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Relationships Between Workers

1. Relations between workers were, for the most part, 'cool'. The exception, which was not very common, was when individual workers had been friends for many years. It was the intention of the Party to prevent the cultivation of friendships, as it was considered that these friendships would make Party control over individuals more difficult. This policy of the Party was not generally known. The Party -- through the directors of firms, personnel directors, and the secretaries of firm Party organizations -- strove to give the appearance of friendliness, at the same time encouraging the employees to fear one another, so they would be induced to report one another's activities and conversations. This type of atmosphere was not difficult to create when among the employees there were PZPR members who belonged to the firm organization of the PZPR. The ignorant sort of person was always the most enthusiastic Party member.

Party Meetings

2. Party meetings were nightmares for the employees. An employee could count on at least one or two meetings per week, and more, if he belonged to a number of organizations. If there was not a general meeting on production and the fulfillment of plan (Narada Produkcyjna) there was the Trade Union (Zwiazek Zawodowy) meeting. If not the Trade Union meeting, there was the Polish-Russian Friendship Society (Towarzystwo Przyjazni Polsko-Radzieckiej -- TPPR) meeting. If not the TPPR meeting, there was the mass meeting (Masowka).

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3. All meetings took place after working hours, and the subjects discussed at these meetings were often the same: improving the quality of one's work, working harder in order to fulfill the plan, working harder in celebration of BIERUT's birthday, or STALIN's birthday, or the First of May, or the 22nd of July, or the end of the year, or the beginning of the year, or really working hard, which would be Poland's best answer to the imperialists' warmongering.
4. The reason given for absence from a meeting was checked closely, and each individual was reminded again and again of his duty to attend the meetings. An employee who enjoyed being conscientious about his work, or who liked his job and had the required ability, strove to restrain himself from doing his best, because his evident enjoyment of his work would have been held up as one of the successes of the Party, and the person would be obliged to tell at meetings how willingly he worked for the good of the Party.
5. The same people regularly took active part in all the meetings. The secretary of the POP, the personnel director of the firm, the firm chairman of the Polish Youth Union (Zwiazek Mlodziezy Polskiej-ZMP), the chairman of the trade union, and the department heads could always be counted on to speak and were expected to have something to say at the meetings. Most of the other attendants, on the other hand, rarely heard all that was being said and often voted on issues that they had not paid attention to, after the meeting asking one another what it was they had voted on.

Influence of the Trade Unions (Zwiazek Zawadowy)

6. The workers seemed to like the trade unions better than the other Party organizations, for although the trade unions had much in common with the PZPR, they were a positive help to the workers. For example, if an employee was unjustifiably discharged on the grounds of violating Article 32 (the employment article concerning work discipline), he presented his case to the trade union, which took an active interest in rectifying the injustice. If necessary, the trade union would retain a lawyer without expense to the employee. There were instances in which the employee won his case against unjustifiable discharge, and the firm had to make restitution for the employee's loss of wages during his period of unemployment. Through the trade union, an employee sometimes could spend his annual vacation (four weeks) at a resort free of cost or at reduced rates.

The Polish-Russian Friendship Society

7. The TPPR had little or no influence, as its only purpose was to acquaint the people with Soviet history, culture, and industry. No one seemed to be interested in this information, because everyone had repeatedly heard of the accomplishments of MICHURIN and LYSENKO, Russian botanists who could grow potatoes the size of a man's head. Everyone had heard of STACHANOW, the Russian champion of miners whose norm of production was always over 100%. And everyone had heard of KARABIENKOWA, the Russian woman who could far surpass anyone at spinning. Everyone had heard of the miraculous technical achievements of the Russians, whose technicians could completely rearrange a city over night. Although the TPPR

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was rather laughed at, it boasted of the highest membership of any organization in Poland, including the PZPR. The TPPR officials interpreted this as proving great interest in, and love for, the organization. But the true reason was that in this organization there was little or no Party discipline, such as one experienced in other organizations. And since there was no special obligation entailed in being counted among its members, people willingly joined, for being a member of many organizations would impress the Party and one's employers favorably. In the provincial office of Central Fisheries in Opole, from October 1951 to August 1952 there were only two 15-minute meetings conducted by the TPPR. The membership fee was the lowest of any organization, 50 groszy per month (one-half zloty), while the PZPR membership fee ranged from six zloty per month to two per cent of monthly earnings, depending on the job the member held.

The Home:

8. Financially the situation in the home was not critical, provided both the husband and wife were employed. There was not enough to eat, but one got along more or less adequately. [redacted] the most serious effects of the food shortage were on individual temperaments. 50X1
9. A very serious problem was finding a place to live. Particularly in the large industrial cities it was not unusual for a newly married couple to live apart for two or three years because of the inadequacy of housing. [redacted] about 90% of those married in early 1952 did not have their own apartments but lived with the parents of one of them. If there was not enough space with the parents, the husband lived with his parents, while the wife lived with hers. All people seeking a place to live had to report to a housing office and await their turns for a vacancy. It was not unusual for those with money to bribe a person of influence in the housing office. 50X1
10. In respect to marriage, there were no special questions asked if the individual was an ordinary Party member or a non-Party member. However, if one was a member of the UB or of the Citizens' Police (Milicja Obywatelska -- MO), or was a full-time employee of the PZPR, various demands were made before marriage was permitted. I do not know all that was required, but a member of the UB first had to inform his chief of his plans to marry. His intended bride had to be approved, and it was desirable that she be considered a good Party member. The prospective bridegroom submitted his fiancée's complete biographical history to his chief. This biography, together with a request for marriage, was sent to the head UB office in Warsaw for final approval. After approval, a medical examination was necessary. These men were cautioned never to speak of their work to their wives. Housing never became a problem for any of these men, as they were given an apartment immediately after the wedding from the UB's own special block of apartments.
11. Relations between the older married couples usually seemed warm and sincere with nothing hidden. Husband and wife seemed to try to work together and to rear their children to the best of their ability. Between young couples, however, there was, in some instances, an atmosphere of distrust. The husband was not always

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certain of his wife's politics. If the young man was secretly anti-Communist, he was sometimes unwilling to make these feelings known to his wife, as there were cases where the wife had betrayed her husband. In some instances denunciation of a spouse to the Communist Party has taken the place of divorce.

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12. It is hard to comment on the relationships between parents and children, as these relationships depended on the seriousness and aims of the parents in rearing their children. The aim of the Communist Party was to separate the child from his parents in respect to his beliefs. If the parents were not very interested in what the child was being taught in school or what he did when he was away from home on Communist outings, the child would eventually be feared by the parents. Most such uninterested parents were Party members who willingly submitted their children to Party training and discipline.

School:

13. The new type of school, of which one heard with more and more frequency, was the Workers' Society Friendship to Children School (Robotnicze Towarzystwo Przyjaciol Dzieci -- RTPD). This was a completely Communist-controlled school from elementary to lyceum level. There was no tuition charged, and most of the buildings were new. The teachers in these schools were all Communist Party members and the students were exclusively the children of peasants, workers, and Party members.
14. Elementary school children became members of the Boy or Girl Scouts (Harcerze), organizations which were patterned after the Soviet Pioneers. Children in the middle schools joined an organization patterned after the Soviet Komsomols. The elementary schools, in addition to the basic educational requirements, taught such subjects as history of the Russian Revolution, Communist doctrine, Communism in Russia, and the lives of famous Communists. To combat the religious influence of the home and the church, Darwin's theory of evolution was taught, particularly in explaining the origin of man and the world.
15. The universities were not as yet wholly under Communist influence. It was admitted that most of the enemies of the Party were in the universities, and a very high percentage (perhaps as high as 80 or 90%) of older university professors secretly did not accept the Party doctrines. In addition, a high percentage of the students were from an intellectual background.

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Social Relationships

16. Outside of work, relationships were similar to relationships on the job. People were unwilling to make new acquaintances or friends. They preferred to stay in circles of friends whom they had known a long time, where they were more at ease and could say what they thought, especially on political subjects, with little fear of having their words reported. In gatherings where everyone was not very well known, conversations were guarded, particularly in respect to political opinions and opinions about radio broadcasts from the West.

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Medicine

17. Little in the line of medicaments was available except perhaps for headache powder and purgatives. Before the pharmacies became state-owned in the Spring of 1951, one was still able to get some kinds of medicaments, and with a little search one could usually find streptomycine or penicillin, most of which came from relatives in England. Although it was a violation of Communist law to sell these drugs in Poland, the selling of these drugs to private physicians seemed to be condoned, [redacted] of no one arraigned for such a transaction. [redacted] in Warsaw, a subsidiary of the Retail Trade Store (Miejski Handel Detaliczny -- MHD) was buying the contents of packages that were sent from abroad, particularly medicines and coffee. The prices for these were supposed to be as high if not higher than black market prices.

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Movies and Theatre

18. Movies and theater were the Communists' strongest propaganda media. When there was a movie that was considered excellent propaganda-wise, employers would sometimes release the employees at one in the afternoon, and the employees were admitted to see the movie gratis. At these times, when the auditorium was filled to capacity, pictures were taken which appeared later in a newspaper or illustrated magazine with the explanation that the film was a huge success and that the people had all but rushed en masse to see the film. The voluntary attendance at most of the features with propaganda themes was sparse. Jokes were circulated about the old woman who went to a movie armed with a knife. When asked why she carried the knife, she answered that she was afraid to sit alone in an empty auditorium. Of those attending, children were in the majority. Older people were mostly interested in films from abroad, which were usually pre-World War II films of French, English, or Swedish origin. Up until 1948, US films could still be seen. When "Hamlet" was shown, it ran for four weeks to a continually overcrowded audience, which was a record in Opole.

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