

of the faithful. On the one hand, they were reminded by the Hungarian Prime Minister Károly Grósz in mid-March that there are "strongly nationalistic" forces within Hungary which are trying to use the refugee problem to "disturb and overturn the social order". Such attitudes, he continued, were "harmful to the interests of Hungarians both in Hungary and abroad". These words were widely interpreted as a warning not to stray from the government's policy on the refugee question and the national rights of the Hungarian minority in Romania. On the other hand, pressure comes from Romania. In April 1987 Metropolitan Antonie of Transylvania responded to Hun-

garian charges of national discrimination in Romania by accusing his government's Hungarian critics of seeking "tension and destabilisation", and claimed that the national rights of the Romanians of Transylvania were violated under Hungarian rule. Likely to carry more weight with the church leaders of Hungary are the reports that the Hungarian Catholic Bishop of Alba Julia, Antal Jakab, has asked the Primate of Hungary, Archbishop László Paskai, not to make public statements on the issue of the Hungarian minority because of the added difficulties this brings to his church.

JOHN V. EIBNER

Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

The 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 has been marked this year in a fashion which has no parallel in Polish history. For both political and economic considerations the Polish government has decided to use the anniversary to further its wider political aims. For both political and diplomatic reasons visiting Israeli ministers and Jewish leaders from the West decided to go along with these Polish efforts. They did not lay down the condition that public figures actively involved in the "anti-Zionist" campaign of 1968, which effectively put an end to the 1,000-year-long history of the Jews in Poland, should not play a major part at the commemorative events. Had such a condition been stipulated, the Polish government would have had no choice but to accept it.

In the event only a few independent spirits in Poland and in the West found it necessary to protest or to

remark at the sacrifice of good taste and historical truth for the sake of *Realpolitik*.

Some of the commemorative events, especially the visits to the death camps, were a searing emotional experience for the survivors of the Nazi holocaust and for people born after the Second World War. Other commemorative ceremonies had a pronounced official character.

The commemorative events started on 14 and 15 April with an international conference on "The Struggle and Martyrology of Jews and Poles during the Nazi Occupation", which took place in Warsaw. On the same day — 14 April — 1,000 young Jews from the West took part in a "March of the Living" at the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp complex. On 17 April the Medal of the Righteous Among Nations was presented by the Yad Va-Shem Institute to 97 Poles who saved the lives of Jews during the Nazi Holocaust.



Theatre Square, Yerevan: Armenian students on hunger strike (from 1 June 1988) for the return of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenian jurisdiction. They are being interviewed by a journalist from an official Armenian newspaper. The interview was not published.

Hunger strike in Armenia.
See *Chronicle* item on pp. 252-254.
(Photos © Keston College)

The students on hunger strike were joined on 4 June by hero of the Soviet Union, Garnik Manasyan. His coat with medals is hung up for display.





Theatre Square, Yerevan: as a mark of solidarity with their compatriots on hunger strike, Armenian students sit outside the Opera and Ballet Theatre day and night. Daily, three or four people were removed from the square, suffering from sun-stroke.

Support for the Armenian hunger strikers.

See *Chronicle* item on pp. 252-254.

(Photos © Keston College)

8 June: friends of the hunger strikers attempt to erect a canopy over them as protection from the sun and heavy rains.



Less sensitivity was displayed on 18 April at the unveiling of the memorial marking the site of the *Umschlagplatz* (assembly point) from which 300,000 Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto had been sent to the Treblinka death camp during July-September 1942. No prayers were recited at the spot; instead, official speakers delivered three long addresses.

The moral dimensions of the Ghetto commemorations had already emerged at the preparatory stage. As part of the preparations, the Polish government organised a seminar for "Israeli and Jewish journalists" on the theme "Jews in Poland Before, During and After the War". An English journalist, Edward Mortimer, was also invited to attend and being neither Israeli nor Jewish provided an illuminating perspective on the psychological and moral dilemmas involved.

Professor Kazimierz Kakol, one of the leaders of the anti-Semitic campaign in 1968, is now head of the official commission to investigate Nazi crimes and, as such, was thought a suitable person to meet our group and present us with a programme of films on Jewish themes . . . That did not cause such a scandal as it might have done, for the simple reason that the group was unaware of Kakol's background when it met him.¹

Even less dignified was the organisational framework of the Ghetto anniversary commemorations. The main question facing the Polish organisers was how to avoid official involvement of the Polish government. The solution was to declare that the ceremonies had been organised by ZBoWiD, the veterans' Union of Fighters for Freedom and

Democracy. ZBoWiD's share in organising the commemorations was nominal, but it enabled the Polish government spokesman, Jerzy Urban (ironically, a Jew), to stress that they had not been organised by the Polish government.

In declaring ZBoWiD the organisers of the commemoration ceremonies, the Polish leadership displayed an appalling lack of sensitivity. For in 1968 ZBoWiD was one of the main instigators of the "anti-Zionist" campaign which resulted in the exodus of the remnants of Polish Jews from Poland. Moreover, ZBoWiD, officially appointed as being in charge of commemorating the Jewish victims of the Nazi genocide, did precious little to keep their memory alive in 1968. Rather, the opposite is true. It was due to the intervention of ZBoWiD that the production of the film *The Ascension*, based on a story of Adolf Rudnicki, Poland's leading Jewish writer on the Holocaust, was halted. It was ZBoWiD again which was responsible for the halting of the production of a film based on the true life story of Janusz Korczak, a doctor and a Polish writer, who chose to die with the orphans in his care in the Treblinka death camp, even though as a physician he was exempt from deportation. Despite the fact that the film was due to be financed in part by Korczak's West German admirers, the project was abandoned. Thus, 26 years after being murdered by the Nazis, Korczak, an internationally famous educator, became posthumously a victim of ZBoWiD's witch hunt and "anti-Zionist" campaign.

If for political reasons the Polish government did not want to be involved in the commemoration of Poland's Jewish citizens who had been murdered by the Nazis, it could easily have appointed a reputable non-governmental body, such as the

¹Edward Mortimer, "The Two Saddest Nations", *Financial Times*, 3 April 1988.

Polish Academy of Sciences, to be in charge of the commemoration ceremonies. The Polish Academy of Sciences has supported the Warsaw Jewish Historical Institute over the years, and the Jagiellonian University of Cracow has become a centre for the study of Jewish history and culture in Poland. Both institutions richly deserved the honour. Instead the Polish authorities made surprising choices in appointing organisations and individuals as guardians in 1988 of Jewish martyrdom.

Symbolic of this bizarre attitude was the official commemorative meeting at the Warsaw Palace of Science and Culture on 19 April. The event was attended by Mr Zenon Komender, President of the Board of the PAX Association. The PAX Association was set up in 1945 to counteract the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. Its founder was Boleslaw Piasecki, the pre-war leader of the Polish Falanga, a Fascist organisation on the German and Italian model, which preached and practised violent methods in solving the Jewish question in Poland. In 1968 PAX became actively involved in the "anti-Zionist" campaign which brought about practically the end of the Jewish presence in Poland. At the meeting at the Palace of Science and Culture, however, the leader of the PAX Association was sitting among the prominent guests listening to the lecture of Mr Stefan Grajek, Chairman of the World Federation of Jewish Fighters, Partisans and Camp Inmates.

The main speaker was Professor Henryk Jablonski, the former President of Poland. In 1968, as one of the instigators of the anti-Jewish (officially "anti-Zionist") campaign he wrote:

... the paradoxical phenomenon may have arisen that some of these families (ie. of Jewish students)

became disenchanted with the policy of our country, while they increasingly identified with the interests and policy of a state which occupies a particularly advanced place in the imperialist camp (ie. the USA).²

In this convoluted way he justified the punishment of Jewish students who demonstrated in Warsaw University. In 1988, however, he praised the patriotism of Polish Jews and their attachment to Poland in a way diametrically opposed to this statement of twenty years ago.

It is of interest to look at the attitude of the Polish leader himself, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, during the "anti-Zionist" campaign of 1968. In April 1968 General Jaruzelski, then Chief of Staff of the Polish Army, soon to be appointed Polish Minister of Defence, referred to a (non-existent) alliance between Israel, West Germany and South Africa.³ *Żołnierz Wolności*, the Polish army daily, treated this issue in greater detail:

Zionist propaganda has bartered away the truth about the fate of European Jews, it has concealed it for 2,000 million West German marks ... It now charges the Poles for the extermination of Jews because this is in the interest of the German Federal Republic.⁴

Twenty years later, the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising turned into a commemoration attended by Zionists and anti-Zionists. The former included the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Mr Simcha Dinitz, who came only for a meeting with the Polish leader, Politburo member Mieczyslaw Rakowski, and did not stay for the ceremonies. The

²Henryk Jablonski, "Zaburzenia studenckie w marcu 1968 r.", *Nowe Drogi*, No. 5/228, May 1968.

³PAP, 11 May 1968.

⁴PAP, 8 April 1968.

Israeli leaders who attended the ceremonies were Deputy Prime Minister Yitzhak Navon of the Labour Party, Minister of Justice Avraham Sharir of the right-wing Likud party and six members of the Knesset (the Israeli parliament).

Both sides took care to emphasise that they were not participating in their official capacity. The Israeli guests, the highest ranking Israeli personalities to visit Poland since the "anti-Zionist" campaign in 1968, emphasised that they were there in their private capacity only. General Jaruzelski did not attend the official ceremonies but met a delegation of the World Jewish Congress on 19 April. Nor were the ceremonies attended by any members of the Polish government or high-ranking party officials.

The officially organised events were not the only commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. On the eve of the official ceremony, a Citizens' Committee for the Remembrance of the 45th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto issued a plea to participate in an alternative ceremony. Among the 46 signatories to the plea were opposition leaders Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik, Bronislaw Geremek, Janusz Onyszkiewicz and Zbigniew Bujak, Polish writers Tadeusz Konwicki and Jan Józef Lipski, Polish-Jewish writers Julian Strykowski and Wiktor Woroszyński, Andrzej Wajda, the film director, two Catholic clergymen, Father Bronislaw Dembowski and Father Jacek Salij, and Aniela Steinsbergowa, a defence council in political trials of Polish dissidents. The initiative for the commemoration evidently came from Dr Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, now a cardiologist in Łódź.

The commemoration took place at noon on 17 April, at the Jewish cemetery on Okopowa Street. The

difference between this unofficial commemoration and the official one was considerable in many respects. Firstly, both the Hebrew prayer for the dead, Kaddish, and the Christian Our Father were recited. Secondly, Solidarity leader Zbigniew Bujak said in his address that despite many examples of Polish heroism, Polish society as a whole "behaved too indifferently during the Holocaust". This was in stark contrast to statements made by official Polish spokesmen, extolling in unrealistic fashion the virtues of Polish society and its attitude towards the Jews during the Holocaust, often in the presence of people who had been active in some of the anti-Semitic forms of the "anti-Zionist" campaign of 1968. Thirdly, the official Jewish leaders who came to the official Polish ceremonies in Warsaw did not attend the alternative commemoration at the cemetery on Okopowa Street.

A controversial part of the unofficial commemoration was the dedication of a monument to Wiktor Alter and Henryk Erlich, leaders of the Jewish Workers' Party (Bund) in pre-war Poland. Alter and Erlich died as Polish patriots in a Soviet jail executed on Stalin's orders in 1941. The justification for such a connection with the Warsaw Ghetto commemoration has been called into question by *Polityka* journalist, Daniel Passent, himself a Jew.⁵

By trying to extract propagandistic dividends from a vast human tragedy, the organisers of the official commemorative events merely emphasised the moral ambiguities underlying the attitude of Polish society towards the Jews both during the Holocaust and in the succeeding years.

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⁵Daniel Passent, "Kazdemu wedlug Zaslug" *Polityka*, 23 April, 1988.