

INTRODUCTION

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The Tragedy of the Polish Communist Party dates from 1957, when K.S. Karol asked Isaac for a brief outline of the history of Communism in Poland. It might be worth recalling that shortly after the dramatic Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in February 1956 (at which Khrushchev in his famous 'secret speech' revealed for the first time to a Russian audience some of Stalin's crimes and misdeeds), a **communiqué** from Moscow announced the 'rehabilitation of the Polish Party and its leaders,' who, it was stated, had fallen victims to 'provocations and slanders' during the period of the 'cult of personality'. This short announcement, hardly noticed in the West, was in fact a strange epilogue to one of the greatest tragedies of Communism, in which a whole party had been annihilated. In 1938 the Comintern announced the dissolution of the Polish Party under the pretext that it was corroded by 'Trotskyist and Pilsudskist influences' and had become merely an agency of fascism and the Polish political police. Yet all the members of the Central Committee, threatened by the very same police, escaped from Poland to seek refuge in Moscow. On Stalin's orders they were imprisoned and executed as traitors. Among them were Adolf **Warski** (Warszawski), the founder of the party and friend of Rosa Luxemburg; Lenski (Leszczyński), a veteran of the October Revolution and a former member of the Executive of the Comintern; Wera Kostrzewa (Koszutska), a most militant woman revolutionary. At the time not much was known about the fate of the victims: Stalin did not bother to stage even a mock trial and at the height of the terror his dealings with the '**fraternal party**' were enveloped in murky silence. In Poland the remnants of the illegal party, persecuted by the police, led a precarious existence.

Isaac, himself a former member of the party—he was expelled in 1932 for 'exaggerating the danger of Nazism' and 'sowing panic' in Communist ranks—traced the circumstances of its wholesale destruction. He was fully aware that 'the views expressed here must. . . provoke opposition'. 'I do not pretend,' he wrote, 'that what I have to say is a revelation of infallible truth. I would be quite satisfied if my work were to bring new elements into a discussion about the history of the Polish Party and if it helped to a more thorough understanding of its tragic fate.' This wish was fulfilled in a rather unusual manner. The interview, which was recorded,

was translated from Polish into French and appeared in *Les Temps Modernes* in March 1958. Soon afterwards the editors of the Warsaw *Polityka*, the official organ of Gomulka's party, planned to reproduce it, but had to abandon the idea after protracted negotiations with the censors. Then the more esoteric theoretical quarterly *Zeszyty Teoretyczno-polityczne* intended to publish it, but did not succeed either. The problem 'to publish or not to publish' came before the Polish Politburo. There was no clear majority either for or against, so a compromise was reached: it was decided not to publish the text, but to duplicate it and distribute it among party cells. Nicknamed 'Isaac Deutscher's secret speech', it soon became the subject of passionate debate. By 1980–81 the 'secret speech' was largely forgotten, and if it was known to a handful of people of the younger generation, it was in its French, German, or English version.

Exactly a year ago, on 18 May 1981, I received a letter from a Dutch scholar from Utrecht University: 'I spent recently a week in Poland', he says *inter alia*, 'and had the opportunity to speak amply with people of KOR, Solidarnosc, the Independent Students Organisation. They try very hard to be informed about their own past, the history of the Soviet Union, and related subjects, but they have up to now no good literature. The works of your husband (with one exception among the people I spoke with) are unknown.'

It is undoubtedly true that young people have tried 'very hard to be informed about their own past'. After all, defying danger, they flocked to the 'flying universities' to acquire knowledge which was denied them at official schools and universities. In setting up the flying universities the organisers followed a tradition going back to the times of the struggle for national independence when such clandestine schools contributed to the preservation of Polish culture against efforts at Germanisation or Russification by the occupying powers. In the curriculum of the underground study groups in the late 1970s more stress was laid on the teaching of the national history of Poland, on risings and insurrections in the 18th and 19th century than on social history and class struggles of the 20th century; more time devoted to the achievements of Pilsudski's Legionaries than to the activities of the Polish Communist Parties, and the shafts of the opposition were aimed more sharply against foreign totalitarianism than against the domestic quasi-fascist pre-war regime of the Colonels. To the heroic Polish Communists, martyred by both, not much attention was paid.

While in 1958 Deutscher's 'Tragedy of the Polish Communist Party' was discussed at the politbureau and then circulated in a duplicated form, as if it were the rulers' own 'Samizdat', 22 years later the essay was, so to say, *non grata* either with the ruling party or with the opposition. Both sides had their particular reasons for consigning it to oblivion.

There was, of course, great pressure from the intelligentsia for the

publication of literature which hitherto, through the fiat of the government, was on the index. Among the books which the opposition wanted to see published openly were those of Gombrowicz, Milosz and **Kolakowski**. (Solzhenitsyn, in a clandestine edition, sold well in the forecourt of the Warsaw University.)

It is true that Polish society is intensely interested in its own past, but it is not eager to learn about the past which it does not consider its own, while the ruling party has no wish to learn about the past which it is still determined to disown. Neither *raison d'état* nor *raison d'opposition* should prevent the independent Left in the West from learning about the tragedy of the Polish Communist Party.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE POLISH COMMUNIST PARTY*

Would you throw some light on the key problems of the history of the Polish Communist Party, which I am at present studying? I am particularly interested in the ideological and political currents within the Party, in the background to the formation of its various factions, in the Party's policy during the critical periods of the two interwar decades, and, finally, in its tragic end.

Let us begin with some general reflections and with a remark of a personal nature. When you ask me to speak of the history of the Polish Communist Party you are surely aware of the particular point of view from which I reply. In June 1957, exactly twenty-five years will have elapsed since I was expelled from the Party as an oppositionist. I shall not analyse now the reasons for my expulsion: they have been stated clearly although tendentially—and with the passage of time their very bias becomes more and more self-condemnatory—in the documents and statements published at the time by the Party leadership dealing with the 'Krakowski affair'. (Krakowski was one of the pseudonyms which I was then using.) From 1932 until its dissolution I was in sharp conflict with the Polish Communist Party. Nevertheless, at the time of the dissolution and of the accusations made against its leaders, I stigmatised these actions as an unparalleled crime committed against the working class of Poland and of the whole world. The opposition group to which I belonged was in fact the only group of members or former members of the Polish CP which denounced this crime then and protested against it **vehemently**.¹

It was unquestionably the Polish Communist Party which had the greatest influence on my intellectual and political development. I never doubted that it would be 'rehabilitated'—though even the term 'rehabilitation' is out of place here. It was a great and heroic party, the only party in Poland which represented the interests of the proletarian revolution, the great Marxist tradition, and a true and living internationalism. In this respect no other Polish party could be compared with it. Unfortunately, up to this day the history of the Polish Communist Party still remains a

*This interview was originally published in French in *Les Temps Modernes*, March 1958.

closed and sealed book. The most recent publications which I have had an opportunity to read are on the whole rather pitiable. They note the Party's rehabilitation, but do nothing more. There is no real attempt to depict the great periods in the Party's existence—the high flights and decline. What is striking is a tendency—the result of habits acquired in the course of many years—to be satisfied with **clichés** and writings in the manner of *Lives of Saints*. The only party in Poland which was worthy of bearing the name of a proletarian and Marxist party deserves to have its record studied in a serious, realistic and critical manner. The Polish CP was once buried under a pile of outrageous slanders. Let us not bury it again, wrapped in shrouds of golden legends to the accompaniment of senseless hymns.

I should like to add a remark of a general methodological character. In order to understand the history of the Polish Communist Party, every important phase of it must be considered from a double point of view: from the angle of the class struggle within Poland itself, and from that of the processes which were taking place within the Communist International and the Soviet Union. These two groups of factors acted upon each other continuously. An investigator who restricts himself to an analysis of only one of these will be unable to grasp the essence of the story. As years went by, the processes occurring in the Soviet Union played a more and more important role and weighed more and more disastrously on the fate of the Polish Party. Therefore to see clearly the policy of the Party and its ideological tendencies and also to understand the factional struggle, we must be continuously aware of the class relationship within Poland and of the processes of development taking place within the Russian Revolution.

What were the main internal divisions in the Polish Communist Party at the time it was founded, that is to say, at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919?

These divisions followed from the fact that the Polish CP was born from the fusion of two parties: the Social-Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (Rosa Luxemburg's party, the **SDKPiL**) and the Polish Left Socialist Party (the PPS **Lewica**).² Each of these two parties had its own traditions. The Social-Democratic Party grew in opposition to the nationalism and patriotism of the Polish nobility harking back to the insurrectionist romanticism of the nineteenth century, and placed its main emphasis on proletarian internationalism. The Left Socialist Party had at first adhered to the patriotic-insurgent tradition, and the restoration of Poland's independence had occupied a central place in its programme; but later on it came closer to the internationalist attitude of the **Luxemburgist** Party. The Left Socialist Party had its affinities with the Left

Mensheviks; only under the influence of the October Revolution did it ~~move closer~~ to Bolshevism. The Social-Democratic Party adopted—as the proceedings of its Sixth Congress show—an attitude very close to that of **Trotsky**, remaining independent both of the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. At the time of the revolution, the Luxemburgist Party—again like **Trotsky**—identified itself with Bolshevism. Here we must take note of the differences within the Party between adherents of the Party's official leaders (Rosa Luxemburg, Marchlewski, Jogiches) and the so-called 'splitters' (Dzerzhinski, Radek, Unszlicht). This was, however, a discord, not a genuine split. The 'splitters' represented a certain opposition to the centralism of the Executive Committee, which operated from abroad. Furthermore, they were somewhat closer to the Bolsheviks. In the Polish Communist Party the **SDKPiL** tradition was predominant from the beginning. Nevertheless the importance of these differences should not be exaggerated. They were in actual fact restrained and even obliterated by the real unity of the newly founded Party and the conviction of its members that the old divisions were a matter of the past. The Party's ranks were further united by a sharp awareness of their common and unyielding opposition to the nationalist and reformist Poland, to the Poland of the landlords and petty *nobility*.³

Is it not true that the Communist Party began its political life in independent Poland with a certain moral disadvantage arising from its Luxemburgist tradition, which was opposed in principle to the struggle for national independence?

There is a little truth and a great deal of exaggeration in that. The proof that this is so is seen, for example, in the relative strength of the different parties within the Soviets of the Workers' Deputies which were set up, at the end of 1918, in Warsaw, in Lodz, and in the Dabrowa coalfields. In Warsaw the forces of the Communist Party and of the Socialists were equally balanced and, if I am not mistaken, the **Bund**⁴ tipped the scales. There was a similar situation in Lodz, although there the Communists had a certain superiority. In the Dabrowa mining district the Communist Party was incomparably stronger than the Socialist Party, and with this is connected the episode of the Red Republic of Dabrowa. One could say that on the eve of independence, the influence of the Polish CP over the working classes in the main industrial centres was certainly not smaller than that of the reformist and 'patriotic' PPS—it was probably larger.

The situation was complicated. On the one hand, events had *to a certain degree* refuted the assumptions on which Rosa Luxemburg and her comrades had dissented from the 'struggle for national independence'. On the other hand, however, Luxemburg and her followers had been alone in placing their hopes on revolutions in Russia, Germany, and

Austria, the three empires that had subjugated Poland, rather than on an unending repetition of Polish nineteenth-century insurrections. Pilsudskism—and the Polish Socialist Party which in 1918 was almost inseparable from Pilsudskism—had above all proclaimed its scepticism and distrust of the reality of revolution in these empires. Events had given the lie to this scepticism and distrust. Contrary to Rosa Luxemburg's expectations, Poland had regained her independence; but contrary to the expectations of her **opponents**, Poland had received it mainly from the hands of the Russian and German revolutions. History showed itself to be more cunning than all the parties; and that is why I do not believe that, in comparison with other parties, the Communist Party entered the phase of independence with any particular 'moral handicap'. Moreover, while the 'Luxemburgists' were rotting in tsarist prisons and in exile, the Polish bourgeois parties (especially the 'national democrats', who opposed all movements for national independence, but also Pilsudski and the Socialist 'patriots') placed themselves at the service of the occupying powers and collaborated with them; after the fall of these powers, this did not prevent the bourgeois parties from adopting hypocritical, ultranationalist attitudes and from seizing power.

After the foundation of the Polish Communist Party did the old controversy over Poland's independence go on within the Party?

Only at the beginning, and to an insignificant degree; later it stopped altogether. The Party was concerned with other problems—its position in the configuration of social forces; the elaboration of its political line; and, of course, the problem of the Russian Revolution and the prospects of world revolution.

Did not the question of boycotting the Constituent Assembly of 1919 mark the appearance of a new division within the Party?

Unless I am mistaken, this question did not give rise to much discussion. On this matter the Polish and the German parties took similar stands, considering elections to the Constituent Assembly as a diversion which had as its aim the liquidation of the Soviets of Workers' Delegates. The Polish *Seym* and the Weimar Constituent Assembly were regarded as the foundations of a bourgeois parliamentary republic, erected on the ruins of the workers' Soviets—the potential organs of the socialist revolution. Undoubtedly, the two parties made a mistake in proclaiming the boycott of the bourgeois parliament, and in both cases this mistake was a result of the ultraleft mood of the period.

How did the Communist Party react to the Polish-Soviet war of 1920?

The Polish Party treated this war—as it had every reason to do—as a war of the Polish possessing classes (or of their decisive elements) against the Russian Revolution, and as an integral part of the capitalist powers' intervention in Russia. The Party felt it was at one with the Russian Revolution and obliged to defend it. The situation became complicated after Pilsudski's retreat from Kiev and at the time of the Red Army's march on Warsaw. The state of siege and the existence of military tribunals reduced to a minimum the Party's open activities; and it was difficult for both leaders and rank and file to express the various nuances of Communist opinion. Nevertheless I should like to draw **attention** to characteristic differences which appeared among the numerous groups of Polish Communists living in Moscow. When the question of the march on Warsaw came up, this group split in a rather paradoxical manner. On the one hand, the old 'Luxemburgists', the 'opponents of independence', Radek and **Marchlewski**,⁵ spared no efforts to convince Lenin and the Russian Politburo that the march on Warsaw should not be undertaken, but that peace should be proposed to Poland as soon as Pilsudski's armies had been chased out of the Ukraine. (They succeeded in winning to their point of view only **Trotsky**, who was then the People's Commissar for War.) On the other hand, the **old supporters** of independence, former PPS men like **Feliks Kon** and **Lapinski**,⁶ favoured the Red Army's march on Warsaw; they maintained that the Polish proletariat was in a state of the utmost revolutionary ferment and would welcome the Red Army as its liberator. I should like to report yet another episode: in 1920 the paper *Rote Fahne*, the organ of the German Communist Party, published a protest against the march on Warsaw signed by Domski, one of the most eminent 'Luxemburgist' members of the Central Committee of the Polish Party. By the way, under the conditions of internal democracy, which existed at that time in the Party, the right of a member of the Central Committee to publish such a protest was considered as something quite natural. Domski remained a member of the Central Committee and played a leading role in it for many more years, **until** 1925 precisely.

You asked whether the Luxemburgist tradition was not a moral embarrassment for Polish communism. I have no intention of defending *post factum* Rosa Luxemburg's ideas about national independence. I shall simply say that the Red Army's march on Warsaw was a much more serious and more damaging moral handicap for the Polish CP than had been all of Rosa Luxemburg's real or imaginary mistakes taken together; about these mistakes both her bourgeois opponents as well as Stalin (the latter misusing, in his characteristic manner, quotations from Lenin) have made an enormous amount of noise. However, the mistake made by Lenin in 1920—let us call things by their proper name—was a real

tragedy for the Polish CP, because in effect it pushed the Polish proletarian masses towards anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism.

Nevertheless, after 1920 the Party rapidly regained its strength—didn't it?

Yes, to a certain extent. That does not alter the fact that the march on Warsaw also had certain permanent effects: it undermined the trust of the Polish working masses in the Russian Revolution. However, after **1920** the workers recovered fairly quickly from their first enthusiasm for Polish national sovereignty, and from the illusions that went with it. In the relatively freer atmosphere which followed the war, the working class had the opportunity to view the events more calmly. It became known that Lenin's government had done everything possible to avoid war between Poland and Russia and that without Pilsudski's march on Kiev there would probably never have been any Soviet march on Warsaw. The Polish working class came to understand that Pilsudski, in **1920**, was not fighting so much for Polish independence as for the estates of the big Polish land-owners in the Ukraine, and also to satisfy his own dreams of grandeur. The early years of the twenties marked another increase in the influence of the Polish Communist Party, an influence which reached its peak in **1923**, particularly in November, at the time of the general strike and the rising of the Cracow workers.

This was the time of the 'three W's' leadership, wasn't it?

It was. One of them, **Warski**, was a former Luxemburgist, and the two others, **Walecki** and **Wera** (Kostrzewa), were former Left Socialists. Nevertheless, they formed a united leadership which proved that the old divisions within the party had been overcome. Now, however, we are approaching a particularly critical period, when the development of the class struggle in Poland was complicated once more, and to a certain extent distorted, by the influence of events taking place in the Soviet Union. For many years, I personally believed that in Poland, as well as in Germany, the year **1923** was one of a 'missed revolution'. Now, after an interval of thirty-five years, I can no longer be so sure that the historical evidence bears out the correctness of this point of view. In any case, we certainly had many elements of a revolutionary situation: a general strike, the rising of the Cracow workers, the army going over to the side of the working class, and more generally, the country in a state of utter ferment. The only factor, it seemed, which was lacking was the initiative of a revolutionary party which might have led the revolution to success. The Polish CP did not show that initiative. In accordance with the resolutions of the International, the Party was then following a policy of united front with the socialists. Up to a certain moment, this policy had produced excellent

results, enabling the Party to widen its influence, and introducing more vigour into the class struggle. But at the same time, the Party leadership left the political initiative to the Socialists; and in the critical days of November 1923, this produced unfortunate consequences. The rank and file felt that the Party had allowed a revolutionary situation to pass by without taking any advantage; and they reacted, not without bitterness, against the 'opportunism' and the lack of revolutionary initiative of the 'three W's'.

As I have said, the situation became even more complicated because of events taking place in the USSR. At that time the struggle between the so-called triumvirate (Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev) and **Trotsky** broke into the open. At once it took on extremely violent forms unknown hitherto in the movement. The European Communist Parties were deeply disturbed, all the more so as until then **Trotsky**, like Lenin, had been the International's inspirer and greatest moral authority. In the autumn of 1923 the Central Committees of the Polish, French and German parties protested, in one form or another, to the Central Committee of the Soviet Party against the violence of the attacks on **Trotsky**. Those who protested had no intention of associating themselves with **Trotsky's** specific policies. They were simply warning the Soviet leaders of the harm which the campaign against **Trotsky** was doing to the Communist movement, and they appealed to them to settle their differences in a manner worthy of Communists. This incident had serious consequences. Stalin never forgot or forgave this protest. Zinoviev, who was then president of the International, viewed it as a vote of no confidence in himself. Immediately, the Communist Parties of Poland, France and Germany became involved in the internal Soviet conflict. The leadership of the International—in other words, Zinoviev and Stalin—dismissed from their posts the principal leaders of the three parties who had dared 'to come to Trotsky's defence'. A pretext was provided by the mistakes committed by these leaders, notably by the group of the 'three W's' in November 1923; they were expelled for 'opportunism, right deviation, and failure to exploit a revolutionary situation'.

Does it not follow from your account that those who criticised the 'three Ws' were justified?

Even if they were justified, that did not authorise the leadership of the International in Moscow to intervene in such a drastic manner in the internal affairs of the Polish Party. I must add that the leadership of the German and French parties was changed in the same way.⁷ In all these cases the changes were brought about as a result of orders from above, and not as a result of decisions taken by the members of the Party in a way corresponding to the principles of internal democracy. This was the

first dangerous attack on the autonomy of the Communist Party, the first act, as it turned out, of '**Stalinisation,**' although this was done not only by Stalin, but by Zinoviev also. Both played demagogically on the feeling of disillusionment which existed among the rank and file of the Polish and German parties. This feeling was understandable and it turned violently against the 'three Ws' in Poland (as it did against Brandler in Germany). It is possible that if the Party had been free to decide for itself, it might have changed its leadership. Nevertheless, more important than the fact of the change itself was the manner in which it was carried out: the way was opened to further unscrupulous interference by Stalin in the affairs of the Polish Communist Party, an interference which was to end in the Party's assassination.

How did the Party react to this first act of deliberate interference?

Passively, unfortunately. Many of its members were more or less in favour of the 'three Ws' being replaced. And even those who weren't did not oppose it. The operation was mild in comparison with the expulsions, purges and forced recantations which were to follow. Stalinism was only in its formative period, and could not yet show its claws. The attack on the displaced leaders was carried on with relative moderation and correctness of form—and this facilitated its acceptance. What was decisive, however, was the Party's psychological attitude—its misguided conception of solidarity with the Russian Revolution, its belief that any conflict with Moscow must be avoided, no matter at what cost. The moral authority of the Soviet Party, the only one which had led a proletarian revolution to victory, was so great that the Polish Communists accepted Moscow's decisions even when Moscow abused its revolutionary authority. Stalinism was indeed a continuous succession of abuses of this kind, a systematic exploitation of the moral credit of the revolution for purposes which often had nothing to do with the interests of Communism but served only to consolidate the bureaucratic regime of the USSR. During the years 1923–4 it was vital for Stalin to attack Trotskyism in the whole International. **Warski** and **Kostrzewa** tried to safeguard their own position by dissociating themselves from their own protest against Moscow's **anti-Trotsky** campaign. Their motives were understandable. In Moscow the majority of the Politburo and of the Central Committee had come out against **Trotsky**. In view of this, **Warski** and **Kostrzewa** decided that they could not support the minority in the Soviet Party and thus expose themselves to the charge of interfering in the internal affairs of the Party. That did not, however, protect the Polish Party from Soviet interference. Thus, although the 'three Ws' had some sympathy with the views of the Trotskyist opposition, they came, in fact, to support Stalin and Zinoviev and to proclaim their loyalty to them. For this moment of weakness

they had to pay dearly later on.

What was the change in the Party's policy after 1923?

What was called 'the left' took over the leadership: **Domski**, Zofia Unszticht, and Lenski. Both in the International as a whole and also in the Polish Party the new policy presented a sharp reaction from the orientation of the preceding period. This was, in fact, the time of an 'ultraleftist' policy. If, in 1923, the Party did not show enough revolutionary vigour, its policy during the years 1924 and 1925 was marked by a false excess of that vigour. This was all the more harmful because after the crisis of November 1923 the objective possibilities of revolutionary action had decreased. During this period the Polish CP rejected the united front tactic completely and dispersed its efforts in futile adventures. The result? It lost its influence and cut itself off from the working masses.

It is worth recalling that, at the beginning of 1924, in local elections, the Polish CP was still stronger than the Socialist Party. This success, however, was no more than a delayed echo of the radicalisation of the masses which had taken place in 1923 and it did not foreshadow the rise of a new revolutionary wave. In the following years the Communist Party's influence declined drastically. The Party was unable to lead any mass action. This was not only a Polish phenomenon. The same fluctuations could be seen in all the Communist Parties of Europe—all were, in fact, pursuing the same ultraleftist policy with similar results. This was the time of the Fifth Congress of the Comintern; it was called the 'Bolshevisation Congress,' but actually it was the 'Stalinisation Congress'. Henceforth, all parties were subjected to the same treatment; all followed the same 'line'; all had recourse to the same tactical tricks; all launched the same slogans without taking into account differences in the class relationships of different countries, in the level and form of class struggle, etc. The movement had reached the stage of bureaucratic uniformity. The Polish Party was affected by this even more painfully than were other European parties because its revolutionary tradition had been deeper and stronger, and it operated in conditions of complete *illegality*,⁸ appealing continuously to the spirit of revolutionary self-sacrifice and to the heroism of its members, which never failed. Bureaucratic uniformity and revolutionary enthusiasm are a contradiction in terms.

Nevertheless, at the end of 1925, Warski, Walecki and Kostmewa returned to the leadership of the Party, didn't they?

Yes. The ultraleftist policy was soon discredited in the eyes of the Party, and that of the 'three Ws' was almost automatically vindicated. Whatever might be said against **Warski** and **Kostrzewa**, they had the gift of feeling

the moods of the working class and the ability to strengthen and widen contacts between the Party and the masses. The periods when they led the Party were, in general, those when the Party expanded and conducted its activity on a grand scale, although it frequently lacked—how shall I put it—a revolutionary edge. The return of **Warski** and **Kostrzewa** to the leadership of the Polish Communist Party was, again, due more to what was then happening in Russia than to the change of climate in the Polish Party.

In Russia, a new political situation had developed. The triumvirate had broken up. **Zinoviev** and **Kamenev** had turned against **Stalin**, and shortly afterwards they were to ally themselves with **Trotsky**. **Stalin** formed a bloc with **Bukharin** and **Rykov** and followed what has been called 'a rightist line' in the Soviet Party and in the International. What was called the 'Polish right', the 'three Ws', came back into favour for the time being because they had lent support to **Stalin** and **Bukharin**. On the other hand, a part of the ultraleftist leadership, **Zofia Unszticht** and **Domski**, sided with **Zinoviev**; it was for this reason, more than for any mistake they had committed in Poland, that they were removed.⁹ Once more, calculations connected with the struggle in the Soviet Party were decisive. **Lenski**, in spite of his ultraleft policy, remained in the leadership, sharing influence with the 'three Ws'; **Lenski**, unlike **Domski** and **Unszticht**, had come out against the **Zinovievist** opposition. More than this, he became the leader of the **Stalinist** nucleus within the Polish CP, whereas **Warski** and **Kostrzewa**, although completely loyal to **Stalin**, maintained a certain reserve towards him and were closer to **Bukharin's** group. Later this division within the Polish Party was to be crystallised in the formation of a 'minority' faction led by **Lenski** and a 'majority' led by **Warski** and **Kostrzewa**. At the beginning of 1926 these two factions shared the leadership and both were responsible for policy, in particular for the 'May mistake', that is, the support the Polish CP gave to **Pilsudski** at the time of his *coup d'état* of May 1926.

Could you say something more about the 'May mistake' and explain its background? Among old Party militants I often find the following thesis: at the time of the coup the Party could not avoid supporting Pilsudski, who had the confidence of the Polish Socialist Party and of the entire left, and whose 'putsch' was directed against the so-called Chjeno-Piast government (a coalition of the right-centre). The Party, they say, considered that the coup constituted in a certain measure the beginning of a bourgeois revolution, and as such was relatively progressive, because during the previous period only the semifeudal landed proprietors had held power, to the exclusion even of the bourgeoisie.

The 'May mistake' is clearly of fundamental importance in the history of

Polish Communism. I cannot attempt to give you here a detailed explanation of its background. This would require an analysis of the most complicated class relationships and political forces.¹⁰ Therefore, I shall simply try to sketch in certain broad historical outlines. Again, it is essential to examine the situation on two levels: on the level of the class struggle in Poland and on that of the internal development of the Soviet Party and the Comintern.

Let us begin with the purely Polish aspect. Poland was going through a crisis of the parliamentary regime. No stable government could be formed on a parliamentary basis, and this reflected the breakdown of the social and political equilibrium outside parliament. All the possibilities of parliamentary alliances had been exhausted. The masses were utterly disillusioned with their regime, which proved incapable of providing employment and of protecting workers from the catastrophic results of the currency devaluation, had deceived the peasants' expectation of land reform, had condemned the national minorities to oppression and despair. On the other hand, the propertied class were equally opposed to parliament and to the 'omnipotence of the Diet'. They were afraid that the feeble Polish parliamentarianism, unable to ensure stable, let alone 'strong' government, might expose the existing social system to the danger of violent attack and revolution. Objectively, the situation was ripe for the overthrow of the parliamentary regime. Theoretically, there were three possibilities. The parliamentary regime might have been overthrown by a fascist mass movement, similar to Nazism or the Italian prototype. This, however, was not the actual prospect. For reasons which I shall not examine here, all attempts to launch such a movement in Poland, attempts repeated more than once both before and after **1926**, failed. Our native varieties of fascism or Nazism were little more than comic-opera creations.

The second theoretical possibility consisted in the overthrow of the bourgeois-parliamentary regime by proletarian revolution—for this, one might have thought, the Polish CP should have been preparing. However, during the months preceding the May coup the CP had been preparing for almost everything except revolution. Up to a point, this fact reflected the ebb of the militant mood among the working class, the shock the **1923** disaster had inflicted on them, and, finally, the exhaustion of the movement by the pseudo-revolutionary, sterile 'activities' of **1924-5**. The Communist movement lacked self-confidence; and when there was little self-assurance in the vanguard, there was, naturally, even less of it in the working class as a whole. Not believing in its own strength, the working class was inclined to place its hope in external forces and to calculate the benefits which it might obtain for itself through the activities of other classes or social groups. Such was the objective political background to the 'May mistake'.

. A remark in passing—the Polish Communist Party's 'May mistake' began even before **1926**. If my memory does not mislead me, it was **Warski** who, on behalf of the Communist group, offered an emergency motion in the Diet in the autumn of **1925** on 'the dangers threatening the independence of Poland'. The motion was as unexpected as it was amazing. It was astonishing that a friend of Rosa Luxemburg should suddenly raise an alarm about the 'dangers threatening Poland's independence'. In the situation of **1925** it was difficult to see what justified the alarm. The conclusion of this emergency motion was even more amazing. In it, Warski—to meet the 'threat to independence'—demanded the immediate return of Pilsudski to the post of commander-in-chief of the armed forces (this at a time when Pilsudski had left the army and was sulking in his retreat in Sulejowek).

The spectacle was tragicomic indeed! Hardly five years had elapsed since Pilsudski had marched on Kiev, mainly in order to return the Ukrainian estates to their landowners, and the Communist Party was now calling back this man of destiny to head the army, in order to safeguard national independence. It is enough merely to describe the situation in these terms—and these are the only realistic (though grotesque) terms—to dispose of the theory according to which the comeback of Pilsudski was supposed to mark the beginning of the bourgeois revolution in Poland. How could the defender of the feudal estates of the *szlachta* (nobility and gentry) have become transformed suddenly into the inspirer of the bourgeois revolution, the main task of which is usually to destroy feudalism, or what is left of it?

I have mentioned three possible solutions to the crisis of the parliamentary regime in Poland. The third solution consisted in the setting-up of a military dictatorship. Pilsudski was clearly the candidate, the pretender. He had this advantage over other generals: he enjoyed a high reputation. A legend surrounded him as a fighter for national independence, as former chief of the Polish Socialist Party, as the anti-tsarist terrorist of **1905**, and as the founder of the Polish legions in **1914**. By clamouring for his return, the Polish CP blindly and in spite of itself wove a few of its own purple threads into the fabric of this rather phoney legend. The Party helped to create illusions in the working masses about the 'Grandad' (*Dziadek*), as Pilsudski was called familiarly, and so to prepare the way for the May *coup d'état*. How much more correctly did Adolf Nowaczynski, the talented clown of the National-Democratic petty bourgeoisie, grasp Pilsudski's role when he nicknamed him 'Napoleon IV, the very smallest!' How much more appropriate it would have been for Marxists, who should have learned the art of political analysis from **Marx's 18th Brumaire**, to take this view of Pilsudski!

It is, nevertheless, true that Pilsudski was opposing a centre-right

people and capable of beheading the feeble body of Polish **parliamentarianism**;

In other words, Pilsudski expropriated the Polish landlords and bourgeoisie *politically* in order to preserve their *social* domination over the proletariat and the peasantry. When, in May 1926, we saw President Witos, with his trousers half-buttoned, scuttling through the courtyard of the Belvedere Palace in Warsaw, pursued by detachments of Pilsudski's forces, we were witnessing, in fact, an act of political expropriation. To the working class and to its parties this looked like the beginning of economic and social expropriation. But Pilsudski saved the Polish propertied classes in spite of themselves and in spite of their traditional representatives; and he did this with the help of the workers' **parties**.¹²

All of this does not yet explain fully the origin of the 'May mistake'. Even before the May coup, the leaders of the Polish Communist Party had a premonition that Pilsudski was getting ready to seize power and that this augured nothing good for the working classes. **Warski**, it seems, said so publicly. Indeed, even some of the leaders of the Polish Socialist Party had few illusions on this score. I remember how, as a novice journalist of nineteen, on the first night of the putsch I found myself by chance in Warecka Street, in the office of Feliks Perl, editor of **Robotnik**, the historian of the Polish Socialist Party, and one of its most eminent leaders. **Perl** was very worried and indignant. Every few minutes he grabbed the telephone and demanded to be put through to Pilsudski's headquarters, to General Tokarzewski, if I am not mistaken, and with a sweet-and-sour look on his face asked: 'Any news of *our* front, comrade general? How are *our* troops getting on?' Replacing the receiver, he paced nervously up and down, and forgetting that I was there, grumbled to himself: 'This adventurer has landed us in the soup [*'adventurer'* applied to Pilsudski]. If he fails, things will go badly, but if he wins, he'll thrash us.' This scene repeated itself several times during the night. Meanwhile, the presses in the **Robotnik** printing shop were turning out an appeal 'to the toiling people of the capital' in which the 'adventurer' was hailed as a firm friend of the working class and of socialism.

But let us come back to the Polish Communist Party. Its leaders were too good Marxists to be, in normal circumstances, taken in so easily by optical illusions, even when these illusions originated in the peculiar class relationships in the country. There was another and perhaps a weightier reason for the 'May mistake', and it should be sought in the ideological atmosphere and in the policy of the Soviet Communist Party and the Comintern. The Polish Party was not alone in making such a 'mistake': a similar one on a gigantic scale, which was to have tragic consequences, was committed by the Chinese Communist Party when it blindly supported Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang. And in nearby Roumania, almost at the same time—I think this was also in May 1926—the extremely

weak Communist Party supported a similar military putsch carried out by General Antonescu.

This was, we remember, the time of the Stalin-Bukharin bloc. Trotskyism had already been routed; the bitter struggle between the Stalin-Bukharin group and the so-called Leningrad opposition led by **Zinoviev** and Kamenev was in full swing. Bukharin for reasons of principle, and Stalin for tactical reasons, had both declared themselves the defenders of small peasant property and of the peasantry in general, which was supposedly threatened by the Leningrad opposition. The actual disagreements were over domestic, economic and social policies but, as usual, Stalin transformed a discussion on specific policies into a great dogmatic battle in which the issue at stake was allegedly the fundamental attitude towards the 'middle strata'—the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. Stalin and Bukharin accused the Leningrad opposition of hostility towards the 'middle strata' and of failing to understand the importance for the proletariat of the alliance with these strata. This discussion formed a sequel to the anti-Trotskyist campaign of 1923–5, during which the most serious accusation made against **Trotsky** had been that in his theory of the permanent revolution he too had not 'appreciated at their true value' the importance of the middle strata, their progressive role, and the need to form alliances with them. **Trotsky**, it was said, had not understood in 1905 the necessity for a bourgeois revolution in Russia (and in the other backward countries) or had underestimated it; that was why he had proclaimed that in the twentieth century the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist revolution would merge into a single one ('permanent revolution') to be accomplished under the leadership of the proletariat throughout. To try and 'skip' the bourgeois stage of the revolution, so the argument ran, was the characteristic aberration of Trotskyism.

I cannot enter here into an analysis of these extremely complex problems; I am concerned now with their repercussions in Poland. The Comintern was just then busy eradicating the Trotskyist and Zinovievist heresies. The distinctive marks of these heresies were defined as an 'ultra-leftist' and negative attitude towards 'alliances with the middle strata', a fundamental unwillingness to make such alliances, and an unwillingness to recognise that bourgeois revolution, especially in the underdeveloped countries, formed a separate stage of the historical development, in which the bourgeoisie played a progressive and even a revolutionary role. The Comintern was as if seized with an obsessional cult of 'alliances'. Any sign of scepticism with regard to this cult was stigmatised as Trotskyism. The cult of alliances served a double purpose: within the Soviet Union it justified the 'rightist' line of Bukharin and Stalin; internationally it justified Soviet policy in China, which subordinated the Chinese CP to the Kuomintang and placed it under Chiang Kai-shek's orders. The

principles and the methods of this policy were soon applied, automatically and bureaucratically, to all the parties of the International, and among them obviously to the Polish Party. Translated into the terms of Polish politics, this line implied an 'alliance' with Pilsudski as the representative of the 'progressive' forces of the 'bourgeois' revolution. Pilsudski suddenly appeared almost as the ideal ally—and only the Trotskyists and the Zinovievists could spurn the ideal.

At this time were there any Trotskyist or Zinovievist groups within the Polish Communist Party?

As I have already mentioned, Domski and Zofia Unszlicht had ideas which brought them close to the Zinovievist opposition. However, by that time, they had been removed from any activity in the Polish Party. Nevertheless, the Party leadership was fully aware of the practical and political questions as well as of the doctrinal issues which had been raised; and it worked under the pressure of the ideological conflicts in Moscow. At this time **Warski** and Kostrzewa showed a quite extraordinary docility towards Stalin. They cherished the illusion that by paying the price of submissiveness they would buy for themselves freedom of action in their own Party. Handicapped as they were by their double 'mistake' of 1923 (their intervention in Trotsky's favour and their 'opportunistic' policy in Poland), they were anxious to provide every possible proof of their conversion to the new 'Bolshevism' that spoke of the two *distinct* stages in the revolution, the bourgeois and the socialist, the 'Bolshevism' that attached so much importance to its alliance with 'progressive bourgeois' elements. The whole Party propaganda was carried out in this spirit; and it created certain conditioned political reflexes within the Party which definitely contributed to the 'May mistake'.

In addition we must examine the **effect** on the Party's state of mind of the campaign which was carried out with the aim of liquidating what was called the 'Luxemburgist heritage'. This, by the way, is a problem which so far has not received the attention it deserves in Poland, probably because those who study the Party's history have not been equipped sufficiently to tackle the problem—they lack both method and factual knowledge. The most extraordinary myths have multiplied around the 'Luxemburgist heritage'. I do not want this statement to give rise to misunderstandings: I do not claim that Rosa Luxemburg was infallible, and I am not a Luxemburgist. Undoubtedly, she made some mistakes, but they were no more serious than those committed by Lenin or even by Marx, and in any case they were in quite a different category than Stalin's 'errors'. It was, and still is, necessary to analyse these mistakes rigorously and objectively, and to see them in their true proportions. This, however, was not the kind of analysis in which Stalin was

interested—nor was Zinoviev in the years 1923–4, when, in the name of the 'Bolshevisation' of the Polish CP, they declared a holy war on **Luxemburgism**—that is, on the main ideological tradition of Polish Communism. In order to realise what really mattered to Stalin it would be enough to reread his notorious 1931 letter to the editor of *Proletarskaya Revolyutsya*. Instinctively, Stalin detected Rosa Luxemburg's **affinity** with **Trotsky**. And, even though there had been no Trotskyist opposition within the Polish Party during the **1920s**, that party reeked to him of 'Trotskyism'; Stalin considered Luxemburgism as the Polish variety of Trotskyism. This provoked the *furor theologicus* with which the Comintern set out to crush the Luxemburgist heritage.

It is undeniable that this heritage was not above criticism. Lenin's attitude on the question of national independence, or rather of the self-determination of oppressed peoples, was more realistic than that of Rosa Luxemburg. As far as the agrarian question was concerned, Rosa Luxemburg and her disciples did not go beyond advocating the **socialisation** of farming, without understanding the necessity, in Russia and Poland, to share out the land of the semi-feudal latifundia among the peasants. This attitude did not allow Polish Communism to exercise revolutionary influence over the peasantry in 1920, particularly in the eastern marches. At the time of the anti-Luxemburgist campaign, however, it was not enough to analyse these mistakes critically. The whole way of thinking, which belonged both to Luxemburgism and to **Marxism**—the traditions of true internationalism, the Party's specifically proletarian and socialist orientation, its healthy suspicion of the leaders (genuine or self-appointed) of the so-called middle strata—had to be rooted out. Thus the Polish CP began to atone for the Luxemburgist 'sins' against national independence by belated and absurd demonstrations of its reverence for the fetishes of patriotism; and it began to pay undeserved homage to the 'Legends of Independence'. From this there resulted the paradoxical spectacle, which I described above, when, in 1925, **Warski** sent out a cry of alarm at the dangers which faced national independence and demanded the return of Pilsudski to the post of commander-in-chief. On the one hand **Warski** was prey to the qualms of his own political conscience, and on the other hand he echoed the anti-Luxemburgist exorcisms that came from Moscow. As if to expiate the 'antipatriotic' sins of his youth, Warski—and in his person Polish Marxism at large—went to Canossa. On this pilgrimage the Party was once more torn and tormented by bitter misgivings: it paid homage to the would-be dictator, of whom Rosa Luxemburg had said, at the beginning of the century, that his whole 'patriotic' ideology was but the sublimation of the dream of a **déclassé** petty nobleman who, even under tsardom saw himself as the future gendarme-in-chief of his 'own' independent Polish state. Rosa may have been mistaken about the chances of bourgeois Poland regaining

independence, but she was not wrong about Pilsudski's ambition and the nature of Pilsudskism.

Finally, Luxemburgism, like Trotskyism, was charged with the mortal sin of failing to understand the Party's tasks in a bourgeois revolution. In their enthusiasm to fight and defeat the Luxemburgist tradition, the Party leaders suddenly discovered that in Poland history had put on the agenda the bourgeois democratic revolution, and not, as they had thought hitherto, the socialist revolution, which would complete our overdue and unfinished bourgeois revolution. But if the bourgeois revolution was on the agenda, who could be its chief and its leader? Neither in its youth nor in its maturity had the Polish bourgeoisie produced a Danton or a Robespierre. How could it produce one in its old age? But an offshoot of our petty gentry, our 'frontiersman-gentry',¹⁴ could still produce our own parish-pump edition of the *18th Brumaire*. It was in him, then, that our Marxists, misled and hopelessly confused by Stalinism, discovered the hero of the bourgeois stage of the revolution. The situation was grotesque precisely because this *bourgeois* revolution was designed to overthrow a government presided over by Witos, the leader of the kulaks, backed by the largest section—the peasant section—of the Polish bourgeoisie. And in retrospect the vicious circle in which the Polish CP moved under Stalinist guidance can be seen even more clearly: in 1926 the Party saw in Pilsudski an ally against the 'fascism' of Witos; and a few years later, in the Popular Front period, it greeted in Witos a fighter and an ally in the struggle against Pilsudski's 'fascism'. Incidentally, without any Stalinist promptings, the Polish Socialist Party was floundering in the same vicious circle.

You have recalled the analogy between the Polish CP's 'May mistake' and the support the Chinese CP was giving to Chiang Kai-shek at the same time. Did the Polish CP give its support to Pilsudski on definite orders from Moscow in the same way as the Chinese supported Chiang Kai-shek?

No. Not at all. Stalin's and Bukharin's attitude towards Pilsudski was different from that towards Chiang Kai-shek. In Chiang Kai-shek, then an honorary member of the executive of the International, they saw an ally of the Soviet Union and of Communism. In Pilsudski they saw the enemy of the 1920 war. Not only had Moscow not advised the Communists to support Pilsudski, they immediately took an unfavourable view of the CP's stand in the May *coup d'état*. Moreover, when the Communist group in the Diet decided to vote in the presidential election for Pilsudski, it was prevented from doing so by the veto of the executive of the Communist International. It was not 'orders from Moscow' which were responsible for the 'May mistake', but rather a certain political fetishism which spread from Moscow and which was inseparable from that stage of the Stalinisation and bureaucratisation of the Comintern. Stalin did not

prompt **Warski** to report to Pilsudski's headquarters during the May coup. Yet Stalinism was responsible for the 'May mistake', because it had confused the Polish CP, as it had confused other Communist Parties, because it had made it impossible for the Party to analyse situations and problems in the Marxist manner, because it had terrorised the Party leaders with cults that did not allow them to work out policies in accordance with the demands of our class struggle and our ideological tradition. One may say what one likes against 'Luxemburgism', but within the framework of this 'ism' there was certainly no place for anything even remotely resembling the 'May mistake'. Can anyone imagine Rosa Luxemburg reporting docilely at Pilsudski's **GHQ** and declaring her Party's support for his coup? It took a luckless disciple of hers, a disciple whose backbone was already hopelessly deformed by Stalinism, to perform the feat.

How long did the Party maintain this policy?

For a very short time. On the day following the *coup d'état* or very shortly afterwards as far as I can remember. Communist Party proclamations were circulating in Moscow, branding Pilsudski as a fascist dictator. Pilsudski himself did not allow the Party to cherish any illusions; he refused straightway to grant an amnesty to the thousands of imprisoned Communists, he boasted loudly of the 'strong arm' government he was going to set up, he repudiated all 'social experiments' and reforms, and he sought at once to come to terms with the big landowners.

There are some mistakes which are committed in a few days or even hours, but which cannot be repaired in decades. The 'May mistake' was of this kind. In fairness to the Communist Party leaders it must be said that despite Pilsudski's reactionary and dictatorial manners, the Polish Socialist Party backed him for two years or more, while the Communists recovered quickly from their May 'intoxication' and began at once to wage an active struggle against Pilsudski, continuing to do so until the end. Disoriented and knocked off balance as it was, the Communist Party was still the only one to defend the cause of the proletariat and of the poor peasantry, and to stand up for democratic liberties, while the declared upholders of democracy—the socialists—helped Pilsudski to strengthen his position and to undermine all democratic institutions. **Warski** tried as best he could to make good the 'May mistake'. On this occasion he showed great dignity, militancy, and personal courage. In the name of the Party, he hurled accusations in Pilsudski's face and for this, on the dictator's orders and in the dictator's presence, he was dragged out of the National Assembly by Pilsudski's guards. In order to realise the effect that **Warski's** cry, 'Down with the dictator' had, one must bear in mind the cult which surrounded Pilsudski at that time. Pilsudski himself was as if taken aback by this cry: this was the first attack on his legend, the first attempt to

tear it to shreds. I also remember the image of **Warski** at the Theatre Square on May 1, 1928. He was marching in the forefront of our huge and illegal demonstration, through the hail of machine-gun fire and rifle shots with which we were greeted by the Socialist Party militia,¹⁵ while tens and hundreds of wounded were falling in our ranks, he held up his white-gray head, a high and easy target visible from afar; unyielding and unmoved, he addressed the crowd. This was the image of him I had in my mind when, some years later, it was announced from Moscow that he was a traitor, a spy, and a Pilsudski agent.

What responsibility had the different 'majority' and 'minority' factions for the 'May mistake'? Did this split exist even before 1926?

As far as I know these divisions did not exist before 1926. It was, in fact, the 'May mistake' which brought them into being; if my memory does not betray me, these two factions first came to the fore at the plenary session of the central committee in September 1926. And, as it happens, the new split was traced back to previous dissensions. Lenski, the leader of the minority, belonged in 1924-5, after the 'three **W's**' had been dismissed, to what was called the 'left'. Most of those who had belonged to it were now indeed on the side of the minority; and many of those who had belonged to the 'right' were now on the side of the majority. Even older antagonisms played a role, for two of the leaders of the majority, **Kostrzewa** and **Walecki**, had come from the Left Socialist Party; as for the opposition between **Warski** and **Lenski**, an attempt was made to trace it back to the conflicts within the Social-Democratic Party (the Luxemburgists) before the First World War. Nevertheless, it seems to me that these were artificial genealogical trees, and that they were dragged in quite gratuitously. Their irrelevance to the situation of 1926 is proved by the fact that both factions, the majority as well as the minority, were responsible for the 'May mistake'. At the critical juncture both behaved in exactly the same way. Both supported Pilsudski. Both equally **recognised** their responsibility for the blunder—the question they quarrelled about was which of the factions had contributed more and which had contributed less to the 'May mistake'.

The majority was particularly identified with the theory of the 'two distinct stages of the revolution' and the tactic of the united front, in which the Communist Party marched, or limped, behind the Socialist Party. It was a little more difficult to define the attitude of the leaders of the minority, who themselves did not go to the trouble of defining it. To a large extent they represented a mood of 'radicalism' in the Party rather than any precise theoretical concepts. In no instance did they fight against the fetishes which were being imposed on the Polish Party from the Comintern, and which had contributed to the 'Bolshevisation', or in

other words to the bureaucratisation of the Polish CP. To that extent they contributed in a greater measure, perhaps, to the moral disarming of the movement. Both factions shared responsibility and each tried, not very effectively, to shift the blame to the other. This was a difficult period. The Party was split from top to bottom and indulged in mutual and sterile recriminations.

The recriminations were sterile because neither of the two factions was in a position to reveal the true sources of the mistake; neither was capable even post *factum* of making a Marxist analysis of the May putsch and of the regime which came out of it. Each faction sought in its adversary the cause for the Party's moral-political disaster; neither dared to look for the cause in the Comintern; neither had the courage to attack the fetishes of Stalinism; neither had the courage to challenge the false 'Bolshevisation' of the Party. Neither dared to submit to a critical analysis the methods by which the 'Luxemburgist heritage' had been fought; neither had the nerve to try to save what had been and still was great and valid in this heritage. Let us hope that the Polish working class will now rediscover this heritage at last. It will find there its own past and its own forgotten greatness. However, it is quite possible that habits of thought, formed not just in these last years but for a good thirty years, will make it difficult for the young as well as for the old generation of Polish Marxists to find a key to that heritage. I should like to add that this cannot be a question of using, for some tactical purposes, a few isolated fragments-of Rosa's thinking, such as, for example, her initial doubts about 1917—there is no lack of such attempts to 'use' Rosa Luxemburg in present-day Poland. No, the task of Polish Marxists is to assimilate the sum and substance of the ideas of our greatest revolutionary, the ideas which are in full harmony with the enduring achievement of **Lenin**.

But let us come back to the Polish CP. The Party was then searching exclusively within itself for the causes of its political errors. The leaders hoped to remain at the helm with the support of the ruling circles in the Soviet Union. **Warski** and **Kostrzewa** relied more, perhaps, on the support of Bukharin, who was then the moving spirit in the International. As for **Lenski**, he staked his future on **Stalin**. The two factions were desperately afraid of the possibility of a conflict with the Russians; they feared that this would amount to a break with the revolution and with the international Communist movement. I am not making here any indictment of the men who led the Polish Party. They had their reasons for behaving as they did. I know from my own experience, as the former member of an opposition which was not afraid of conflict with the Soviet Party and which undertook the struggle in 1932 with full knowledge of what was involved—I know **from** my own bitter experience that in fact all the groups which did not recoil from this conflict condemned themselves to isolation and political impotence. But the fact that the leaders of the

Polish Party had submitted to Stalin did not save them from political impotence either. And it did not save them from leading the working class into a blind alley; it condemned them to intellectual and moral sterility, and the Party—to death.

The conflict between the majority and the minority already presented a sad spectacle of that sterility. It was like a quarrel of damned souls imprisoned within the enchanted circle of Stalinism. There was no endeavour to find an explanation of the situation and to investigate the mistakes made and the tasks ahead; all were merely anxious to display Stalinist orthodoxy and loyalty to the bosses of the Comintern. Each faction used the latest orthodox formula to whiten itself and blacken its adversary. Any student who would now immerse himself in the Party literature of this period would be struck by the scholastic methods of this controversy, by the obsessive repetition of some magic formulas, and by the queer violence of a debate, the object of which remains altogether elusive.

Did you yourself belong to the majority or to the minority?

I did not belong to either, probably because when I joined the Party, at the age of nineteen, the dividing line had already been drawn and I did not really understand what it was all about. However, I remember clearly that in **1926-7** I had a very sharp sense of the futility of the dispute. It seemed to me that the majority carried the burden of a certain opportunism, and that the minority had the more revolutionary dynamic. What disturbed me about the latter was its intellectual crudity and inclination towards sectarianism. It seemed to me that the majority represented a more serious school of thought and a deeper Marxist tradition. This was the predominant view among the group of comrades with whom I mixed, young Communist as I then was. This may have induced me to keep aloof from both factions and to search in a different direction for a way out of the impasse. I am convinced that the history of the Polish Party must be tackled afresh; to approach it from the angle either of the old minority or of the old majority would lead nowhere and would bring no positive result, intellectually or politically.

Which of the factions was dominant in the Party after May 1926?

At the time of the *coup d'état* the two factions shared the leadership, and this state of affairs lasted almost until the end of **1928**. At the beginning of this period, Warski's and Kostrzewa's ascendancy was more marked, if only because the Bukharinist line still predominated in the Comintern. As usual, their influence showed itself in a more 'organic' activity of the Party, in a closer link between the Party and the masses, in a greater

realism of its agitation, and in its stronger pull on the left elements in the Socialist Party, and also on the rural population and on the national minorities. In spite of the mutual recriminations which weakened it, the Party had in certain respects recovered quickly from its 'May mistake'. The working class had 'forgiven' that mistake. Hadn't the Communists admitted their error sincerely and unambiguously? After all, they all shared the same illusions. The Party was now gaining strength. This was proved, for example, by the results of the municipal elections in Warsaw, where, in 1927, more votes were cast for the CP's illegal list than for the list of any other party. The electors knew that their pro-Communist votes were lost, that none of our candidates would get into the municipal council, but they nevertheless demonstratively voted Communist. This was again a period when in the main industrial centres—Warsaw, Lodz, the Dabrowa coalfields—the CP was stronger than the Socialist Party, in spite of severe police persecution and wasteful inter-factional struggle. In 1928 the Communist Party really was leading the working class in its struggle against the Pilsudski dictatorship. The fear which seized the Pilsudskists and a section of the Socialist Party explains the bloody repression of May 1, of which I spoke earlier. (The illegal Communist demonstrations were very often larger than the demonstrations of the Socialist Party, which marched under the double protection of the police and their own armed militia.) In spite of all the handicaps and difficulties, the Party had some chance of going over to the offensive again. Just at this moment, however, it suffered a new blow, which knocked it off its relative balance and rendered it powerless.

Are you referring to the change in the leadership and to the elimination of Warski and Kostrzewa?

Yes. And once again it was not *what* happened that mattered so much as *how* it happened. Whether Warski and Kostrzewa or Lenski was at the helm was less important than the fact that the change was brought about solely from 'above', that it bore no relation to the logic of the class struggle in Poland. Once again, the Russian Party and the International weighed on the fate of Polish Communists and the Polish working classes.

At the Sixth Congress of the International, in the summer of 1928, the struggle between Stalin and Bukharin, previously confined within the Soviet Politburo, had burst into the open. Acting under the pressure of the USSR's internal crisis, Stalin was reviving his policy towards the peasantry and preparing the wholesale collectivisation. A huge social drama was being enacted in the Soviet Union, and it entailed another drama, less obvious but in its consequences equally grave, for European Communism. Having broken with Bukharin on domestic issues, Stalin set out to eradicate all Bukharinist influence in the Comintern and to

change international Communist policy. Automatically, this involved the condemnation of the 'majority' in the Polish CP. **Warski** and **Kostrzewa** were deprived of all influence. The steering wheel was violently turned 'left'. In **1929** Molotov put forward the ill-fated conception of a 'third period' which, briefly, consisted in this: the capitalist world was entering a directly revolutionary situation, and consequently the Communist movement must go over to an offensive struggle for power; **social-democracy**, otherwise 'social-fascism', was Communism's main and most dangerous enemy; moreover, the left wing of the social-democratic parties was more dangerous than the right wing; the Communists should direct their main fire against that enemy; they were forbidden to enter into any agreements with Socialists, they should set up their own Red Trade Unions (breaking away from the general trade unions) and, with their help, organise general strikes and **armed** insurrections. The policy of the 'third period' was in force from **1929** to **1934**. This was the time when Nazism was growing like an avalanche in Germany, and in the face of this threat, to which the Social-Democrats were surrendering anyhow, the Communist Party found itself disarmed. When the Party was told that its main enemy was not Hitler but 'social-fascism', and that it had no right to ally itself with social-democracy against Nazism, German Communism, tied hand and foot, was delivered over to the heroes of the swastika.

In Poland the direct results of this policy were not yet quite as tragic, but they were grim enough. The simmering conflict between Pilsudski on the one hand, and the Socialist Party and the peasant movement on the other, was nearing the boiling point. These were the years of the **Left-Centre** opposition. Pilsudski seized the leaders of this opposition and had them imprisoned and tortured in the fortress of Brzesc. The anti-communist terror, too, had grown more intense and reached a climax with the tortures inflicted on Ukrainian Communists imprisoned in Luck. In these conditions the policy and the slogans of the 'third period', diligently translated into Polish by Lenski, had all the characteristics of a malignant political diversion. The Party member had to 'concentrate the fire' on the victims of Brzesc and not on their executioners; he had to believe that the Party's gravest sin would be to support the struggle of the Left-Centre against Pilsudski, or to turn this struggle into a fierce revolutionary contest, which the leaders of the Left-Centre neither could nor wished to do.

In conditions incomparably more serious, the Polish CP repeated the whole series of ultraleft mistakes which it had committed in **1924-5**. It indulged once more in ultra-revolutionary acrobatics, which consisted in launching revolutionary activities with great energy into an empty space—activities the aims of which became less and less real. Loud and big words were not followed by deeds. The Party operated exclusively

within its own ranks—and these were melting away. It cut itself off from the working and peasant masses who had been first aroused and then confounded by the half-hearted struggle of the Left-Centre. It lost common language with the mass of workers and found itself driven more and more towards the fringe of politics, towards radical but politically impotent **déclassé** petty-bourgeois elements (mostly Jewish). The leaders did not, and would not, see the vacuum around the Party and the moral ravages in the rank and file. In the long run a revolutionary party cannot tolerate with impunity a divorce between word and deed; nor can it turn its back on reality and feed on the conventional fictions of a pseudo-revolutionary 'line' without having one day to pay for all this with the distortion of its own character. This indeed was the price the whole Comintern paid for the policy of the 'third period'. The Polish Party, in addition, laboured under the dictatorship of a faction which—following Stalin's example—dragged its inner-party opponents in the mud, gagged them, and thus stopped all the processes of opinion-formation within the party. These characteristics of the Stalinist inner-party regime, with which Poland was to become so thoroughly acquainted in the 1940s and 1950s, existed by the end of the twenties and had become fully developed in 1932–3. The phenomenon was all the more paradoxical because it did not result from the 'corruption of power', which to some degree may be expected in a ruling party, nor did it come about through the growth of a bureaucracy jealous of its social and political privileges. The Polish Communist Party remained the party of the oppressed and the persecuted. Its members and followers continued to crowd Pilsudski's and Rydz-Smigly's prisons. The dream of proletarian revolution and socialism still animated them. It was this dream precisely that made them inclined to accept blindly everything which came from the Soviet Union—the fatherland of the proletariat. Instead of being true to itself, the Party was becoming false to itself. Guided by its devotion to the cause of revolution, it was losing itself as the party of revolution.

In the middle 1930s there took place in the Party a turn in favour of the Popular Front. How did this influence the Party?

At this time, I was already out of the Party. Cut off from it, I could judge the facts from the outside only. Whatever else may be said about it, the policy of the Popular Front undoubtedly rejuvenated and refreshed the Party, which came into contact with reality. This brought new elements within the Party's sphere of influence. The intellectuals, who were then attracted by the Polish Party, now play, it seems to me, an important role in Poland's political life. That is why to the young generation they present this period as idealised and enveloped in a beautifying mist. Nevertheless, we must examine it coolly and objectively.

The Popular Front was the extreme opposite of the policy of the 'third period'. Yesterday's 'social-fascists' turned out to be anti-fascist fighters. Even the right-wing leaders of the peasant movement, like Witos, were recognised as knights-errant of democracy and progress. By comparison with the moderation of the Party's new tactical line, the 'opportunism' of **Warski** and **Kostrzewa** looked like exuberant, ultra-radicalism. Yet the slogans of the Popular Front were, in **1935** and **1936**, launched by the same leaders (**Lenski** and **Henrykowski**) who in the previous year had directed their main fire against the 'social-fascists' and who had considered 'united front from below' as the only admissible policy, and who had expelled hundreds of militants simply because they had dared to doubt whether social-fascism was really 'the main and most serious danger'. Once again, what is important is not so much *what* policy was applied as *how* it was applied. No inner party discussion had preceded this violent change of line, which only followed the change of line of the Comintern, a line based in its turn on the calculations of Stalin's foreign policy. The effect which the reversal of policy had on the Party itself was therefore full of contradictions. On the one hand, the break with the 'third period' had a stimulating and reviving influence on the Party, and allowed it to escape from its vacuum. On the other hand, the mechanical character of this turn, coming entirely from 'above', increased still further the atrophy of political thinking among the cadres of old militants, who had already become accustomed to replace one set of political rituals by another at a single word of command and to consider all political notions and all watchwords as so many conventional phrases with no living content. Cynicism and ideological apathy made serious inroads. The young, who began their political life under the banner of the Popular Front, greeted the new slogans much more seriously and threw themselves with enthusiasm into the thick of anti-fascist activity. Nevertheless, this period was not conducive to the formation of Marxist consciousness in the young; they absorbed only very little of the Party's specifically Communist tradition. The Party propaganda, disseminating the vaguest of 'democratic' and antifascist slogans and the most insipid 'let's all get together' proclamations, was jettisoning all the criteria of proletarian interest and class struggle. It hardly differed from the routine propaganda of right-wing socialists, except that it markedly lacked any genuineness. Ideological shallowness and a patriotic-democratic vulgarity characterised the Party which once drew its inspiration from Rosa Luxemburg's flaming thought.

I am dwelling on this not in order to tear open old wounds or revive lapsed controversies, but in order to show the state of spiritual weakness in which the Party found itself on the eve of its assassination, and so to explain the passivity and the silence with which in **1938** it received its own death sentence and endured the unparalleled slaughter of its leaders.

A picture presenting the Polish CP as a flourishing, intellectually

healthy body, brimming over with strength, which suddenly fell a victim to Yezhov's provocation, would be false and unhistorical. There is no need to resort to such a myth in order to rehabilitate the Party. Moreover, this would transform the very act of rehabilitation into a magic ritual. How did it happen, we must ask, that a Party which had to its credit decades of underground struggle and a long (seventy years long!) and proud Marxist tradition submitted meekly to this horrible outrage—without a protest, without making any attempt to defend its martyred leaders and fighters, without even trying to vindicate its honour, and without declaring that in spite of the death sentence Stalin had passed on it, it would live on and fight on? How could this happen? We must be fully aware of the moral corrosion to which Stalinism had for so many years exposed Polish Communism in order to understand its complete collapse under the blow.

At the time of its dissolution, the Polish CP was charged with being 'infected' with Trotskyism and of being an agency of the Polish political police. What in fact was the influence of Trotskyism on the Party?

The Trotskyist opposition in the Party was formed in the years 1931–2. It grouped comrades who had formerly belonged both to the minority and to the majority, and others who had not been connected with either faction. The opposition did not *a priori* take up a Trotskyist stand. It was formed on the basis of a critical view of the policy of the 'third period', the slogans about 'social-fascism', the 'united front only from below,' etc., and also of the bureaucratic inner-party regime. Demanding the right of self-determination for the Polish Party, the opposition adopted a critical attitude towards the regime that was prevailing within the International and the Soviet Party. Consequently, the ideas of the Trotskyist opposition in the USSR and particularly the magnificent, though fruitless, campaign which **Trotsky** waged in exile for a united front against Hitler, had a powerful and decisive impact on our group. At the beginning, the opposition exercised a fairly large influence. In Warsaw, where the Party counted at that time, it seems, hardly more than a thousand members, the opposition had about three hundred members (most of whom had played an important role in the movement), not counting a large circle of sympathisers in the Party organisations. Unfortunately, the deplorable condition in which the Party found itself affected the opposition too. The Party was cut off from the workers in large industry and was relegated to a petty-bourgeois fringe, and this weakness was reflected in the opposition. Although we had attracted many militants in the capital, our influence was much weaker in the provinces, where the pulse of Party life in general had been rather feeble. The bulk of the militants viewed the opposition with much sympathy so long as they did not realise that

not only adherence but even mere contact with the opposition would be punished by expulsion from the Party. The new grouping, which did not simply continue the old and sterile quarrel between minority and majority but posed the problem of Party policy on a new plane, was at first greeted with relief. The Party leaders retorted by expelling and slandering us in the best Stalinist style. The same leaders who, a few years hence, were to be liquidated as police agents now branded the opposition as the 'agency' of 'social-fascism', then simply of fascism, and as a gang of 'enemies of the USSR'.

By the use of such methods, the leadership succeeded in stifling all discussion and terrorising Party members to such an extent that they began to shun us with the superstitious fear with which faithful members of the Church used to shun excommunicated heretics. The opposition was hermetically isolated from the Party, and by 1936 had almost no contact with it. Thus the charge that the Polish CP had become a Trotskyist 'agency' was sheer invention. But nevertheless, the doubts and ideas that the opposition had sown in the Party continued to germinate. Even while Party members remained conformist, many of them never ceased to listen to the voice of the opposition, and they were influenced by it to a greater or lesser degree—at any rate sufficiently to be sceptical about the holy writ of Stalinism. And since nothing in nature is ever lost completely, the Luxemburgist tradition had not vanished completely either, in spite of the years which had been spent on uprooting it. The opposition's influence and the effect of that tradition was such that even after years of 'Bolshevisation', the psychological profile of even the most orthodox Polish Communist left much to be desired from the Stalinist point of view. Thus it was in the 1930s; fortunately it was like this also after the Second World War: during this whole period a certain law of continuity had never ceased to operate.

Nevertheless, a question must be posed. We know that Pilsudski had his agents in all the left-wing parties. Surely he must have tried to introduce them into the CP as well?

The theory of these networks of agents which Pilsudski supposedly had created in various left-wing parties is again a crude simplification. No network of secret agents could have enabled Pilsudski to exercise on the Socialists and on a part of the peasant movement the influence he did exercise as a result of his long and above-board connections with these parties. He was one of the founding fathers of the Polish Socialist Party and was for many years its chief leader and inspiration. He had been the Commander of the Legion, to which men of the patriotic left had rallied. Even after he had left the Socialist Party, he continued to represent something that belonged to its essence: social-patriotism pushed to the

extreme. It was that which formed the basis of Pilsudski's 'magical' influence. The worship of Polish 'statehood', the dreams of the 'One and Sovereign' Poland, old loyalties, friendships, and ties of sentiment—these gave birth to those Pilsudskist 'networks' in parties of the moderate and patriotic left, which at times of conflict he attempted to destroy from within. There was not, and there could not have been, any similar basis for a Pilsudskist network in the Polish CP. The left-wing socialists who, after 1918, found themselves in the ranks and in the leadership of the Communist Party, had to their credit more than ten years of bitter struggle against Pilsudski. As for the old Luxemburgists, it is hardly necessary to dwell on their attitude towards him. However, even in the moderate, patriotic, left parties (PPS or *Wyzwolenie*) Pilsudski's 'agents' achieved very little. Very quickly these parties overcame the confusion and splits provoked by the 'networks'. Only the Polish CP, if we are to believe Stalin, was *completely* in the hands of Pilsudski's 'agents'. In 1938, when this accusation was made and one wanted to refute it, one felt overwhelmed by the sheer nonsense of it all. It is true that during the 1930s the Polish Party had suffered particularly from police provocations. The fall in the ideological level of most of the militants, the bitterness of the factional **struggles**, the ultra-revolutionary policy of the years **1929–35**—all this had facilitated to a certain extent the penetration of police agents into the Party. It would in any case have been surprising if the police had had no agents whatsoever in the Polish CP in the same way in which the tsarist Okhrana had had its **Azefs** and its Malinowskis in nearly all the illegal Russian organisations. However, no one would have had the idea of dissolving the Bolshevik Party or the Socialist Revolutionary Party for that reason. The Stalinist provocation was a much more serious danger for the Polish CP than all the *agents provocateurs* of the Polish secret police.¹⁶

What, then, in your opinion were the reasons for which Stalin ordered the dissolution of the Polish Party? The view which prevails now among old Party militants is that Stalin was already preparing the ground for his 1939 agreement with Hitler and that he liquidated the Polish Party and sent its leaders to their death because he feared that they might obstruct that agreement.

This motive no doubt played a part in Stalin's decision but does not explain it fully. **Warski** and **Kostrzewa**, for years cut off from all contact with Poland (and the world), were no longer in a position to offer the slightest resistance to Stalin, even if they had wished to do so. As for **Lenski** and **Henrykowski**, I am convinced that they would have remained faithful to Stalin even in a situation as critical for Polish Communism as that of August and September 1939, in the same way as were the leaders

of the French Party, not to mention the Germans and others. But here we are dealing with hypotheses. It seems to me that no single motive or sober calculation can explain Stalin's behaviour in this matter. His irrational impulses were quite as important as his 'rational' calculations; and he was impelled to act as he did by old grudges and ancient phobias, all intensified to the utmost by the persecution mania which gripped him at the time of the great Moscow trials, when he was settling his final accounts with the Leninist old guard. In this frame of mind, Stalin saw the Polish CP as the stronghold of hated Luxemburgism—the Polish 'variety of Trotskyism'—which had defied him as long ago as 1923; the Party in which some leaders were close to Bukharin and others to Zinoviev; the Party of incurable heresies, proud of its traditions and of its heroism; the Party, finally, which might well in certain international situations become an obstacle on his road. . . . And so he decided to remove that obstacle by the blade of the same guillotine which, working furiously, was already destroying a whole generation of Bolsheviks.

The historian will not end his account of the fortunes of the Polish CP on the act of its annihilation. The epilogue of the story is, in a sense, its most important chapter. The 'posthumous' fate of the Polish CP will remain the most striking testimony of its greatness. Crushed, decimated, confounded and outraged, the Party's old cadre was still the spearhead of all of Poland's revolutionary forces. It was that remnant of the old Party which at the end of the Second World War, in the peculiar international situation which favoured social revolution, carried this revolution through. The survivors of the Polish CP came forward as the executors of their Party's will, although they had to do so in conditions and by methods that no philosophers dreamed of. And nearly twenty years after the massacre of the Polish CP, its spirit and, if you like, something of its old Luxemburgist tradition, showed themselves in October 1956.

Not only the historian, but also every militant Marxist, must draw certain conclusions from the tragic history of the Polish CP. Here I must of necessity confine myself to one rather general idea: if the history of the Polish CP and of Poland at large proves anything at all, *it proves how indestructible is the link between the Polish and the Russian revolutions.* This has been proved both negatively and positively. For her attempt to place herself athwart the international revolution which had begun in Russia—the attempt made in 1918–20—Poland had to pay with twenty years of stagnation and backwardness, of provincially narrow and anachronistic social life, and, finally, with the catastrophe of 1939. On the other hand, the revolution, isolated in old and backward Russia, isolated by the world's anti-communist forces (with Poland's eager help), underwent a distortion which affected tragically not only the peoples of the USSR but revenged itself on Poland as well. Already in 1920 Poland had felt something of that revenge. Subsequently, it led to the deformation

of the working-class movement in Poland, condemning it to sterility and impotence. Then there came 1939. After the Second World War, the Russian Revolution, in spite of all its distortions, still showed itself to be sufficiently alive and dynamic to stimulate new revolutionary processes in Europe and Asia. Poland once again absorbed from the Russian Revolution its shadows as well as its lights and took over from it, together with the blessings of a progressive upheaval in social relationships, the curse of bureaucratic terror and the Stalin cult. Poland had to pay a heavy penalty for the 'miracle on the Vistula' of 1920,¹⁷ in which she had gloried for twenty years. Having spurned the Russian Revolution in its heroic stage, she had to humble herself before the same Revolution after it had degenerated. Having scorned Lenin and Leninist internationalism, Poland had to prostrate herself before Stalin and Great Russian chauvinism. Only as the Soviet Union was beginning to awaken from the nightmare of Stalinism could Poland free herself from it, and by that very act stimulate processes of recovery in other socialist countries. But only as the Russian Revolution emerges from the sidetracks onto which history had driven it and at last enters the highway of socialist democracy, will the perspectives before People's Poland clear up definitely. At every step history demonstrates ad oculos how indissoluble are the bonds between the Polish and the Russian revolutions. But whereas hitherto history has again and again demonstrated the indissoluble nature of this bond in a negative manner—by inflicting the most cruel lessons on Poland—in October 1956 it has begun perhaps to demonstrate it in the positive, that is, in the only effective manner. History so far has not always been a good and sensible teacher. The lessons in internationalism which it attempted to teach the Polish masses were singularly involved, badly thought out, and ineffective. During almost every one of these 'lessons', history mocked and insulted Poland's national dignity and, in the first place, the dignity and independence of the Polish revolutionary movement. Is it surprising then, that the 'pupil' has not been very receptive, and, trying to escape the peculiar 'teacher', has sought refuge in the jungle of our nationalist legends? The Polish masses will understand that the bonds which unite their destiny with that of the Russian and other revolutions are indissoluble, but only after they have recovered from the blows and shocks inflicted on them in the past, and when they feel that nothing can ever again threaten their independence and national dignity. Marxists, however, must rise above the shocks and the traumas from which the masses suffer; and they must even now be deeply and thoroughly aware of the common destiny of Poland and other nations advancing towards socialism. Marxists have no right to nourish themselves, nor to feed others, on the spiritual diet of stale and warmed-up myths and legends. Socialism does not aim at the perpetuation of the national state; its aim is international society. It is based not on national self-centredness and self-sufficiency, but on international division

of labour and on cooperation. This almost forgotten truth is the very ABC of Marxism.

You may say that what I am proposing is a new edition of **Luxemburgism**, slightly amended and adapted to the needs of 1957. Perhaps. You may tell me that this is merely a new version of the theory of 'organic incorporation'.¹⁸ Perhaps. But what is at stake this time is the 'organic integration' of Poland, into international socialism, not her incorporation into a Russian empire.

NOTES

1. It is said that at one of the meetings of the Central Committee which took place after October 1956, when Gomulka was relating the story of the Party's dissolution and of the slanders made against its leaders, he was asked whether at that time, in 1938, he himself believed them. Gomulka answered: 'No.' Why, then, had he not protested? he was asked. 'I was not brave enough to do so, or I had not enough self-confidence,' he is said to have replied, 'but if Lenin had been living in Poland, he would certainly have protested in such circumstances.' We must acknowledge Gomulka's sincerity and modesty. Nevertheless it was not necessary to be a Lenin in order to dare to protest. I knew ordinary workers who had no ambitions towards leadership and who understood that their duty was to protest, and acted accordingly.
2. The Social-Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania was formed in 1893 as a Polish party; the Lithuanian Social-Democrats attached themselves in 1900. From the beginning this party was led by Julian Marchlewski, Leo Jogiches-Tyszka, and Rosa Luxemburg. The Left Socialist Party was formed in November 1906, as a result of a split in the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and of an opposition, stimulated by the 1905 revolution, to Pilsudski's reformist, terroristic and nationalist leadership.
3. It is a curious fact that the 'splitters' and particularly Dzerzhinski and Radek should have made almost the same criticism of Rosa Luxemburg as the latter made of Lenin during the division of the Party into Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. They accused her of applying a policy of ultracentralism in the Party, of enforcing too much discipline, etc. In fact, Rosa Luxemburg's Party was led in a manner very similar to that in which Lenin led the Bolshevik Party. This was due essentially to the fact that both parties were operating illegally.
4. The Bund was the Jewish socialist party, which then maintained an intermediate position between socialist reformism and communism.
5. Julian Marchlewski, one of the closest friends of Rosa Luxemburg, was an eminent writer and Marxist theoretician who played an important part in the German socialist left and in the Polish movement. After the October Revolution he stayed in Russia.
6. Feliks Kon, a veteran of Polish patriotic socialism, was one of the founders of the Communist Party and with Marchlewski and Dzerzhinski was a member of the 'Provisional Communist Government', set up during the Red Army's march on Warsaw. Lapinski belonged to the same group as Feliks Kon, and in the twenties played an important role in the Comintern.
7. In France, Monatte, Rosmer and Souvarine were dismissed from the leadership of the Communist Party.
8. The Polish CP was made illegal at the beginning of 1919, only a few weeks after the proclamation of Polish independence. It remained illegal until 1944.
9. At that time, too, Treint was eliminated from the leadership of the French

- Communist Party, of which he had been general secretary.
10. Shortly before the war I wrote a large-scale study of the history of working-class movements and class struggles in Poland; unfortunately this manuscript was lost.
 11. General Jose **Haller**, the commander of the Polish divisions in France during the First World War, was the hero of the extreme right in Poland, and was Pilsudski's antagonist, during the **1920s**.
 12. The western reader will see clearly the analogy between this attitude of the Polish Communists and socialists and the illusions which Proudhon, for example, entertained for a time with regard to the person of Napoleon **III**, or Lassalle with regard to Bismarck. Polish Marxists—especially Rosa Luxemburg's followers—had adopted a very critical attitude towards the traditions and methods of Proudhonism and **Lassallism**.
 13. **Robotnik** was the main newspaper of the Polish Socialist Party.
 14. **Pilsudski** came from the eastern borderlands of the old Poland, famous for the fanfaronades and feuds of its Falstaffian gentry.
 15. Shortly afterwards this militia was to break with the Socialist Party and enter Pilsudski's service.
 16. Azef was a well-known *agent provocateur* who led the terrorist organisation of the Russian Social-Revolutionary Party. **Malinowski**, who was **Lenin's** friend, a deputy of the Duma, and an influential member of the Bolshevik Central Committee, was finally also exposed as an *agent provocateur*.
 17. The 'miracle on the **Vistula**' was the name given to the battle of Warsaw, in which Pilsudski's armies inflicted defeat on the Soviet army. At the time of this battle, General Weygand was Pilsudski's adviser.
 18. In her theory of 'organic incorporation', which she formulated in her doctoral thesis, Rosa Luxemburg stated that the struggle for Poland's independence was hopeless and in essence even reactionary because of the 'organic' economic ties that linked Poland and Russia; neither the Polish bourgeoisie nor the Polish proletariat were interested in the restoration of a sovereign Poland: the bourgeoisie because Russian markets were more profitable to it, and the proletariat because it strove for international socialism. This conception formed the theoretical basis of the Luxemburgist politics.