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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY

Poland

SUBJECT

Reaction to Beria's Fall/Deteriorated Living Conditions/Dollar Speculations/Reaction to Berlin Riots/UB Checks/Special Town Sections/Religious Attitudes.



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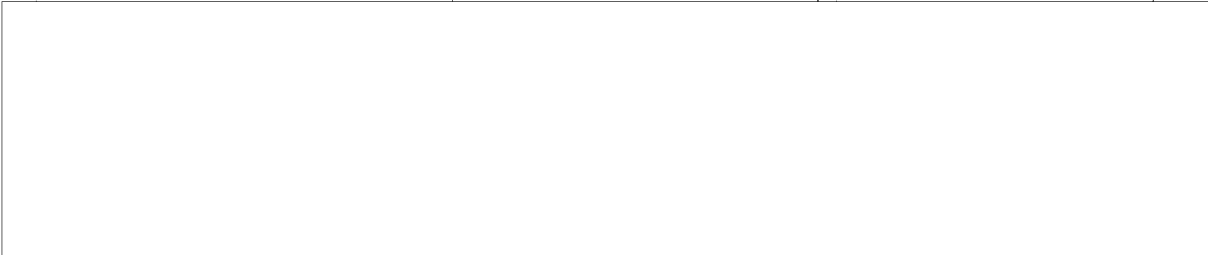
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SUPP. TO REPORT NO.

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1. "The following information concerns conditions and attitudes in the Gdynia and Gdansk area and dates through June 1953:
Reaction to Beria's Fall
2. "The Poles are not particularly interested in what is happening in the KREMLIN, because the general impression is that regardless of what happens there and whoever is in power, the lot of POLAND remains as unhappy and tragic as ever. One certainly welcomed MALENKOV's disposal of BERIA. One might even hope that one day ZHUKOV or VASILEVSKI will purge MALENKOV. But these are only superficial changes which have no effect on the everyday life of the Poles. Beria is gone but the UB (secret police) does not work less efficiently. They fulfill their plans just as before and beat up and torture people just as before. Think how many palace revolutions there were in Tsarist RUSSIA, but that did not change for the better the lives of earlier Poles. Freedom-loving Poles were sent to SIBERIA regardless of who sat on the throne.
3. [redacted] the overwhelming majority of Poles [redacted] convinced that the Soviet regime and system has not changed, nor will it change in the future. Of course, it seems somewhat weakened in the transition period of power, but it would fall only if the Americans, and the Western world in general, would strike a decisive blow at once. Nothing will be changed in the USSR and hardly anything in the Satellite countries without serious blows from without. All talk about the inner decomposition of the regime is nonsense.

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the western powers are making a serious error if they persist in judging the actions of the USSR and guessing at its motives as if it were a country like any other state of the world. That is not true.

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Deteriorated Living Conditions

4. "What interests the Poles much more than the changes in the KREMLIN, are the deteriorated living conditions in POLAND. After the increase in prices in January 1953, it seemed as if there was more food on sale in the shops than earlier. Actually this was not true, but everybody had suddenly become so much poorer that they had no money to buy the same quantities of food they had consumed earlier.
5. "This circumstance was exploited by the authorities: they cut the quantities of unnecessary goods distributed to the shops. [redacted] the shops were half-empty again. For [redacted] milk, one had to queue up for three hours. Fats and sausages had become exceedingly short again. At about the same time, the prices of bread were raised in a discreet manner. Particularly great was the price rise in the cheapest kind of bread, the so-called half-black bread, the price of which rose from 3 zl. to 3.65 zl. per kg. This rise was not announced in any way, neither in the shops nor in the press. The higher prices were simply demanded one day and that was that.
6. "About mid-May 1953, a process started in POLAND, which was called UNORMOWANIE NORM or "normalising of norms". First, the number of groups into which the norms were divided (every group designating differentiated payment) was decreased from nine to seven. At the same time the wages for every labor unit in every group were decreased by eight to twelve groszy - in certain cases by 20 groszy - which in turn resulted in a wage cut of 7-20 zl. per month, depending on the previous wages of the worker and on how the norms are applied in every branch of activities. This wage cut was bad, but would not have proved insufferable if at the same time the norms themselves had not been raised again. [redacted] it was absolutely impossible to earn even approximately as much as before the reform. [redacted] this new system would be applied in the whole of POLAND from 15 July. [redacted] they could not be applied onboard ship where the sailors are exploited by "social obligations."
7. "The monthly income of a PLO (Polskie Linie Oceaniczne) boatswain in late spring 1953 was:

Basic salary	1,180	zl.
Benefit for service years (5 per cent of basic salary per every service year) - in subject's case	80	zl.
Family benefit (80 zl. for the non-earning wife plus benefit for three children)	250.50	zl.
Overtime, etc.	about 140	zl.
Total	1,650.50	zl.

The following deductions are made from this sum:

Taxes	150	zl.
Membership fee of PZPR (the Polish CP)	18	zl.
Trade union fee	15	zl.
Various 'voluntary' (i.e. compulsory) contributions had to be made, to the rehabilitation of WARSAW, to build 'children's houses,' etc.	about 17	zl.
Total	about 200	zl.

"Beyond this sum he has a per diem foreign currency allowance, which in this case was about \$ 25. - monthly. This allowance is calculated in the following manner:

Per each day on sea:		
In the Baltic	\$ 1.-	\$1.-
On the Levantine Line		1.20
In South American Traffic		1.32
On the China Line		1.48

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"Up to 1 January 1953 (when prices and wages were raised in Poland) he had earned: Basic salary 807 zl; Family benefit 150 zl.; plus overtime, etc. so that his total monthly income was 1200 zl. Beyond that he had the usual currency allowance of \$ 25.- The incomes vary slightly in each individual case, depending on service years, etc.

8. "Since 1953 the freedom of movement of the Soviet seamen in Polish harbors has been curtailed. They are not allowed to go on land in small groups of two or three. There must always be at least four to six men, as in Western harbors. Polish sailors in Western harbors may now go on land in groups of two or three; it is extremely difficult to go ashore alone. Formerly the Soviets, as privileged guests in Poland, could buy textiles, chocolates, tobacco, etc., from BALTONA at a par with the Poles. (BALTONA is a special shop for seamen where they may buy scarce or otherwise unobtainable goods by paying in dollars). Since the New Year of 1953, when prices rose steeply in POLAND, the Soviets' right to buy things from BALTONA has been cut considerable.
9. "It still pays for the Polish seamen to buy things from BALTONA, particularly if one considers the black market still existing in POLAND. For example, for [redacted] woolen suiting he pays at BALTONA \$ 9-10; that suiting can be resold on the black market at 450-500 zl. [redacted] or ten times dearer. For a coupon [redacted] of highest quality suiting sometimes up to 2,500 zl. is paid.
10. "Since the beginning of 1953, the quantities of textiles distributed among the shops in POLAND have been severely cut. This is one means to compel customers to buy ready-made clothing, even for babies and small children. The state profits are considerably larger from ready-made clothes than from fabrics. A propaganda campaign to attain this end started at about the same time. Ready-made clothes for children are very expensive. A pair of trousers for a four year old boy costs 55-60 zl. in a shop. At home they can be sewn at the expense of only 15-20 zl. A pair of children's cloth shoes, which can be made of small remnants at home, costs 30-40 zl. in the shops. However, people are compelled to buy these expensive ready-made clothes as fabric goods have grown extremely scarce. The material which can still be obtained easiest is men's suiting.
11. "A salesgirl at a food store earns only 500-600 zl. monthly. A woman executive in food cooperative stores earns about 850-900 zl.

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"Sea captains who have been dismissed for political reasons sometimes buy for the remnants of their savings a horse and cart and earn their living as carters, working for government or communal enterprises, the harbor administration or private persons.

"At present there exist two kinds of carters: the unorganized ones ('private initiative') and those organized in a sort of cooperative. The latter have a great privilege: they get their transports according to plan from government and communal enterprises. The private carters wait at street corners with their carts for customers who are mostly private citizens. Customers and carters can reach an agreement in accordance with the 'free market' taxes although there exists an official tariff. Those who employ the cooperative carters, pay them according to the official tariff which is rather high: for the transport of one ton of coal from ULICA JASNA Z KOLNA to ULICA SWIETOJANSKA in GDYNIA [redacted]

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Dollar Speculation

12. " On an early morning in the beginning of May 1953, [redacted] a side street to ULICA SLASKA was blocked at both ends, at ULICA SLASKA as well as its other end which leads to a forest. It was possible to enter the street but not leave it. It was full of armed patrols from the militia, WOP and KBW. Entrances to a number of houses in the street were blocked. Nobody was allowed to leave those houses. Suddenly there was a disturbance: [redacted] a woman ran towards ULICA SLASKA. [redacted] a shot. The woman was followed. However, she jumped on a bus and vanished.

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"Then the patrols arrested four women, the wives of seamen living on that street. These women have vanished without a trace. They may have been sent to the camp between CHOJNICE and FORDON. Several sailors, including the husbands of the arrested women jumped off abroad after this incident. It was rumoured among sailors in GDYNIA that in one of the searched flats \$ 7000 were found. On the black market in POLAND a dollar now costs from 70 to 100 zl. (the official rate of exchange is a little less than 5 zl.) People still speculate with dollars occasionally, although the punishment can be up to 15 years of prison and sometimes death sentence.

Reaction to Berlin Riots

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14. "Everybody in POLAND had heard of the BERLIN riots [17 June 53]; Western radios had excessively reported on the riots in their Polish broadcasts. Even the Polish regime papers had written about the riots, although they, of course, condemned them severely and attached the 'imperialists who provoked the riots.' Rumours about the riots were wide-spread too, and the extent of disturbances was much exaggerated. People spoke of 20,000 killed (sic) in EAST BERLIN alone and said that the Soviets were compelled to use heavy weapons - tanks, armoured cars and cannon - before they could suppress the revolt. Opinions varied on the causes of the riots. Some people said that the riots were certainly spontaneous and clear proof that the Germans had had enough of the Soviets. Others said that the riots were really a Soviet provocation of gigantic dimensions which had got out of hand.

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16. "Although the riots were much commented upon between trusted friends, nobody had any particular illusions about their consequences for POLAND. Everybody was well aware that POLAND's situation is different. Of course, people were glad that things started happening. They said that the Germans wanted to kick the Soviets eastwards. In the beginning it was also said that what started in BERLIN could soon spread to POLAND. But all the hopes of this soon fell. The final consensus of the Poles on the BERLIN riots was: 'We cannot do anything without being prepared - we all remember what happened in WARSAW in 1944. However, as soon as the Western powers start moving in our direction in a decided manner, we can do something and we will do it!'

17. "The people apparently most impressed by the revolt were the authorities, if one is to judge from the precautions they took, probably fearing that the revolt might spread into POLAND. For persons in GDYNIA this official precaution made itself felt most through intensified control at railway stations.

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Because of the radio, it was clear to everybody that these new control measures were connected with the BERLIN riots.

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18. "One could also observe certain military precautions. On 22 June, from the train between GDYNIA and GDANSK [redacted] Generally speaking, one had the impression that in those days the military traffic, particularly the [redacted] motorcycles, was more lively than usual, at least in the coastal area. Moreover, there were a number of small transports of heavy weapons, which was somewhat out of the ordinary.

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UB Checks.

19. "People say that there are three kinds of UB (BEZPIEKA) agents who do not mix much among themselves in order to be better able to attend to their special duties:
- The first are those secret agents who assist the uniformed militia (i.e., police) during all arrests, house searching, etc. They are expert detectives.
 - The second are expert shadowers - they follow individual victims, try to catch them at the moment they are committing an unlawful act-if the arrest is not reserved for agents of the first group from the start.
 - The third are those secret agents who visit public places, such as restaurants and dance halls, etc. Their duty is to observe people there and try to ascertain their thoughts and behavior, particularly those persons who have but recently arrived in a place and are not yet classified. These agents collaborate often, people say, with the so-called KW (KONTR-WYWIAD) agents, or counter-espionage agents, although these latter are supposed to work independently as a rule.
20. "Public places are also frequented by agents of KONTROLA SKARBOWA, who check on the amounts people spend to ascertain if they pay 'correct' taxes. They are entitled to control the documents of these 'present although the guests may be government, communal or even CP officials.
21. " There is an unwritten law in POLAND: if somebody has had something to do with UB and is later asked by some government agency - be it UB, militia or something else - where he has been, he is not supposed to say that he has been in the hands of UB, in prison or in a labor camp. He has to say that he has been at home. To speak the truth in this case provokes the UB.
22. "The old 'bourgeois' principle, 'my home is my castle', is, of course, quite non-existent in People's POLAND. There are a number of ways the UB can check on the home life of citizens. All of these methods are diligently used. In the past seven years a system has developed in these matters. It works as follows:
- During the daytime any flat may be entered to inspect if the water supply is functioning properly or if there are too few inhabitants for the space available.
 - In the evenings before 10 p.m. flats are entered under the pretext of checking whether the inhabitants are using electric flat-irons or ranges. The use of such electrical equipment is permitted only after 10 p.m., in order to save electric current.
 - From 10 p.m. to about midnight the authorities can enter to check whether anybody is using more powerful bulbs than 60 watt. That is strictly forbidden.
23. "There are manifold reasons for these continuous visits:
- The first is that the authorities hope to catch persons wanted by the UB and hiding at friends' or relatives'.
 - Another reason is to disturb people so that they will not dare listen to foreign broadcasts in Polish.
 - Most often is is trolkas or commissions consisting of three members who represent themselves as coming from the electric power station or drains board, etc. As a

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rule they are accompanied by the blokowy (or superintendent of the house bloc) who is practically always a confidential agent of the CP. The whole system serves one purpose: to keep the citizens 'in fear and trembling' and thus obedient and well-disciplined. This is also the purpose of the evening and night patrols in the streets. The patrols enter flats when they see fit and a conceivable excuse offers itself.

24. "Nowadays it is in the order of the day that nobody can buy new furniture. As soon as the UB happens to hear something about new furniture somewhere, they grow active. They invade the flat in question under the pretext of looking for evidence of speculation (for which a piece of some textile or a pair of stockings - nylons - is considered sufficient evidence) in order to ascertain if the new furniture is worth further measures. If they like the furniture, they look for some 'adequate' reason in the dossier of the owner and confiscate the flat together with the furniture. Needless to say, the UB have secret files on everybody and in every secret file there are possible causes to evict the subject, if the UB so desires.

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25. " One of the most popular pretexts for these evictions is that the new modern furniture is former German property which was taken in possession by the present owner illegally and must therefore be confiscated.

26. " In some cases no such measures are needed: on ULICA NOWOGRODZKA in GDYNIA there lived a medium official, a Pole working in some government office in GDYNIA. He lived in house No. 37 or 39. In spring 1953, this official was rash enough to order himself some nice new furniture of good quality. The furniture factory delivered this furniture to him by railway. Four weeks after the reception of this new furniture, he was transferred to another town, about 100 km from the coast, together with his family, as it was discovered that 'he had worked against the regime.' Nobody understood what the man had done, although it seemed certain that his crime could not have been very serious - otherwise he would have been arrested in today's POLAND. Without any explanation the man had to abandon his flat and new furniture, while his old furniture was cast onto the street. However, the explanation came sooner than anybody expected. A few days after the eviction there came a rather thickset, strongly-built, pale bond officer with a round face who wore a red band in his cap (which means that he belonged either to the infantry or to the UB) - probably a Soviet if one was to judge from his appearance. He took over the flat with its new furniture. This man had the rank of captain. I met him frequently in the street. The evicted Pole had to fetch his old furniture from the street within three days and transport it to his new place of residence at his own expense. Before the arrival of the new lodger his flat had been sealed by the UB.

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28. "In every Polish town there are now special quarters where high government officials and CP bosses live. In some towns all those 'fine' houses lie together; in others there are blocks of such houses or quarters in several places in the town.
29. "In GDANSK such a quarter or DZIELNICA is to be found not far from WYBRZEZE KASZUBSKIE (The Kashubian Quad), quite close to a former anchorage for submarines during the German occupation, and close to the former SCHIHAU Shipyard, at present called BAZA REMONTOWA or Shipyard No. 1. All houses in this quarter are three or six stories high. The windows on the basement and ground floor all have iron gratings.
30. "In ODYNIA, at the corner of ULICA SWIETOJANSKA and PLAC KASZUBSKI, not far from the ODYNIA Central Hospital, there is a house of a somewhat stained cream color, built before World War II. All buses passing the PLAC KASZUBSKI, must also pass this building. Within the port of this house there always stands a militiaman in uniform with a machine-pistol (pepesza). He permits those living in the house to pass freely; everybody else's documents are checked with great care. At times when some congress or CP meeting takes place in GDYNIA, one sees many new persons passing the port of this house - probably there are guest rooms in it. The windows of the basement and the ground floor all have iron gratings. In the ground floor of the house there is a Polish and a Russian book-store. In this house, on the first, second and third floors, live high bosses who are driven to work in luxurious limousines.

Religious Attitudes

31. "The Poles revere the Catholic clergy for their decisive attitude towards Communism and their active struggle against it. As is generally known, the churches are always full to capacity. Needless to say the authorities do not like this. Some loyal Communists demonstrate against the Church.

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Attitude toward Soviets in Poland

32. "There exist practically no contacts between the Poles and the Soviets living in Poland. The latter made their purchases in special shops and eat well - while the Poles are at least half-starving. The Soviets sell their surplus food to those who are rich enough to pay the prices demanded.

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"Soviet women living in POLAND pretend to be great ladies although their very simple origins - to express it mildly - are clearly discernible. The Poles consider them comical and say that they pretend to be greater and finer ladies than the ladies-in-waiting of Elizabeth II.

"As a rule, nobody looks at the Soviets. They are avoided in the streets like the Plague. They live in separate quarters of towns and do not want to mix with the 'abrogomes'. They behave like Herrenvolk in front of the Poles.

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