of the Socialists and nationalists, who had exercised a moderating influence on the workers. Communist Party activity was considerable, the strikes organized by it during May obtaining the participation of 25,000 workers. In the October elections for officers of the Mutual Funds for Illness, the Communists obtained well over the absolute majority, which was reconfirmed in December in the elections for the Directive Council of the Funds. They also gained predominant influence in the metal-workers' union.[26] The Communists also made their presence felt in Warsaw at the elections for the Mutual Funds in September when their slate gained the most votes, although it did not obtain a majority and the Minister of Labor later annulled the election results, installing a government commissar.[27]

Up to 1922, the Communist Workers' Party of Poland gained both numerically and politically by an influx of splinter groups from other socialist and workers' parties.

In the Polish Socialist Party, there had been a small but steady drain of its left wing, protesting the Socialist Party's nationalist politics during the Polish-Russian War and its compromises with the bourgeois parties. A series of such leftist protesters moved into the Communist Party in the early 1920s.[28]

Another addition to the Communists came from the Bund, the main Jewish workers' party, which had endorsed proletarian dictatorship and workers' councils since June 1919. At the Bund's First Party Congress in

independent Poland, in April 1920, a leftist faction captured a majority in the Central Committee and voted in favor of membership in the Communist International, suggesting that revolutionary radicalization was influencing the Jewish proletariat. The question of the Bund's membership became complicated, however, when in January 1921 its Central Committee conditionally accepted the "21 Conditions" of membership to the Comintern but with the exception of the second point requiring the exclusion of non-revolutionaries from a party belonging to the Communist International. (The reasoning was that the Bund center had accepted the new political line and the right no longer existed.) Complicated negotiations with Moscow continued into March 1921, when the Executive Committee of the Communist International met with representatives of the Bund and the Communist Workers' Party of Poland to discuss their membership. Walecki was firmly opposed to conditional membership of the Bund, denouncing it as a nationalist, separatist, and opportunistic party; he was also opposed to the proposal of Zinoviev and Radek, representatives of the Executive Committee, to invite the Bund to the upcoming Third Congress of the Comintern. He stressed the validity of the principle of a sole, centralized revolutionary organization for every country. Zinoviev and Radek, politically impressed by the Bund's strength, proposed keeping it as an autonomous organization, at least for the short term. Finally a compromise was adopted and a letter was sent to the upcoming Congress of the Bund from the Executive Committee of the Comintern explaining the "21 conditions" and inviting it to the next Congress of the Comintern. The Polish Party was not satisfied with this alleged compromise and protested to the Comintern, charging the Bund with opportunistic behavior and with tolerating any Communist maneuvers within its ranks.

At the Bund's second congress in December 1921, a line opposing the Communists was passed, whereupon its Communist fraction began to operate

autonomously as the Kombund, proposing a platform of its own, approaching the Communist platform but formally remaining within the Bund. This Kombund had about two thousand members, mostly workers. At the beginning of 1922, it made an agreement with the Communist Party that envisioned an eventual union between the two parties.

Though the general reaction in the Communist Party to the agreement with the Kombund was by and large positive, the Party's Jewish Sector was split (three votes against and eleven in favor). The leadership of the Kombund then acknowledged the authority of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and in June, 1922, the Kombund was accepted as a member of the International by the Executive Committee.[29]

The Polish Communist Party's unhappy representative on the Executive Committee of the Comintern stressed the primacy of the Communist Party in fighting for the political and national liberation of all working people without discrimination. Zinoviev replied for the Comintern that the decision recognizing the Kombund was not intended to favor any federational principle and that the autonomy of the Kombund vis-à-vis the Communist Party was anticipated as temporary in recognition of the Jewish masses, lingering attachment to the social democracy and, second, in recognition of lingering anti-Semitic tendencies in some Polish workers' circles. Eventually, the Polish Communist Party prevailed and the Kombund was merged into the Communist Workers' Party of Poland after September.

Less complicated was the merger of the Communist Party with the revolutionary fraction that had separated from the Jewish Workers' Party, Poale Zion, in the middle of 1921, and with the lesser fraction that had broken away from the Jewish organization Fereynikte.

The mergers of the revolutionary wings of various parties with the Communist Party added some strength to the Communist Party. Nevertheless, the Party remained a minority movement among the working class.

There were many reasons for this, chief among them its inflexibility regarding political platforms and its theoretical obtuseness. Police repression was also a hard reality that kept the Party from winning over the masses, as was its lack of skill in revolutionary activity, and the widespread suspicion that the Party was an agent of the Soviet Union and endorsed Moscow's hostility to the Polish state and its boundaries.

At the beginning of September 1921, after an evaluation of both the Party's central leadership and its local organizations, the Central Committee Plenum issued resolutions intended to revitalize the Party. Keeping the local organizations informed and up-to-date was emphasized as was opening the discussions on politics, ideology, and strategy to the entire membership, chiefly through the circulation of the journal Red Standard (*Czerwony Standar.)* The local organizations were, in their turn, to inform the central bodies of their circumstances and activities. The functional sectors and regional committees were assigned the task of issuing monthly reports to the Party leadership.

Over all, as 1921 drew to a close, the Party's main achievement was to have survived. Its secondary achievement was to have sustained a Communist press of a fairly high quality and profile. *Czerwony Sztandar* (Red Standard), the official Party organ on the national level, made efforts to resume publication, interrupted months before. In Warsaw, the periodical *Myśl Robotnicza* (Worker Thinking) had a circulation of four thousand copies. After being shut down, the *Walka Robotnicza* (Worker Struggle) came out with a similar circulation. On a national scale, the weekly *Przegląd Związkowy* (Union Review) was devoted to theoretical and practical problems of the labor movement and it was succeeded, after its shutdown, by *Wiadomości Związkowe* (Union News). As already mentioned, two periodicals were devoted to the poor and landless peasants: the weekly *Skiba* (The Plow), with a circulation of three thousand, and the weekly *Orka* (The Furrow) with a

social and educational bent directed at the general agrarian population. In Upper Silesia, *Czerwony Sztandar* (Red Standard) and later *Prawda* (The Truth), with a considerable circulation of four thousand, came out as the official Party organ of Upper Silesia. In Łódź, *Wyzwolenie Robotnicze* (Worker Liberation) had a social political makeup; in Lwów, *Sprawa Robotnicza* (Worker Cause) was devoted to labor questions and later so was *Trybuna Robotnicza* (Worker Tribune). In the Dąbrova district, *Głos Robotniczy* (Worker Voice) and later *Życie Robotnicze* (Worker Life) appeared in addition to two Yiddish-language publications: *Der Stern* (The Star) and *Der Glock* (The Bell). Trade unions under Communist influence printed a conspicuous number of revolutionary periodicals: *Robotnik Budowlany*, (The Construction Worker), *Robotnik Maczny* (The Dyer Worker) and others. These publications, both legal and semi-legal, were all shut down by censorship, to be reopened under different names. In many cases these journals did not last beyond the printing of just a few numbers.

Some major publications came out illegally, among them *Czerwony Sztandar* (Red Standard) and *Gromada* (The Host), the most noted on the national level, and *Głos Komunistyczny* (The Communist Voice) the bulletin of the Party Central Committee. To these publications could be added a large number of one-issue reviews and disbanded publications. The most popular medium was the leaflets, a flexible and rapid means of propaganda which adapted itself ideally to the illegal condition of the revolutionary structure (the penalty for distribution of Communist literature was a prison term running from a few to many years). The pressrun of leaflet was, at this time as at many others, quite large. The Comintern, at its Third Congress (1921), evaluated the Polish Party in extremely positive terms.[30]

The Third Conference and Parliamentarianism

A new chapter in the ideological development of the Communist Party began at the Third Party Conference held in April 1922 at Sopot on the Baltic coast.[31] This conference had the importance of a true congress, since its agenda was dominated by key strategic matters: the united front with the Socialists, the agrarian and labor questions, and the national question.

The Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921 had launched the new political strategy of a united front for the working class and struggle for the short-term objectives summarized in the slogan "going to the masses". The International now embraced the idea that a united front of the entire working class would be necessary, without distinctions as to ideology, for an effective response to the attacks of the bourgeoisie's alleged intent to worsen the already miserable conditions of the working class. Some Communist Parties, such as those of Austria, France and Italy, opposed the Comintern's new united front line. The Polish Party advocated not considering the new strategy a principle to be applied everywhere in the same way, fearing that such a universal application might imply nonchalance concerning the conflicts with the Socialists. The Polish delegates tried also to get the Executive Committee not to commit itself and pressed it to table the discussion until the next congress of the Comintern.

Ironically, the Polish Party had always had a strategy of sorts regarding a united class, having supported the unity of the Workers' Councils and the class trade unions. It had collaborated consistently with the Mutual Workers' Funds, cooperatives and cultural organizations. This activity was, however, viewed as grass-roots collaboration, not political agreement at the leadership level with other workers' parties, i.e., the Socialist Party. In February 1922 the Central Committee issued a resolution repudiating any political united

front with the socialists, but approving cooperation on economic bread-and-butter issues.[32]

Nevertheless, the strategy of a united front met with strong opposition at the Third Party Conference. Many conference delegates accused the Socialists of opportunism. The Conference split into three different positions on this issue. The first, reflecting the majority viewpoint of the Central Committee, was presented by Krajewski. It supported the views of the International, expressing reservations, however, on the reliability of the Socialist leadership.[33] The second position, represented by Kowalski, proposed the complete rejection of the united front, claiming that it signified a lack of faith in the development of the Communist movement and would degrade revolutionary strategy into compromise. Warski and Kostrzewa, representing the third position, understood the united front in a broad sense. Warski stressed that the strategy consisted of turning initially to the masses and only thereafter to the Socialist leadership since that leadership still enjoyed the support of the working class. Thus, the workers would clearly see who was seeking the unity of the movement. He also advised that tactics ought to be adapted to real-life situations, saying that those who still considered the Party a small propaganda group were mistaken. Kostrzewa acknowledged that the Party would have to put the tactics of a united front into practice if it were to have a serious role among the working class. She acknowledged that this was not an easy task in view of the weakness and illegality of the Communist Party.

After a series of amendments and votes, the following majority resolution was approved:

> In order to involve the largest possible numbers of the masses in the struggle for the short-term objectives, and in order to build up the combativeness and cohesiveness of the masses, the Communist Workers' Party of Poland must address the socialist

> parties and the class trade unions with the proposal of a common struggle. Addressing the socialists and the class trade unions...the Communist Party must openly underscore our aspiration to the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Polish Republic of Councils before the masses.[34]

After the Conference, at the Second Congress of Trade Union Brotherhoods, the Communist faction urged the need for achieving both unity in the movement and short-term objectives.[35] This Trade Union Congress was under control of the Socialists, who tried to exclude Communist elements and sometimes even entire union sectors. The Communist fraction nevertheless succeeded in getting a resolution passed guaranteeing the freedom of political opinion for labor union members. This halted the frequent Socialist practice of expelling union members of "revolutionary tendencies" who were deemed to pose a threat to the union. The Communists also succeeded in gaining entry into the Central Commission of Trade Unions.

Soon after the Third Conference the Party tried the tactic of a united front. On May Day 1922, an open letter asking for united participation in the demonstrations was sent to the leadership of the Socialist party, the Bund, the Poale Zion parties, and the Central Commission of Trade Unions. The letter included a platform asking that the everyday interests of the workers be defended, and calling for the liberation of political prisoners, for aid to the famished Soviet population, and for support of the Soviet Revolution. The Central Executive Committee of the Socialist Party replied in the negative, charging that the Communists subordinated Polish independence to the interests of the Soviet government.[36] The Communists judged this Socialist rejection as tantamount to what might have been expected from parties of the center or right. The Jewish parties accepted the Communists' proposal, provided it was limited to May Day workers' demonstrations.

Eventually, indeed, the Communists attained a certain degree of success, since the masses were more leftist than the leaders of other parties or of the trade unions; thus in the Dąbrowa basin, Silesia, and in Lwów the May Day demonstrations were attended by mass phalanxes rallying around the Communist flag.

Yet many Party members and some organizations still resisted the tactic of the united front. In Warsaw the group of so-called "*Grzechists*" (a group that followed the views of Władysław "Grzech" Kowalski) attempted to block the political initiative of the united front. Warski made a spirited attack on the position of Kowalski in the theoretical Party organ *Nowy Przegląd*. The question emerged again at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern at which Kowalski sought censure of the Polish party leadership for alleged opportunism. But the International repudiated him and endorsed the Communist Party leadership after a vigorous debate.[37]

For the first time in the Party's history, the agrarian problem was taken up with a certain amount of realism at the Third Conference. Kostrzewa took the initiative of changing the Party line from its previous refusal to endorse redistribution of large estates among peasants and its insistence on maintaining the estates as "socialist" (state-owned) property.[38] Kostrzewa's new recommendation of expropriating and distributing the estates implied a change in the Party's political strategy in the countryside to viewing the peasants as potential allies by satisfying their urgent craving for land. Kostrzewa's proposal provoked a storm at the Conference. Kowalski and W. Dąbrowski defended the traditional Party line of endorsing the expropriation and collectivization of the land. Supporting them were those who were generally convinced of the coming of the proletarian revolution and who opposed the united front.

Among the Party rank and file there immediately began a broad discussion, promoted by the Agrarian Sector. No consensus emerged at

many local and regional conferences, but the ample discussion benefitted the Party by allowing it to hear the voice of its members, laying the foundation for a future program presenting a solution from within the Party itself, and not from Moscow. The discussion also provided impetus for the creation of Agrarian Sectors in the regional organizations as well, and these later proved valuable in attracting new members in the countryside.[39]

The Conference decided on a reorganization of the Party to make it more efficient. The cultural-educational sector was revitalized and a German Sector was created for internal activity among the German ethnic minority. A Central Women's Sector was created to strengthen female participation in the Party at all levels. Following the Conference the Central Committee set up a new system for payment of Party dues and red fraction union dues based on income.[40] It was further urged that every member of the Party belong to an active cell and carry on a primary activity within it.

As the Conference drew to an end, there was some discussion of democratic centralism and the Central Committee was criticized by some for taking decisions without seeking the views of the Party. The election of the new Central Committee prompted conflict over the issue of whether Committee members henceforth should be obliged to reside within the country in order to guarantee a daily presence overseeing the struggle. Certain members of the past Central Committee indeed were under risk of arrest because of their notoriety and therefore lived outside of Poland. This was the case with Próchniak, Warski, Walecki and Kostrzewa. The proposal to require the Party leadership to live inside the country passed. The only non-resident member of the new Party Central Committee was Warski, who lived in adjacent Danzig.[41]

The restructured Party machine was put to the test a few months after the Third Conference, in November 1922, by the general parliamentary elections in Poland. At the mid-May Plenum of the Central Committee, the

articulation of a political platform and the creation of a respectable legal "front" organization were planned as part of a vast electoral fund raising campaign. At the end of August, a communiqué was issued over the signatures of labor leaders throughout the entire country, announcing the formation of a "Union of the Proletariat of the Town and Country" (*Związek Proletariatu Miast i Wsi*). The Communist Workers' Party of Poland thus gained legal status in the political arena for the first time in its history. This marked a great success, but at the same time great risk of failure threatened.

The Union printed hundreds of thousands of copies of a manifesto -- "To the Working People of Poland" -- presenting the Communist political platform for the elections to the Sejm and to the Senate. The reconfirmation of the struggle for the "Polish Socialist Republic" was announced as a basic principle whose corollaries were a series of democratic demands for freedom of political belief, speech, press, and religion, for lowering the cost of living and ending capitalist exploitation, and for free and secular education. The platform demanded freedom for ethnic minorities and expropriation of the land and its "transfer into the hands of the working people".[42]

Electoral committees were formed to carry on the campaign in fifty-four electoral districts out of a total of sixty-four. These were presented with approximately 3,800 signatures, three hundred candidates for the Sejm in forty-one colleges and fifty-four candidates for the Senate with about six hundred signatures. A majority of the candidates were workers, eighty were peasant candidates for the Sejm, and twenty-four for the Senate. The Union opened its own branches in seventy-eight localities. In all, about ten thousand Union activists were publicly employed in the electoral campaign in support of revolutionary slate number 5.

Repression hit the Union heavily from its beginnings. More than six hundred of its activists were arrested, and its presses, its publications, and electoral posters were confiscated or simply destroyed; Union demonstrations

were broken up and their slates were either canceled or voided under various pretexts.[43]

Despite disallowance of many of its ballots, the Union obtained 132,000 votes for the Sejm. The Socialist Party received 906,000 votes; The National Workers' Party, 473,000; the Bund, 81,000; and the Poale Zion 14,000. In the Senate elections, the Union of the Proletariat of the Town and Country gained 50,000 votes.[44] Sixty-eight percent of the total vote came from the four major worker centers of the country, while the electoral colleges in the countryside recorded four percent of the total. Oddly and ominously from an intra-Party perspective, the Communists of Western Galicia boycotted the elections rather than support the Union of the Proletariat of Town and Country. In the end only two of its candidates were elected to the Sejm: Stanisław Łancucki, from the Dąbrowa Basin, and Stefan Królikowski, from Warsaw, who at the moment was in prison. The number of votes necessary for the election of a single candidate apparently varied: for election to the Union, the number of votes needed was double the number necessary for a Socialist Party candidate and more than triple those needed for a candidate from the Christian Union.[45]

The picture that emerges from the elections is of an almost exclusively urban Communist Party. The Communist Workers' Party of Poland had, with these elections, certainly grown in numbers, in its capacity to mobilize, and in the quality of its theoretical espousals. In addition, having gone through a mobilization campaign on a national scale it had spread its reach, albeit thinly, to the remote provinces. The Party, it could be said, had made its presence felt in the class and workers' movements, and now it also had a voice in Parliament. According to some Communist estimates, the Party now claimed to have a membership of about ten thousand. This was, however, a liberal estimate, perhaps closer to the number claimed if the Union of the Proletariat were included.[46]

The Union of the Proletariat of the Town and Country was a considerable success for the Communists because they had succeeded in setting up and putting into motion a legal mass structure that exerted some influence throughout the country and that had a potential strength that was greater than that of the Party itself. The high point of Union activity occurred during the electoral campaign. However, after a few months, Union activity began to wane, thus giving rise to the problem of how the Union could be utilized. But the electoral experience had given pause to that part of the Party leadership considering the prospect of legality, but a legality whose terms were kept vague. According to Świetlikowa:

> In the spring of 1923, the Central Committee of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland tabled the discussion of legality on the basis of the Union of the Proletariat of the Town and Country. For lack of specific data, it is difficult to replicate exactly how such legality was conceived; whether it were a sort of vaster use of legal activity than before, or a disbanding of the illegal Party cells which were then to be brought into the Union of the Proletariat of the Town and Country, or perhaps of the building, apart from the current cells, of a mass organization under Party direction. From the scanty data available, it would appear that the Central Committee tended towards the legalization of the territorial cells, without however disbanding the illegal Party apparatus.[47]

Apparently, these perspectives, aired by the Party Central Committee before a Party Council, met the vehement opposition from the great majority of members, the more open of them urging caution. Thus, ideas of legality were soon dropped, only to be brought up again months after the elections, at a time when the Union of the Proletariat was greatly reduced in membership and political effectiveness. The Union showed very limited activity in a

few major localities; the only exception was Western Galicia, where it maintained its full impact and activity. The Union's activity continued, however, in the Sejm through the two representatives it had there, and indeed their activity was energetic. In just a few months they had managed to present more than forty interrogations and motions. The Party had not in any case given up the struggle for legal status of the Union for the question of legality arose again later, at the Second Congress.

Notes

1. The Conference had participants from eight regional organizations: the Dąbrowa basin, Lublin, Łódź, Płock, Radom, Warsaw, Suburban Warsaw, Włocławek. Representatives of the following Sectors: Agrarian, Jewish, Technical, and Agitation, Railroad, Army, Trade Unions, Cooperatives. Guests from Wilno and Western Galicia. See "Pierwsza Konferencja KPRP", *Zasady i taktyka Partji Komunistycznej. Ważniejsze uchwały Partii od Zjazdu Zjednoczeniowego w Grudniu 1918 do Konferencji Partyjnej w kwietniu 1920.* Warszawa, 1920. pp. 3-4.

2. *Zasady i taktyka...* p. 15.

3. Ibid., p. 20.

4. The new Central committee: F. Grzelszczak, A. Kapota, W. Kostrzewa, W. Kowalski, S. Królikowski, H. Lauer, T. Sikorowski, W. Stein-Krajewski, A. Warski, A. Zalberg-Piotrowski.

5. *Świt*, July 16, 1920. Also Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna partia...* pp. 158-159.

6. *Wiadomości Białostockiego Powiatowego Komitetu Wojenno-Rewolucyjnego*, No. 4, August 6, 1920.

7. J. Marchlewski, *Pisma wybrane*. Vol., II. Warszawa, 1956. p. 568.

8. Ibid., p. 776.

9. During the second half of the year 1920 *Czerwony Sztandar* had an issue of 5,000 copies, *Gromada*: 3,000; *Żołnierz-Robotnik*: 3,000; *Cum Kampf*: 4,000. Many propaganda brochures and Party documents and resolutions were published in thousands of copies. Estimates put at 800,000 the total number of printed copies. F. Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia...* p. 164.

10. E. Brand und H. Walecki, *Der Kommunismus in Polen. Drei Jahre Kampf auf vorgeschobenen Posten*. Hamburg, 1921.

11. *Czy jest w Polsce biały terror. Fakty i dokumenty*. Warszawa, 1925.

12. *Do wszystkich członków KPRP w sprawie wymiany więźniów politicznych*. s. l., s. d. .

13. Participants in the Second Conference were 38 of which 9 had only an advisory vote right. Among others present were M. Bernstein, J. Dutliger, F. Fiedler, W. Kowalski, R. Jabłonowski, A. Landy, H. Lauer, J. Lubieniecki, F. Grzelszczak, S. Królikowski, W. Kwiatkowski, J. Paszyn, L. Purman, E. Sokolowski, H. Stein-Domski, W. Szturm de Szterm, A. Warski, M. Zdiarski. Party organizations represented were: Warsaw, Warsaw suburban, Łódź, Łódź suburban, Dąbrowa basin, Kielce, Radom, Włocławek, Kraków. See also *W sprawach partyjnich. Druga konferencja KPRP*. Warszawa, 1921.

14. The Central Committee resolution obtained 18 votes of support with 11 against. *W sprawach...* p. 20.

15. The first two periodicals were "*Skiba*" (Clod) in Warsaw, and "*Orka*" (Ploughing) in Kraków.

16. New elected members to the Central Committee: F. Fiedler, F. Grzelszczak, S. Królikowski, A. Landy, H. Lauer, J. Lubieniecki, S. Rybacki, T. Sikorowski, W. Szturm de Szterm, A. Warski, M. Weinzieher. Members of the Secretariat: F. Grzelszczak, A. Landy, H. Lauer, J. Lubieniecki.

17. Participants in the Party Council numbered 23 from eight party organizations: Warsaw, Warsaw suburban, Dąbrowa basin, Kraków, Łódź, Łódź suburban, Kielce-Radom, Włocławek, and from the Communist Party of Western Galicia. Six participants had advisory vote rights, among them one each from the Jewish, Trade Unions, Railroad Sectors, and the Central Editorial Office. See *Sprawozdanie z Rady partyjnej*. Warszawa, 1921

18. Ibid., pp. 10-13. See also *Związkowiec*, No. 9, May 10, 1921 and *Robotnik*, April 27, 1921.

19. The leftist list received 29,500 votes, the Socialists 25,650. The Council represented 14 Trade Unions. F. Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia...* p. 187.

20. Widział Związkowy. Sprawozdanie, grudzień 1921. CA KC PZPR, 158/X-10.

21. J. Żarnowski, "Strajk kolejarzy i strajk powszechny w lutym-marcu 1921 r.", *Kwartalnyk Historyczny*, No. 1, 1956. pp. 55-88.

22. *Wiadomości Związkowe*, No. 1, July 19, 1921.

23. *Głos Komunistyczny*, No. 2, March 1922.

24. The three organizations controlled by the Bund, Poale Zion, and Fereynikte united in the Union of the Class Trade Unions which then merged with the Union of Trade Union Associations (Związek Stowarzyszen Zawodowych).

25. *Głos Komunistyczny*, No. 1, December 1, 1921.

26. F. Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia...* pp. 211-213.

27. *Sprawa Robotnicza*, No. 14, October 2, 1921.

28. Memorial J. Sochackiego z 31.3.1921, CA KC PZPR, 115/1. Also G. Iwański, J. Bratkowski: "Jerzy Czeszejko-Sochacki", *Z pola walki* No. 4, 1960, pp. 128-147.

29. Quoted from F. Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia...* p. 207.

30. *Tezy o taktyce przjęte przez III Kongres Miedzynarodówki Komunistycznej*. Warszawa, 1921. p. 7.

31. Participants in the Conference numbered 56. Among them were ten members of the Central Committee and 31 delegates from 14 party organizations. There were also representatives from Central Sectors, the Union of Communist Youth, the Communist Party of Western Galicia, and the Kombund. Among the others attending: M. Berstein, J. Brun, F. Fiedler, F. Grzelszczak, W. Kostrzewa, A. Lampe, S. Łańcucki, P. Minc, J. Ryng, J. Sochacki, W. Stein-Krajewski, A. Warski, T. Żarski.

32. Uchwała KC KPRP. CA KC PZPR, 158/V-1.

33. *Sprawozdanie z III Konferencji Partyjnej...* p. 22.

34. Ibid., p. 49.

35. P.Tokarski, "Kongres Związków Zawodowych w Polsce", *Nowy Przegląd*, No. 1/2, July-August 1922. p. 71 (reprint). Also *Głos Komunistyczny*, No. 3, June 1922.

36. *Robotnyk*, April 28, 1922.

37. *Z prac i uchwał IV Kongresu Międzynarodówki Komunistycznej*. Gliwice, 1923, p. 6.

38. *Sprawozdanie z III Konferencji partyjnej...* pp. 63-81.

39. Sprawozdanie Wydziału Rolnego za październik 1921 r. - kwieczień 1922 r. . CA KC PZPR.

40. Plenum z 13.6.1922. CA KC PZPR, 158/III t2.

41. Elected to the new Central Committee were Z. Balicki, F. Fiedler, F. Grzelszczak, R. Jabłonowski, A. Landy, S. Rybacki, J. Sochacki, W. Stein-Kraiewski, A. Warski, W. Wrómlewski, M. Zdziarski.

42. "Do ludu pracującego Polski", *Nowy Przegląd*, No. 5, October 1922, pp. 332-334 (reprint).

43. *Nowy Przegląd*, No. 6/7 November-December 1922, pp. 474-511.

44. T. i W. Rzepeccy, *Sejm i Senat 1922-1927*. Poznań, 1933. pp. 116-202.

45. Ibid., p. 491.

46. Estimate declared by Walecki at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. Wsiemirnyj Kongres Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala 5 IX-3 XII 1922. Moskwa 1923, p. 17.

47. F. Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia...* p. 270.

Chapter III

The Ideological Consolidation (1923)

The United Front

The fifth year of its existence -- 1923 -- marked a crucial point in the history of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland. It was a turbulent year for the Polish State, a year of economic and social crisis. It began with widespread strikes and ended with a workers insurrection in Kraków. During the course of the year, inflation increased drastically, and the value of the Polish Mark plummeted deeply. The cost of living rose fifty percent in January and sixty percent in February.[1] More than 1,250 strikes in 7,500 workplaces took place, with the involvement of about 850,000 workers (more than the total of strikers in the United States during the same period and two and a half times that in Great Britain). The number of unionized workers reached almost 1,200,000, a record for the entire interbellum period.[2]

In December 1922, following the assassination of Gabriel Narutowicz, the first president of the reborn Poland, the government proclaimed a state of emergency which entailed repression of all "revolutionary activities." Though Narutowicz had been assassinated by a rightist fanatic, police its repression focused primarily on the labor movement and the national minorities. At the beginning of January 1923, the Warsaw police closed down the Council of Class Trade-Unions in the lumbering, tobacco and sugar sectors. A short while later, the leather, chemical and construction trade unions suffered the same fate, and the union secretaries and most leaders of

note were arrested. In April, hundreds of workers were arrested in several factories.[3] The repressive process spread from Warsaw to the rest of the country. Communist estimates put the number of revolutionaries in prison at 850. The sentences imposed on a total of 120 persons condemned for Communist activities totalled 410 years of prison.[4]

Amid the steadily worsening living conditions, the Communist Party mobilized on a political platform stating intermediate objectives for the defense of workers' living conditions, a platform that was made to fit the more general strategy of the united front. Though the Socialists and other workers' parties had earlier rejected Communist overtures for common action, the Communist Party nevertheless now again pressed for a united front. This strategy was more widely supported now than earlier within the Party itself and was more widely proposed to the other workers' parties. The united front strategy entailed tactically dropping the slogan of the social revolution and emphasizing peasant-worker cooperation. It had been anticipated by the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in November 1922.[5]

Whereas the slogan of peasant-worker government did not encounter serious internal opposition within the C. P. of P., the Communists of Warsaw remained unconvinced of the "united front" tactic.

In April, for example *Nowy Przegląd* printed a short-term plan of strategy put forward by the Central Committee, intended also as a preparation for the new congress, which was scheduled and then postponed.[6] For the first time in the Party's history it presented the idea that the driving force of the revolution was not only the urban proletariat, but also the peasants *(chłopi)* and the oppressed nationalities. Uniting these groups in a common fight for their real and immediate interests was declared to be the main task of the Party.

The Socialists were invited to a joint struggle to achieve the satisfaction of the immediate needs of the workers, regardless of political

convictions, and were no longer challenged to fight for "proletarian revolution." This was certainly a political and propagandistic turn, initiated from above, from the Comintern; and the Party seemed to accept it without either conviction or opposition.

The first Communist success in applying the new tactic of the united front was in the Dąbrowa Basin where, for the elections for the Workers' Mutual Fund in August, the Socialist Party approved a joint slate with the Communists. In Lwów, on Communist initiative, a Workers' Defense Committee *(Robotniczy Komitet Obrony)* sprung up, with participation by all the workers' parties. In Warsaw, the unification of the two Councils of Trade Unions into a single body was achieved.

The Communist Party strove to promote unified May Day demonstrations. Later in May, it sought to give a united image to a week of struggle against militarism and fascism. But the response of the Socialist Party's central leadership to these initiatives was negative. The Communists, undaunted, then sought to press their strategy on a lower local level. Unitary May Day demonstrations were held in the Dąbrowa Basin, in Lwów, in Łódź, in Białystok, and in other localities. In June, the Union of Trade Unions in Warsaw organized a conference on the struggle against fascism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism; the Socialists and the Bund refused to attend, but the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, the German Labor Party, The Communist Party of Upper Silesia, the Party of Independent Socialists, and the Polae Zion-Left did so. The conference set up a provisional committee to attempt to extend the united front.[7]

The united front had some worker support during the general strikes that swept the country in 1923: at Łódź during the textile workers' strikes, at Warsaw in the metal-workers' strikes, in Upper Silesia among the miners and metal workers. Meanwhile the Communist Central Committee continued to busy itself with the agrarian problem, and continued to be divided between

the supporters of land distribution and the supporters of land socialization. From the latter group there eventually emerged compromisers led by Brun and Krajewski, who suggested that land distribution might be an appropriate solution if confined to heavily overpopulated areas such as Galicia and the Kresy (eastern provinces). They remained opposed, however, to the notion of the peasantry as a reliable ally of the proletariat. Eventually, the Central Committee's formula straddled both positions:

> The Party, intent on socialization for the greatest possible number of well-run farms believes it to be acceptable and necessary to subdivide the larger holdings in those parts of the country where land is most scarce...[8]

Kostrzewa incidentally reminded the Party that the slogan "land to the peasants" could serve to spur the resentment of the majority of peasants towards the large landed proprietors. She considered it futile to seek to differentiate among various sectors of the peasantry and was ready to consider giving all the land to the peasants, including landless agricultural workers without much overly refined discussion.

In May 1923, in the midst of these theoretical discussions, the Central Committee issued a resolution supporting land distribution. This rather sudden decision was based on the conviction that it now reflected the views of the majority of the Party, and that it had become necessary to anticipate a discussion of the agrarian problem in the Sejm with a clear Party position. The motion presented to the Sejm by the Union of the Proletariat supported the expropriation and distribution of all landholdings greater than sixty hectares.

The Party now also tried to become more conspicuous in the rural areas with a new journal *Plug* (Plow). The first legal Communist publication in support of the new strategy, it addressed the daily needs of the peasant

masses, attempting to promote the organization of the landless peasants. It soon gained a certain notoriety.

Despite its somewhat greater realism, the Party remained weak in numbers. At midyear, Communist estimates put the number of members at 5,500 and at about 25,000 the number of people actively mobilized to collaborate with the Party in political initiatives and institutions such as the Workers' Mutual Funds, the red union factions, and the Communist youth organizations.[9] The Warsaw organization had the most strength. Its urban and suburban numbers totaled 1,200; the Dąbrowa basin now had about 450 members and de facto control over most of the local union members; in Łódź, the Party had 450 members with the capability of mobilizing about 15,000 people. The Brześć-Litewski regional organization had about 270 members and the Wilno only twenty-five; the Białystok had about 280. Kielce-Radom numbered about 170, Częstochowa 177, Ciechanów 100, and Lublin ninety members despite police destruction of the organization. In Kraków and Poznań, the Communist presence was extremely weak. In Upper Silesia, the Party had declined to 450 members after its fall into illegal status. The Communist Party of Eastern Galicia numbered 1,560 members and had a solid influence in the area.[10] In addition to a vast number of illegal publications, the Party also maintained a number of legal journals, among them *Kultura Robotnicza* (Worker Culture), *Przegląd Związkowy* (Trade Union Review.)

The Second Congress

The Second Party Congress, held at Bolshovo near Moscow in September 1923, marked the close of a period when revolutionary struggle aimed at taking power and the beginning of a period when the political strategy of the united front aimed at improving the workers' lives. The Congress also provided a stage on which the theoretical points of various problems were being defined or redefined: the agrarian problem, the united front strategy, the national question, the organizational question, and the Party's role in the Revolution. The new political leadership that emerged from the Congress came to be known as the "Three W's". -- Adolf Warski, Henryk Walecki, Wera Kostrzewa (Maria Koszutska) -- the major exponents of the change. The period following the Congress was named after their initials.

It was a time of crisis in Poland: inflation was reaching new highs, and the situation of the working masses worsened by the day. Events elsewhere were exerting their influence. In Germany, rampant inflation and revolutionary struggles seemed to be opening new perspectives for revolution. And the armed Communist insurrection of September 1923 in Bulgaria, occurring as it did during the proceedings of the Congress, had a profound effect on the Congress's participants.

The Congress was representative of the Party in both numerical and political terms; it had been well prepared and political questions had been discussed at preliminary Party regional conferences. The Comintern was represented by Grigori Zinoviev and Karl Radek.[11] The participation of delegates was documented by questionnaires filled in by them and published in the minutes. Of the sixty-nine delegates, sixty-one took the floor for a total of two hundred speeches.[12]

The agenda of the Congress listed ten major points: 1) "Political and organizational report of the Central Committee" (Stein-Krajewski); 2) "Five Years of the Communist International" (Zinoviev); 3) "Five Years of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland" (Warski); 4) "Political and Tactical Situation of the Party" (Lauer); 5) "Organizational Policy of the Party" (Kostrzewa); 6) "Agrarian Problem" (Kostrzewa), and "Report on the Agrarian Sector" (Jabłonowski); 7) "Activity in the Labor Movement" (Łozowski and Zdziarski); 8) Elections of the Central Committee; 9) Work among the Youth; 10) Work among Women.[13]

Szczepan Rybacki opened the proceedings with a tribute to the memory of Rosa Luxemburg. Despite decimation through police-bourgeois repression allegedly aided by the "Social Opportunists" (i.e., the Socialists), the Party had purportedly succeeded in becoming a mass party, capable of exerting an influence on the proletariat. He then celebrated the Bolshevik Revolution and placed emphasis on the German revolutionary events which, in his opinion, spelled the beginning of fresh prospects for the Polish Communists.[14]

Grigori Zinoviev made a speech on behalf of the Executive Committee of the International. He defined the Polish Communist Party as one of the better bodies of the world revolution, a party which was to play a historic role of prime importance. His speech touched on four points: the agrarian problem, the national problem, the united front, and the revolution in Germany.[15] Concerning the agrarian problem, he recalled the recent positions assumed by the Comintern and criticized the Polish Party (as well as the German) for not having acknowledged the importance of this problem for the revolution. He recalled how the Bolsheviks had not correctly evaluated it either until 1905. Zinoviev reminded the Congress that during the Polish-Soviet War, owing to errors, the peasant masses had not been won over to the cause of the revolution. He then criticized the ultra-left currents

within the Polish Party for maintaining a strictly proletarian stance on the revolution and ignoring the importance of the peasant masses. He pressed the principle of the worker-peasant alliance as one of the basic principles of Bolshevism.

Regarding the national question, Zinoviev criticized Karl Kautsky and the old Socialist International on the one hand, and on the other, stated that a newer Comintern tendency toward absolute internationalism had led to a sort of nihilism on the national question. In the Polish case, he maintained that the Communists should have used the nationalities question to put pressure on the national bourgeoisie, which was incapable of solving this problem. He then turned his attention to the Jewish minority, recalling that in the Ukraine before the November 1917 Revolution, the Jews had supported the Bolsheviks:

> We have heard about the results of your elections and we have come to realize that in Poland the Jews do not vote for the Communists. This means that there is a basic problem here...I know perfectly well that there is a Jewish bourgeoisie and a Jewish petty bourgeoisie, but the Jewish workers and petty bourgeoisie, through a proper use of tactics on our part, will be with us as soon as they are convinced that we have completely split with anti-Semitism, that we are putting forth a resolution on the national question such as no other party can put forth.[16]

He concluded by stating that the internationalist proletarian traditions of Polish social democracy, together with the name of Rosa Luxemburg, were worthy of respect, but now it was necessary to win over both the working class and the peasants. Zinoviev defended the strategy of the united front as the only valid strategy for the conquest of the masses, particularly in Poland. Attacking Domski (Henryk Stein), he compared the current positions of the

left in the Polish Party to the group of the "*otzovist*" Social Democrats in Russia.[17] Zinoviev then attacked the alleged tendencies toward inaction in the Polish party and charged it with expecting the Revolution to be imported from abroad -- an unrevolutionary stance.

Krajewski presented the political report of the Central Committee. He described a working class falling into apathy in the aftermath of the revolutionary hopes of the preceding years. To counter this trend, he stressed the united front principle and criticized his Party's neglect of political work in the countryside.[18]

Krajewski's report was also critical of the Party's stand on the national question. He urged that the Party emphatically support the minorities, including their right to secede from the Polish State. He recommended that the national question be viewed as a point of juncture with the agrarian problem since in the country's eastern half the land-hungry peasant masses where largely non-Polish. As for current Polish politics, Krajewski pointed out that the struggle between the Narodowa Demokracja and the Piłsudski camp could be viewed as a competition for peasant support, i. e., that of the Piast Party on the question of agrarian reform. This competition included unleashing Polish nationalist chauvinism through a policy of colonizing the eastern provinces with Polish peasants. Krajewski ended by listing the attempts at bringing about a united front by the Party in the period prior to the Congress

In his self-critical report "Five Years of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland" Warski dealt with the problems pertaining to ideological development in a summary of the latest Party developments.[19] He conceded that adhesion of the Party to the Comintern was based more on revolutionary instinct than on a real agreement of views. Warski berated his Party for having cheered the slogan of social revolution without seriously considering the reality of the country's social forces; it had emphasized an almost non-

existent proletariat and a limited agrarian proletariat and had neglected the peasant masses. He contended that on theoretical principles there was nothing to be added to those of the First Congress, but that a practical program of action based on more than vague abstractions had still to be formulated. The existing so-called program was mere revolutionary rhetoric, lacking political solidity. "Pearl of Marxist literature" was not an adequate substitute for concreteness. Now, at last the ideological development of the Party had begun (according to Warski) with Walecki's contribution on parliamentarism, Kostrzewa's on the agrarian problem, and, most of all, with the Third Conference which

> throws a clear light on the further roads of the Polish Revolution. It clearly articulates the main questions, which are unsolvable for the bourgeoisie: the peasant question, the national question, the worker question.[20]

Warski then deplored the majority's understanding of the tactics of the united front as a mere tactical maneuver, while it was actually a basic element of a revolutionary strategy working for the consolidation of the forces of the proletariat and against the reformists in league with the bourgeoisie. The obsolete idea of a purely worker party, alien to concessions, was for him a manifestation of Menshevik ideology, an ideology that did not comprehend the real role of the proletariat in the Revolution.

Ending his speech, Warski appealed for practical preparations for the revolution, in particular for its military aspect. He contended that criticism by the Communists of Socialist paramilitary organizations had led the Communist to forget the importance of armed force for the revolution. He warned against forgetting the Soviet example. Alluding to Zinoviev's words, he cited the supposed imminence of the German Revolution and the need to organize the masses in its defense, and concluded: "We must have the

courage to say that Eastern Galicia and the eastern *kresy* must go to the Ukraine and to Soviet Byelorussia."[21]

Henryk Lauer also emphasized the coming German Revolution, to which the Polish Communists should contribute not with mere appeals to international solidarity, but also through concrete strategy in their own country, the strategy of the united front toward a worker-peasant government committed to the freedom for the nationalities and land for the peasants. Lauer later dealt with Piłsudski, contending that the Polish bourgeoisie had decided to abandon him after his defeat at Kiev by the Red Army and that it no longer sought the support of the petty bourgeoisie, or of the intelligentsia, or of the peasantry, but rather now sought an alliance with the landlords and the political far right. He viewed the Piłsudski camp as varied, observing that a broad spectrum of people saw in Piłsudski a representative of the petty bourgeoisie and that the peasants, part of the working class, some members of the intelligentsia, and even part of the national minorities still believed in him. For Lauer, the task of the Communists was to win over the bulk of Piłsudski supporters and democratic elements among the socialists, old patriots, and workers. Thus, he contended that the united front should be broadened to include the proletarianized intelligentsia as well as the peasants, not as an opportunistic tactic, but as stable basic elements of a worker-peasant government, an intermediate phase towards the dictatorship of the proletariat. He noted that the Communists were checked by the Piłsudski supporters, who viewed them as partisans of Soviet Russia. But this problem could now be overcome because Piłsudski and the Soviet Union no longer posed threats to each other. In his opinion, the Piłsudski supporters could understand that independence and freedom for Poland need not mean total dependence on the West, but that Poland "can be independent, and will be independent within the Union of the Workers' Republics of Europe."[22]

The minority oppositional line against the Central Committee majority was argued by Henryk Domski. His political positions within the Party were well known and had appeared in *Nowy Przegląd*. His views certainly had a solid following. Domski vigorously attacked the strategy of the united front and the call for a worker-peasant government. The argument that this could be deemed a transitional step toward the dictatorship of the proletariat was, in his view, unwarranted. The image of a worker-peasant government that was not a proletarian dictatorship was but a damaging illusion. United fronts had everywhere proven to be without any real value. Domski insisted that with the tactic of the united front, the masses would lose political clarity. Hence this tactic was a mere tactical maneuver, not to be compared with the Russian case.[23]

Regarding ideological correctness, Domski contended that errors had often been caused by confusion between the need of Communists to support the Soviet state and their need to be attentive to the proletariat in their own capitalist countries. For example, Radek had declared that the Witos government in Poland was more correct toward Soviet Russia than the Sikorski government, but this did not necessarily mean that it was also better for the Polish proletariat. (The Sikorski Government was in office November 1922 - May 1923; the Witos government was in office May 1923 - December 1923).[24]

Domski concluded that in any case the intra-Party disagreement on the united front was becoming irrelevant since revolution was now imminent.

Of Wera Kostrzewa's two reports to the Congress, the first, on the Party's organizational policy, was a stale rehash of Lenin's various disagreements with Mensheviks and other Bolsheviks on the essence of a Marxist Revolutionary Party. Lenin was declared by Kostrzewa to have been right in insisting that this Party must be centralized and disciplined and in command

of the proletarian revolutionary movement, though she conceded that Rosa Luxemburg was also a good Marxist.

Politically more serious was Kostrzewa's second report, on the agrarian problem. Here the delegates, like the entire Party, were divided. On one side were the supporters of the principle of unconditional distribution of land to the peasants; on the other side were those supporting the original principle of land socialization, now articulated in the slogan "Land to the poor and landless peasants." Kostrzewa termed the worker-peasant alliance imperative in a situation in which the peasants were the determining factor: "In Poland the Revolution will be a worker-peasant revolution or none at all." She argued that: 1) the situation in the countryside would deteriorate further, 2) the Polish bourgeoisie was incapable of solving the problem, 3) the agrarian parties were searching for short-range solutions that were in fact utopian, 4) the Polish landholding classes were quite strong and the bourgeoisie would defend its interests. Therefore, the agrarian problem was becoming an endless circle with no way out for those actors. Hence, from this vision of reality, emerged the role of the revolutionaries:

> Such is in fact the paradox of history, in which we indeed, the proletarian party and not the peasant party, are the only ones to sincerely defend the peasants in their struggle for land. It is we who want to bring it to a conclusion.[25]

Kostrzewa also stated that the principle of land distribution needed to be understood. It was not that the Communists would give the land to the peasants, but that they, the peasants, would take it for themselves. She contended that the proletariat, once in power, would not be capable of immediately administering the land; therefore its distribution to the peasants was not only a political, but an economic necessity. One could not hold out the utopian promise that the Revolution would bring immediate happiness to everyone. Whether the land to be distributed would be enough for

everyone or, if probably in the initial phase, a part of the peasants would be left without any land, was a question that needed addressing. But as far as possible, the Revolution would seek to assure to all peasants a middling quantity of land.

Kostrzewa, wondering if this would suffice to attract the peasant as a class to the Revolution, answered her own question affirmatively, despite the passivity of the peasant in past revolutionary situations:

> Obviously the peasant does not by himself make the Revolution. In current conditions, he is not and cannot be an autonomous force of the Revolution. His inaction in the years 1905, 1918 and 1920 can be explained by the fact that the movement of the towns was not yet tense enough. The bourgeois machine was not yet sufficiently weakened to incite the peasant to open revolt.[26]

Recognizing the Party's divisions on this issue, i.e., land distribution versus land socialization, Kostrzewa urged that the agrarian proletariat be led into an alliance with the small-holder peasants, not into enmity toward them. The objective was join these social forces together instead of keeping them separated or in competition with each other. To the objection that land distribution would exclude the landless agrarian proletariat, Kostrzewa replied that it would in any wise be injured during the initial phase of the Revolution. The Party's revolutionary strategy in the countryside should be to capitalize on the antagonism between the great undifferentiated majority of peasants on the one hand and the nobility and small groups of rich estate owners on the other.[27]

This is why the party's slogan should be: "Land to the Peasants" and not "Land to the poor and landless Peasants." All land should be expropriated and given to committees of peasants, including the mid-level peasants, for distribution. Kostrzewa reminded the Congress that the welfare of the

peasant was a necessary condition for the prosperity of the worker, since only a comfortable and educated peasant could buy the goods that the city had to offer and supply the indispensable needs of the city.

The minority opinion on the agrarian problem was reported by Jan Suchanowski, who began by accusing the Congress leaders of not having let the minority express their opinions, indeed of having misrepresented them. For him, the slogan "land to the poor and landless peasants" was a guarantee of reaching the most revolutionary peasant masses. In his view, the Revolution offered nothing to the mid-level peasant that he did not already have; he had no reason to risk the dangers of the Revolution and indeed had always turned in to the police those revolutionaries who approached him. Suchanowski then asserted that the Polish countryside had never been united. Indeed, the agrarian proletariat had always fought the rich peasant. And it would be impossible, he said, to incite the mid-level peasants to fight against the large landholders. In support of his position, he quoted a Comintern resolution:

> Regarding the parties not already in possession of a sufficient Marxist indoctrination, the danger arises of the interpretation of the slogan (Land to the Peasants) in the spirit of the Russian social revolutionaries, in other words in the spirit of the petty bourgeois "socialism" that considers all peasants a single mass and forgets that among the peasants there are heterogeneous strata.[28]

In his speech to the Congress, Tomasz Dąbal, a revolutionary peasant leader, defended the principle of the distribution of land to the peasants, given the Polish agrarian structure of widespread small land-holdings, overpopulation, and rising land-hunger throughout the countryside. In his view, in many parts of Poland the Revolution would take on a decidedly agrarian character and would be very similar in nature to the Russian

Revolution. Dąbal pointed out that seventy to eighty percent of the Polish army consisted of peasant recruits and that winning them over to the cause of the Revolution would be the Party's greatest reward for all its efforts in the countryside. Thus, he advocated intensifying these efforts.

Following a detailed discussion on this agrarian problem, full of original contributions, the Congress accepted the line of the worker-peasant alliance and distribution (rather than socialization) of the land.

Two reports, one by Radek for the Comintern and the other (which has been lost) by Próchniak, ignited a debate on the national question in Poland. Radek stressed the importance of this question for the international workers' movement.[29] He noted that Marx himself had not dealt with the question before 1848. Marx had regarded some national independence movements progressive (such as those of the *szlachta* in Poland) provided they weakened Russia, the bulwark of reaction in Europe; but he regarded as reactionary national movements (such as those of the Czechs and the Balkan Slavs) because they were either pro Russian or weakened the Ottoman Empire, which Marx viewed as an obstacle to Russian expansion.

Radek went on to note that the Second International had not gone any further than a vague declaration of sympathy concerning the Tsarist and German persecution of the Polish people in 1896. He cited the Austrian social democracy's debate on the national question, the polemics between Renner and Studniski, and Strasser's positions, concluding that none of them had connected the national question either with the proletariat or with the Revolution. But Radek concluded that Bauer had realized the revolutionary content of the national struggles:

> In Eastern Europe there are multi-national nations, made up of highly evolved so-called dominant peoples, and peoples who are only now awakening to the political and cultural life that their property-holding classes do not have. The movement of

> these peoples is a revolutionary movement. The working class must fight on a united front, it must unite in a sole party. In order that this be done, the dominant nationality party must clearly acknowledge the rights of the peoples of other nationalities.[30]

Radek insisted that the Communists should acknowledge national rights. He went on to deplore the fact that the Leninist principle of self-determination of peoples, including their right to secede, had not been accepted by the Polish revolutionaries because in Poland the proletariat was made up largely of artisans (absent in Russia) who were brought up on nationalism. In the circumstances, the Polish revolutionaries had adopted decidedly anti-nationalistic slogans: "Just as Lenin overdid it in his metaphysical slogans of self-determination, in reality completely pointless, so have we overdone it in denying national slogans."[31]

The national question in Poland, Radek continued, was special due to nationalities such as the Germans and the Jews who possessed substantial economic means. Therefore, if the Polish bourgeoisie wanted to dominate the economy, it would either have to fight these nationalities or share economic power with them. But the anti-Semitism of the Polish bourgeoisie was mostly economically motivated, and so it could not resolve this problem, nor would that bourgeoisie turn against the Polish landowners in the interest of the Ukrainian or the Byelorussian peasant. Thus, the Polish bourgeoisie was unable to solve the national question. The Communists had to work out these contradictions and free themselves from nationalist ideology. Organizationally, Radek advised the Polish Communist Party to grant broad freedom of action to autonomous Ukrainian and Byelorussian bodies.

Sochacki, in turn, noted the different roles played in the provinces by the Polish proletariat and the nationalities.[32] He urged the Party to draw correct political conclusions from this situation. Whereas the Polish Socialist

Party more or less ignored the workers among the non-Polish national minorities, the Communists should not do the same. Indeed, they should support the separation of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian lands from Poland to be united with their respective Soviet republics. Aleksander Lenowicz, in turn, dealt with the problem of the Jews in the worker movement.[33] Though they were employed mostly in small manufacturing or commercial businesses, he insisted, nevertheless, that the Jewish workers were important to the revolutionary movement. He claimed that Communist influence was growing among them although they remained heavily under the influence of Jewish social nationalism; the main obstacle to the struggle against Jewish nationalism was lack of fraternal relations between Jewish and Polish workers. Lenowicz here faulted the workers' residual Polish anti-semitism, whose origins were a cultural intolerance deeply rooted in the people and carefully nurtured by the bourgeoisie and the clergy. He ended by warning that the success of the Revolution in Poland could only come over the dead body of anti-semitism.

At the end, the Congress came out in favor of self-determination for the Ukrainian, Byelorussian, and Lithuanian peoples. Accordingly, after the Congress, a Communist Party of the Western Ukraine (the old Party of Eastern Galicia rechristened) was created along with a Communist Party of Western Byelorussia as autonomous bodies working in close collaboration with the Communist Workers' Party of Poland. The Polish and Jewish Communists residing in those regions were required to join.

Mirosław Zdziarski brought up the trade union question.[34] His report opened with polemics, deploring the disappearance of trade union questions from the Party's agenda. He depicted an extremely weak Polish trade union movement, incapable of decisive action despite its having over a million members. It did not play even the smallest role in the political and social life of the country. He viewed was that the trade union movement as

having been destroyed by the struggle between the Communists and Socialists and by excessive fragmentation. In addition, Zdziarski charged that bureaucratization had taken over the trade unions and had isolated them from the masses. For example, the metal-workers' union was nothing more than a representation of worker aristocracy. This sorry state of the trade unions had led to a general worsening in the material conditions of the working class: the eight-hour workday was less and less observed despite its official legislation.

Zdziarski urged the Communists to fight for a strong labor movement even if they could not take over its leadership. He argued that union fragmentation could be overcome through ethnic sensitivity, with Jewish and Ukrainian workers joining the same organization. Satisfying the cultural and linguistic needs of the non-Polish nationalities would have to be worked on within the unified trade unions, but one obstacle to this process was undoubtedly the widespread anti-semitism of the Polish masses.

The Congress found itself essentially in accord with Zdziarski's report. The Party needed trade union unity in order to defend the immediate interests of the working class. Candidly Grzelszczak conceded that the Party itself had weakened the trade union movement by treating it as a mere instrument in the political struggles of the Party.

The Congress in general dealt in a critical spirit with past labor activity and now seemed agreed upon recognizing the necessity of a united strong, labor movement with close ties to the masses. It also seemed in agreement on the function of worker committees, which were not to be understood as action groups working against the unions or in competition with them, but as an active part of the trade union movement itself. The preparation of the Congress's labor platform was entrusted to a special commission consisting of Zdziarski, Sochacki, Wróblewski and Dutliger.

At the conclusion of its proceedings, the Congress voted to restructure the Party directorate.[35] The Central Committee, of nineteen members was subdivided into a Political Office (Politburo), and an Organizational Office (Orgburo), which was to replace the Secretariat. The Political Office was in turn divided into two groups, one residing abroad, the other in Poland, which were to work in close contact; the group in Poland could take autonomous decisions as necessity decreed, taking into account the Party's situation and orientation. The Organizational Office was entrusted with the tasks of overseeing the Party's organization and of putting into practice decisions of the Central Committee. It was to oversee financial affairs as well. The three "W's" were in the newly elected Central Committee together with the other major Party leaders.[36]

On paper at least, the Communist Workers' Party of Poland now had a solid and definite structure, a political line intent on resolving the large political questions before it and, finally, a concrete strategy more in line with the reality of Poland and more likely to satisfy the needs of its working people.

The New Strategy

The resolutions of the Polish Second Party Congress, though in general approaching the Comintern "line", did not fully integrate with it. The Polish Party, for example, remained rather reserved toward the principle of worker-peasant government as a transition toward the dictatorship of the proletariat. With respect to the agrarian problem, the Party agreed only to rethink its attitude toward the mid-level peasant. On the practical level, the Party did increase its numbers during 1923 thanks to the radicalization and sharp class conflicts taking place in the country. In the autumn there occurred a wave of strikes accompanied by the repression of a strong-arm center-right government led by the Peasantist Witos. Workers were killed in Tarnów and Borysław; in Kraków, a two-week insurrection left many casualties, including soldiers. The Communist Party was in many instances the organizer and prime mover of these disturbances, but it was not in real control of the movement. In Upper Silesia, the Communist Party operated through "Komitet 21", a united front organizational body, and in Kraków it was actually outside the strike movement of which Socialists were in charge. The struggles of autumn were to lead to the resignation of the center-right government coalition in December, but the prospect of its fall had already prompted discussions about the prospects of a collapse of state authority. The Communist leader Warski judged that there was not yet a concrete revolutionary situation and therefore the correct Communist strategy was to seek the replacement of the Witos government by a left-center democratic one as a prelude to a more radical worker-peasant government.[37]

The Communists and the Socialists were both anticipating the overthrow of the Witos Center-right government by mass pressure. The difference between the two parties lay in their vision of the future and in

what they wanted the new government to be. The Socialists wanted to construct a center-left coalition, while the Communists wanted a peasant-worker government. The revolutionary events in Kraków in November 1923 put on the agenda the possibility of an insurrection, which up to that point had not been a consideration for the Communists. Various Communists now addressed this possibility. Próchniak advocated that the Communists not mount an armed insurrection since they "are still, politically, technically and organizationally unprepared."[38] Walecki judged that the Party was not yet capable of taking on the leadership of the masses, that it was still a weak party, not yet capable of challenging the Socialists. He thought that this was a consequence of the Party's being outlawed, of its lack of experience in mass demonstrations, and of its simplistic interpretation of the tactic of the united front.[39] Warski, agreeing with Próchniak and Walecki, recommended an urgent solution to the technical problems since he was persuaded that the continuation of the Polish general strike, the near-insurrectionary events of Kraków, and crises in Germany and Bulgaria, all signalled the beginning of a new period of fresh revolutionary possibilities in Europe. This optimistic assessment echoed Zinoviev's political line at the International at that moment.[40]

The Plenum of the Polish Party Central Committee held in December 1923 was devoted mostly to the problem of the united front, on which opinions were still divided. Kostrzewa stressed the worth of the principle which, with Warski's help, was adopted once more, but opposition to it had grown, as Domski's report and the opposing stance of Tadeusz Żarski make clear.

In analyzing the 1923 crisis in Germany, Domski was quite blunt. He and the Central Committee blamed Communist errors in Germany on the Comintern more than on the German Communists. The International was accused of misappraising the situation, of having overwhelmed the German

Party leaders through the over-optimistic Zinoviev and Radek, and of having cowed the German Party leaders into being mere recipients of Moscow's orders. The Polish Central Committee also disagreed more broadly with the new political leadership of the International for its casuistic manipulations of the slogan of united front and worker-peasant government.[41]

The Polish Central Committee also commented on the internal battles within the Russian Communist Party, alerting it to the danger of a split emerging from the internal fighting against Trotsky.[42] This Polish "intervention" prompted a quick negative reaction from the International and just one month later, Próchniak, as a Polish Party representative to the Comintern Executive Committee, delivered a "clarification," that reiterated the Polish judgment of the events in Germany but that now endorsed the Bolshevik Party's fight against Trotsky.[43] Still unsatisfied with the Polish Party's stubbornness in criticizing Moscow's handling of the recent German crisis, Stalin intervened in February 1924. He accused the Polish Party's Central Committee of defending Heinrich Brandler a "right wing" German Communist who had been ousted from the Party direction by Comintern maneuvers. On Russian questions, Stalin warned the Polish Communist leaders against becoming "objective supporters" of the "opportunistic faction" in the Bolshevik Party.[44] Thereupon, in March 1924, the Poles gracefully yielded by publishing a resolution against factionalist tendencies and in support of the majority in the Bolshevik Party.[45]

As Bogdan Kolebacz correctly asserts, it was not simply a question of the Polish Party's defending the internal opposition or even a particular group of German party leaders. The question had to do with the destiny and proper administration of the international workers' movement, and in particular with the internal autonomy of Communist parties, topics on which Kostrzewa and Warski were particularly adamant.[46]

It has already been mentioned that the political line determined by the Second Polish Party Congress had established the theoretical and strategic alignment of the Party. This line was a political victory for the leadership group that represented the Party majority. The opposition to this line was intellectually strong and highly visible, although numerically not very large. Also there was a widespread lack of confidence in the leadership among the Party's rank and file, and in some quarters, this had worsened as a result of the autumn events. At the height of the Party's polemics with the International and right after Stalin's intervention, the internal opposition within the Polish Party was solidified and concertized.

A group of Polish Communists residing in Berlin published an analysis of the crisis in the Party.[47] Stalin's stance was here reiterated, together with accusations of ideological and strategic opportunism levelled against the Party's leaders. They were declared guilty of not having grasped the revolutionary spirit of the masses, of not having followed revolutionary objectives. The "Berliners" also attacked the Central Committee's position on the national question. The notion of the proletariat's becoming the representative of national interests was dismissed as demagoguery in competition with the Socialists. The tactic of the united front was then taken to task as being dictated from above, as was the slogan of a worker-peasant government as a possible interim to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Central Committee was then accused of organizational weaknesses during the autumn 1923 Polish turbulence. The "Berliners" finally attributed all these alleged flaws of the Polish Central Committee to the current leaders' past in either the Polish Socialist Party-Left or the Bund, or the Poale Zion. The document of the "Berliners" was the first attack leveled at the "Three W's" by Polish Communists more closely identified with the Russian Bolshevik Party, and with Stalin himself.

Over time, the influence of the "Four Berliners" would grow within the Party, primarily as a result of outside factors. After the revolutionary demonstrations met defeat in 1923, the International was to introduce, in 1924, a hardened political line favoring certain ultra-leftist groups forming in European parties.[48] The crux of the change for the Comintern line was the strategy of the united front, now viewed as feasible exclusively as a movement coming from below. The Socialists were defined as counterrevolutionaries. Lenin's death in January 1924 further hardened the International's line. Thus began the fashion, promoted by Stalin and Zinoviev, according to which any criticism of the International was interpreted as hostility towards the Soviet Union and the Bolsheviks.

Under these internal and external pressures, the polarization between left and right within the Polish Party became more severe.[49] At the Plenum of the Central Committee held early in June 1924, the tensions persisted. A group of Polish Communists residing in Moscow condemned their Party's leadership and Central Committee, which they declared incompetent, and they requested intervention by the International.[50] In response, the majority leaders prepared themselves for the predictable battle to be waged at the upcoming Congress of the International to open in mid-June of 1924.[51]

The Fifth Congress of the International, whose chief speakers were Grigori Zinoviev and Eugen Warga, (a Hungarian-Soviet economist) denied that capitalism was in a phase of stabilization, thus justifying the Comintern's radicalism in Germany, Bulgaria, and elsewhere during 1923.

They restricted the strategy of the united front to a from-the-bottom-up application, leaving out any other form of political negotiation, and depicted it as a tactical maneuver to mobilize the masses and weaken the Social Democrats. As a consequence, the worker-peasant government slogan was also reworked and identified with the dictatorship of the proletariat, thus

eliminating the prospects of Communist participation in a government with Social Democrats.

The Comintern Congress devoted special attention to the Polish question and a special Polish Commission was chaired by Stalin. An atmosphere of isolation enveloped the allegedly "opportunistic" Polish leaders, identified as the "Three W's" and Próchniak, and pressure was exerted on Polish delegates to the Congress to sever connections with them.[52] As a result, the Polish delegation divided into three camps: 1) the articulators of the political line of the 1923 Second Congress: Warski, Kostrzewa, Walecki, and Próchniak; 2) the "Berliners" authors of the "Theses of the Four", supported by Polish residents in Moscow, who charged the first group, the Party leaders, with opportunism and demanded that they be immediately replaced; 3) group of delegates from Poland led by Krajewski and Skulski who supported Warski's first group, but whose cohesion was in doubt. Some of these delegates were wavering or changed their political positions during the Congress.

Though the Warski group of Party leaders adopted a low profile, the Comintern Congress adopted a resolution of censure against them which said

> In its practical activity, especially in the period of October (1923) mass struggles, the [Polish] Party heads did not show true revolutionary activity. In Russian and German affairs the Polish Central Committee supported the right wing and sought to stifle in its ranks any criticism from the left.[53]

The document did not actually reject the political line of the Second Party Congress, but it charged the Party leaders with having failed to implement the contents of that policy and of having supported the right wing of the international communist movement. From these contentions proceeded the conclusion that the "Berliners" critiques of the Group of Four had been well founded.

The Warski group was isolated within the Polish Commission. Stalin openly condemned it, saying that the Polish Party was experiencing a crisis caused by its opportunistic leadership, a leadership that had left itself open to the charge of supporting the Trotsky opposition. Thus, it had become the Polish branch of the opposition in the Russian Communist Party. Stalin emphasized the model quality of the Russian Communist Party and of the Soviet Union for the international communist movement.[54] Stalin was answered in strong terms by Kostrzewa, who acknowledged errors and omissions in Party activity. But she rejected the accusation of opportunism. As Warski had done, she reiterated the point that in taking sides in the Russian Party, the Polish Communists had not been giving support to Trotsky, but rather vicariously discussing methods of fighting against opposition forces. She stressed the importance of maintaining an atmosphere of open discussion in the International, cautioning that a "surgical cutting policy" would not benefit the international communist movement:

> Because of our taking a side and because of the critical assessment of some decisions of the Executive, Comrade Zinoviev has been telling us for some time: we will break every bone in your bodies if you attempt to take sides against us...In our Communist International, broken bones can mend. I am rather afraid of something else. Precisely because of your special privilege (predominance in the movement) those who pose a danger to you are not those like us whose bones you might break, but those who really have no bones.[55]

Kostrzewa was the only Polish delegate who steadfastly, without hesitation or concession, maintained her group's political positions in their original form. Warski waffled, declaring himself in favor of the resolutions of the Fifth Congress.

The International censured the group of Polish "opportunists", removing them from their Party's leadership, and appointing a provisional Polish Central Committee headed by Leński.[56] He set the new course of the Party with a letter "To all the Organizations of the Polish Communist Party" in which the reasons for the changes were explained.[57]

Leński's new group of leaders quickly published a declaration and a resolution by the Central Committee.[58] These documents stated that Poland was in the midst of a profound political and economic crisis and that the situations of the proletariat, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, and the national minorities would worsen, giving rise to the possibility of a vast revolutionary action within open civil war. Parliamentary activity had become unsuitably tame in this pre-revolutionary environment. The document underscored the necessity to struggle against "social opportunists" and "social fascists," A term used here for the first time to define the Socialists as allegedly the most dangerous enemy of the working class.

The new leaders were soon put to the test; a new wave of strikes on the issue of the eight-hour day broke out in Upper Silesia. The movement was still guided as it had been in the previous year by "Komitet 21", a united front body. The Communists sought to spread the general strike throughout the country, but they failed and repression brought the strike movement to a halt. As Walecki had done on the occasion of the declaration's publication, Warski now fiercely attacked Leński's ultra-leftist political line.[59] In September 1924, a Plenum of the Central Committee blamed the excessive ultraleftist tendencies on Domski, whose role in the Party leadership had expanded after the recent arrest of Leński.[60] The Plenum had been summoned to define the Party stance to a group of eight separatist Sejm deputies from the peasant party "Wyzwolenie," who represented the most radical wing of the peasant movement. They were identified as members of the intelligentsia with vaguely defined ideas and with nationalist tendencies.

The Plenum now opposed forming an autonomous revolutionary peasant party.[61] This stance did not satisfy the Polish delegation to the International, which favored the formation of a radical peasant grouping outside the Communist Party. As head of the Peasant Communist International, Tomasz Dąbal was also displeased and came out in favor of creating, with the help of radical deputies, a party able to mobilize the peasant masses, including the mid-level peasants. He stated that the radicalization of the peasant masses ought to have been properly exploited by the Communists.[62]

In the meantime, radical members of the peasant movement were making themselves heard through the Independent Peasant Party, a legal party sympathetic to Communist goals. But the Communist leaders demanded that this new party openly declare itself a Communist organization, endorsing the annexation of the Ukraine and Western Byelorussia by their respective Soviet republics, but this was too much for the radical Polish peasant party to stomach.[63]

At the same time, the radicalizing of the Byelorussian national minority was confirmed by the foundation of a revolutionary party: "Hromada", the Byelorussian Peasant-Worker Party.

In the Sejm, a dissident group of deputies from the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party merged with the two representatives of the Union of the Proletariat of the Town and Country to bring into being a Communist Fraction. The Party thus attained successes which enabled its new leaders to claim the correctness of their line and strategy.

Notes

1. F. Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia...* p. 257.

2. *Sto lat polskiego ruchu robotniczego. Kronika wydarzeń.* Warszawa, 1978. pp. 111-112.

3. *Przegląd Związkowy*, No. 3/4, June/July 1923.

4. F. Świetlikowa, *Komunistyczna Partia...* p. 257.

5. *Z prac i uchwał IV Kongresu MK...* p. 17.

6. "Zadania taktyczno-programowe (program akcji) w okresie ofensywy kapitału i reakcji (projekt)", *Nowy Przegląd*, No. 8, June 1923, pp. 95-110 (reprint).

7. *Trybuna Robotnicza*, No. 17, July 1923. Also *Robotnik*, No. 192, August 17, 1923.

8. *Zadania taktyczno-programowe...* p. 101.

9. From Walecki's report in *II Zjazd...* p. 148.

10. *II Zjazd...* pp. 195-217.

11. The Second Congress lasted from September 19 to October 2, 1923. Sixty-nine delegates attended. The forty-nine representing Party territorial organizations and the members of the Central Committee had voting rights. Fifty-six were Party officials (*funkcjonariusz*). G. Zinoviev and K. Radek represented the Comintern Executive Committee, and A. Łozowski the Profintern. Those attending the Congress included delegates from the Communist Parties of France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Lithuania and the Soviet Ukraine.

12. The questionnaire reported the following data:
Profession: Twenty-five physical workers (thirteen metal workers, three miners, one baker, two shoemakers, one bricklayer, one carpenter, one tailor, one agrarian worker, one gardener, one unskilled worker). Forty-three professionals (ten men of letters-journalists, two social workers, twelve

teachers, two lawyers, three engineers-technicians, eight clerks, two agronomists, three students, one dentist).
Party membership: Forty-one delegates had been members for five years, six for four years, four for three years, twelve for two years, three for one year. Their active presence in the worker movement averaged above 15 years.
Prison experience: Forty-seven had served terms for an average of twenty-six months each. Thirty-seven had served terms in the reborn Poland for an average of ten and a half months. Nine delegates had never been in prison.
Ethnicity: Fifty-nine delegates were Poles (of whom fourteen were of Jewish origin); seven gave their ethnicity as Jewish; and one each reported Ukrainian, Bielorussian, German ethnicity respectively.
Social origin: Twenty-nine delegates were workers or artisans; eleven came from the intelligentsia; six from the peasantry; nine from the petit bourgeoisie; and six from the bourgeoisie. Four landowners and two farmers also attended.
Family status: Thirteen delegates were single, twenty-one were married, and thirty-five married with children.
Age: Only one delegate was under twenty-five, and three between fifty-one and sixty. Sixteen were between twenty-five and thirty; thirty-seven were between thirty-one and forty; and twelve were between forty-one and fifty.
Education: Nine delegates had completed university; twenty-two had either not completed university or were self-taught at the university level; eleven had completed high school and twelve were self-taught at the high school level. Fifteen had only an elementary education.
Foreign language knowledge: Sixty-two delegates knew Russian, thirty-six German, twenty-two French, ten English, eight Polish, three Italian, three Czech, two Ukrainian, two Yiddish, two Serbo-Croatian, one Slovak, one Bulgarian, one Esperanto. Two knew only their mother tongue.
"Statystyka zjazdu", *II Zjazd...* pp. 307-312.

13. *II Zjazd...* p. 50.

14. Ibid., pp. 15-17.

15. Ibid., p. 19

16. Ibid., p. 29.

17. Ibid., pp. 32-33. "Otzovist" was the name given to a group formed within the Social Democratic Worker Party of Russia after the 1905-1907 revolution. The group postulated the withdrawing of Social Democratic representatives from the Duma and opposed activities in the trade unions and in any legal worker organizations.

18. Ibid., p. 61.

19. A. Warski, "Pięć lat KPRP", *II Zjazd...* pp. 168-181.

20. Ibid., p. 179.

21. Ibid., p. 181.

22. Ibid., p. 189.

23. Ibid., p. 192.

24. Ibid., p. 194.

25. Ibid., p. 410.

26. Ibid., p. 414.

27. Ibid., p. 418.

28. Ibid., p. 453.

29. Ibid., p. 313.

30. Ibid., p. 318.

31. Referat K. Radka "O kwestii narodowościowej." In *II Zjazd Komunistycznej Partii Robotniczej Polski. Protokoły obrad i uchwały.* Warszawa, 1968, p. 321.

32. Ibid., p. 331.

33. Ibid., p. 343.

34. Ibid., p. 377.

35. Ibid., p. 299.

36. Ibid., pp. 299-302.

37. A. Warski, "Korespondencja polityczna 1920-1926", Cz. II. *Z pola walki*, No. 2, 1971.

38. List Sewera (E. Próchniak) z 9.11.1923 r. do KC KPRP. CA KC PZPR, am 36/II.

39. List H. Waleckiego z 26.11.1923 r. z Berlina do Moskwy. CA KC PZPR, 158/IV-2 t56 k14.

40. A. Warski, "Od strajków masowych do powstania zbrojnego", *Nowy Przegląd*, 1923, p. 316 (reprint).

41. "Korespondencja między Komitetem Centralnym KPRP a Egzekutiwa Międzynarodówki Komunistycznej i CK Rosyjskiej KP", *Nowy Przegląd* 1924-1925. pp. 238-242 (reprint).

42. Ibid., p. 250-251.

43. Ibid., pp. 242-246.

44. Ibid., p. 242-246.

45. Ibid., pp. 246-249.

46. B. Kolebacz, *Komunistyczna Partia Polski 1923-1929*. Warszawa, 1984, p. 35.

47. "O crases w KPRP i najbliższych zadaniach partii", *Głos Komunistyczny*, No. 23, June 23, 1924.

48. "Dyskusia o działalności Międzynarodówki Komunistycznej", *Z pola Walki*, No. 1, 1973. p. 73.

49. List Oskara (T. Żarskiego) z 14.2.1924 r. . CA KC PZPR, 158/V-3 t7 k44-45. Also "Nieznana list Stefana Królikowskiego", *Z pola walki*, No. 3, 1966. p. 172.

50. *Sprawa Polska na V Kongresie Międzynarodówki Komunistycznej*. Moskwa, 1924.

51. H. Walecki, "O losach partii", *Wybór pism*. Vol., 2. Warszawa, 1967. p. 183. Also "Nieznane listy Marii Koszutskiej z lat 1921-1924", *Archiwum ruchu robotniczego*, Vol. 1. Warszawa 1973, p. 129.

52. Members of the Polish Commission included among others J. Stalin, D. Manulski, F. Dzierżyński for the Bolshevik Party; E. Thälmann and G. Rwal for the German Party; A. Treint and S. Gireaud for the French Party and U. Terracini for the Italian. See also H. Gruda, "Sprawa polska na V Kongresie Międzynarodówki Komunistycznej", *Z pola walki*, No. 4, 1962.

53. *Sprawa polska na V Kongresie...* p. 22.

54. "O Komunistycznej Partii Polski. Przemówienie J. Stalina na posiedzieniu komisji polskiej V Kongresu MK", *KPP Uchwały i resolucje*. Vol. II. Warszawa, 1955, pp. 52-58.

55. Ibid., p. 90.

56. *Nowy Przegląd*, 1924-1925, p. 158.

57. *Sprawa polska na V Kongresie...* pp. 110-112.

58. "Deklaracja odnowionego kierownictwa KC KPRP po V Kongresie MK", *KPP Uchwały...* Vol. II, pp. 61-70.

59. A. Warski, "W sprawach partyjnych", *Nowy Przegląd*, 1924-1925, pp. 339-344. (reprint).

60. Plenum KC KPRP z 24.9.1924 r. . CA KC PZPR, am 22/20. Also L. Domski, "Parę słów odpowiedzi", *Nowy Przegląd*, 1924-1925. pp. 235-236. (reprint).

61. Ibid.

62. List Dąbala do KC KPRP. CA KC PZPR, am 728/1.

63. *Gromada*, No. 4, December 1924.

Chapter IV

The Bolshevization of the Party (1923-1926)

The Third Congress

The Third Congress, held in mid-January 1925 near Moscow, came to be known as the Congress of Bolshevization. It was the conclusion of a process, begun in the territorial conferences, intended to resolve divisions within the Party, to eliminate the political influence of the "Three W's", and to keep the Party under the close supervision of the Executive of the International.[1]

Krajewski presented the political report of the Central Committee, Sochacki its organizational report, and Skulski, the report on the Comintern. Key issues coming under review were the united front tactic and its application, the accusation that the old leadership group was guilty of opportunism, the Bolshevization of the Party, and the assessment of the International's political line. Criticism of the Second Congress's political line and its application under the leadership of the "Three W's" dominated the discussion.

Criticism of the right's alleged opportunism verged toward glorifying the ultra-left. A prime example of this tendency at the Third Congress was the report by Danieluk, who argued that the errors committed by other communist parties stemmed from the Fourth Congress of the International in 1922. Specifically, he mentioned the mistaken assessment by Radek, who had declared closed the period of direct struggle for the seizure of power,

and the contention of Zinoviev, who had introduced the concept of the worker-peasant government as an intermediate step in the Revolution. Danieluk also laid blame on the Fifth Comintern Congress of 1924 for the continuance of opportunistic policies that caused further errors. His stance was hotly contested at the Polish Congress but it could not be denied that he reported the facts correctly. The International had in reality steered rightward at its Fourth Congress, approving and sanctioning those principles and analyses about which it would later complain at the Fifth Congress.

Intervening in the discussion, Walecki, Warski, and Kostrzewa were self-critical regarding the method of applying the united front tactic. Kostrzewa expressed the view that criticizing the ideas of the Polish Second Congress was tantamount to criticizing the entire political line of the Communist International. She declared her acceptance of the new positions on the worker-peasant government, intended now to be synonymous with the dictatorship of the proletariat, and on the application of the united front exclusively from the bottom up.

Leon Purman gave the report on the activity of the new Party leadership after the Fifth Congress of the Comintern. The activity of the Central Committee was assessed positively on the whole, but it was deemed inappropriate to have attached excessive importance to the struggle against the high cost of living when efforts should have focused on the struggle for wages. The central role of the working class was stressed, and the choices of the Central Committee on the question of Western Byelorussia were defended; this was a problem which directly involved the Congress. According to the new Party leadership, the payment of taxes in Western Byelorussia was connected to the fast-approaching prospect of revolution. Purman stated that the stance adopted by the Party against the payment of taxes had intensified the situation. Thus, along with the hope of the

Byelorussian peasantry for the help of the Red Army, the outbreak of insurrection could happen in the spring.

Representing the Executive of the International, Zinoviev appraised the international situation, supporting the view that it would be impossible for capitalism to attain stability. He envisioned a growing role for the Soviet Union, saw a genuine possibility of a wave of revolutionary struggles in the short term, but warned against facile predictions for the outbreak of the Revolution. Contending that Poland was the bridge of the Revolution between the Soviet Union and Germany, he warned that defeat could not be risked, that the struggle had to be won at once. Zinoviev stressed the centrality of the working class in the revolutionary movement, including the peasants and the national minorities as well. He ended by cautioning that the Polish peasant movement in the eastern provinces could not count on the armed intervention of the Red Army.

Despite these warnings, Domski's report on the political situation and Skulski's on the eastern provinces placed the Revolution at the top of the agenda.[2] Domski argued that the Party must be a party of action. The united front had to be considered a purely tactical maneuver intended to align the masses against their bosses. The slogan of the tax boycott, Domski maintained, must be extended from the Byelorussians to the Poles as well. The need to prepare for the revolution by creating self-defense bodies and gathering arms in the city and countryside was at hand. He advocated that the Party "infiltrate" among soldiers and railroad workers and emphasized the importance of an organized revolutionary vanguard. Interestingly enough, by acknowledging the stabilization of bourgeois power at this moment in Poland, Domski's report revealed how important subjective factors were in the revolutionary process.

Kostrzewa, in turn, from her realist's standpoint, argued that the Party must be prepared for a long period of struggle and be capable of adapting to

real situations. She argued, that the power of the bourgeoisie in Poland was stabilized for the time being despite the critical situation in the eastern provinces.[3] But a considerable part of the delegates rejected her caution and adjudged the outbreak of the Revolution to be close at hand. According to Stanisław Bobiński, the main problem was to expand the political work of the Communists in the army, creating cadres capable of heading an armed insurrection. This involved devising strategies for the urban struggle, including techniques of supplying arms.[4]

Many delegates discerned symptoms of a revolutionary crisis in current events. The most salient phenomenon was the recent increase in strikes throughout Poland. Actually, a process of ruling class stabilization was taking place. The increase in unemployment was intrinsic to that process, with the classes in power seeking to unload their costs on the working class. Although strikes were numerous, not more than half million workers were actually involved, about half as many as the year before. In political terms, the strikes had a strictly defensive character. On the economic level, the stabilization of power was more palpable. The Grabski government's currency reform had brought positive results: the value of the złoty to the dollar had steadied at about five to one, a respectable rate. Thanks to foreign credit, the government was basking in a moment of genuine repose. In brief, it can be stated that the country was better off economically in 1924-25 than in 1923; stabilization was evident, even though it was occurring within a wider context of economic recession.

In the resolutions of the Congress, the problem of armed insurrection appeared to be less important. There was confirmation of the Party's responsibility for conducting armed insurrection in order to secure victory, the only route, the workers must be reminded, to social liberation. The possible role of self-defense groups as leading bodies of the armed struggle

was pointed out, but in no wise could they be brought into being as replacements for the workers in that struggle.

On the self-defense committees, the Congress had differing viewpoints: some saw them as simple defensive instruments for demonstrations and marches; others viewed them as instruments of physical struggle against provocateurs; still others viewed them as purely revolutionary bodies.

Of some interest was the discussion concerning the factory or action committees and their relationship with the labor unions. The factory committees were seen as the most realistic route to implementing the slogan "To the Masses," and also as an effective weapon against the unions, which were affiliated with non-Communist parties claiming to be the workers' true representatives. The committees were valued for their potential in opposing the trade unions, but this idea, supported in particular by Żarski and Pasyn, was contested by many delegates. Krajewski blasted it as a vision of the ultra-left, arguing that the factory committees were, at this juncture, in fact an instrument for driving the workers even more closely into the trade unions. This matter had considerable political implications. In the resolution on the trade-unions, the Third Congress came out nominally in favor of a strengthening of the trade unions but criticized as "social-opportunist" those parties in control of the unions, and directly accused the Socialist Party, the Bund, and the National Workers' Party of being instruments of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, the need for an autonomous leadership of the masses by the Communist Party was emphasized with every political action seen as an aspect of the fight for power. The resolution recognized, in accordance with the signals from the International, the need for unity within of the labor movement, but only if that unity were promoted and applied on the grass-roots level, excluding all action on the part of the union heads.[5] Once again, its fogginess and duplicity complicated the Communist Party's internal and external strategies for the labor movement.

The Congress then considered the question of the Party's Bolshevization. Speaking on behalf of the International, Bukharin recalled the principles of Leninism and Bolshevism in a speech of vague, unhelpful generic theoretical speculation. On balance, he seems to have favored a continuation of the political line established at the Second Party Congress.[6] Skulski, on the other hand, speaking for the Central Committee on the question of Bolshevization, argued that the Second Party Congress had spoken of Bolshevization in theory, but that it had not put it into practice. He recalled the Leninist principle of ironclad Party discipline, redefined the role of the Party cells and, in particular, the role of the Party functionary.[7]

In the discussion on Bolshevization, Kostrzewa maintained that Bolshevization was synonymous with rendering the Party capable both of guiding the Revolution to victory and maintaining the domination of the proletariat. Thus, Bolshevization was the Party's struggle to be the guide of the proletariat, for, in Leninist terms, the victory of the Revolution was only possible under the guidance of the working class -- in other words, the proletariat and its Party. She viewed as fundamental, then, the creation within the Party and the working class of the "Psychology of the Leader." On a strategic level, the use of revolutionary forces, the conduct of a policy of alliances, and maintaining the Party as the party of the masses were all declared necessary.[8]

At the end of the Congress's proceedings, on a proposal by Skulski, the Party changed its name, becoming the "Communist Party of Poland" (*Komunistyczna Partia Polski*). The primary motive for this change and the elimination of the adjective "workers'" from its name was to cast the Party in the role of leading the Revolution not only of the workers, but also of the peasants. Skulski stated that this did not mean tending towards the principle of the working class's assuming responsibility for the nation's destiny, as had

been defined by the Second Congress. The slogan then adopted, "For our freedom and yours", was clearly nationalistic.

In the resolution on the national minority question the Congress restated the Party positions in defense of the right to self-determination, including the right of secession by Poland's fractions of the Ukraine and Byelorussia and their ensuing union with their respective Soviet republics. The resolution sought to define the Party's struggle against oppression faced by other national minorities such as the Jews, the Lithuanians, and the Germans. During the discussion on nationalities, the Soviet apparatchik Manuilski's speech, granting the right of secession from Poland to Upper Silesia, was opposed by the overwhelming majority of the Polish delegates and staunchly protested by Żarski.

The last topic dealt with at the Congress was the agrarian question. Sokolowski and Dąbal both favored the slogan "Land to the Peasants," as did Domski, albeit with reservations. Budzyński, on the other hand, asked that a program be devised that tended more towards the nationalization of land. In this connection, the newly founded Independent Peasant Party (*Niezależna Partia Chłopska*) was also the subject of argument at the Congress. Dąbal expressed the view that this Party could not be pushed towards a strictly Communist stance and self-concept since such a position would prompt its outlawing, thus depriving the Communists of a possibility of utilizing the growing peasant radicalization. Sokolowski, in contrast, argued in favor of a complete "communistization" of the Independent Peasant Party. In its resolution on the agrarian question the Congress essentially confirmed the positions set forth at the Second Party Congress.

The prospective platform was articulated in the resolution on the political situation and the tasks of the Party. In line with the resolutions of the International, optimism was expressed on the prospects for success of the revolutionary struggle and the claim of a deepening Polish political and

economic crisis was reiterated. The principle of the worker-peasant alliance was confirmed, and any eventuality of united front tactics was excluded except on the grass-roots level. Additionally, the Party gave itself the task of guiding the mass struggle.

With the Bolshevization of the Party, the Third Congress represented a clean break with the theoretical and strategic principles set forth by the "Three W's" at the Second Party Congress. But the new political line soon failed, bringing the Party even closer to total isolation from Poland and its working class.[9]

The Leftist Strategy

The Third Congress' analysis of events and strategy by the Polish Communists at the beginning of 1925 did not correspond to the general Polish and European economic and political stabilization. Recognizing such ultra-leftist fallacies, the International itself, which was responsible for them, began a process of revision at its Expanded Fifth Plenum of the Executive Committee in February-March 1925, a process that continued until its Sixth Plenum in March 1926. The stabilization of capitalism was recognized, although the view was expressed that this stabilization was only partial, and that the overall situation continued to favor the Revolution.[10]

The possibility of taking united front action from the top down was also taken into account, and indeed promoted by the German and French Communist Parties.[11] The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Poland opposed such an initiative with a resolution addressed to the International. It argued that the tactic of the united front from the top down was acceptable only as a maneuver, not as a serious strategy. It stressed that only the Communist Party was carrying the offensive against capitalism and that seeking the collaboration of other parties would only lead to a paralysis of the class struggle. The Polish resolution accused the German, French, and Bulgarian Communist Parties of opportunism.[12] Wacław Bogucki, Central Committee Deputy and representative to the Central Committee of the International, spoke out against this resolution. At the Executive Committee session of the Comintern on June 12, 1925, it drew opposition from Bukharin and Zinoviev as well as Bogucki. The Comintern issued a resolution on June 12, 1925, censuring the ultra-leftism of the Polish party and calling for an explanation.[13]

But at the end of June, the Polish Party's Central Committee repeated its previous views and charged the leadership of the International with erroneous and contradictory behavior in the recent French administrative elections, the German presidential elections, and in its censure of the use of individual terror in the Bulgarian struggle.[14] The quarrel was carried over into the session of the Polish Commission of the Executive Committee of the International.[15] Representing the Polish Central Committee, Domski and Skulski supported the previous ultra-left line and requested clarifications from the International. An exchange between Bukharin and Domski dominated the proceedings. The latter contended that Communists shared nothing with liberals or social democrats. For Communists to turn to these forces for help, even in special circumstances, would arouse false expectations in the working class and constrain the Communists to a minimal democratic program. Bukharin retorted that Communists must support the social democrats in their struggle against the reactionary bourgeoisie and in the course of that struggle lure the workers from democratic influence to communism. This, Bukharin claimed, had been exactly the case of Germany. He went further, suggesting analogies between the elections of 1911 to the Second Duma and the recent municipal elections in France, and between the struggle against Kornilov in 1917 and that against the monarchist peril in Germany.

Bukharin's speech (overly moderate in the view of Stalin) revealed that the Soviet leadership of the International did not unanimously condemn all the non-Communist socialist and radical parties. In the Polish Commission's final resolution, Polish leaders stood accused of ultra-left factionalism.[16]

This time, the International addressed the Polish Party members directly, partly because the Central Committee had kept the June 12 resolution of the Executive of the Comintern secret from the Party bodies.

In the letter, positions on the topics previously dealt with were clarified. The Party was criticized for having worked against unionization of labor and having favored the tendency to play the factory (action) committees and the unions against each other. The Party was also taken to task for organizing separate May Day celebration. New ways of bringing the workers together were advocated.

The Central Committee of the Polish Party defended itself in an August resolution. Denying the charge of ultra-left factionalism, it maintained that its prior stances were based on the concern that putting the tactic of the united front into practice from the top down would have deprived the Communists of the possibility of autonomously conducting the mass struggle. The resolution reiterated the choices made with regard to the trade unions, the May Day demonstrations, and workers' committees. But for the first time, errors were acknowledged and a route to agreement with the International was openly sought. A short while later, the Polish Central Committee supported the International's criticism of the German Communist Party's ultra-leftist group.[17] Only Domski, true to his convictions, opposed the Central Committee's concessions to the International's newly moderate line. Domski was still convinced that the Communists must prepare for the outbreak of Revolution in the near future.[18]

The preceding episode left the initiative in the hands of those Polish Communists who resided in Moscow.[19] Their analytical task was not easy for the Polish situation was contradictory and highly changeable. Alongside clear signs of apparent stabilization, there loomed moments of seeming crisis. At the beginning of 1926 the balance of trade worsened with imports far exceeding exports. Foreign credit was becoming increasingly tight as Anglo-American capital was largely tied up in rebuilding Germany. In addition, since 1923 a German-Polish war had caused a production drop in Upper Silesia, with unemployment there increasing from about 175,000 in January

1925 to more than 310,000 in December 1925. Real income was also falling. Despite these phenomena, the workers' struggle did not gain in militancy. In fact, the number of workers on strike remained constant, and during the entire year did not reach 150,000.[20] The Communists did not have a following in the trade union centrals and their theories on the worker committees led to the latter's isolation, and to a steadily increasing de-unionization. Żarski, the principal author of these fallacious theories, started with the notion that the unions could not be won over by the Communists and therefore should be replaced by the worker committees as the key representative institutions of the working class. He also wished to entrust these committees with the problematic task of operating simultaneously among the masses and in the vanguard, eventually to control the unions directly. Hence, he deemed the centralization of the committees on a national basis to be necessary.

In mid-September 1925, the Polish Central Committee had to assume a position on the question of self-defense and on the problem of provocateurs as repressive activity on the part of the police was on the rise. The Central Committee rejected individual terror as an instrument of political struggle, though a few of its members viewed armed struggle against provocateurs as a way of psychologically "arming" the masses. Domski, for example, argued that the work of the Party was being stifled by repression and that therefore eliminating the provocateurs (police agents who had infiltrated the Party) was the right thing to do.[21] Armed action against provocateurs actually gained approval in this period, when the Party was being decimated by repression. The concern of the Central Committee, however, was to prevent the liquidation of provocateurs from spilling over into broader individual terror.[22]

In 1925, then, the Communist Party underwent pressures that reduced it numerically and injured it politically. On the one hand Poland's objective

situation did not bode well for the movement; on the other hand, the Party's unrealistic and "subjective" ideological interpretation of that situation compounded its difficulties. *Nowy Przegląd*, the official Party organ, simply did not publish during the entire year. Furthermore, the Party was *de facto* taken over by its ultra-left, at the instigation of the Comintern. But the Comintern had become one of the arenas where the post-Lenin succession struggle of the Soviet leadership was being fought and thus it, too, could not supply an "objective" corrective to the fallacious and subjective "analyses" of its real situation being made by factions of the Polish Party.

The Fourth Conference

Toward year's end of 1925, Poland was in political turmoil. The center-right Grabski government had fallen, and a newly constituted grand majority, including the Socialist Party, was cobbled together to mend a catastrophic economic situation: the value of the złoty was rapidly dropping, a currency crisis loomed, unemployment was mounting, and real incomes were falling. Social tensions were once again on the rise.[23]

Internationally Poland's position had been weakened by the Locarno Accords of October 1925, which by formally differentiating between Germany's eastern and western frontiers, left open the prospect for eastward German expansion at Poland's expense.

The Fourth Conference was summoned to address the Polish Communist Party's weakened state, and its diminishing relevance to the struggles and experiences affecting workers' lives. It had the character of a congress.[24]

As expected, much of the proceedings of the Conference was devoted to assessing Party activity since the Third Congress.[25] Ultra-left errors committed by the leadership, particularly its tactic of setting the worker committees against the trade unions and its support of the armed struggle against provocateurs, were denounced. But the activities carried out among the unemployed, the peasants, and in defense of the workers' immediate interests were deemed correct. The Conference focused on an assessment of current economic and political conditions.

The overall situation in Poland was described as catastrophic, but not yet directly revolutionary. The Polish economy was deemed too weak to be competitive on an international scale. Lacking an internal market of its own, Poland, as an agrarian country and a supplier of raw materials, was becoming

more and more dependent on western industrialized economies. Stabilization of the Polish situation would only be possible if Poland satisfied the interests of European capitalism, rather than those of the Polish people. The coalition government's program was therefore seen as an attempt to shift the costs of stabilization onto the working class through an agreement of the conservatives with the "Social-traitor" socialists. Poland would be brought to yet deeper levels of foreign indebtedness and face greater limits on its independence.

Bukharin presented his views in a letter to the Conference. He exhorted the Polish Communists to put Polish independence on their agenda since, he contended, Polish independence was at the present moment, just as in the days of Marx's First International, of vital importance to the International Revolution. It would be of vital importance also in recruiting the majority of the working class to the cause of communism. The previous omission of this question from the Party's agenda had contributed to the isolation of the Communists, and allowed the Socialists to monopolize the theme of national independence on the left.[26]

Once placed on the agenda by virtue of Bukharin's authority, the independence question was dealt with carefully by the Conference participants, the majority of whom came out in its favor. But many Communists from the more internationalist Luxemburgian tradition had difficulty accepting the principle of the defense of national independence. Domski came out against it, viewing the principle as utopian. Budzyński stated that saving the independence of the nation meant destroying the existing government and installing a worker-peasant government. Kostrzewa pointed out "The defense of the nation's existence can be adopted by us only when we are in power and when there is a worker-peasant government."[27]

The problem was complicated by the need to reconcile the defense of Poland's independence with the right of her Ukrainians and Byelorussians to

secede and unite with their respective Soviet republics. Budzyński proposed that the Party approve the principle of autonomy for the Byelorussians and the Ukrainians so as to please the Poles, while at the same time advocating that the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Communist sub-parties support the slogan of secession and consequent union with their respective Soviet republics. The Ukrainian and Byelorussian delegates were staunchly opposed to those ideas, Krylik warning against the defense of an independent bourgeois Poland and the attempt to use nationalism as a mean of seducing the Polish petty bourgeoisie. Leński argued that the right of secession was intrinsic to the success of the Revolution in Poland, but that it was not relevant since the victory of the Revolution would mean that all of Poland would become a part of the Soviet Union.[28] These are but a few examples of the Polish Communist's infinite capacity for self-delusion.

Warski presented his views on economic problems. Drawing on the assessment given by Lauer, he judged that Poland's internal market could be greatly extended by the distribution of land to the peasants and by a rapprochement with the Soviet Union; an increase in industrial production would benefit the proletariat as well as the bourgeoisie. But a condition for Poland's rapprochement with the Soviet Union was, in his view, conceding self-determination to the Ukrainians and Byelorussians.[29]

Warski's focus on the internal market was resumed in the Conference's resolution on the situation in Poland and the tasks of the Party. There it was stated that the smallness of the internal market was one of the many obstacles to the development of Polish industry and was tied to the peasants' hunger for land. The thesis was formulated thus: "The worker has no work because the peasant has no land." On the other hand, economic development was also regarded as blocked due to the absence of foreign markets. Poland's "natural" foreign market should have been the Soviet Union, but this was aborted by the Polish ruling szlachta's and bourgeoisie's

hostility towards the Soviet Union and their oppression of Poland's Ukrainian and Byelorussian minorities. Thus the thesis was refined to say: "The worker has no work because the domination of the szlachta and of the bourgeoisie closes off the access of Polish industry to the Soviet market."[30]

The novelty of this resolution resided in its connection of the economic crisis to the problem of national independence and, in this context, the defense of independence, even though in the final analysis that independence could allegedly only be guaranteed by the victory of socialism in Poland. A link was also drawn between Poland's independence and the Revolution in the sense that, in order to guarantee independence it was declared necessary to destroy the power of the landowning classes and grant freedom to the oppressed national minorities. Within this idea it was stated that while the masses understood independence in a bourgeois sense

> the communist worker could not defend the principle of the capitalist nation. He could not separate the question of independence from the question of the Revolution.

The resolution argued that

> the Communist Party of Poland must tenaciously seek a rapprochement with the workers and the peasants of the radical and petty bourgeois political parties also on the issue of independence.[31]

These stands emerged out of the arguments concerning the national question that had been developed at the Second Party Congress in 1923.

On the question of the tactic of the united front, the Conference recommended its broad application at all levels. The worsening of the economic situation gave the Party some hope in this regard, as did the emergence of a leftist opposition within the Socialist Party, in reaction to its participation in the government. A similar internal opposition was forming in the peasant party *Wyzwolenie*.

The Conference then turned to the trade union question, with Landy attacking the Central Committee for having led the Party into isolation by underestimating the trade unions. The resolution adopted called for the expansion, reinforcement, and unity of the trade unions as necessary for defending the workers' interests. But the role of the factory committees was also stressed. It was stated that the role of the communist fractions was to operate within the trade unions.[32] These views were strongly expressed by Walecki and Królikowski, but they were opposed by a minority still attracted to the anti-trade union notions of the ultra-left.

Regarding the agrarian question, three orientations emerged at the Conference. The first, represented by Dąbal, was based on the principle that the peasant class must by and large be directed against the bourgeoisie and, therefore, the slogan "land to the peasants" must be connected to that of the worker-peasant government. For the success of this strategy, the struggle for democratic freedoms and for the satisfaction of urgent peasant needs must be waged. This view was supported by Kostrzewa, who stressed that the mid-level peasant could serve as an ally of the proletariat. She advocated that the Party not insist on the distinction between poor and middle level peasants. Żarski, basing his view on a different analysis of the Polish countryside, argued that the Party should limit its activity to the poor and landless peasants. The third position, represented by Domski, Bobiński and Budzyński, advocated land nationalization, citing the current radicalization of the peasantry. The problem of the middle-level peasant was to be deferred until after the victory of the Revolution.

The resolution adopted on the tasks of the Party in the countryside reflected the positions of Dąbal and Kostrzewa. It advocated support for the leftist opposition groups within the peasant parties and anticipated an expansion of the radical peasant movement.[33]

In analyzing the general political situation, the Conference sought to clarify the question of the fascist peril, albeit in a cursory manner. Caution was urged against a possible coup d' état by the right, but no assessment of the different forces on the right was made. A more precise motion by Domski, differentiating among the "fascist" threats posed by the bourgeoisie, the landowners, the Pilsudskists, the military, and the nationalist intelligentsia (who were succeeding in winning over workers and peasants), was rejected by the Conference.

A "thesis on fascism" by an unknown author was also circulated at the Conference. It maintained that the Piłsudski group was a type of military organization imbued with the culture of the leader, with Russophobic traditions, and with an anti-Bolshevik slant that had many of the outward appearances of fascism, but that was not, nor could ever be a fascist organization in the current reality of Poland. As far as this group was concerned, the document considered flawed the definition "Fascism of the Left" circulating at the Conference and proposed the practice of the united front on a grass-roots level as the only possible tactic for the struggle against fascism.[34] Neither of these two analyses judged the Piłsudski camp to be an archenemy, and Domski himself, while attributing elements of fascism to the Pilsudskist camp, saw a real possibility of the Communist Party's actively supporting it. Though the Conference ignored them, these two documents marked the beginning of a political debate over important strategic choices in the immediate future of the Party.

The deliberations of the Conference were approved by the International, which added recommendations only concerning the agrarian problem. The Conference marked essentially a return to the ideological baggage of the Second Congress, with some evolution from the positions assumed at that Congress. It constituted a consolidation and an enrichment of the theoretical and strategic formulations of the Second Congress. Differences among the

delegates in strategic, tactical and ideological viewpoints and opinions were still vast. For example, no agreed formulation for the defense of national independence was arrived at not only due to differences of opinion, but also owing to the multi-national makeup of the Party and the attitude of the International itself, which avoided the use of the term "Polish independence."[35]

The "May Error"

At the beginning of 1926 the Polish political and economic situation was still confused and difficult; nevertheless, improvements were registered in industrial production. Productivity in the coal-mining industry had risen as a result of greater demand in the west for Polish coal, a demand which was also a consequence of the continuing strike by English miners. With the state budget deficit reduced and the złoty stabilized, unemployment started to decrease. The conservative government decided on a reduction of wages for civil service employees; it lowered appropriations for local administrations and introduced a reduction of taxes for industrial concerns. In the spring, the police violently quashed demonstrations by workers.[36]

When it gathered in February 1926, the Central Committee of the Party faced difficult tasks. It predicted continuing impoverishment of the petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia and renewed radicalization of the masses, mainly the peasantry. Regarding unemployment and recent outbreaks of violence, the Central Committee urged the creation of committees of the unemployed and the coordination of their actions with those of the trade unions. The Central Committee continued its near-sighted policy of self-isolation by again pressing its hostility to Poland's national independence and denouncing the nationalism of the Socialists. It tried to promote an internal "left" opposition within the Socialist and National Workers' Parties and to seek "leftist" influence within the peasant parties.[37]

During these February 1926 proceedings of the Central Committee, Walecki presented a plan calling for a mass and parliamentary political campaign to expedite the collection of 740 million złotys in back property taxes owed to the state by landed proprietors. This plan, in Walecki's judgment, would be quickly endorsed by the great mass of workers. It might

also lead to a vast political alignment linking the Socialists and the peasant parties to the Communists. Such a campaign would make the Communists more visible and strengthen them. Walecki also proposed the creation of a coalition of worker and peasant parties for elections due late in the year. Walecki's two proposals certainly constituted an effort to end the self-isolation of the Communists and to bring a worker-peasant party into being. But they were unrealistic as the Communist party was too weak and discredited to be accepted as a plausible partner by other parties of the left. Nor was a legal publication available to help the Communist wage a political campaign at a popular level.[38]

The Central Committee also addressed itself to the fascist peril, but in generic terms, without going into a serious analysis of the political forces of the right in Poland. The Central Committee was apparently persuaded that a coup d' état was feasible only by the nation's conservative right wing. It deemed the prospect of a political agreement between Piłsudski and the nationalist right rather unrealistic.[39]

On this issue, Leński intervened with an article in *Nowy Przegląd*. As a voice of Polish Communists abroad, he argued that the landowning classes together with the bourgeoisie were seeking a Polish Mussolini who would limit democracy and open the way for a monarchy. Piłsudski, in his opinion, was a prime candidate, since he could bank on the support of a broad military and a petty bourgeois contingent as well as of the peasants and working intelligentsia. These social strata did not yet, alas, perceive advantages in the ("real") Revolution. Leński asserted that fascism was gaining influence in Poland at a brisk rate, but he did not give the Party any strategic advice.[40]

Walecki anticipated that a rightist coup would not succeed because it would meet with too much opposition. Piłsudski, on the other hand, enjoyed better prospects since a great part of the petty bourgeoisie would remain

neutral. Walecki recommended that the Communist Party oppose a Pilsudskist coup despite his nominal leftist reputation because he would install a dictatorship and sell out Polish independence to Anglo-American capitalism.[41]

In contrast to Walecki's reasonably realistic speculations, the Party's left wing assessed Poland's overall political situation as favoring the Communists. A group of militants in Upper Silesia even argued that the outbreak of the Revolution was close at hand, and that it was urgent for the Party to prepare itself to seize power in the month of April.[42]

In fact, the Party was in a sorry state in the first half of 1926. In Warsaw it counted fewer than five hundred members; membership in the entire country was barely over 1,200 (not including the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Communists in their two sub-parties.) But Warski and some others saw grounds for optimism in the Party's supposed potential to attract democratic elements in the Piłsudski camp through proper compliance with the political line of the Fourth Conference.

In March and April, meetings begun the previous November between the Communists and a certain Kazimierz Kierzkowski, chief of the "*Związek Strzelecki*", who claimed to be acting as a representative of the Piłsudski camp, resumed. Kierzkowski sought to arrange a meeting between Warski and Piłsudski, but the latter refused.[43]

Such meetings between the Communists and the Piłsudski group had been the subject of an off-the-record discussion during the proceedings of the Fourth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the International in April 1926. There, the Poles were cautioned lest such meetings become a Pilsudskist trap to discredit the Communists with the workers.[44] Among the Polish Communists there was no unanimity toward the meetings. On the one hand, the national leaders meant to place such questions as agrarian reform, secular education, and the separation of church and state at the center of the

discussions. On the other hand, Walecki and Bogucki, along with the group resident in Moscow, were more interested in what Piłsudski proposed to accomplish after taking power. Walecki also suspected the conversations as a ploy by Piłsudski to disorient the Communists in order to neutralize them and take over their mass (sic!) following. Thus, he recommended limiting the contacts and conveying as little information as possible to the Pilsudskists side. He suggested that the Communists offer neutrality to Piłsudski and halt their attacks against him in exchange for his eventual legalization of their political activities and an amnesty for their political prisoners. In addition, Warski wanted an eventual Pilsudskist government to change its hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union.[45]

At the beginning of April, the situation in Poland became tense. The press was filled with stories of a possible coup d' état, with those papers friendly to the Piłsudski camp warning of the danger of a coup d' état by some generals friendly to the political right, while the rightist press cautioned against the danger of a putsch led by Piłsudski or even by the Communists. These charges and countercharges became so vivid that the Polish Commission of the Executive Committee of the International held a meeting in Moscow.[46] Two views were articulated on the problem of the fascist peril.

The first was Dzierżyński's. He saw a fascist threat in the rightist forces, with their anti-worker and anti-Soviet ideology. No importance was given to Piłsudski, whom he believed to be without an ideology or a program capable of attracting any party or part of society. Dzierżyński had reservations about defining the Piłsudski camp as a fascist movement. He compared the Polish situation with that of Russia in 1917 and advocated the application of active Bolshevik opposition against Kornilov (read the Polish right) and of mere non-collaboration with Kerensky (read Piłsudski). The opposing view was Chicherin's. He foresaw a coup d' état by Piłsudski, who would then build an anti-Soviet alliance with Germany and England. Zinoviev's

view was expressed with caution. A coup d' état by Piłsudski should not be ruled out, since he could rely on the support of the army, on some Socialists, on the peasant parties, and on England as well.

On balance, the Polish Commission was rather disoriented and confused as to nature of the Piłsudski phenomenon; failing to issue any resolution, it asked Warski and Danieluk to draft a detailed report on the current situation in Poland.

Among the Polish Communists too there was a difference of views. The myth of a democratic and socialist Piłsudski continually under attack from the right had gained influence among both the masses and several Communist leaders. An example of this was the position taken by K. Lepa who, from the Lublin region where he operated, sent a memorandum to the Central Committee testifying to the enormous popularity acquired by Piłsudski in the countryside.[47] His strong reputation among the workers had already been evidenced during the so-called Kraków insurrection of November 1923. As far as Lepa was concerned, Piłsudski was the leader of the people, the one element that could promote mass action, and Communists should take this fact into account and act accordingly by supporting him and popularizing the slogan of a worker-peasant government with Piłsudski at its head -- a man for whom the peasants would mobilize. The Lepa memorandum had no immediate impact on the Central Committee, but it was typical of the intensive correspondence of that period between the Party leaders in Poland and those abroad.[48]

The variety of opinions in the Party on the one hand, and the indecision of the International on the other, prompted the Political Bureau to seek to clarify the issue in a document printed at the beginning of April 1926: "*The April Theses.*"[49] This document viewed Piłsudski negatively, but acknowledged his popularity among the people. The overall situation was compared to that of Russia in 1917 and, consequently, Piłsudski became a

Polish Kerensky. Since the Party's task was to support all the democratic forces in the fight against fascism, Piłsudski was included among those benign forces. The Party must fight for a democratic and leftist government to satisfy the requirements of land for the peasants, the payment of property taxes by the wealthy, and amnesty for political prisoners. The theses defined the current situation as a conflict between the nobility and the bourgeoisie on one side, and the democratic petty bourgeoisie on the other. In this context the Communists as a third force should mobilize and radicalize the people to "lean on" the Piłsudski-guided political camp to fight fascism and to bring into being a worker-peasant government.

These theses were submitted for discussion among the Party leaders. Jakub Dutliger recalled that the Piłsudski camp had diverse political tendencies and was not ideologically uniform; but it was the only force of the left that could initiate the armed action without which there could not be a genuine fight. He envisioned the Piłsudski camp, after the seizure of power, becoming as anti-worker as the conservatives, and the Communists would have to maneuver dexterously at that time. Finally, he advocated a friendly stance towards Poland by the Soviet Union in order to advance the influence of the Communists on the Piłsudski camp.[50] Kostrzewa and Królikowski endorsed this differentiation within the Piłsudski camp, expressing the view that its left could be won over to the cause of communism. Alone among all the Communist leaders, they correctly foresaw further developments: "A coup d' état of a strictly military character which occurs without the mobilization of the masses and without our participation."[51] Walecki recommended that the Party throw all its efforts into the fight against fascism.[52] Leński and some others upheld the notion of two fascisms in Poland, but in the end agreed Piłsudski was still the lesser of two evils and that the Communists should not be neutral in the fight between them.[53]

The April theses and the discussion they provoked showed that for many Polish Communist leaders the analogies of Russia:Poland and Piłsudski:Kerensky were mesmerizing. This assumption was perhaps the basis for the May error. On the other hand, the theses represented a sort of synthesis of various modes of thought and certainly represented a rethinking of the idea that Piłsudski wished to win the masses through the help of the Communists and the notion of a fascism of the left with reference to Piłsudski was abandoned. The tendency to support a possible democratic leftist government of the Polish petty bourgeoisie was proof that the concept of a united front at the popular and political level had made great progress after the theoretical groundwork was laid at the Second Congress and the Fourth Conference. It is necessary to remember that such a government was, in the estimation of the Communist leaders, a transition from the democratic revolution of the bourgeoisie to the socialist revolution of the proletariat and peasants. As for the prospect of a coup d' état, the Communist leaders were of the belief that, at this point, it would more likely come from Piłsudski than from the right wing forces. Piłsudski was regarded as a democrat on the political level, and on the social level as a petty-bourgeois. Additionally, the Piłsudski camp was seen as a party when in fact it was a group composed of various social and political factions whose only point of convergence was the person of Piłsudski himself.

The April theses were presented to the Executive Committee of the International on April 23. A summoning of the Polish Commission was postponed because Polish delegates had not arrived in Moscow. In Poland itself the Plenum of the Party Central Committee was summoned for May 10 and then postponed to May 15.. Piłsudski's coup d' état, however, erupted on May 12, before the Communists had met to finalize their stance toward it.[54]

Worthy of mention at this point is Warski's expectation that a coup d' état by the Piłsudski camp was indeed likely, but only following a great rash of mass actions not "out of the blue" (as it actually happened.)[55]

The historic division of the Polish left into Socialists and Communists was one of the main limits on action by the Communist Party during May 1926. For the May Day celebrations, the Communists had proposed a united action with the Socialists and during the demonstrations in Warsaw they attempted to join Socialists but were repulsed.[56] During Piłsudski's coup, the Socialists openly supported him and used their influence in the railway workers' union to ensure his victory by workers refusing to transport his opponents' reinforcements to Warsaw.

The chronology of the coup proceeded as follows: On May 5 the Skrzyński government resigned. President Wojciechowski met Piłsudski at Belweder on May 9, but no agreement was reached and the creation of a government headed by Witos offered no real solution. On May 11 the Pilsudskians demonstrated in the streets of Warsaw and the next day Piłsudski's troops began the battle in the center of the city. At the end of the month, the victorious Piłsudski was named president of the Republic, but he waived the post, nominating to it Professor Ignacy Mościcki, and retaining in his own hands the War Ministry portfolio.

The Communist Party, despite its ongoing discussions of the possibility of a coup d' état, was taken by surprise by these events and found itself paralyzed. On May 12 Warski wrote a rough draft of a document and issued it on the following day in the form of an appeal to the Central Committee. It urged the workers to support Piłsudski and to push him to grant the Communists' objectives: arming of peasants and workers, freedom for political prisoners, free distribution of land to the peasants, and freedom for Byelorussians and Ukrainians.[57]

The next day the Communists organized two worker rallies but these attracted only a few hundred people. They also made an abortive effort to free political prisoners from the Pawiak prison.[58] Remember that the Party at that time had only 500 members in Warsaw, the lowest number of the entire interbellum period. The attempt to form a "worker battalion" during the coup failed; it was vetoed by the pro-Piłsudski Socialists. Piłsudski himself had never considered arming the people.

The Communist Party sought to mobilize the people and involve them in the fight. A worker delegation led by Sochacki, a Communist Sejm delegate, negotiated fruitlessly with the Warsaw police for the release of political prisoners and the arming of workers. Addressing the peasants, the Party appealed to them to join the *Związek Strzelecki* (The Rifle Corps) in the hope that such a move might lead to their occupation of the land.[59] In the hope of expanding the struggle, the Central Committee sent letters to the leaders of the Socialist Party, the Bund, the peasant party "Wyzwolenie", and other smaller parties, proposing a united front committee; the proposal was rejected.

The Communists believed that the leftist forces, supporting Piłsudski might be their allies in the first phase of the revolution. But they underestimated their own isolation from the leftist parties, whose members simply didn't see the Communists as true Poles. The fact that the parliamentary left supported the Piłsudski coup led the Communists into the illusion that Piłsudski, in his fight against the right, would have to reciprocate by granting some leftist aspirations. This illusion was further fed by the fact that on May 13 the shadowy Kierzkowski was still soliciting the Communists to persuade the workers to join the Pilsudskist soldiers, but this was later exposed as a ploy:

> It seems that Kierzkowski's offer was part of the Piłsudski camp's plan, the purpose of which was to deceive the Commu-

> nist Party of Poland regarding the true nature of the fight under way. Disorienting operations carried on by Piłsudski and his followers were aimed at various political groups. Part of this campaign to throw society off the track was the interviews with Piłsudski in the press.[60]

The Polish Commission of the Executive Committee of the International met on May 15, when the coup had succeeded. No position on Polish affairs had been assumed to that point, due to insufficiency of data and clarity about the situation and probably also because of the Russian party's internal leadership struggles at that time. In its resolution of May 15, the Comintern Polish Commission essentially approved the conduct of the Polish party, but simultaneously rejected support for Piłsudski and his government as inappropriate. The following day, apparently realizing that this was internally contradictory, the Commission expressed itself more critically, stating that the Polish party had been mistaken in supporting Piłsudski.[61] Documents are not available and there is only fragmentary information from Walecki on the Commission's discussions. It appears that for Bukharin, the Polish Party's error consisted in the nature of the political slogans adopted and not, as Zinoviev contended, in the Communists' agreeing with the Socialists. It was deemed an error to have viewed the Piłsudski military men as potential revolutionaries. So as not to humiliate the Polish Party , or shame the International, the seriousness of the May error was played down, but instructions were issued henceforth to unmask Piłsudski as an ally of fascism.[62]

At the Polish Central Committee's Plenum held in Danzig at the end of May, Warski expressed mild criticism, while admitting that supporting Piłsudski had been a mistake. Walecki, in Moscow at the time, was of a like conviction, and many other leaders expressed themselves in similar terms. Eventually, different and more critical opinions concerning the "May coup"

error surfaced and the post-coup reality was looked at from fresh perspectives. Whereas Warski thought that power lay in Piłsudski's hands, but that he did not represent the petty bourgeoisie, Fielder was convinced that power was indeed completely in the hands of the petty bourgeoisie. For the Central Committee, Warski hazarded the prediction of an imminent conflict between Piłsudski's armies and military units loyal to Jozef Haller, as the fight for power resumed.[63] The Plenum concluded with a decision to support the candidacy of Piłsudski for the presidency of the Republic at forthcoming parliamentary elections. This decision was immediately and heatedly opposed by the Executive Committee of the International, causing the Central Committee to review its own stance. The support of Piłsudski's candidacy was retracted and the Communist faction in the Sejm cast a symbolic vote for its colleague Łancucki at the elections on May 31.[64] There was considerable disagreement with this decision. Warski, Danieluk, and the Party Regional Committee of Warsaw remained steadfast in their opposition.

As has been mentioned, Piłsudski was elected president on May 31 and following his declining of the post, it went to Ignacy Mościcki in a subsequent election on June 1. Communists turned out for street demonstrations organized by the Socialist Party in Warsaw and Łódź to celebrate Piłsudski's success. This action was the logical continuation of the political line adopted by the Party leadership at the beginning of the coup d' état. The following day a resolution of the Party Central Committee disowned the Communist participation in the celebrations for Piłsudski. The discussion of the May error had just begun.[65]

That discussion can be considered a new crisis that shook the Party after it had more or less overcome the crises of the past two years. It was proof that Party lacked unity and clarity on several questions, including the concept of the Revolution in Poland and its application to the principle of a worker-peasant government. Issues of prime importance had not been

resolved. What would the Communist Party role be in a worker-peasant government? What tactics should the Party employ toward the Socialists, the radical peasant movement, the national minorities? What of the questions of autonomy and self-determination for the Byelorussians and Ukrainians?

These issues were no less complex for the International, where several non-Polish leaders aired their personal perspectives on the Polish events. Stalin described the coup d' état as an action carried out by the petty bourgeoisie in an attempt to stabilize capitalism. Therefore Piłsudski would never have given high priority to the needs of the Polish workers and peasants and the Party should never have wooed him. (This opinion of Stalin's differed from what would later be his and the International's eventual position.) Bukharin viewed Piłsudski as a sort of Polish Napoleon who would move more and more in the direction of fascism. In his opinion, petty bourgeois elements had influenced the Communist Party leadership, which had made a huge error in applying the strategy of the united front during the coup d' état. Thälmann, in *Pravda*, argued that Piłsudski harbored Napoleonic aspirations and represented the interests of the landowners.[66]

In the Plenum of the Central Committee held on June 10 in Danzig, no fewer than three plans containing opposing premises were presented. In his proposal, Warski resumed the analysis he had initiated a short while before in the article "Mussolini and Piłsudski", in which he had predicted that Piłsudski would lose power unless he transformed himself into a compliant representative of the capitalists and landowners.[67] He now introduced a new element into the analysis, attributing a capitalist and not a petty bourgeois character to the coup d' état since it was done to save capitalism from the Revolution. He defined the new regime as a fascist dictatorship hostile to the interests of the working people as well as those of the petty bourgeoisie. He predicted that the Socialists would soon shift to the opposition. He also cast the Polish events in a European context: Large

capital would move against parliamentary democracy and embrace fascism in order to stabilize the European economy and maintain its own hold on power. Warski's analysis appeared excessive to some Communist leaders since a Polish parliament continued to exist, but there was no doubt that he was the first to grasp the fundamental antiparliamentarian nature of Piłsudski's coup.

A second analysis, presented by Leński, recognized the capitalistic character of the Piłsudski regime, but placed emphasis on its petty bourgeois origin without noting its antiparliamentarian character. Leński contended that the cause of the May error lay in the ideological conceptions of the leaders of the Party's right wing, leaders who had erroneously theorized the necessity of a bourgeois democratic revolution guided by the petty bourgeoisie as an intermediate step towards the proletarian Revolution.[68]

A third judgement was presented by Fiedler, Ryng, Tomorowicz and Zaks (who became known, thanks to this proposal, as the "Four Petty Bourgeois"). In their estimation, the coup d' état had initially a strictly petty bourgeois character, although it was now changing to a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. They also underscored its antirevolutionary and anti-Soviet character.[69]

The resolution adopted was based primarily on Warski's views. It attempted to analyze the May error and the current situation.[70] At this moment the Communists did not believe in the possibility of restoring parliamentary democracy and could only foresee two prospects: fascism or the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Kostrzewa and Lauer again joined the debate with arguments of their own. The Polish situation should be seen in a European framework that revealed England as the instigator of the coup d' état and Poland's ally in an anti-Soviet front; Poland could reasonably expect sizeable loans to compensate for the abandonment of her economic autonomy; Poland would become

an agrarian preserve of Germany; the coup d' état was antidemocratic and aimed at the stabilization of bourgeois power to stave off the Revolution; the new Pilsudskist regime would seek to attract sectors of the working class, the peasants, and national minorities to its side. Kostrzewa and Lauer did not define the new power as fascist. They found Piłsudski was not a Mussolini. But they emphasized that the petty bourgeoisie was, after all, but an arm of the bourgeoisie and hence all the recent discussions by the Communists as to whether Piłsudski represented the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie was, politically, a wasted effort.[71] Nevertheless, the assessment of the role of petty bourgeois elements in the coup d' état remained a point of heated controversy within the Party and would play a crucial part in the formulation of strategies in times to come.

In the meantime, the Central Committee broadcast an appeal to the Party stating that in Poland a fascist dictatorship of the wealthy classes against the working people had been installed. The concept of the opposing ideas of fascism and revolution and a defense of constitutional rights was advocated. This stance provoked reactions concerning the definition of fascism as well as the defense of democratic principles. Various Party organizations disagreed.[72]

At the moment, of course, Piłsudski was just beginning to consolidate his power. Many Communists deemed it still premature to define his government as a fascist dictatorship. Piłsudski, after all, did not dissolve parliament but confined himself to amending the constitution in the direction of broadening presidential powers at the expense of the legislature. The parliamentary left, the Socialists included, opposed this step, but it nevertheless passed on August 2. Piłsudski was still seen as liberal and democratic by much of the public, which believed that the legislature had been irresponsible. The new government, led by Kazimierz Bartel with Piłsudski as War Minister, would presently tilt towards the wealthy classes.[73] Meanwhile the

month of June 1926 witnessed worker protests repressed by violent police action, involving some fatalities. The honeymoon between Piłsudski and the initially indulgent parties of the left (Socialists and left Peasantists) proved shorter than anticipated.[74] But the Communist Party leadership was, as usual, wrong in interpreting these worker demonstrations as an indication of the nearing of the Revolution.

At the beginning of July, the Polish Commission of the International's Executive Committee finally met. Never before had the Commission seen the participation of so many important leaders of the International (Trotski, Zinoviev, Bukharin, Togliatti, among others) and such a numerous Polish delegation (including Warski, Walecki, Kostrzewa, Leński, and Domski).[75] The Commission had previously received a report from the Central Committee of the Polish Party. Three reports, by Warski, Leński, and Danieluk, opened the Comintern's discussion on the Piłsudski coup d' état.

Warski's report included the earlier stated views of Kostrzewa and Lauer. He described the Polish situation in alarmist terms, predicting a gradual stripping away of democratic freedoms as well as an emerging conflict between Piłsudski and the Socialists. Leński reiterated his past positions. He stressed that the dictatorship was of petty bourgeois origin and therefore drew the conclusion that Piłsudski would craft a compromise with the Socialists. Moreover, he charged Warski and Kostrzewa with overestimating the prospects for the stabilization of capitalism in Poland.[76]

In the discussion, Bukharin predicted that all the forces of the bourgeoisie would group around Piłsudski. He was essentially in agreement with the positions of Warski and Kostrzewa. He disagreed with Trotsky's definition of fascism as a caricature of Jacobinism, but he agreed with him on the common traits of Sanacja's regime and Mussolini's fascism. Zinoviev believed that the coup d' état had a petty bourgeois stamp and he supported Leński in the latter's dim view of the prospects for the stabilization of

capitalism in Poland. Trotsky considered the coup d' état to be petty bourgeois, but also went further with a surprising identification of it as a plebeian coup d' état. He foresaw a struggle between the petty bourgeoisie headed by Piłsudski and the forces of large capital.

Another question taken up at the Polish Commission concerned the causes of the May error. Leński, Landy, and Budzyński insisted on a censure of the right-wing leaders for their attitude. The Commission decided however, to charge the Party Central Committee in its totality with the May error, but did not advocate any changes of personnel in its makeup.

The Commission arrived at no official decision. Rather, an article appeared in "*The Communist International*" and "*Nowy Przegląd.*"[77] It defined the coup d' état as fascist and considered that definition binding. The Party's error, the article stated, lay in having supported a fascist movement, erroneously considering it a progressive petty bourgeois movement. Furthermore, to adjudge a petty bourgeois movement as an autonomous political actor in a period of class struggle was theoretically erroneous in general. The article concluded that in the current historical context a small petty bourgeois movement could not act alone politically. It would have to succumb to another class with more decisive impact on the class struggle. As regards Poland, the article judged the bourgeois democratic revolution to be now exhausted and that prospects for the future were either the dictatorship of the proletariat or the dictatorship of capital. Consequently, the slogan of the worker-peasant government was henceforth to be defined as synonymous with the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Central Committee in its entirety was declared responsible for the errors committed and the Party's opportunistic conduct during the coup d' état.

Kolebacz makes this observation on the article:

> It obviously excluded the prospect of Lenin's theory of the degeneration of the bourgeois democratic revolution into a

> socialist one from actually occurring. Lenin had however predicted that the Revolution would evolve in accordance with the above-mentioned model in countries with relatively underdeveloped productive forces. Poland was then indeed such a country.[78]

The International's position, new in a formal sense, only partially grasped the real political issue. It avoided decisions regarding the Party and its internal divisions. The reasons for this were not clear. On the one hand, there may have been the desire not to widen further a political rift within the Polish Party. Even more potent, however, was the current rift within the Bolshevik Party, which was experiencing intensive internal strife symbolized by the recent expulsion of Zinoviev, representing the New Opposition, from the Central Committee and later also from the leadership of the Comintern.

The Central Committee of the Polish Party adopted, on August 1, 1926, a resolution stressing the International's views. An agreement was reached for the moment within the Party on the character of the Piłsudski dictatorship. The first phase of the discussion of the May error ended here, inconclusively. After August, this discussion entered a new phase. It now took on the same vehement tone as a struggle between factions, with a greater number of Party members participating. Differing opinions as to the source of the May error became one of the key causes of divisiveness within the Party. Along with Leński, the left put the entire blame on the opportunistic conduct of the right, led by Warski and Kostrzewa, and, more broadly, defined their political and theoretical stances as a Menshevik legacy.

The factional struggle within the Polish Communist Party has been subject to different interpretations by historians. According to some, the harshness that characterized this dispute often turned on tactical points; it was not unusual for speakers to change opinions in mid-passage. With various sides giving their own versions of each others' positions, inaccuracy

and confusion resulted. According to other historians, the nature of the factional dispute cannot be reduced to a simple struggle between persons and groups about different tactics, a struggle devoid of ideological or idealistic content. They consider the essence of the dispute to lie in the differing conceptions of the Revolution in Poland and in the divergent reading of its strategic and tactical implications.

Historians have observed that the discussion was characterized by highly inaccurate terminology. The same thing could be defined in different terms and the same definition could be used for different things on the spur of the moment, without ideological or analytical cohesiveness. But the opposing factions did devise one exact definition at the September Central Committee meeting. Two distinct groups were formed: the "majority", headed by Warski and Kostrzewa; and the so-called "minority" of Leński.[79]

The twenty-one political documents presented during the proceedings are evidence of the care with which the Central Committee had been prepared by its members and by a substantial group of militants. The majority presented a proposal that reiterated the positions taken by the International. It took issue with the analyses that attributed a petty bourgeois character to the Piłsudski coup, and with the analysis that rejected the prospects for a stabilization of the economy. Additionally, evidently seeking a compromise, the majority avoided placing emphasis on the Leninist concept of a two phase Revolution and on the possibility of autonomous revolutionary activity by the petty bourgeoisie and the peasants. The minority document described the Party as divided into three parts: the right, the ultra-left and the center. This identification was to make clear that responsibility for the May error was to be laid exclusively on the right, in other words on the current majority. This was also the view that Leński had previously and unsuccessfully sought to have accepted by the International.

In the resolutions adopted there were points of agreement and disagreement between the two factions, but the majority proved to be on the defensive and tending towards compromise, while the minority was on the attack, seeking to obtain all that it could. Both sides were in agreement on the prediction that Piłsudski would head towards the creation of a fascist party, using the "*Związek Strzelecki*" as his nucleus. To that end, he would further take over the centrist and leftist parliamentary parties. With respect to the economy, the prospect of a temporary stabilization was acknowledged, but within a process that rendered Poland ever more dependent on Germany. The resolution also denied that the parliament was a democratic body. This was a result of the majority's desire for compromise. Open disagreement existed on the problem of a united front and on the type of struggle to be promoted.

The two factions exchanged accusations, the majority being accused of Menshevism and the minority in turn accused of national-Bolshevism, with special reference to the views of Brun, censured in the resolutions of the Central Committee.[80]

In actuality, the Plenum, while issuing resolutions articulating a partial compromise between the factions and agreement with the International, sanctioned the profound division between the majority and minority of the Central Committee. This division soon had an impact on the entire Party. The regional Committee of Warsaw and the Central Committee of the Union of Communist Youth adopted the "minority" positions, while the "majority" line was inherited by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Western Ukraine and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Western Byelorussia.[81]

As political events continued to unfold, the Bartel government fell victim to a rightist initiative: a no-confidence vote against the Minister of Internal Affairs. This confirmed the "minority" position of not believing that

the parliamentary left could be an effective opposition to the prevailing system. In addition, the Socialist Party had "caved in" by voting for a budget plan presented by the government. The "minority" repeatedly attacked Warski for his alleged softness toward the Sejm and insisted on dismissing the petty bourgeois parties as incapable of playing a serious role in the fight against the Piłsudski dictatorship. The Socialist Party was also judged unable to do this because it lacked a real political vision of socialism.[82] A new government formed on October 2, with Piłsudski replacing Bartel as premier while retaining the War Ministry, had conservative and rightist ministers together with one socialist and one from the *Wyzwolenie* peasant party. This turn of events also cut against Warski's optimistic predictions and strengthened the "minority", which continued its relentless attack with an article by Budzyński in the *Nowy Przegląd*. In October, the "minority" made itself official in the Party newspaper, declaring a formal split with the "majority" which it accused of opportunism, of not believing in the revolutionary initiative of the proletariat, and of believing instead in the stabilization of capitalism. The "minority" also asked the removal of the rightist "majority" from the Party leadership.[83]

After the coup, the Polish economic situation improved. The złoty was stabilized at the rate of nine to the dollar, foreign credit became looser, and the low cost of credit favored investment. And improvement in agricultural production strengthened the internal market and stimulated industrial production. Finally, a lingering coal-miners' strike in England led to a two hundred percent increase in Polish coal exports, with a positive impact on the trade balance and unemployment, which at the end of the year had decreased to about 190,000.

Notes

1. *III Zjazd Komunistycznej Partii Polski. Sprawozdanie z obrad.* Warszawa, 1925. Compare with: "III Zjazd KPP", *KPP uchwały i rezolucje.* Vol., II, Warszawa, 1955. pp. 88-222.

2. L. Domski, "Sytuacja polityczna i zadania partii". S. Skulski, "Sytuacja na Białorusi i Ukraini Zachodniej", *III Zjazd KPP...* pp. 297-322.

3. Ibid., p. 366

4. Ibid., p. 379.

5. "O zadaniach w partii w związkach zawodowych", *KPP uchwały...* Vol. II. pp. 188-205.

6. N. Bukharin, "Trockizm a leninizm", *III Zjazd KPP...* pp. 410-436.

7. *III Zjazd KPP...* pp. 436-448.

8. Ibid., pp. 264-266.

9. The newly elected Central Committee was composed of L. Domski, F. Grzelszczak, J. Lewartowski, J. Łohinowicz-Korczyk, L. Purman, S. Skulski, Z. Unszlicht, S. Wołyniec, T. Żarski. Supply members were M. Bernstein, W. Bogucki, J. Gutowski, W. Krajewski, O. Krilyk, A. Landy, S. Miller, J. Paszyn. The political background of all members was the SDKPiL except for L. Purman, who came from PPS-Lewica.

10. Międzynarodówka Komunistyczna. Egzekutywa. Rozszerzone Plenum Egzekutywy MK, 21.3.-6.4.1925 r. . s. l. , 1925. CA KC PZPR, 151/II t1 k2.

11. *Międzynarodówka Komunistyczna 1919-1943. Zarys historyczny.* Warszawa, 1974. p. 355.

12. Materiały Egzekutywy Międzynarodówki Komunistycznej w sprawie KP Polski. s. l., s. d. . pp. 3-4. See also "List KW MK do organizayj KPP", *KPP uchwały...* Vol. II, p. 223.

13. *Materiały Egzekutywy...* pp. 7-11.

14. Ibid., p. 16.

15. Ibid., pp. 41-49.

16. *List KW MK do organizacji KPP...* p. 223-247. Also *Miedzynarodówka Komunistyczna...* p. 256.

17. Rezolucja KC KPP do KW MK z sierpnia 1925 r. . CA KC PZPR, 151/III t2 k10.

18. Listy L. Domskiego do KC KPP z 2 i 8.10.1925. CA KC PZPR, 155/V-3 t74 k1-4.

19.List L. Domskiego do kraju z 8.10.1925 r. . CA KC PZPR, am 728/1.

20. J. Tomaszewski, "Położenie klasy robotniczej w Polsce w latach 1924-1929", *Z pola Walki*, No. 2, 1967, p. 36.

21. Rezolucja w sprawie walki z prowokacją przyjęta w pierwszej połowie sierpnia 1925 r. . CA KC PZPR, 158/V-1 t4 k2.

22. Korespondencja Sekretariatu Krajowego KC KPP. CA KC PZPR, 158/V-3 t11 k24.

23. See A. Ajnenkiel, *Od "rządów ludowich" do przewotu majowego. Zarys dziejów politycznych Polski 1918-1926.* Warszawa, 1978.

24. *IV Konferencja Komunistycznej Partii Polski (24.11-23.12.1925). Protokoły obrad i uchwały.* Cz. 1-2. Warszawa, 1972.

25. Ibid., Cz.1, pp. 55-89.

26. Ibid., Cz.1, p. 24.

27. Ibid., Cz.1, p. 595.

28. Ibid., Cz.1, p. 516 and 608.

29. Ibid., Cz.1, p. 473.

30. Ibid., Cz.2, pp. 359-360.

31. Ibid., Cz.2, p. 364.

32. Ibid., Cz.2, pp. 379-395.

33. Ibid., Cz.2, pp. 272-277.

34. Ibid., Cz.2, p. 254.

35. The new Central Committee consisted of Ł. Aronsztam, K. Cichowski, A. Danieluk, G. Henrykowski, J. Leński, J. Łohinowicz, J. Paszyn, E. Próchniak, A. Warski. Supply members were M. Bernstein, J. Lubiniecki. W. Kostrzewa and W. Kwiatowski were coopted to the Central Committee after the conference. The Central Committee was clearly divided into two groups: the left, led by Leński and Paszyn, and the right, led by Warski and Próchniak.

36. *Czerwony Sztandar*, No. 2, March 1926. Also *Robotnik*, No. 96, April 8, 1926.

37. Materiały plenum lutowego KC KPP a 1926 r. . CA KC PZPR, k 6-7.

38. H. Walecki, "Najbliższe zadania KP Polski", *Wybór pism*. Warszawa 1967. pp. 285-286.

39. List Sekretariatu Krajowego z 3.1926 r. . CA KC PZPR, am 728/2.

40. J. Leński, "Na czele mas", *Nowy Przegląd*, 1926. pp. 127-129 (reprint).

41. K. Walecki, "W sprawie prawego i lewego faszyzmu", *Wybór pism*. Vol. II, p. 689.

42. List Sekretariatu Krajowego KC KPP z 1.3.1926 r. . CA KC PZPR, 158/V-3 t13 k19.

43. Ibid.

44. List W. Boguckiego do Sekretariatu Krajowego KC KPP z 15.3.1926 r. . CA KC PZPR, 151/VII-4 t13 k10.

45. List A. Danieluka z 11.4.1926 r. . CA KC PZPR, am 728/2.

46. T. Feder, "Sprawa przewrotu majowego 1926 r. na Komisji Poskiej Międzynarodówki Komunistycznej", *Z pola walki*, No. 2, 1967.

47. Ibid., p. 5.

48. Piłsudczyzna. CA KC PZPR, 151/VII-1 t73 k32.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. "Korespondencja polityczna Marii Koszutskiej". Cz. 2, *Z pola walki*, No. 2-4. 1965.

52. H. Walecki, "Praktyczne wnioski z tez Politbura o piłsudczyźnie", *Wybór pism*. Vol. II. p. 295.

53. List J. Leńskiego. CA KC PZPR, am 728/2.

54. On the coup d' état see Joseph Rothschild, *Piłsudski's coup d' état*. New York, 1966. And Andrzej Garlicki, *Przewrót majowy*. Warszawa, 1981.

55. A. Warski, "Bankructwo wodzów PPS", *Wybór pism...* Vol. II. p. 323.

56. "Dodatek nadzwyczajny". *Czerwony Sztandar*, No. 1, May 13, 1926.

57. Ibid.

58. *Czerwony Sztandar*, No. 6. May 27, 1926

59. Odezwa z 14.5.1926 r. . CA KC PZPR, am 1011/1.

60. B. Kolebacz, *Komunistyczna Partia Polski 1923-1929. Problemy ideologicze*. Warszawa, 1984, p. 148.

61. Uchwała Komisji Polskiej KW MK z 15.5.1926 r. . CA KC PZPR, 158/I-4 t6 k84.

62. List H. Waleckiego z 24.5.1926 r. do kraju. CA KC PZPR, am 728/2.

63. Plenum majowe KC KPP z 1926 r. . CA KC PZPR, 158/III t7 k2.

64. H. Piasecki, "Komunistyczna Partia Polski w dniach przewrotu majowego 1926 r.", *Z pola walki*, No. 1. 1976. Also T. Feder, *Sprawa przewrotu majowego...* pp. 15-16.

65. "Uchwała KC o demostracji w Warszawie 31 maja", *Nowy Przegład*, 1926, p. 481 (reprint).

66. E. Thälmann, "O taktice Komunistycznej Partii Polski", *Nowy Przegląd*, 1926. p. 619 (reprint).

67. A. Warski, "Mussolini a Piłsudski", *Wybór pism...* Vol. II. pp. 333-335.

68. "Tezy tow. J. Leńskiego", *Nowy przegląd*, 1926, pp. 491-494.

69. "Tezy czwórki", *Nowy Przegląd*, 1926, pp. 495-498.

70. "Błąd majowy, sytuacja i zadania partii. Uchwała Komitetu Centralnego z 12 czerwca", *Nowy przegląd*, 1926, pp. 485-586 (reprint).

71. "Tezy o sytuacji w Polsce", *Nowy Przegląd*, 1926, pp. 524-532.

72. "Uchwała KC", *Nowy Przegląd*, 1926, pp. 505-509 (reprint).

73. A. Wierzbicki, "Uwagi o przewrocie majowym", *Najnowsze Dzieje Polski 1914-1939*, Vol., IX, 1965.

74. *Robotnik*, June 11 - 29, 1926.

75. Materiały Komisji Polskiej KW MK z lipca 1926 r. . CA KC PZPR, am 1628.

76. B. Kolebacz, *Komunistyczna Partya Polski...* p. 175.

77. "Przewrót faszystowski w Polsce a KPP", *Nowy Przegląd*, 1926, pp. 309-322 (reprint).

78. B. Kolebacz, *Komunistyczna Partia Polski...* p. 177.

79. Plenum wrześniowe KC KPP z 1926 r. . CA KC PZPR, 158/III t12.

80. "Oświadczenie mniejszości KC", *Nowy Przegląd*, 1926. p. 563 (reprint).

81. *Nowy Przegląd*, 1926, pp. 470-478 (reprint).

82. A. Warski, "Przemówienie", *Wybór pism...* Vol. II. pp. 342-343. And F. Fiedler, "Na błędnej drodze", *Biuletyn Dyskusyjny*, November 15, 1926.

83. "Oświadczenie mniejszości KC", *Nowy Przegląd*, 192, pp. 559-562 (reprint).

Chapter V

The Factional Struggle (1926-1929)

The Factions

In the autumn of 1926, the two opposing factions, the "majority" and the "minority," had solidified within the Party leadership. The discussion of the so-called May error had accentuated and deepened differences among the members of the Central Committee. Factional struggle was to become a feature of the Party for years to come. In its initial phases, the dispute was on an ideological and theoretical level, leading to an examination of Marxist-Leninist theories and an overall heightening of the militants' theoretical consciousness. In its second phase, political content and theoretical values lost importance as the dispute took on the guise of a sheer power struggle for control of the Party. In the initial period ending with the Fourth Party Congress, the theoretical terms of an authentic political debate evolved around the nature of the Revolution, the role of the petty bourgeoisie, the stabilization of capitalism, and the dynamics of relationships among Poland's various political forces.

The changes in Poland's political and economic situation in the late spring and summer of 1926, after Piłsudski's coup of mid-May, came as a surprise to the Party, leading to further infighting among its factions. The economic situation improved yet again, unemployment went down, and, politically, the process of governmental consolidation continued. In a sense, this was what Warski had expected, but some of his predictions were undone

by events. The Socialist Party, for instance, had not yet gone over to the opposition, which was now composed of the National Democracy and the Piast Peasants. The parliamentary opposition had not at all been eliminated. Differing interpretations of data, together with accusations concerning past Party stances continued to nourish the inter-factional discussion.

The Plenum of the Central Committee was summoned in November to clarify the terms of the discussion underway.[1] For the first time, the "minority" came forth as a solid group, waging a battle on every point of the agenda. Warski himself was at the center of criticism, which focused on the assessment of political and parliamentary forces. Warski's efforts and those of the majority to seek contacts or to promote common action with the other parties in the parliamentary arena were branded "right-wing opportunism." The minority pressed the theory of social-fascism now widespread throughout the international worker movement and bluntly tagged every socialist group to the right of the Communists as essentially fascist.

In the resolutions adopted by the Plenum of the Central Committee, a fresh analysis of Pilsudski's regime was presented for the first time. The elimination of bourgeois-democratic institutions was now seen as a process of long duration. Piłsudski's decision to preserve the Sejm and other representative bodies was explained as an opportunistic manoeuvre to deceive the people. The possibility of an open struggle by the wealthy classes against the regime was discounted.[2]

Actually the Communists could not find an explanation for the continuation of right-wing opposition to the government, perceiving it simply as the result of the opposition of the wealthy classes to the bourgeoisie. Kolebacz notes:

> The heads of both factions of the Communist Party of Poland forgot that the struggle for power between the National Democracy and the Camp of Belweder lasted from the time of

> the independence of Poland, but its beginnings went back further than that. The coup of May and the attaining of a certain importance by the Sanacja could not bring this struggle to a halt.[3]

The parties of the left were subjected to harsher judgment. Their leaders were now defined as agents of the government and supporters of fascism. The Socialist leader Jędrzej Moraczewski was branded a fascist. This dogmatic position was not in step with reality, however. It did not make it any easier for leftist workers to draw nearer to the Communist Party. In fact, it drove the Party further into isolation.

In its resolutions, the Central Committee stressed the validity of the "worker government" slogan and emphasized the necessity to broadly expand the class struggle, mainly in the battles for wage increases, social rights, cost-of-living control, and against unemployment. According to the "majority," these struggles and the exercise of the strike option would be the instrumentalities allowing class-consciousness to grow and the political struggle to evolve. "The minority" in this instance sought opposition at all costs.[4] It branded the Centra Committee "majority" as "rightist" and called for a leadership capable of bringing the Party to the Bolshevik political line.[5]

The Plenum sent a letter to Party members summarizing the discussion in accordance with the views of the "majority". The "minority" was harshly criticized. It is worth noting that there were no threats of sanctions or disciplinary action mentioned in this document. In one respect this was comprehensible since formally at least, factionalism was prohibited by Leninist tenets; moreover, the leadership of the International had approved of the internal discussion in the Polish Party.[6]

The Party was by and large in agreement in forecasting the general disappointment by workers and peasants with the first post-May 1926 Sanacja governments. This was a realistic expectation, for in reality the peasants did

not gain much land and the workers were suffering under the strain of intensified and accelerated work schedules, a result of capitalist rationalization.

For its part, the government had made some movement on the agrarian problem, applying a policy of price increases for agricultural products and at the beginning of 1927 intensifying *parcelacja*, dealing with the question of eliminating *serwitut* and *komasacja* of the land. On balance, it supported the rich and middle income agrarian interests in order to achieve political support in the countryside. Indeed, this policy neutralized the moderate peasant parties, withholding them from the opposition. Otherwise peasant radicalization might have posed a risk to the Sanacja regime. With respect to radical and revolutionary peasant parties, the government adopted a policy of repression, the first step of which was the outlawing of the Byelorussian "Hromada" and the Polish Independent Peasant Party, together with the arrest of their Sejm deputies and their militants.[7]

Regarding the working class, the government sought to present a neutral image of non-interference in socio economic questions. It sought to project itself as an impartial mediator between capitalists and workers. At the moment, the government's prime economic concern was to secure a loan from the United States.[8] In urban areas, where worker discontent was palpable, the Communists made some gains. The mounting mood of radicalization drove the Socialist Party over to the parliamentary opposition although this move was marked by indecision and contradictory political conduct.[9]

The Piłsudski government gained important support for its conservative plank from the "old" Polish elites, at the expense of the National Democracy, which had lost support.

The Communist Party thus felt itself under pressure at the end of 1926 to reassess its situation and its stance. Toward the end of the year, the

factional struggle within the Party intensified. One faction was led by Warski and Kostrzewa, the other by Leński. Both were convinced of the correctness of their position and were determined to lead the Party. The "majority" sought confirmation of its political line from the International in an effort to shame the "minority".[10]

This "majority" gambit came at a favorable moment. In October 1926 the so-called New Opposition within the Bolshevik Party had been defeated, abandoning its activity while retaining its basic convictions. Trotsky was removed from the Politburo, and Kamenev from prospective membership in it, while Zinoviev, no longer a member of the Politburo, was removed from the presidency of the Comintern Executive Committee. The struggle was by no means over, however; opposition groups survived in the Bolshevik Party, among them Sovietized Poles guided by Zofia Unszlicht and Henryk Domski. No clear position was assumed by the International with respect to the Polish Party's internal conflict. Within the Polish delegation to the seventh Expanded Plenum of the Comintern's Executive Committee the "minority" found itself on the defensive, but no change in positions resulted. The "majority" lacked the support of Stalin, who though ideologically agreeing with the "minority", for the moment abstained from taking sides. He had not forgotten the attack unleashed on the "Three W's" during the fifth Congress of the International regarding the methods of struggle against Trotsky. Bukharin, urging that a compromise be reached, prevailed for now. At the beginning of January 1927, the Comintern took the further step of summoning the Polish Commission. Both factions were invited to present their arguments, and both opposed any compromise.[11]

On behalf of the "majority", Próchniak defended the recent political line, placing special emphasis on the fact that it had repeatedly earned the approval of the International. Replying to criticism, he stated that the Polish Party's alleged rightist political deviation was not only currently nonexistent,

but that it had never controlled the life of the Party. A good deal of his report was intent on demonstrating the fractional activity of the "minority" through such material 'evidence' as their writings and correspondence. Próchniak requested censure of the "minority" by the International and a prohibition on its factional activity.

From the other side, Leński focussed on the "majority's" historic errors, especially on its responsibility for the "May error." He asked that the International openly acknowledge the ideological differences within the Polish Party and that it guarantee freedom of discussion and circulation of documents. He also asked that a Party congress be summoned with the election of its delegates to be under the control of the International.

The leadership of the Commission asked the two factions to put their arguments into writing and to respond, also in writing, to a series of questions. No documentation exists for the subsequent consultations.

The resolution adopted by the Commission abstained from taking a position. It reasoned that it did not wish to interfere with the internal Polish debate in view of the upcoming congress. The resolution stated that the Party's political line in the recent past had been essentially reasonable and not in conflict with the line of the International. It was recalled that errors committed by the Central Committee had been grounds for criticism by the opposition. In the Commission's judgment, despite the Polish Party' internal differences of opinion, those differences did not amount to opposing political lines of thought in the Party. In so saying, the Commission declared its opposition to factionalism.[12]

The International was seeking the settlement of internal conflicts without wounding either of the two factions. In a second document, published a short time later by the Commission and confirmed by the Secretariat of the International, the right to criticism was affirmed in a ten-point enumeration. Full freedom of discussion within the Party was affirmed

as was the right to political opposition by the "minority", which was placed on a par with the "majority" and granted the right to appeal directly to the International.[13]

The "minority" was surely in an advantageous position. Having thus acquired a political standing, it felt even less inclined towards compromise. The Commission had not brought the factions together. Indeed, in a sense, it had sanctioned their existence with the principle of parity in the discussion commissions at all levels of the Party. It had legitimated a vertical division within the Party, a division that actually undermined "unity." In any case, the discussion process impacted on the entire Party, down to the smallest cells. In fact, two central committees, one led by Warski and the other by Leński, acted within the Party and were represented by delegates of their own at all levels of the Party.

A particularly adverse effect of this factional dispute was the arrest of many members. The Party, in total illegality had to pay a high price for lapses in its concentration on security matters in its conspiratorial existence.

The Party Central Committee was held in February 1927.[14] The "minority" limited itself to a collective denial of the "majority" line, but did not wage battle and did not present any document or resolution. Its posture incurred the wrath of the "majority", which, in the resolutions adopted, accused the "minority" of having embraced the view that what was worse for the Party was better for itself. In a certain sense, it may be true that factional interests had overridden the interests of the Party, but it can also be maintained that there was real confusion in understanding the new situation.

The analysis provided at the Central Committee seriously sought to understand the meaning of events. Changing government policy in the countryside was resulting in greater stratification of the agrarian social classes. In consequence, a fresh prediction was made of increasing radicaliza-

tion of the peasant masses since the differences between the poor and the wealthy peasants were being aggravated. Then, with some contrivance and oversimplification, a linkage was made between increasing peasant purchasing power and diminishing purchasing power among the urban workers. On this issue Lauer wrote an explanatory article.[15] The "majority" then voiced its approval of peasant participation in the parceling out of land and the elimination of serfdom. The "minority" was opposed, advancing instead a proposal for peasant committees to organize a decisive struggle against the government's entire agrarian policy.

The resolutions also proposed the idea of a worker-peasant bloc which, with the support of the revolutionary left in the Sejm, would constitute an opposition force to the government and to its policy of repression and psychological terror. This idea was not defined in detail, however Judgment of the parliamentary left and in particular of the Socialists was more intricate. Overall, the "Majority" sought a positive attitude toward the Socialists in view of the fact that they were a party intent on socialism even if through parliamentary means. At the moment, however, the International was mandating the line of "social-fascism" and was pressing in the same directions as the "minority", insisting on a conspiracy between the Sanacja government and the Socialist Party to perpetrate their power over the Polish masses. The resolution adopted upheld the "minority" opinion. Later, at the Fourth Congress, the "majority" would attempt to have this position changed in favor of the parliamentary left.[16]

The Fourth Congress

In the first months of 1927, the political discussion had involved the entire Party, with the result that it was divided into two factions at all levels. The upcoming congress prompted disputes on the selection of delegates and both factions hardened their stands. It is difficult to determine the power configuration inside the Party, but it is basically known that the "minority" was quite advanced, to the point of controlling the organizations of Warsaw, Kraków, part of Upper Silesia, the Union of Communist Youth, and the Communist Party of Western Byelorussia. The "majority", however, controlled the organizations of Łódź, the Dąbrowa Basin, the Communist Party of the Western Ukraine, and many other regional organizations.[17]

The harshness of the dispute over the appointment of delegates to the Congress is attested by the fact that the "minority" blocked the opening of the Congress itself with a protest demonstration over the selection of delegates. Given the impasse, the Polish Commission of the International took charge of the situation, naming Smerala the head of the commission of delegates to the Congress, and giving him the function of supervisor. At the end of the Commission's proceedings there were twenty-four "majority" and twenty "minority" delegates. The Communist Party of the Western Ukraine was represented by four delegates from the "majority" and two from the "minority."

The suspicion that representation at the Congress was skewed is plausible. The Party structure in Poland was less favorably represented than the Party abroad, where a considerable number of medium-high echelon leaders resided. Both factions demanded majority representation at the Congress, illustrating that the will to compromise was lacking on both sides. The Comintern's Polish Commission assumed that the "majority" enjoyed the

greater representation at the outset of the Congress. Hence the president of that Polish Commission, Bukharin, thought it safe to stay away from the opening session of the Congress .

The Congress, held outside Moscow, lasted three months. It was the longest in the history of the Polish Party. Both factions were well represented and the most influential leaders were all present, excepting Walecki and Brun.[18]

In the initial phase of the Congress, discussion focused on the history of the workers' movement and its future prospects. The question, placed on the agenda at the opening of the Congress in order to encourage theoretical debate, did not in fact deflect discussion from turning to the May error, a discussion marked by the polemics of the factional dispute. The discussions which followed, on the political situation and on the risk of war against the Soviet Union, were similarly marked by factional polemics.

The Polish Commission interrupted the Congress in an effort to quell the conflict, but both factions were negative. Then the Executive Committee of the International intervened with Wasil Kolarov, the Bulgarian Communist throuble-shooter, imposing a compromise resolution at the Congress which received formal and unanimous approval.[19] Thereupon the atmosphere became less tense, and the Congress resumed serious work.

The Polish factions now demonstrated a more realistic attitude, abandoning their search for unconditional victory. They ceased the game of motions and counter motions at every step and on every pretext.

The direct intervention of the International via Kolarov can be better understood if we recall here the internal situation of the Bolshevik Party and of the International itself. The struggle against internal opposition had scored a victory, but it was not yet ended. Trotsky was counter-attacking on the Chinese problem, accusing the Stalinist-Bukharinist leadership of the Party and the International of opportunism in the strategic choices made. In

this atmosphere, it was considered appropriate to work towards mediating the differences between the factions of the Polish Party. On the one hand, the "minority" could not be supported by Moscow because the positions of the Polish left were mostly those of the Soviet New Opposition or, in any case, appeared to match those positions. (Actually, both Polish factions were currently keeping a safe distance from the New Opposition, and, with discernible opportunism, approving the repressive methods being used against it.) Furthermore the most forceful veteran representatives of the ultra-left position had been kept away from the Congress.

On the other hand, Moscow and the International could not support the "majority" either. Such a stance would have elicited more accusations of rightist opportunism. Compromise was thus dictated, with Stalin himself moving in that direction. Even though his sympathies tended towards the "minority", he met with representatives from both factions.[20] Similarly, Bukharin sought to create a mediation commission with Stanisław Huberman at its head, but this move failed thanks to resistance by Warski, Kostrzewa (of the "Majority"), and Leński (of the "minority").

One of the salient elements on which the "minority" line rested was the conviction that the capitalist world was preparing for war against the Soviet Union. This was also apprehended as a real danger by the International. The Polish "majority", however, believed that this apprehension was currently unwarranted, that while the international political scene indeed was tense with respect to the Soviet Union, it was not such as to justify fears of an upcoming war.[21] This question had direct consequences for the Polish Party in at least two areas of concern. First, if there was indeed a danger of war, Poland would be a belligerent and the Party needed to prepare to transform war into revolution. That meant applying a short-term political strategy in specific directions. Second, in Poland's eastern provinces and thus for the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Communists, war would mean the

prospect of national as well as social liberation. This also implied the need to be prepared for other events, and consequently for the application of a short-term political strategy. Further, it was believed that such a war would force the Polish government to arm the workers and the peasants and that therefore conditions for the Revolution would be enhanced. Overall, the peril of war aided and encouraged the ultra-left's arguments for immediate preparation for revolution. As has been mentioned, these arguments were based on the belief that subjective factors prevailed over objective ones in crisis situations.

At the Congress the notion of the "united front" was in effect conceded to be a mere tactic to unmask reformist leaders.[22] Closely connected with this issue was the question of "economic struggle." The "majority" deemed conflicts that were economic in nature and entailed strike activity to be revolutionary by definition, requiring the Party to involve a broad spectrum of workers in them and to infuse them with political content so as to ripen the workers' class consciousness. The "minority" was more concerned that governmental arbitration of such economic disputes and strikes might arouse confidence in the government. Salary increases obtained from such struggles might deter the growth of a revolutionary mood. In the resolutions of the Congress the "majority" line was passed although criticism for economic opportunism was leveled against it.[23]

The agrarian question and its strategy continued to be an object of profound disagreement and strife within the Party. Kostrzewa again defended the choices made by the Party leadership since the Second Congress on and the slogan "land to the peasants." But the pressure for change was strong. Budzyński brought up again the idea of nationalization, supported by the fact that the slogan of collectivization had made somewhat of a recovery thanks to the push by the "minority". Collectivization was especially supported by the Bolshevik Party as was demonstrated at its

fifteenth Congress in December 1928. The promise of land to the peasants was deplored as mere reformism all too similar to the parcelizing activity of the government. Even though many and, perhaps, the majority of delegates remained convinced by the old Party line, the Congress opposed on principle the government's entire agrarian policy. Thus to the slogan "The worker has no work because the peasant has no land", in force up to time of the Congress, was added "the peasant has no land because the worker has no power."[24]

One of the focal points of discussion and ideological dispute at the Congress was the concept of the Revolution. This issue had already dominated the entire history of the international workers' movement. After the Bolshevik Revolution it had taken on new importance. Its range of concern was broad: the stance of proletarian dictatorship with respect to bourgeois democracy; the development of the bourgeois into the socialist revolution; the role of the working class and its party in transforming general democratic goals into socialist aims.

As previously described, in the Communist Party of Poland these ideas had found a firm definition for the first time at the Second Party Congress, where the "Leninist" line had been approved. The working class and its revolutionary vanguard had been identified as the basic force of the Revolution, and it was further given the weighty assignment of guiding the entire nation. In the specifically Polish case, the Congress had identified the peasants and the national minorities as natural allies of the proletariat. It had also devised the formula of a worker-peasant government as an intermediate phase leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat. After the "May error," criticism was focused on this theory's leaving open the possibility of an autonomous role for the petty bourgeoisie at the expense of the proletariat. In this view lay the source of the differing interpretations of the nature of fascism and of the regime installed by Piłsudski. Here also was the

source of the problem of tactics. Now at the Fourth Congress, Warski stressed that from the fight against fascism in Poland, a "democratic interlude" could emerge. This suggestion had originally been formulated by the Communist Party of Italy.[25] The Polish "minority" denounced it as further evidence of "majority" cowardice and unwillingness to confront fascism with the dictatorship of the proletariat.[26] Indeed, this theory was now blamed as the true genesis of the May error. At the time of the Piłsudski coup d'etat in May 1926, the Party leadership had applied a strategy that was consistent with the Leninist principles of the Polish Second Congress, in particular regarding the possible evolution of the Revolution from a bourgeois democratic to a socialist phase. In contrast the "minority" maintained that the Revolution must have a socialist character from the outset and must be carried out by the working class through its vanguard, the Communist Party. Hence, the notion of two-stage revolution was rejected as a delusion. The "majority" was blamed for having weighed a possible autonomous role in the revolutionary process for the petty bourgeoisie. Heavy criticism was especially aimed at Kostrzewa.[27] She had indeed overestimated the role of the petty bourgeoisie but she had also validly punctured the prevailing dogmatism of the International toward all political forces that were not strictly Communist. Kostrzewa based her reply to the Congress on Leninist positions and furnished a detailed account of the Lenin's own contradictions.[28] Incidentally, this topic of petty bourgeois autonomy held center stage throughout the Polish Party factional dispute.

The question of Poland's economic viability also elicited much divisive discussion. It was influenced from the start by the Leninist (and not only Leninist) theory of the inevitable fall of capitalism. Despite the Fifth Comintern Congress's denial of any possibility for capitalist stability, the Polish Communists had to contend with an evident process of economic stabilization. Kostrzewa and Lauer had on numerous occasions noted that

process, thereby provoking harsh criticism from Leński and the "minority". Towards the end of 1926, some narrowing of the gap between these contrasting opinions could be noted. The "majority" acknowledged internal improvements in the areas of finance, currency, and employment, but nevertheless described Polish capitalism as heavily dependent on the interests of foreign capital, a dependency that intensified worker's exploitation and thus their militancy. In the long run, the resulting struggles would render impossible the stabilization of Polish capitalism.

This stance still did not satisfy Leński, who persisted in attacking the "majority" on the issue. He and others argued that Poland was jeopardizing its own industrial potential by exporting raw materials to the West and that the "majority" failed to recognize this. On the political level, he considered the Sanacja regime to be linked to the large landholdings and to heavy industry, while light industry supported the National Democracy. This analysis was based on the concept of a lingering power struggle among segments of the bourgeoisie.[29]

During the Fourth Congress the usual pattern of factional fighting prevailed. The "minority" was organized for attack and the "majority" sought to shore up its positions, without irritating the International. On a motion presented by Kolarov, the Congress approved the nominal dissolution of factions and the end of internal strife. This decision was imposed by the International, but of course no compromise was reached. In fact, the dispute became more heated. The Polish Commission had to intervene again in the elections to the Central Committee. The "majority" was granted the right to elect eight representatives (not the nine requested) and the "minority," seven. Two so-called neutral (non-Polish Party) members were added directly by the International to the Polish Central Committee. With this technical solution, the International gained the power of direct decision within the Central

Committee of the Polish Party. But the battle between the Polish factions continued.[30]

The "minority" now was in a way strengthened by gaining protection from "majority" sanctions against it. Furthermore, at the plenum of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party held on August 1, 1927, Stalin announced that "the struggle against right-wing deviations in the Polish Party continues and will continue in the future." As Kolebacz notes, the term "right-wing deviations" was used here for the first time by Stalin in reference to the "majority" of the Polish Party.[31] The Stalinist position was hardly compatible with the International's efforts toward compromise.

As for these two Polish factions themselves, the "minority" based its convictions on a maximalist vision of the Revolution and ultra-left concepts. By virtue of that vision, it often overestimated subjective at the expense of objective factors in the revolutionary process, and it did so too in its analysis of the current situation. The strategy it often proposed was unrealistic, and its slogans alienated the Party from the rural population and from the working class as well. The "majority", on its part, presented more wide-ranging concepts, showing greater capacity for serious political analysis and for recognizing changing circumstances. It focused on precise interests and gave the Party greater popularity and political impact, even within the constraints of its illegality. Finally, various Party members were of the highest intellectual stature in the international workers' movement, guaranteeing a sophisticated political formulation for the Party.

The Fourth Congress brought the theoretical and ideological (but not the organizational) dispute between the factions to a close. But the aftermath saw a sectarianism and dogmatism that would lead to a deterioration of the Party's ideological and theoretical assets.

The End of the Factional Fight

In an institutional political sense, 1927 was of special importance in Poland since March 1928 would witness the first national Senate and Sejm election since November 1922. These elections would, in effect, be a symbolic referendum on Piłsudski's coup and subsequent regime.

The Communist Party anticipated the elections in the Central Committee in February 1927. A plan of electoral action was submitted for discussion by the Political Bureau. All other political parties were considered enemies since they represented different sectors of the bourgeoisie and all of them, including the Socialists, comprised the fascist camp.[32] This assessment signalled a victory of the "minority" on the issue of the "division of roles" within the non-communist political world between the ruling Pilsudskist regime and its parliamentary opposition. The Communist electoral slogans remained: the worker-peasant government, the right to self-determination, including secession, land to the peasants, defense of the Soviet Union, defense of workers' rights with an eight-hour workday and wage increases. The Central Committee also decided on the publication of a manifesto to open the political campaign and on the presentation of Communist lists under the name of "Worker-Peasant Unity." Regarding other revolutionary radical groups and parties, both worker and peasant, the Centra Committee decided that they should run on autonomous lists, separate from the Communist.

The Plenum of the Central Committee of October 1927 again dealt with the electoral campaign, now close at hand. The resolution adopted on the subject has been lost, but from the arguments made at the discussion it may be inferred that the choices made at the February Central Committee meeting were confirmed.[33] The "minority" favored ideological purity, even

at the expense of electoral success. The "majority" remained by and large in favor of the presentation of separate lists by the parties of the revolutionary and radical left.

The Central Committee meeting of October 1927 did not bring up anything that was theoretically new in the general discussion, nor did it succeed in ending the factional fight. A provisional political bureau was selected to be domiciled in Moscow and to replace the Party mission at the Comintern. The National Secretariat was also considerably overhauled. The lack of documents does not allow us to go into any further detail on these matters.

The Plenum had also to contend with the question of the (West) Ukrainian Communists, who were at the moment divided into factions.[34] With respect to the internal problems of the Bolshevik Party, the Plenum censured the New Opposition. It also planned a mass demonstration on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the formation of Soviet Russia.

The representative of the Comintern to the Plenum (probably Dimitrij Manuilski) had an important role in preventing the resurgence of the factional dispute and in getting the final resolution passed. The resolution stated the obligation of all members to work for the consolidation of the Party in accordance with the recommendations of the Polish Commission of the Executive Committee of the International. It also imposed a ban on factions and prohibited the discussion in various party organizations of different positions if they had not been fully dealt with first by the Party Central Committee. For Party members and activists, there was the threat of dismissal from the Party for non-compliance with its decisions. This resolution was presented as an extreme remedy for cases in which previous remedies had proved ineffective.[35] Nevertheless, a short while after the Plenum the "majority" was to disclose the existence of several party

organizations that supported the New Opposition of the Bolshevik Party, indicating that the guilty parties were former members of the "minority."

The prospect of Polish elections was a problem for many political parties. The tendency to collaborate with the regime had evolved and spread among the moderate segments of many parties, which had to contend with full-blown schisms in their own ranks. On the other hand, various parties in the Sejm had shifted to the opposition owing to the Sanacja government's harassment of parliamentary action.

The elections to the Sejm were finally held on March 4 1928, and to the Senate a week later. The Piłsudski regime, carefully preparing its participation in them, had founded a new political body: The Non-Party Bloc of Collaboration with the Government (*Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem - BBWR*), led by Walery Sławek and made up of conservatives, bourgeoisie and landlords, some centrist parliamentary groups, and defectors from leftist parties. To this grouping was added the support of old Legionnaires, personal adherents of Piłsudski of various political stripes, and the institutional state apparatus together with the government. The BBWR proposed amending the Constitution to strengthen the president and weaken the legislature. A large number of lists was presented for the elections, but the actual alignments were few enough to be summarized: the government bloc (BBWR), the National Democracy, the centrist parties (Piast Peasants et al.), the parties of the parliamentary left (Socialist et al.), the bloc of ethnic minority parties, and the revolutionary left (Communists et al.).

As anticipated, the electoral program of the Communists focussed on the struggle against the "fascist dictatorship of Piłsudski". They accused the non-revolutionary opposition parties of deceiving the people. This stand entailed some contradiction, however. On the one hand, the Communists considered the opposition to be allies of the fascists, on the other, they agreed that the regime leaned towards the destruction of the opposition in

its own self-interest. In these stances could be recognized the success of the "minority" political assessment at the Fourth Congress.

"Worker-Peasant Unity" was the legal electoral list of the Communists in the major urban concentrations. Other lists known as "on reserve" were presented under various names such as "Solidarność", "Radical Socialists", "Worker Unity."[36]

In the cities, the Communists' main competitor was the Socialist Party, which contended for the workers vote and mounted a solid and well-run anti-communist campaign. The Communists, in turn, kept up their clear opposition to the Socialist Party, labeling it "Social-traitor" and "Left arm of fascism"; isolated attempts were made in the interest of a united front, without results.[37] In the electoral campaign the two Party factions were aligned strangely, with the "majority" opposing any united front with the Socialists, and the "minority" oddly favoring it. The International intervened and the "minority" was ordered to abandon its position.[38]

The Communist Party's electoral campaign was carried out under rather harsh repression. In various districts it was reduced to a mere conspiracy. Many Communist militants were arrested and many Communist lists were voided on various pretexts. Notwithstanding, sixty revolutionary lists were presented in sixty-four electoral districts, including all the major areas of worker concentration.

The results of the elections were unexpected. The Sanacja Bloc (BBWR) gained only a limited success, with twenty-five percent of the votes. This meant it was henceforth the largest party in the Sejm, but far from the three fifts majority need for amending the Constitution. The Peasant Party Piast lost votes, as did the National Democracy and the National Workers' Party. For the National Democracy and the Centrist parties the election results spelled outright defeat. The non-Communist left gained significant success, a reflection of widespread popular radicalization. The Peasant Party

Wyzwolenie almost doubled its representatives in the Sejm and considerable success was also enjoyed by the Peasant Party. The Socialist Party polled 1,411,000 votes, improving from forty-one to sixty-three representatives and endorsing its parliamentary opposition to the regime.

Communist sources and historians claimed that the revolutionary lists obtained 900,000 votes, of which about 300,000 were on voided lists, showing considerable gains over the 132,000 votes polled by the Communists in 1922. In the countryside the Communists polled 120,000 votes, ten times as many as in 1922. In Warsaw, the Communist list was well over double the votes polled in 1922. The same thing happened in the Dąbrowa Basin where the Communist list was in first place. In Łódź, the number of votes more than tripled. Other independent statistics put the number of votes obtained by revolutionary lists at less than 400,000.[39]

The Communist Party gained seven mandates: Adolf Warski and Konstanty Sypula in Warsaw, Henryk Bitner and Paweł Rosiak in Łódź; Jerzy Sochacki, Władysław Baczyńsky, and Jakub Gawron in the Dąbrowa Basin. The other revolutionary lists allied with the Communists succeeded in obtaining eight mandates plus four from a similar, but more moderate, list.[40]

This relative electoral success attested to the Party's ability to mobilize, despite its internal and external problems. The success occurred at a moment of relative economic stability, yet it demonstrated growing dissatisfaction with the regime of the Sanacja as well as residual resentment against the Right-Center segments that had preceded it. The Party had incited a substantial volume of political activity despite its difficult factional split.

A Plenum of the Central Committee assessed the electoral results in June 1928. The "minority" again adopted a critical stance toward the Central Committee, accusing it of not having been able to organize a worker-peasant voter bloc and of having erred in keeping secret the links between the Party

and other revolutionary groups. As a consequence, it maintained, there had been no general mobilization when the regime repressed the legal revolutionary organizations.[41] This position was an example of the Leński concept, according to which all the legal revolutionary organizations should openly associate with the Communist Party. This idea seems a bit out of touch with reality since it is most unlikely that it could have achieved a greater mobilization; moreover, repressive governmental measures would certainly have resulted had the Leński scenario been activated.

The "minority" then expressed, for the first time, a positive judgment regarding the Communist Faction in the Sejm. It again attacked Kostrzewa, who, replying in *Czerwony Sztandar*, sought to reconcile her relatively benign position on the Socialists with the official principle of social-fascism.[42]

The two factions presented two separate reports, although this time their contents were not markedly different. There was general agreement on the desirability of the united front at the grass-roots level, aimed at unmasking the reformist Socialist leaders. Fascism in Poland was seen as growing in strength and all the legal parties were considered as either right arms or left arms of fascism, as exemplified in the Sanacja regime. Both these positions were effectively "minority" successes. The danger of war against the Soviet Union was again stressed. The only real disagreement between the factions was over the stabilization of the capitalist economy, although here, too, the "majority" had in fact already partially accepted the positions, albeit unrealistic, of the "minority". Current restructuring in the countryside favored the landlords and the wealthier peasants, it was declared. Also noted was the growth of cartelization in heavy industry and the growth of foreign capital in Poland.[43]

In April 1928 the Sixth Congress of the Comintern opened in Moscow. The political atmosphere was dominated by radical prediction of an imminent and definitive fall of international capitalism, with the consequent outbreak

of socialist Revolution. This apocalypse required a united Communist Party, free of internal strife and a leadership capable of accomplishing the tasks commanded by the International.

The preparation for the Congress of the International had been an occasion for further harsh factional battles in the Polish Communist Party. Both factions sought, as they had in the past, to acquire internal Party control and confront the Comintern with such a fait accompli. The Warsaw Party organization, a "minority" stronghold, attempted to hold the territorial conferences without the participation of the Central Committee's "majority" representative. These conferences were then suspended by the Secretariat. The same thing happened in the Union of Communist Youth. The protest campaign against government policy toward the Soviet Union was another prime example of factional infighting as the two factions organized separate and competitive rallies against each other. The Central Committee punitively dissolved the Warsaw Party Committee and the Secretariat of the Union of Communist Youth; both bodies were then reappointed by the Secretariat, this time under "majority" control. Given these self-destructive power games, the intervention of the International appeared necessary and legitimate.

Concerning strategy, the Congress advocated increased Communist Party action at the mass level. For that purpose, the principle of the united front "from the bottom up" was stressed. On the trade-union front, the Communists had already for some time applied a strategy of separation. Now that strategy was theorized in the principle (adopted officially at the Tenth Plenum of the Executive Committee of 1929) of "class against class." This new circumstance meant that the Communists needed to strengthen their opposition to the leadership of Social-Democratic parties, promote autonomous Communist activity within the social classes, and raise the struggle from the economic to the political plane. This process was intended by the International as the first step toward the creation of actual communist trade

unions. The articulated premise was that the member parties of the Socialist Workers' International had allegedly gone over to the side of the bourgeoisie and that the social democrats and reformers were the most dangerous enemies of the working class. In other words, the Sixth Comintern Congress was in the throes of sectarian ultra-radicalism.

The Revolution occupied a central position in the proceedings of the Congress. The question was outlined by Bukharin: the seizure of power by the proletariat would take place through various routes and at various times and according to the situation, since the evolution of capitalism appeared to be varied and non-uniform. In countries where capitalism had reached an advanced stage of evolution, the crisis would lead to the immediate installation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But for countries that had attained a medium level of development, the Socialist Revolution might give rise to democratic bourgeois transformations. For countries in which vast bourgeois democratic reforms were needed, a process of developing from a democratic to a revolutionary stage was envisioned. Poland's situation was said to fit this scheme.

On this question reports were given by Ryng for the Polish Party "majority" and Lauer for the "minority." Disagreeing on various points, both foresaw for Poland the onset of a Revolution which would be socialist from the outset and which, during its course, would accomplish democratic objectives. This position was not approved by the Congress.[44]

Another question debated at the Congress was the nature of fascism. Various distinctions such as "overt fascism", "fascist tendencies", and other characterizations were used casually. The documents often contained unexplained terminological classifications such as "social-fascism", "fascist government", "leftist fascist block", and the like. In effect, the International was unable to produce a precise analysis of the fascist phenomenon -- its origins, and its original elements.

The censure of "rightist deviationism" devised by the Congress gave further opportunity for the Polish factional dispute. The "minority" was in a strong position since it had already for some years labeled the "majority" as a "grouping of the historic right." Nor did the "majority" abstain from attacking the "minority", accusing it of "rightist opportunism", mainly in reference to the recent electoral campaign when the "minority" had supported the idea of the formation of a united front "from the top down." On this specific question, Lauer and Leński locked horns,[45] as they did on the matter of the danger of war with the Soviet Union.[46] Leński and Lauer exchanged accusations, each aiming to gain the support of the Comintern. Lauer asked that the "minority be pressed into submission in the name of the principle of 'Bolshevik discipline'." Leński, declaring that his "minority" actually represented the current numerical majority in the Party, demanded the abolition of the principle of equal representation and the transfer of the Party leadership to the "minority."

Kostrzewa's speech was basically self-critical. For the first time, this tenacious leader renounced her own positions. After once again accusing the "minority" of rightist opportunism, she fully accepted all the arguments presented by the International, which had attacked all her previous positions. Moreover, she even defended the "minority" positions on the question of the parliamentary left and its relationship with the Sanacja. The reasons for Kostrzewa's yielding are not known; it may have been the result of outside pressure, or, less likely, influenced by the atmosphere of the Congress, she may have changed her opinions. More convincing is the suggestion of Kolebacz:

> ...Kostrzewa only officially renounced part of her views, which in the present situation of the International communist movement, would have disqualified her group from candidacy for the political leadership of the Communist Party of Poland.

> [To which she gave the highest priority] The reason for this behavior could be that she was convinced of the correctness of her own political line and of the injuriousness of the views of the "minority" for the communist movement in Poland.[47]

Thus, in her view, the "minority" had to be prevented at all costs from achieving party control. This interpretation seems to correspond with the fact that Warski, a delegate at the Congress with a consultative vote, did not intervene in the debate despite the fact that he was actually excluded from the Party leadership at this time.

Owing to the conflicts between it and the Warsaw party and the Polish Party Secretariat, the Polish Committee, whose chairman was Bukharin, was again summoned by the Congress.. Both Polish factions submitted documents to the Commission.[48] In reality, the theoretical debate was but a "cover" for the conflict for control of the Party and its various bodies. This conflict had by now taken on a particularly dogmatic and caustic tone such as had never been heard before in the history of the international Communist movement. The Commission decided that the Party leadership must be moved to Poland. Otherwise, abroad, there could only be limited political nuclei. Otto Kuusinen and Dimitrij Manuilski (Stalin's Soviet trouble-shooters for Communist matters) were nominated by the Comintern to the Polish Party's Central Committee, while Wilhelm Knorin was nominated to its Political Bureau, which consisted of three representatives from the "majority" and two from the "minority". The National Secretariat and the Central Editorial Bureau were to be built on an equal-footing basis. Stiepan Garbuz-Poddubnyj was named representative of the Comintern in the Secretariat and Wilhelm Knorin also joined the Central Editorial Bureau. It was stressed that the decisions of the Central Committee were binding on all party organizations and on the Union of Communist Youth. Some Polish leaders were dismissed from the Party.

The International thus sought to resolve matters by directly intervening in the affairs of the Polish Party. It assumed a role not only in the Party's internal political questions. but also in its choice of people and in determining the personal political fate of individual leaders and militants. These decisions were protested by the "majority", through Próchniak.[49] They indeed amounted to a decisive victory for the "minority." The "majority" now found itself in a difficult position in which its past theoretical achievements were jeopardized. It had now become the "historic right" of the Party. In addition, the Comintern instructions regarding the Socialists came at just the moment when they and the moderate political groups were in fact joining the opposition to the Sanacja regime.[50]

The political line sanctioned at the Sixth Congress of the International and its consequences for the Polish Party were replicated by the Polish Central Committee in November 1928.[51] It stated the need to consolidate the Party, upheld the validity of the political line formulated by the Fourth Congress, and demanded that rightist deviations be combated. The document, which was approved by both factions, restated the principle of submission to the decisions of the majority by the minority. In giving its approval, each faction was apparently convinced that it represented the Party majority. The document rhetorically demanded an end to factionalism at all levels and in all organizations. Party discipline was emphasized and sanctions were envisioned for failure to comply. In general, the Central Committee's resolution attested to the "majority's" accepting the new state of affairs in the Party leadership and to the "minority's" undoubted position of strength in the Party leadership.

In the international Communist movement, however, doubts soon arose concerning the line of the Sixth Congress and its tendency to inflate rightist errors out of proportion. The Bolshevik Party was also embroiled in conflict. Differences of opinion were arising concerning the first five year

plan. Among others, Bukharin and Rykov (Bukharin was at the moment Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Comintern and editor-in-chief of *Prawda*; Rykov was Chairman of the Council of Peoples' Commissars) now opposed collectivizing agriculture on a grand scale. Instead of all efforts being focused on heavy industry, they proposed developing light industry and consumer goods and easing pressure on the peasantry. Stalin proposed rapid total collectivization of agriculture and concentration wholly on heavy industry. As is known, Stalin gained a clear victory and by early 1929 Bukharin was beginning to lose power in the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party.

Events of such importance obviously had an immediate impact on the Bolshevik Party and carried considerable weight in the Polish Party, which now had to adjust to a rather complex internal Polish reality. Shortly after the 1928 elections, the Sanacja regime went on the offensive in the parliament on the matter of amending the Constitution, with Piłsudski coming out against "*Sejmokracja*". At this point, the parliamentary left differentiated itself from Piłsudski and took up the defense of the Sejm and the Senate, to protect the democratic system. The parties of the parliamentary left formed a "Commission of Agreement for the Defense of the Democratic Republic", a body intended to resist the regime's penchant for executive dictatorialism. This opposition actually materialized in a vague and incoherent fashion. More decisive was the opposition of the rightist Narodowa Demokracja. A consequence of this ferment was a split in the Socialist Party, engineered by Piłsudski supporters, who brought the slyly-named "Polish Socialist Party-Revolutionary Faction" (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna-Frakcja Rewolucyjna*) into being.

It now became difficult for the Communists to deny or dismiss the non-revolutionary left's genuine opposition to the regime. But the political line imposed by the International left no room for maneuver. And the

political dilemma, already complicated, was made more so by the lingering intra-Party factionalism.

The political situation was assessed in January 1929 by the Plenum of the Central Committee. It again focused on the threat of war against the Soviet Union by the western powers, noting an alleged increase in the role of France as an organizer of the anti-Soviet war. Poland's Sanacja regime was again accused of preparing to attack the Soviet Union.[52] This position complied with the instructions of the Comintern, but seemed contrived as the Soviet Union was being invited in September 1929 to participate in the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The Plenum's resolutions on the Socialists mechanically repeated the old line of "social-fascism", contending that the Communists would carry on the struggle against the regime by themselves, without the collaboration of other parties. On trade-union strategy, a solid part of the Polish Party disagreed with the resolutions of the International, which had for some time been driving toward transforming the trade-union Communist factions into separate Communist trade unions. With this consideration in mind, the Comintern had instructed the French and Czechoslovakian Communist Parties accordingly. At the Polish Plenum, the "minority" once again charged the trade unions with abandoning the defense of the workers, with having instead become outposts of fascism. The trade union leaders were accused of seeking to destroy the revolutionary factions in the trade-union movement. The trade unions were summarily divided into two categories: those pro-regime (actually almost all of them) and those which were revolutionary. The latter, however, with few exceptions, had yet to be created. Such tactics certainly did not facilitate the spread of Communist influence. Perhaps even the International was aware of this fact for in February 1929 it urged the Polish Party to press continual political action among workers, mainly at the level of worker committees and factory delegate.[53]

It is proper to recall that at this moment the Communist Party of Poland was still illegal. Its total membership amounted to about 3,500, with another 2,500 from the Ukrainian and Byelorussian brother parties in the eastern provinces. To these numbers were added five to six thousand from the Union of Communist Youth. The total number of Communists did not exceed ten or twelve thousand. Though its membership had been reduced, the Party still attracted notice in the political arena.[54]

While the inappropriate "social fascist" tactics had the potential of pushing the Party into a new isolation similar to that of 1925, it derived benefits from the fact that the objective terms of the situation were changing: with the Wall Street crash of October 1929, capitalism entered a profound economic crisis, the Great Depression.

The Polish economy was stifled with recession, its weaknesses evident. Unemployment began to climb after a period of instability, with 170,000 on the rolls of unemployed in March 1930 and 185,000 at year's end (up from 126,000 twelve months earlier).[55] In the middle of April 1929 the regime had resorted to the first government of officers a cabinet half composed of soldiers, headed by Colonel Kazimierz Świtalski. The new government immediately sought to gain ground through an administrative maneuver. The oppositional Socialists were dismissed from the Mutual Funds, and replaced with Socialist commissars from the pro-BBWR Revolutionary Faction. This and other government actions incited intense political activity on the center and the left, giving rise in mid-September to an opposition bloc of the Center-left *(Centrolew)* that provoked the fall of Switalski's government at the beginning of December 1929.

The Communist Party, however, disclaimed any collaboration with the Centrolew. The ultra-left line of the Sixth Comintern Congress negated such a possibility and the Polish "minority", guided by Leński, having now won the factional fight, was uninterested. The new Party situation was sanctioned by

a Plenum of the Central Committee, held in Berlin in June 1929. The "minority", with Leński as the main reporter, again accused Kostrzewa, Danieluk, and Lauer of rightist deviation and opportunism. Nikolaj Popov and Wilhelm Knorin, the representatives of the International, openly aligned themselves with the "minority" in defense of the theory of "social-fascism" and its attack on the Socialists, who were defined as the greatest danger to the working class.[56] At this point, the argument had taken hold in the Comintern that the Socialists represented the greatest danger to the Communist movement and "the Revolution." The attacks unleashed on Kostrzewa for doubting this line were vehement, comprehensive, and vituperous.[57]

Thus ended the long factional fight for the Party leadership. The Plenum reconfirmed the Comintern analysis of capitalism's economic crisis. Also stressed was the danger of war against the Soviet Union, especially at a moment of economic transformation. It was charged that the international bourgeoisie needed such a war to resolve its own internal problems and to destroy the example of Soviet success that was attracting the attention of the world's people.

It was predicted that the capitalist crisis would erupt in a revolutionary explosion. Only thus could the destruction of the Sanacja regime be achieved. This reasoning flowed from the Communist dismissal of parliamentary and reformist opposition as mere maneuvers intended to deceive the working people and preserve the capitalist system. Thus it was that the Communists did not join the Centrolew opposition and denied the necessity of fighting for the attainment of bourgeois-democratic objectives. Their current line contradicted that of the Second Party Congress of 1923, which had endorsed democratic objectives as an intermediate step toward socialism.

With these Central Committee proceedings came the end of the factional conflict. The victory of the "minority" was complete, with an almost total exclusion of the "majority" from the Party leadership. Up to this point

the "majority" had taken part (though in a gradually decreasing manner) in the decision-making process of the Party, but the "minority" now assumed total control and responsibility. Leński, as Secretary General, took over the leadership of the Party. The son of workers, he was an example of a professional revolutionary. His experience went back to the time of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania. He had gone through deportation and prison and had been a member and leader of various revolutionary organizations. Always an extreme left-winger, he now came to the fore as the most plausible person to guide the Party in accordance with the prevailing line of the International.

The resolutions adopted at the Plenum were largely approved, thanks to the "majority's" yielding in the greater interest of Party unity. Following Popov's proposal, the makeup of the Central Committee was shifted through cooptation and a new Political Bureau was elected. As a result, Próchniak was the only representative of the "majority" remaining a member of the Party leadership's Political Bureau.[58] The "majority" submitted to the new leadership at all Party levels. But for years to come, opposition groups to the Central Committee would now and then express the views of the broken "majority." The victorious "minority" excluded Warski, Kostrzewa, Danieluk, Lauer, and others who had in the past contributed to the formulation of political theory and to the enrichment both of the Party's ideological thinking and the international worker movement. It is sufficient to recall here Kostrzewa's contribution on the agrarian problem. Such contributions were henceforth lacking. The price of unity certainly meant for the Party a reduction of its creative capacity in theoretical and ideological thinking.

Of course, the process through which the Communist Party of Poland was going was not unique. Other communist parties, all members of the International, were undergoing similar purges. The phenomena marking this period are well known in the history of the international Communist

movement. The Comintern dealt explicitly with the Polish Party changes on two occasions. At the Tenth Plenum of the Executive Committee in July 1929, in approving the choices made by the Polish Party, the Comintern hailed the progress it had made in its struggle against rightist deviation and in supporting Bolshevization. Again, in October 1929, in a resolution on the Polish Party adopted by the Political Secretariat of the Executive Committee, Kostrzewa's (and others') "rightist deviationism" and Warski's "national-patriotism" and "opportunism" were expressly condemned.[59] The ideologically fertile "Three Ws" were gone, perhaps forever.

The new party leadership was faced with very difficult tasks. Essentially, the broad thesis developed at the last Plenum of the Central Committee stated that Poland was on the verge of a revolutionary explosion that would spur the destruction of the regime and of capitalism. The Party must thus guide the people to victory in the Revolution and to the dictatorship of the proletariat. This general political line adopted at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern confronted the Polish Communists with great difficulties.

Notes

1. Plenum listopadowe KC KPP 1926 r. . CA KC PZPR, 158/III t16 k55-56.

2. Uchwały plenum KC KPP (listopad 1926). s. l. , 1926, pp. 1-8.

3. B. Kolebacz, *Komunistyczna Partia...* p. 197.

4. Nowe dokumenty w sytuacji od plenum wrześniowego a zadania Partii. *Zbiór artykułów i materiałów dyskusyjnych*. Warszawa, 1927, pp. 144-145.

5. Uchwa y plenum KC KPP... p. 22.

6. "Do wszystkich członk w KPP". *Nowy Przegląd*, 1926 pp. 545-547.

7. A. Garlicki, *Od maja do Brześcia*. Warszawa, 1981, pp. 108-203.

8. See Z. Landau., J. Tomaszewski, *Gospodarka Polski międzywojennej*. Vol. II, Warszawa, 1971.

9. See A. Tymieniecka, *Polityka Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej w latach 1924-1928*. Warszawa, 1969.

10. "Do Komisji Polskiej Egzekutywy MK". *Zbiór artikułów...* pp. 187-191.

11. Materiały Komisji Polskiej KW MK ze stycznia 1927 r. . CA KC PZPR 151/III t15 k1.

12. "Uchwała Komisji Polskiej KW MK z 21 stycznia 1927 r. ." *KPP uchwały...* Vol. II, p. 377.

13. Postanowienie Komisji Polskiej. CA KC PZPR, 151/III t16 k2.

14. Uchwały VII Plenum KC KPP, luty 1927. s. l. , s. d.

15. H Lauer-Brand, "Ekonomiczne momenty w przewrocie majowym i w polityce obecnego rządu". *Pisma i przemówienia*. Warszawa, 1970, pp. 217-284.

16. Uchwały VII Plenum... pp. 12-19.

17. "Organizacie partyjne w sprawie dyskusji". *Zbiór artykułów...* pp. 149-171.

18. Protokół IV Zjazdu KPP. CA KC PZPR, 158/I-4.

19. Protokół IV Zjazdu KPP. CA KC PZPR, 158/I-4 t10 k26.

20. Materyały Prezydium IV Zjazdu KPP. CA KC PZPR, 158/V-3 t16 k18 R-86.

21. Międzynarodówka Komunistyczna... pp. 288-289.

22. J. Sochacki, wystąpienie na IV Zjeździe. CA KC PZPR, 158/I-4 t7 k98.

23. *Uchwały IV Zjazdu KPP.* Warszawa, 1928, p. 8.

24. Ibid., p. 64.

25. A. Warski, "Gdzie jest prawica?" *Nowy Przegląd* 1927-1928. pp. 102-107 (reprint).

26. *Uchwały IV Zjazdu KPP...* p. 8.

27. M. Koszutska, "O roli drobnomieszczaństwa w rewolucji." *Nowy Przegląd*, 1926. pp. 566-586.

28. M. Koszutska, "O sytuacji politycznej i zadaniach partii." *Pisma i przewmówenia*. Vol. III, Warszawa, 1962, pp. 212-213.

29. J. Leński, Wystąpienie na posiedzeniu Komisji Polskiej KW MK. 7.1.1927 r. . CA KC PZPR, am 1628.

30. The new Central Committee had the following makeup: The two members from the Comintern were O. Kuusinen and D. Manuilski. The "majority" was represented by Wera Kostrzewa, W. Krajewski, O. Krylik, J. Lubiniecki, E. Próchnik, A. Rozenszajn, N. Szapiro, A. Warski. The "minority" was represented by M. Bernstein, G. Henrykowski, A. Lampe, J. Leński, J. Łohinowicz, J. Paszyn, W. Tomorowicz. Supply members elected were J. Borowicz, W. Bogucki, S. Burzyński, K. Cichowski, A. Danieluk, F. Fiedler, S. Hubermann, P. Komander, S. Królikowski, R. Matys, S. Miller, A. Pflug, W. Popiel, L. Purman, J. Sochacki, T. Sokołowski, R. Turański, J. Wizenfeld, S. Zachariasz, B. Zaks, M. Zdziarski, T. Żarski.

31. B. Kolebacz, *Komunistyczna partia...* p. 252.

32. Wniosek w sprawie wyborów VII Plenum z Lutego 1927 r. . CA KC PZPR, 158/III t19 k45.

33. Plenum KC KPP, October 1927. CA KC PZPR, 158/III t22 k48.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Other lists were presented by other communist groups. See L. Hass, "PPS-Lewica 1926-1931." *Najnowsze Dzieje Polski 1914-1939*. Vol. V, 1961. H. Cimek, *Zjednoczenie Lewicy Chłopskiej "Samopomoc" (1928-1931)*, Lublin, 1973. J. Radziejowski, *Komunisticzna Partia Zachodniej Ukrainy 1919-1929*. Kraków, 1976.

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39. Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*. Seattle and London, 1974, p. 63.

40. E. Brand, "Bilans wyborów." *Nowy Przegląd*, 1927-1928. p. 387. See also H. Cimek, *Zjednoczenie Lewicy...* p. 191.

41. III Plenum KC KPP, June 1928. CA KC PZPR, 158/III t25 k57.

42. M. Koszutska, "Trzy główne oddziały faszystowskiego obozu." *Pisma i przemówienia*. Vol. III, p. 257.

43. III Plenum KC KPP, June 1928. CA KC PZPR, 158/III t25 k48-52.

44. H. Laurer-Brand, "Wystąpienie na VI Kongresie MK w dyskusji nad punktem porządku dziennego "Program Międzynarodówki Komunistycznej", 13.8.1928 r. ." *Pisma i przemówienia...* p. 453.

45. H. Lauer-Brand, "Wystapienie w diskusji nad referatem N. Bucharina na VI Kongresie MK 28 VII 1928 r. ." *Pisma i przemówienia...* pp. 444-445.

46. *Stenograficheskii otchot VI Kongressa Kominterna*. Moskva-Leningrad, 1929. 1, p. 242.

47. B. Kolebacz, *Komunistyczna Partia Polski...* p. 275.

48. Materiały. CA KC PZPR, 151/III t18 k10-53, t19 k1-17. Also Materiały Komisji Polskiej VI Kongresu MK. CA KC PZPR, am 1628.

49. Ibid.

50. "Komunistyczna Partia Polski wobec nowych zadań." *Nowy Przegląd*, 1927-1928. pp. 268-275.

51. "List informacyjny Sekretariatu Politicznego KW MK do KC sekcji Kominternu." *Nowy Przegląd*, 1927-1928, pp. 443-444.

52. *Uchwały V Plenum KC KPP, styczen 1929*. Warszawa, 1929.

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57. Ibid., k2-3.

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59. "Rezolucja Sekretariatu Politycznego KW MK o sytuacji w KPP, październik 1929 r. ." *KPP uchwały i resolucje...* Vol. II, pp. 556-559.

Conclusion

The end of factional fights in 1929 brought to a close the first decade of the history of the Communist Party of Poland (which ended in 1938). That decade incorporated the following phases.

At the beginning, the new Party sought the integration of the Polish communist movement, which then expressed divisions according to territory and ethnicity. This process of integration was concluded about 1923 with the assimilation (direct and indirect) of the revolutionary forces into a single revolutionary center represented by the Communist Party. The internal organizational process, which had lasted several years, also ended in 1923. The completion of this process was hampered by having to operate illegally. Indeed, the Party's structure never became fully precise or well-defined.

During the first years of its history, the Communist Party was confident that the proletarian revolution was about to break out. At the moment of its foundation, the Party adopted the political slogan of the international proletarian revolution and based its strategy on the direct struggle for the taking over of power by the working class. A primary instrument of this strategy was to be the Workers' Councils, and in these the Party invested much of its political energy. Hence, participation in representative institutions such as the parliament could be dispensed with, and boycott of the elections was thus adopted.

However, the expected revolution did not break out. The experience of the Workers' Councils of 1918-1919 demonstrated that the supposed anti-capitalistic and revolutionary sentiments of the working class were in fact limited and circumscribed. The movement of the Workers' Councils proved to be a phenomenon of limited importance and communist slogans did not truly influence the majority of workers. The Communist Party lacked the strength, the organization, and the ability to lead the working people towards a revolution.

A year later, with the Polish victory in the Polish-Soviet War, the alternative prospect of a revolution based on the support of the Red Army was dashed. After that war, the revolutionary movement suffered defeat in all of Europe and prospects of a political and economic stabilization opened up in Poland. Various political orientations began to take shape in the Communist Party, and some of its leaders began to review its political strategy. They no longer viewed the Revolution as close at hand; its exclusively proletarian character was questioned in favor of a positive re-evaluation of the peasants and of other non-proletarian social elements, such as the working intelligentsia. The working class was deemed to need allies in the revolutionary process and the idea of a united front in the class struggle was proposed.

The Party became divided; part of it expressed reservations about the new ideas, and the majority remained committed to original revolutionary principles. Nevertheless, the ideas of the new strategy gained ground and found support in the trade-union sector, where workers were demanding attention to actual living conditions, rather than abstract revolutionary slogans.

Another opportunity for strategic rethinking came with the elections of 1922. This time the Communist Party opted for participation and not boycott with sabotage, as it had in 1919. It also sought to operate on legal

grounds through the creation of a Union of the Proletariat, which was a legal mass organization for the coordination of the electoral campaign. In political terms, the Party thus recognized the "bourgeois" parliament, although only as a forum for revolutionary opinions. Besides the parliament, the party also accepted the principle in fact of a legal mass communist organization, although real efforts in that direction dwindled away almost immediately after the electoral campaign because doctrinally this principle seemed to contradict the Leninist image of the Party as a vanguard, and not a mass, organization.

The process of revising political strategy was completed at the Second Party Congress of 1923, five years after the founding congress, and after three national conferences held in 1920, 1921 and 1922. The political line expressed by the Second Congress represented the acme of ideological concerns during the entire first decade of the Party's history. It came to be known as the political line of the "Three W's": Warski, Walecki and Wera Kostrzewa, its major proponents. From the revolutionary maximalism of the Party's beginnings, there now emerged a supposedly revolutionary program structured on various principles such as, (a) the Revolution divided into stages, (b) the struggle for a peasant-worker government, (c) the united front of the working people, (d) the worker-peasant alliance.

The Second Congress of 1923 also grappled with organizational problems. It organized the Polish Communist movement into a single political body while conferring autonomous status on the Ukrainian and Byelorussian communists. Thus, the unity of the communist movement came to be defined principally in terms of ideological unity and collaboration between the various communist parties and organizations.

The principle of democratic centralism à la Lenin was maintained, although its precise functioning remained sketchy. In reality, the Party operated on the basis of a mixture of democratic centralism and internal democracy; its rank-and-file members were usually involved in the decision-

making and ideological processes. An instance of free discussion was on the agrarian question, ranging for over a year's time and leaving the Party leadership split even at the Third Conference. The opposing positions, as expressed in the Party press, were wide-ranging, and thus the discussion lingered on well after the Second Congress of 1923.

The discussion was also open and general on the question of parliamentarianism. Inserted into the agenda of the First Conference (1920), the question was again dealt with at the Second Conference (1921) by three different proposals of resolutions. The discussion continued further at the grass-roots level of the Party and in the Party press. On the whole, political discussion was carried on in a frank and open manner; it often continued even after decisions had been taken and approved by the majority. Dissident minorities indeed usually continued to support their own positions despite the official party line. Similar "undisciplined" behavior took place with respect to instructions and advice from the International to the Polish party.

The Comintern generally played an important role in the definition of ideology and strategy for the Polish Communist Party. Thus, the political program produced by the Second Party Congress of 1923 represented both a point of arrival in the independent ideological development of Polish communism as well as the ascendancy of Leninist principles and instructions from the International to its Polish section.

But the political line nominally adopted at this Second Congress was scarcely put into practice, and the reasons for this lapse were varied and complicated.

Revolutionary prospects in Germany and other European countries had collapsed by the end of 1923, with the Comintern placing the responsibility for this failure on the leadership of the German communist party. Thus, emphasis was now placed on the "subjective" factors of the revolutionary movement at the expense of "objective" ones, which suggested a drop in

revolutionary potentiality in view of the stabilization of capitalist systems. Accordingly, from the beginning of 1924, the Comintern made a brusque change in its political line, designed to negate the tactic of a united front. Instructions to its various sections now advised the consideration of a united front only from a tactical standpoint at the grass-roots level, and not to seek the collaboration of other workers' parties and not to consider the slogan of the worker-peasant government as synonymous with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In its effect on the Polish party, this Comintern shift led to a polarization between the supporters of the previous political line of the Second Congress led by the three "W's", and their opponents, led by Domski and Leński, who were strengthened by the new Comintern line. Considerable differences between the two groups marked their respective conceptions of the revolution and its outbreak, as well as their evaluations of prospects after the presumed success of the revolution. One side contended that the revolution in Poland would take place in two phases and through the union of the working class, the peasants, and the ethnic minorities under the hegemony of the proletariat. On the other side, it was believed that the revolution would be, from the beginning, a socialist revolution and that the proletariat would carry it out in an autonomous manner. The Party was thus divided between a "majority", the supporters of the line of the Second Congress, and a "minority", the supporters of the so-called "ultra-leftist" tendencies upheld by the Comintern. The Fifth World Congress of the Comintern attempted to resolve this conflict by forcing the "Three W's" out of the Polish Party leadership.

The "minority" under Domski and Leński was thus placed at the head of the Party and sought to impose a political strategy intended for the immediate radicalization of the people without much consideration of the actual conditions in Poland. Its activity was also directed largely towards the

"conquest" of only the proletarian sector of the population. This strategy, "achieving" its high point in 1925, brought about a greater isolation of the Communist Party in society, and a great weakening of its influence among the people, as well as a lowering of its membership.

The International then intervened again, advising flexibility in the implementation of political strategy, and greater attention to the social, political and economic conditions of Poland. Consequently, the "majority" (the three W's) regained influence and the discussion was reopened in the Fourth Party Conference toward the end of 1925. The result was an agreement that foresaw the resurrection of the political line of the second Party Congress. But in point of fact this did not occur; the unity reached was rhetorical only and was short-lived.

The ideological struggle was rekindled after the Piłsudski coup d' état because of the endorsement given to the coup by the Party leadership under the guidance of Warski. The discussion concerning the "May Error" involved the entire Party and also the International. This discussion was divided into two periods. From May 1926 up to the Fourth Party Congress of 1927, it was a discussion of serious political and ideological content, polarized between the "majority" and the "minority". In the second period, until 1929, it took on the guise of a dogmatic personal fight between opposing sects in which the political contents, relegated to the back burner, were faded and confused.

Thus the Fourth Party Congress represented the last moment of genuine discussion and confrontation on political grounds in the Party's first decade. At this point the Comintern attempted unsuccessfully to make peace within the Polish party, but the two factions refused to compromise, both aiming to take over the Party leadership, and each claiming to represent the Party majority and its legitimate political line. Sectarianism prevailed, and confusion reigned; the factions accused one another of political opportunism and "rightist deviation". The "minority" sometimes assumed the "rightist"

positions of the "majority." The "majority" in turn occasionally assumed "ultra-leftist" positions held by the "minority".

In terms of numbers, the predominance in the Party was held by the "majority", under the leadership of Warski, Kostrzewa and Walecki. The "minority", however, would eventually emerge victorious by order of the Comintern. The political program of the Comintern also predicted a new victorious outbreak of the socialist revolution on an international scale as a consequence of the imminent crisis of capitalism. In order to deal with this situation, it was required that communist parties have a united and solid leadership. Such leadership must be able to accomplish revolutionary tasks in a coherent manner as dictated by the situation. The Polish Party's "minority", led by Leński, was thus placed at the head of the Party with the precise task of hastening the radicalization of the people vis-à-vis the revolution. The political and organizational leadership of the Party was purged of the representatives of the "majority" by order of the Comintern in the middle of 1929. The new leadership spurred the Party forward to "revolutionary struggles". Again, there was renewed hope that the upcoming revolution would achieve a victory in Poland and the rest of Europe. But in fact the Communist Party of Poland was destined to march to another defeat.

The failure to reach genuine ideological or organizational unity was a salient characteristic of the Communist Party of Poland.

In terms of organization, unity was in appearance only; in reality, the Party did not act as a single body. Many local organizations carried on their business completely apart from the central Party. They managed their own activities and often ignored central directives. These directives were frequently late and fragmented upon arrival from the central organ to the local organizations and hence were interpreted in various ways. Consequently, they were often never acted upon. The apparently chaotic behavior of the various Party organizations was partly attributable to differences between the

various areas of Poland in which they operated. The makeup of the working class, ethnic distribution, and economic and social conditions were all variables in this equation. Where, in certain local instances, the labor movement comprised a Jewish majority, anti-semitism among Polish workers would indeed be a problem for the Party. In another case, the Ukrainians and Byelorussians, who were already alienated by the process of Polonization, had difficulties working alongside the Polish workers within the Party. In the Dąbrowa Basin, internal regional and economical differences were an important factor. And at times, the dominant element of the working class itself were the artisans and not the proletariat, and poor artisans and proletarian workers were not the same thing, even in terms of political mentality.

These were just some of the obstacles to full organizational unity of the Communist Party. Hence it could not easily develop in accordance with the Leninist scheme -- that is a compact, disciplined, monolithic group, composed of professional revolutionaries and governed by a strictly applied principle of democratic centralism. This problem of Party unity was complicated by the diversity within the working class which included factory workers, service workers, miners, artisans, and farm workers.

Ideologically, Party unity was just as elusive. The Party had arisen as a union of two distinct revolutionary orientations which, even if somewhat similar, maintained separate traditions and beliefs. The Leftist Socialist Revolutionaries were by tradition completely removed from the organizational and theoretical schemes of the Leninists, and partially removed even from the speculations of Luxemburg on capitalism and Poland. The national question was one example of their traditional sensitivity on the issue of Polish independence and the generic approach to internationalism. The Social Democrats did not follow the Leninist track either. Luxemburgist thought was of central importance to their theoretical tradition, which rejected the

Leninist concept of the Party and embraced non-Leninist positions of Marxism on theoretical issues such as the fall of capitalism and from-the-bottom-up worker democracy. These initial differences in the political fabric continued to affect the Party even up to its end.

In fact, the Communist Party was characterized by fragmented internal politics, an anarchic bent, a lack of theoretical and organizational co-ordination, and with being non-Leninist in general and anti-Leninist in particular.

Division and unsuccessful integration within the Party leadership persisted as well. The leadership was split into groups residing at various times in places such as Poland, Berlin, Danzig and Moscow. The congresses and conferences rarely had the participation of the entire leadership, but were in fact heavily attended by Comintern representatives together with "sovietized" Polish Communists who were residents in Moscow. Moreover, further disunity arose because part of the Party leadership resided almost permanently outside of Poland while another part remained in Poland. This led to different reactions caused by different perceptions of the Polish reality.

There was also theoretical division on principle. Some leaders sought a strict application (based on Soviet success) of Communist principles to Poland while others, more flexible in their approach, sought to adapt those principles to specific situations at hand. Either way, both groups did give priority to ideological objectives. They sought to fit the realities, in one way or another, into extant ideologies. For The Communists placed priority on a political strategy expressive of ideological principles. They did not concern themselves greatly with the diverse specifics of Polish reality or of their historic course. As a result, the political strategy of the Communist Party went against the principles and demands of a nation reborn after more than a century of foreign occupation. This strategy was meaningless to a country

whose society was almost exclusively agricultural. Furthermore, it was unable to win over a working class drastically reduced in numbers, sensitive to the issue of national independence, attracted to reformism, and prey to anti-semitism. The Communist Party seemed in a certain sense affected by revolutionary utopianism (Marxist and anarchist) typical of the past century, not adhering in ideological essence to current Leninist or Luxemburgist schemes. In the political arena, the Communist Party was abstract and unintelligible in its theoretical principles as well as isolationist and self-destructive in actual practice.

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