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LABOR AND THE SOVIET SYSTEM, by Romuald Szumski, is a factual story about the destruction of democratic trade unions under Russian Bolshevism.

The author clearly shows that real trade unions do not exist in Russia or its satellite countries. He describes Soviet slavery and the extension of this most barbaric system of Russian imperialism into Eastern Europe. This hard-hitting account is the answer to those who think free workers have nothing to fear from the Kremlin's "dictatorship of the proletariat".

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C. D. Jackson
President

April, 1951

By Romuald Szumski

LABOR and the Soviet System

National Committee for
a Free Europe, Inc.

ONLY A WORLD BUILT ON THE IDEALS OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY CAN LIVE IN PEACE

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Labor and the Soviet System

Romuald Szumski

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Introduction

IN the ever-expanding conflict between the forces of democracy and totalitarian dictatorship now raging in many parts of the world, organized labor is destined to play an increasingly strategic role. For it is in the free and democratic trade unions now existing in practically all countries outside the Iron Curtain that the men of the Kremlin who guide the destinies of Soviet Russia are encountering one of the greatest obstacles to their design for world domination.

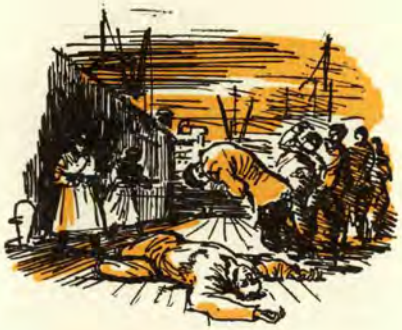
The existence of democratic trade unions bitterly opposed to communist totalitarianism is a categorical repudiation of the myth that the Politburo's dictatorship is a progressive idea, or that communism offers anything that will advance the interests of international labor. It is precisely because the role of free and democratic trade unions is so dynamic that Soviet attacks on them are so full of fury.

Lenin, the founder of Russian Bolshevism, once hoped that trade unions would be "schools for Communism." But Joseph Stalin, his ruthless successor and faithful disciple, long ago realized, as did Hitler and Mussolini in their day, that a free and independent labor movement was incompatible with totalitarian state control.

Thus, wherever the Cominform operates today, it must either capture, dominate, or destroy the free trade unions—as a first and major prerequisite for the eventual capture of political and economic power. Indeed, it has long been clear to students of international affairs that the extent to which trade unions remain free and independent will be of decisive importance in determining democracy's future and in destroying the carefully laid plans of the Cominform.

In the countries outside the Iron Curtain the Cominform aims, through widespread penetration of the independent trade unions, to prevent economic recovery and to perpetuate political instability and chaos. By attempting to control the major industrial and economic centers of the non-communist world through trade union domination, the Cominform hopes to deny to the democratic states economic reconstruction and a continual improvement in the standards of living.

I. Suppression of Workers



IN the West, communists, through their influence in the trade unions, hope to deny power to the forces of democracy. But in the countries of Eastern Europe under Soviet domination — Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania and Eastern Germany — trade unions are employed by the totalitarian state as an instrument for consolidating communist power.

The fate of the once flourishing and firmly rooted organized labor movement in Poland is typical.

Poland's trade unions and pro-labor political parties developed parallel with the country's agelong struggle for freedom from the oppression of the Russian czars. Prior to the Stalin-Hitler Pact of 1939, followed by the Nazi invasion of Poland, trade unionism had already gained a firm foothold among the industrial workers and was well on the way to becoming an important factor in the country's economic development. Throughout her stormy history, Poland, overrun in turn by Austria, Prussia and Russia, has never submitted in spirit to any foreign or domestic tyranny. From the middle of the 19th century until the Nazi blitzkrieg, the Polish factory worker was the courageous and unflinching defender of his country.

The political system that prevailed in Poland prior to the outbreak of World War II can perhaps best be described as a "semi-dictatorship". It was certainly not a democracy in the ac-

cepted Western sense. Yet despite fierce opposition on the part of the reactionary "Colonel's Regime", (the prewar, semi-Fascist government of Pilsudski) the Polish workers had their own free trade unions and political organizations. The semi-dictatorial government never succeeded in breaking the strength of the trade unions or abolishing the basic right to strike.

In the year 1937 alone, strikes occurred in 25,242 industrial enterprises embracing 565,000 workers. As a result of this strike wave the government was forced to relax its strangle-hold on the country's economy, and collective bargaining, as it is practiced in the United States and other democratic countries, won universal recognition in Poland in the second half of the nineteen-thirties. This was, indeed, the crowning achievement of the progressive Polish labor movement and its mature leadership.

But ten years later, in 1947, a strike of textile workers in the city of Lodz was suppressed by the new communist regime with a ruthlessness undreamed of under the prewar reactionary government. The largest textile center in continental Europe, Lodz was always known as the "citadel of Polish trade unionism". So popular were the trade unions in Lodz that in the municipal elections of 1939, shortly before the outbreak of the war, Jan Kwapinsky, President of the Democratic Trade Union Congress, was elected Mayor of the city by an overwhelming majority. Yet it was precisely in this "citadel of unionism" that the Moscow-dominated communist regime chose to break the back of Poland's organized democratic labor movement by resorting to brute force and bloodshed.

Even more ruthless methods of suppression were employed by the cohorts of Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky, the Stalin-appointed dictator of Poland, in the strike of longshoremen which occurred in the city of Szczecin on October 29, 1950. The strike was caused by the arbitrary decision of the Government to revaluate the Polish zloty. Suggested by Moscow, it was a clever scheme to peg the zloty to the Russian ruble and thereby increase Poland's dependence on the Soviet Union. As a result, however, most of the savings of the population were wiped out overnight.

On the night of October 29th the men working on the second shift refused to load Polish sugar on Soviet ships waiting in the Szczecin harbor. But the communist dictatorship went into im-

mediate action. A bloody massacre followed. With the aid of the Soviet secret police (MVD) and Communist Party "activists", the Polish police forced the longshoremen into submission.

The suppression of legitimate strikes by resorting to terror and imprisonment in Russia's widespread net of slave labor camps is a standard Communist practice, not only in the Soviet Union, but also in all countries under its domination. This pattern is followed with a deadly monotony in every satellite state of Eastern Europe where the communists succeeded in seizing power with the aid of the Red Army.

Cominform propaganda claims that labor in Poland has been liberated from "capitalist oppression and exploitation" while, before the present Warsaw regime came to power, it suffered under the yoke of capitalism and dictatorship. The truth is, however, that in prewar Poland even under the rule of a semi-dictatorship, labor enjoyed more rights and greater freedom than in the present full-fledged communist totalitarian state.

In pre-communist Poland a majority of the strikes ended in a complete or partial victory for the strikers. Wherever and whenever the prewar Colonel's regime interfered with the right to strike, it encountered labor's determined resistance.

In 1936, in Cracow, during a strike in the famous "Semperit" plant, the police ejected the strikers by force. In protest, the trade unions called a general strike. The Governor of Cracow, Switalski, ordered the police to use force and arms against the striking workers. But the workers would not yield to force. The reactionary government was finally forced to dismiss the Governor and admit defeat in order to prevent bloodshed and acts of violence. Thus, labor again demonstrated its right to strike for better economic conditions, even under a semi-dictatorial regime.

Under communism, strikes are punished by death or exile. As in the case of the Lodz strike in 1947, and the longshoremen's strike in October, 1950, the Warsaw Communist government does not hesitate to employ the cruelest reprisals in order to break the spirit of the workers.

Indeed, not only is the worker forbidden to strike, but he is not even permitted to change his job without the permission of his communist bosses. Many of the legal rights, achieved by

working men and women in the civilized countries during the last century, have been cynically abolished by the communist rulers.

According to a decree published in Warsaw's official journal, *Dziennik Ustaw,* of May 5, 1950, entitled, ironically enough, "Concerning the Socialist Discipline of Work", a worker who absents himself from work for four days in succession is liable to legal prosecution. Punishment for such an offense consists in the mandatory continuation by the worker of the work he has been doing for a period of three months but at lower wages. From ten to twenty-five percent of his wages are deducted as a fine.

During the term of his three-month sentence, imposed by a court, or administratively by the communist manager of the enterprise, the "guilty" worker is literally chained to his job. He has no right to seek other employment. The penalty for any infringement of this rule is punishable by six months' imprisonment.

Modelled on a similar law in force in Soviet Russia for many years, the decree of May 5, 1950, not only deprives the Polish workers of the right to strike, and, consequently the protection of their economic interests, but of all other basic rights normally enjoyed by labor in civilized communities. It applies with equal severity, not only to industrial workers, but to all employees of nationalized factories, workshops, government offices and public institutions.

In promulgating this drastic decree the Warsaw government hoped:

1. To insure a supply of labor for the disastrous Six-Year Economic Plan;
2. To kill labor's spirit of resistance until it has become a powerless and obedient tool in the hands of the communist bureaucracy.

Only in a country ruled by a totalitarian dictatorship is such a law even conceivable. Such laws were in force in Germany under Hitler, and in Italy under Mussolini. Such laws, too, are the rule rather than the exception in Stalin's Russia.

As already indicated, the decree "Concerning the Socialist Discipline of Work", in addition to imposing court sentences also calls for administrative penalties. Such penalties are usually im-

posed by the plant, or office manager himself, in "consultation" with the factory or office Council (usually dominated by Communist Party members) or with a representative of the secret police who as a rule acts as the spokesman of the "trade union" organization.

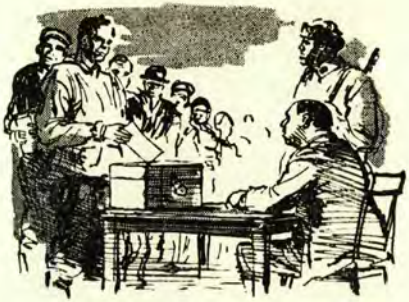
A worker who is absent one day from work is liable to a stern warning on the part of the management or to a deduction of one day's wages. Should he miss two days' work he is fined two days' pay. But for an absence of three days, six days' pay are deducted from his wages. Moreover, the manager has the right, arbitrarily, to transfer him to a lower category of pay.

It is noteworthy, that even before the decree of May 5 was introduced, the right to strike was non-existent in the "People's Democracy" of Poland. A strike was permitted only in privately-owned enterprises. These utilize less than 15 per cent of all workers employed, since private enterprise in the communist state is little more than a fiction. The few remaining privately-owned enterprises are constantly being squeezed out of existence through the imposition of prohibitive taxes and other restrictive measures. The vast majority of Poland's workers (more than 85 per cent) are employed in nationalized industries or in municipal and co-operative enterprises owned directly by the state. And it is always a crime to strike against the omnipotent communist state.

The fiction is, of course, that it is the workers who "own" the factories in Poland and one cannot strike against himself. To lend credence to this communist myth, the official propaganda agencies of the Warsaw government cite fantastic facts and figures about the rate of Poland's economic recovery and social progress. According to these official handouts, wages are constantly being raised while prices are decreasing.

But according to statistics published by the United Nations in 1949, Poland has the lowest per capita income of all the industrialized European countries. Only in Soviet Russia is the per capita income lower. On the other hand, in the United States, chief villain of communist propaganda, the average working men and women enjoy the highest standard of living. Nevertheless, so powerful and widespread is Soviet propaganda, that the fiction that workers enjoy a higher standard of living in the communist-dominated states persists in many parts of the world.

II.
Trade Unions Under Dictatorship



UNTIL July 1, 1949, the state-controlled trade unions of Poland, which claim a membership of 4,000,000, functioned under prewar legal provisions: the decree of January 18, 1919, and the "Law on Associations" of October 27, 1932.

But the law promulgated by the communist regime in July, 1949, drastically changed the trade union structure and established unlimited communist control over Poland's organized labor movement. In typical communist double-talk, the July law "Guarantees to manual and white collar workers the right to associate freely in trade unions and to participate to the maximum in the exercise of the people's authority".

However, while stipulating among other provisions, "the continued improvement of labor's material welfare and cultural life", the law also decrees "the mobilization of the working class for the carrying out of (the state's) production plans . . .". It calls for increased "productivity" and the development of socialist "competition".

On the surface, the law concerns itself with such threadbare communist clichés and slogans as "welfare of the working people", "improvement in living standards", "people's authority", etc. But these slogans have no practical value and serve merely to conceal the real aims of the Communist Party which, incidentally, is so

unpopular in Poland, that it has to parade under the name of the "United Polish Workers' Party".

Of essential importance in the July law are the provisions for carrying out the totalitarian state's production plans for an increase in productivity and the development of competition. These are the actual functions of the trade unions in communist states.

A basic right "enjoyed" by the trade unions, is to cooperate with the authorities and institutions of public administration, and to supervise the national economy in accordance with "procedures established by law". But in a communist state this "right" is merely a duty. "Cooperation" consists of the strict execution of orders issued by the government which, in turn, following the Soviet pattern, is subject to the unlimited will of the Communist Party's Politburo.

Members of trade unions are granted officially the right to elect their officials; but only officially. In reality, lists of candidates for trade union offices are designated by communist "activists" in agreement with Communist Party Committees. All voting is done in the open. Trade union members must therefore go through the motions of voting for the Party candidates or risk reprisals, even banishment to slave labor camps, as "enemies of the people".

Communist Party cells exist in every enterprise and every trade union of Poland. They are charged with the political supervision of the workers and non-Party managers. Criticism of the Communist Party or the government is considered a crime against the state. For merely voicing dissatisfaction a worker is liable to imprisonment or forced labor.

Trade unions in Poland, as in all other satellite states, are directly subordinated to the Communist Party. Membership is compulsory. In a speech at the congress, which merged the so-called Polish "Socialist" Party with the official "Polish Workers' Party", President Bierut of Poland declared: "The (Communist) Party must, and should play, through the trade unions and their affiliated organizations, a leading and decisive role in the great production and educational tasks confronting the country". Shedding the communist mask for once, he made it quite clear that the "Trade unions form the basic transmission belt between the Communist Party and the non-Party masses".

Thus, unlike the democratic countries, the function of trade unions under a totalitarian dictatorship is not to safeguard the worker's economic rights, but to serve as tools of the communist dictatorship which seeks to gain complete control over the minds and bodies of the working people.

In the nationalized plants and factories of Poland the worker has absolutely no protection against ruthless exploitation by the state. The entire machine of the state is against him. Although he pays union dues—which is also compulsory in a communist State—the trade union merely serves to enslave him rather than protect him.

In an article in the "Workers' Economic Review" of July 2, 1946, Wlodzimierz Sokorski, a prominent communist trade union official, sheds additional light on the role and structure of trade unions in Poland. Polish trade unions, Sokorski points out, are non-partisan but not non-political. This is another way of saying that the trade unions are closely linked to the Communist Party and subject to its control. In a subsequent article published in the same review (January, 1948), Sokorski describes the tasks of the Polish trade unions as follows:

1. Protection of the worker against various forms of exploitation in *privately-owned enterprises,* against extortion and speculation.
2. Protection of the worker against bureaucratized elements in the state apparatus.
3. Trade unions must actively participate in the daily struggle for raising the level of production, carrying out the State's economic plans, raising the national income and stimulate "socialist" competition. All for the benefit of the worker, of course!

However, since it is the primary task of the trade unions to protect the workers employed in private enterprise, less than 15 per cent of Poland's workers receive the "benefits" of such "protection". For in Poland only small enterprises are in private hands and these, as already indicated, are constantly being squeezed out of existence. What about the 85 per cent of the industrial and white collar workers employed in government, municipal and cooperative enterprises, and institutions — all

owned by the State? Wlodzimierz Sokorski, a typical communist trade union official, is mute on this question. And yet, it is in the state-owned enterprises where strikes are forbidden and where workers are exploited to the maximum.

Let us now examine the "Constitution of the Trade Union Association", adopted in June, 1949, at the second Trade Union Congress of Poland. According to this constitution, the tasks of the trade unions coincide with those of the "People's Democratic State". But here again it is made clear that the primary, if not the only task of the trade unions, is "to combat capitalist exploitation in private enterprise, increase the vigilance of the working class against the manifestation of any activity on the part of the enemies of the people". And again, of course, the constitution calls for labor's interest in the raising of production. Hence, the trade unions "mobilize the broadest working masses for the struggle for the accelerated fulfilment of the (state's) production plans through the organization of socialist competition, the struggle for discipline and also for a new socialist attitude towards work and social property".

Whether in the declarations of communist leaders or in the myriad resolutions adopted by various trade union congresses, the one and only refrain—*raising of production levels, discipline, competition* — is ever present. The lip service paid in these declarations to the "protection of workers" is less than meaningless.

Trade unions in a communist totalitarian state, it must be pointed out repeatedly, are entirely a tool of the state-machine, dominated and directed by the communists. In practice only, Party members or "loyal non-Party workers" are elected to the governing bodies or executive boards of trade unions. Only on the lowest organizational levels are free elections ever permitted. But this, of course, is merely a democratic camouflage, because in a highly centralized state only the top political organs exercise real authority and power. In fact, the top bureaucracy of the centralized trade union has the unlimited right to simply invalidate the elections of the lower echelons. It has the right to remove any legally elected executive board, appoint a new board and call for new elections, this time under the bureaucracy's direct supervision.

In order to create the illusion that labor exerts real influence

on the economic life of the country, and also on management, Factory Councils were established by a decree of February 6, 1945. But in 1947, when the communists succeeded in consolidating their power, this decree was amended by another decree, (January 1, 1947) which linked the Factory Councils to the trade unions.

Ostensibly the Factory Councils represent the workers in their relations to the employer — the State. As part of "management", however, they too, must see to it that production is accelerated, increased, and improved in accordance with the general directives of the state's economic policy.

Communist propaganda presents the decree on the Factory Councils as a great gain for labor. But in reality, and at best, the Councils are only consultative bodies. They do not actually participate in management and have no right to make independent decisions. Resolutions of Factory Councils are subject, in all essential matters, to confirmation by the communist authorities. Members of the Councils, if they do not want to land in jail, must at all times be subservient to the orders of their communist bosses.

Of course the Factory Councils consult periodically with their managers. But these consultations, again, concern only the raising of levels of production, discipline, etc. In reality, the function of the Councils is to drive the workers harder and prevent them from excessive grumbling.

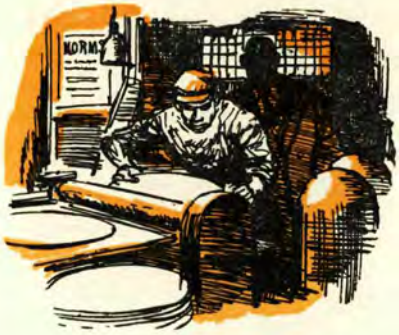
Whenever there is a question of punishing a worker, the Factory Councils are consulted. They also participate in the hiring and firing of workers. Thus the State is able to shed some of the responsibility, to point out to the workers that they themselves are their own exploiters — all in the name of "Socialist progress".

Those elected to the Factory Councils are trusted people, mostly Party "activists". Theoretically, to be sure, any employee over 18 years of age, who has worked in a plant or an office for three months, has the right to put forward his candidacy for membership in a Factory Council. But in practice candidates are appointed by the Communist Party cell. No one dares to run against a candidate designated by the Party.

The organization of work in Poland follows in every detail

the pattern established in the Soviet Union. The "Sovietization" of labor in Poland went through several stages and is now rapidly approaching its completion. In 1945 and 1946, when non-communist political parties with limited independence were still permitted to exist, the process of "Sovietization" proceeded at a slower pace. But following the election to the Sejm (Parliament) of 1947, which heralded the liquidation of all political opposition, the tempo of "Sovietization" gained in force and speed. Today, there is very little difference between conditions in Soviet Russia and in Poland.

III. Techniques of Economic Exploitation



COMMUNIST trade unions, though claiming millions of members, do not fulfill the fundamental role for which trade unions first came into being. Totalitarian dictatorship strives for total monopoly in all phases of political, economic and social life. It cannot tolerate views, or beliefs, which diverge in the slightest degree from those officially sanctioned by the monolithic party. It stamps out heartlessly the slightest sign of freedom of thought, speech and worship. Any organization, regardless of its purpose or function, is subordinated to, and controlled by, the Communist Party which, according to the Soviet constitution, is the mainspring for all social organizations. All decisions are vested in the Communist Party and the top layer of its leadership known as the Politburo. In Soviet Russia, Stalin, as the undisputed head of the Politburo, wields unlimited power, which reaches beyond the frontiers of the U.S.S.R. His power extends to all Soviet-dominated countries of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, to all political parties and trade unions included in the Cominform, or professing pro-communist beliefs. Similarly, the trade unions in Poland are under the domination of the Polish Communist Party and entirely subject to its control.

In the democracies, trade unions enjoy freedom of action, within limits prescribed by law, and are thus, in a position to protect to the maximum the economic interests of labor. Union

members are free to elect their officials and exercise a decisive influence in the conduct of union affairs. Candidates for office cannot be chosen or elected by a restrictive and all-powerful political group as in the Communist Politburo. The right to strike as well as the right of assembly are guaranteed by law. Membership in unions is voluntary and not compulsory.

In the totalitarian state, too, membership in unions is theoretically voluntary — but only theoretically. Refusal to join a trade union leaves the worker open to the charge that he is an enemy of the people. Trade unions in the communist states, despite their millions of members, are thus merely a powerless tool in the hands of the totalitarian dictatorship, employed to exploit rather than protect the workers.

Poland has officially an eight hour working day and a forty-six hour week. However, the worker is not paid for the number of hours he works but for the amount of work he produces under the state-established production "norms". These norms are, as a rule, set by the factory or office management acting on behalf of the dictatorship. Any worker who fails to fulfill these norms in an eight hour working day receives a lower rate of pay.

Production norms are set high and are constantly being increased. To earn the bare necessities of life, the worker must work at breakneck speed, frequently overtime, to meet the management's production quotas. These are set by special technicians (efficiency engineers) on the basis of the norms achieved by the so-called privileged "shock workers". If several workers in a plant manage to fulfill the production norms in an eight hour day, or even exceed them, the norms are at once increased for all the workers in the given industry. In practice, this of course means a corresponding decrease in wages.

Before the outbreak of World War II, under the Colonel's regime, the Polish trade unions vigorously opposed the piecework system as a special form of exploitation. Only in special cases and under clearly defined conditions was piecework sanctioned. In collective bargaining agreements the trade unions always endeavoured to fix the rates for such work.

Now that the trade unions are under the complete control of the totalitarian state, production norms are the rule rather

than the exception. Communism, in theory, is opposed to the exploitation of labor. In practice, however, this exploitation is now applied in the Soviet-dominated states to a degree unprecedented even in the most backward capitalist countries.

In democratic countries with a capitalist economic system, organized labor, because of its strength, solidarity and democratic organization, has succeeded, through higher wages, social services and other benefits, to reduce the employer's surplus profit. But in Soviet Russia, as in Poland and the other satellite countries, the surplus profit derived from human labor considerably exceeds such profit gained by employers in the capitalist countries.

Under the norm system the exploitation of labor is glaringly demonstrated. The worker is being driven to exhaustion. Before long his productive capacity is completely sapped. He actually gives his life to tighten the strangle-hold the totalitarian state has over him, as under the Soviet system, the surplus profit goes for the maintenance of the immense government apparatus, including the secret police, ever-expanding army and the Communist Party with its vast propaganda machine.

The Soviet system has also developed a new type of labor exploitation known as "socialist competition". Under such competition the worker agrees to produce "voluntarily" even more than his required quota.

Socialist competition is carried out either individually or collectively. As a rule, a worker, under party or trade union pressure, declares that he plans to exceed the established norm by, say, 30 per cent, and challenges his fellow-workers to do the same. Failure on the part of the other workers to meet this challenge is frowned upon by management and may even be interpreted as an act of sabotage, punishment for which is a term of slave labor in "corrective labor camps".

In group competition, the entire crew of a plant or factory challenges the workers of another industrial enterprise to exceed production norms or to fulfill the government's plan at an accelerated speed. This type of competition is especially popular on national or communist holidays, when the workers announce that they will "voluntarily" contribute their labor free, so as to honor the holiday and speed up "socialist production". Such challenges

to socialist competition are, of course, extensively reported in the communist press.

In an article entitled "The Problem of Competition", (Workers' Economic Review of February, 1949), Z. Kratko claims that one million Polish workers have already responded to the call of socialist competition. "Work in Poland", he writes, "has become for the majority of working men and women a matter of pride and honor. The reason for their enthusiasm is the nationalization of industry, as a result of which the workers do not work for the capitalist but for themselves, their class and state".

These high-sounding words are used to camouflage the most ruthless exploitation of labor in modern society. Actually, only the regime of terror which reigns in Poland's industry could induce the overworked and underfed Polish worker to engage in socialist competition.

Resolutions urging socialist competition and the contribution of voluntary labor are adopted at factory meetings by open vote. They are either introduced by a communist representative of the trade union or by an emissary of the Party itself. Thus the worker is coerced to vote for the resolution, since to oppose it or even abstain from voting leaves him open to the charges of "enemy of the people", an anti-social element destined, sooner or later, to land in prison or in a forced labor camp.

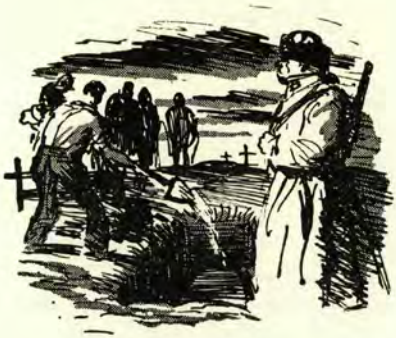
Socialist competition, as practiced in Poland, is based on the Soviet system long in vogue in Russia, where it is known as the "Stakhanov System". Stakhanov was a communist miner who allegedly exceeded his norm by 500 per cent. The first "Stakhanovist" in Poland was a young miner by the name of Pstrowski whose triumph was short-lived. He died prematurely in an effort to overfulfill the Government's norm. He has since become a symbol. *Chcesz sie udac na sad Boski — pracuj tylko jak sam Pstrowski,* is now a popular proverb among the Polish workers. (If you are eager for the Lord's Judgment, work like Pstrowski).

Cash prizes, honorary badges and decorations of all kinds are supposed to give the worker the necessary incentives to engage in socialist competition. But only the strongest ever attain this happy state.

On paper, to be sure, the communist regime introduced a

number of improvements in prewar labor legislation: restoration of the forty-six hour week, one month's vacation annually for those engaged in physical labor for ten years (holidays and Sundays are not counted in the vacation period), extension of the collective bargaining law of April 14, 1937 to local government employees and farm workers. Also, Labor Courts are now competent to sit in civil disputes between management and labor. However, these paper "privileges" are but slight compensation for the basic rights which labor has lost under the communist regime.

IV. Persecution of Democratic Labor Leaders



DEMOCRATIC labor leaders are, as a rule, the first victims in a state where communists attain power. They are the first target of the totalitarian regime — and with reason. Democratic labor leaders — men and women who oppose the exploitation of labor whether by the capitalist or the ruling communist oligarchy — are a serious obstacle in the dictatorship's road to total power.

Because of their lifelong experience and devotion to the cause of free labor, the democratic leaders are singularly equipped to challenge the communists on their own ground. Those who refuse to betray their principles by succumbing to the usual communist offers of bribes, honors and other privileges, and collaboration with the dictatorship, are exterminated ruthlessly. On the other hand, collaborators are given positions of honor and even power.

Andrei Vyshinsky, who rose to fame during Moscow's famous blood purges and is at present the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs, is a case in point. Vyshinsky was originally an anti-communist member of the Russian Social Democratic Party, but he turned renegade in time to become a member of the Bolshevik oligarchy. As a prosecutor in the famous "trials" of 1936-1938 he displayed great zeal in extracting "confessions" from Stalin's former colleagues and opponents. He is thus enjoying privilege and power entirely by the grace of Stalin. One day, he too, may share

the fate of the "Old Bolsheviks" whom he hounded so relentlessly, and forced to "confess" his early sins. Such is the nature of the Bolshevik dictatorship.

Immediately prior to and following World War II, wherever the Soviet Red Army became the army of occupation, it was always followed by the secret police known by its initials M.V.D. (*Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Diel*). Wherever the M.V.D. came, democratic labor leaders were at once placed on the proscribed list.

When, in September 1939, Soviet troops occupied the eastern territories of Poland — as agreed to in the Stalin-Hitler Pact — the Moscow authorities at once commenced the liquidation of the independent Polish labor movement, both its political and trade union sections. Existing trade unions were "reorganized" along Soviet lines and subjected to the supervision of the Communist Party and the secret police.

Well-known and active democratic labor leaders were at once arrested and subsequently sentenced without trial *administratively,* to long terms of forced labor in Siberia. Many of them (information has since reached the western world) died of undernourishment and exhaustion due to hard labor and the severe Siberian climate.

Among the prominent Polish labor leaders "purged" by the communist authorities were such outstanding men as Zygmunt Piotrowski, former Socialist member of the Polish Sejm (Parliament) and editor of the "Railway Worker's Journal"; Artur Hausner, former member of the Sejm and chairman of the Socialist Party of Lwow; Mieczyslaw Mastek, chairman of the executive board of the Railway Workers Union; Stanislaw Grylowski, Secretary-General of the same union; Bronislaw Skalak, outstanding labor leader from Lwow; Edward Skwirut of Tarnow, and many others.

Piotrowski, Hausner, Grylowski and Skwirut, it is now known, died in Soviet prisons. The Moscow authorities, however, refused to disclose details of their deaths or even where they were imprisoned.

Particularly tragic was the fate of the outstanding leaders of the Jewish Labor Union (*Bund*) of Poland, Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter. In 1939, soon after the Red Army occupied the east-

ern territories of Poland, they were arrested by the Soviet M.V.D. and sentenced to death.

Following the outbreak of the Russo-German war in June, 1941, and the conclusion of an alliance between Poland and the U.S.S.R. in July of the same year, Erlich and Alter's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Subsequently, they were granted an amnesty and released from prison. They were employed for a brief period in the Polish Embassy in Moscow and later in Kuibyshev.

During this period Erlich and Alter were devoting all their energy to the organization of aid for Jews from the eastern territories, who were deported by the M.V.D. to Russia in the years 1939 and 1940. Many of their co-religionists who found themselves homeless, ragged and hungry in Russian Siberia, Kazakhstan and other outlying regions, were saved from certain death due to the indefatigable efforts of these two great Jewish labor leaders.

But Erlich and Alter, though Socialists of extreme left views, were strongly opposed to the Bolshevik principle of dictatorship and totalitarianism as early as 1917. Stalin, whose opponents they were in the early day of the Russian Revolution, was determined that these two gallant men should not leave Russia alive. Thus, after a brief spell of freedom, they were arrested again by the M.V.D. in December, 1941 — despite strong protests on the part of the Polish government whose ally Soviet Russia ostensibly was at the time.

Although Erlich and Alter were citizens of Poland, both by birth and freedom of choice, Moscow, arbitrarily, declared them to be citizens of Soviet Russia. In violation of all precepts of legality and the accepted diplomatic tradition, the Polish Embassy in Moscow was repeatedly forbidden by the Soviet Foreign Ministry to interview them or intervene on their behalf.

Little was known of the fate of Erlich and Alter for nearly two years. Despite repeated requests for information about them on the part of prominent personalities throughout the western world, particularly on the part of the free labor movements in the United States and Europe, the Soviet government refused to disclose their whereabouts. Not until 1943 did the Soviet Embassy in Washington, pressed by William Green, President of the

American Federation of Labor, Philip Murray, President of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, David Dubinsky, President of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and other leaders of the American Federation of Labor, announce that Erlich and Alter (who as Socialists and Jews were determined foes of Nazism and struggled relentlessly against it) were executed for "collaboration with Nazi Germany".

This announcement stunned Erlich and Alter's friends and admirers in the United States and Europe and resulted in spontaneous protest demonstrations throughout the civilized world. The accusation of "collaboration with Nazi Germany" was, of course, a deliberate falsehood of the type frequently resorted to by the communist dictatorship in order to whitewash its own crimes against human decency.

At the beginning of 1942, the Soviet government established under its aegis in the city of Saratov, on the river Volga, a "Polish Patriots' Association" composed in the main of members of the Polish Communist Party. This association was to be the nucleus of a future Polish Communist government, completely subservient to Moscow.

In December, 1944, when the Red army entered Polish territory in pursuit of the retreating German army, the former "Polish Patriots' Association" now rechristened "National Liberation Committee" was recognized by the U.S.S.R. as the legal Polish government. This despite the fact that Russia's western allies continued relations with the legal Polish government-in-exile, whose seat was in London.

Both in the so-called "Liberation Committee" and the new "government", communists, who in the meantime organized their own political party disguised as the "Polish Workers Party", were placed in a controlling position. The Polish Socialist Party which was supported by a majority of Poland's labor was banned, its leaders purged and only an emasculated version of the "Polish Socialist Party" was permitted to exist.

Simultaneously with the purge, carried out by the secret police among the Polish Socialists, Moscow also ordered a purge of the trade unions. Perhaps the most prominent and most widely-beloved leader of Polish labor purged by the communists was Zygmunt Zulawski, former Secretary-General of the Central Com-

mittee of the Polish Federation of Trade Unions and a member of the Polish Sejm from 1919 to 1935. Zulawski was also known beyond the frontiers of Poland as a member of the executive board of the International Federation of Trade Unions.

Zygmunt Zulawski became active in the ranks of Polish labor in his early youth and because of his energy, selflessness and intellectual qualities, soon achieved a leading position. A staunch supporter of democracy in its broadest sense, he was firmly opposed to all forms of dictatorship — whether communist or fascist. Because he sought to preserve trade union independence and revitalize the Socialist Party, Zulawski became a favorite target of the communists. Nevertheless, despite violent communist opposition, he was elected in 1947 to the Sejm on a coalition ticket headed by the former Prime Minister of Poland, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk.

Only Zulawski's popularity with labor and with Polish citizens generally prevented the communist regime from sending him to a slave labor camp. However, exhausted by the unequal struggle, weakened by illness, he withdrew from public life in August, 1949. He died in Cracow soon after. Only death saved him from sharing the fate of Erlich and Alter.

In May, 1947, the communist regime arrested three hundred leaders of Poland's trade unions and Socialist Party, including such outstanding figures as Antoni Zdanowski and Kazimierz Puzak.

Puzak, like Zygmunt Zulawski, was one of the great leaders of Polish labor. Before World War I, he participated actively in Poland's revolutionary struggle against the Czar. Arrested by the Czarist police, he was sentenced to eight years imprisonment in the notorious Schlisselburg fortress. For six years of his imprisonment he was chained and in solitary confinement. He was released from his dungeon following the first (Kerensky) Russian Revolution of March, 1917.

Immediately upon his release, Kazimierz Puzak associated himself with the struggle of the Russian people to throw off czarist oppression. Subsequently he returned to Poland, which by now had gained its independence, and in 1919 was elected a labor deputy of the Sejm. A year later he became Secretary-General of the Polish Socialist Party.

During the prewar semi-dictatorial Colonel's regime, Puzak fought unflinchingly in defense of democracy. In 1939, following the occupation of Poland by Germany, he organized a widespread underground movement against the nazis and was elected Speaker of the underground parliament. When Soviet troops occupied Poland in 1945, Puzak was invited, together with fourteen other underground leaders, for a conference at the Red army headquarters. The Russians informed him that he and his co-workers were to go to Moscow, ostensibly to negotiate a Polish-Soviet agreement. However, no sooner did his special plane, supplied by the Red army land at Moscow, when he was arrested by the M.V.D. Tried by a secret Soviet court martial, Puzak and his friends of the underground were sentenced to prison. After having served his prison term, Puzak returned to Poland but did not remain free for long. In June, 1947, he was again arrested by the Polish communist regime, kept in prison without trial until 1948 when he was sentenced by a Warsaw court-martial to ten years' imprisonment. It is characteristic of the present satellite communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, to have military courts try civilians charged with political offenses.

Sentenced together with Puzak were, Jozef Dziegielewski, former member of the Sejm and one of the bravest underground leaders during the nazi occupation of Poland; Tadeusz Szturm de Sztrem, well-known economist, Ludwik Cohn, leader of the Labor Youth Organization, who spent five years in a German prisoner-of-war camp, and many others.

In 1950 Puzak died in the notorious prison of Rawicz. His body was delivered to his family in a sealed coffin. The family was ordered by the communists authorities not to open the coffin nor to send out death notices. This lent credence to widespread rumors that Puzak was actually murdered in prison.

The news of Kazimierz Puzak's death spread all over the world causing great indignation against his murderers. Democratic labor organizations everywhere voiced a strong protest against this heinous crime committed by the communist regime of Poland.

The mock trial and death of Kazimierz Puzak who gave his life in the struggle for democracy and social justice, is another

glaring example of the terror that now reigns in Poland under the communist totalitarian regime.

In the Paris *Combat* of July 13, 1947, the well-known liberal French journalist Texcier wrote:

" . . . W. R. N. stands for three Polish words meaning Freedom, Equality, Independence. This was the name of the underground organization of Polish Socialists during the whole of the German occupation. The much advertised 'spying activities' of the W.R.N. consist simply in the fact that they have been informing their comrades of the Western democracies of the political conditions in their own country. The crimes of which the W.R.N. are being accused are strike waves. It must be added here that for a similar reason — incitement to strike — a working class leader has recently been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.

"As a result of the discovery of this 'plot' — which is but striving for freedom — thirty-six Socialists have now been arrested. They are being accused of maintaining contact with Zygmunt Zaremba and Ciolkosz, as 'leaders of the W.R.N. abroad'.

"Zaremba, whom French Socialists know well, was a leader of the Polish Socialist Party under the occupation and — together with his friends — organized the magnificent and tragic Warsaw Rising. As for Ciolkosz, he was throughout the war delegate of the Polish Socialist Party in the Committee for the Reconstruction of the International in which he co-operated with Camille Huysmans.

"Amongst the arrested men there is Kazimierz Puzak, a former inmate of the Tsarist prisons, from which he was released by the Russian Revolution. In the period between the two wars Puzak was uninterruptedly Secretary-General of the P.P.S. During the German occupation he was Chairman of the Council of National Unity, a body corresponding to the French *Comité National de la Résistance*.

"Also arrested are, Jozef Dziegielewski, former secretary of the Warsaw District Committee of the PPS and, during the war, member of the Central Executive Committee; Wilczynski, organiser of the workers' sport associations and head of the workers' militia which defended Warsaw in 1939; Feliks Misiorowski, general secretary of the Transport Workers' Union; Ludwik

Cohn, secretary of the Socialist Youth organisation; Tadeusz Szturm de Sztrem — a prominent Socialist theorist; Wiktor Krawczyk — secretary of the Clerical Union.

"Such are the 'plotters'! Such are the 'Fascists'! And such is the fate of leaders of a party which still believes in freedom and which maintained its noble name from the period of struggle: Freedom, Equality, Independence . . ."

Equally tragic was the death of another well-known Polish labor leader, Antoni Zdanowski, former editor of the "Workers' Economic Review" and Secretary of the Tobacco Workers Union. Arrested in June, 1947, Zdanowski was released after seven months of confinement, broken spiritually and physically. He died four days later.

On the occasion of Zdanowski's death, the Polish Socialist Delegation-in-Exile issued its famous proclamation entitled "Stop the Savage Persecution of Socialists in Poland". It was released in London in April, 1948.

"Antoni Zdanowski was strong, healthy and vigorous when arrested in June, 1947", the proclamation stated. "Today we are expected to believe that meningitis and tuberculosis were the causes of his mysterious death. There is a sinister implication in the fact that Zdanowski was released from prison at the end of January, 1948 — just in time to die".

As in the case of Puzak, according to the proclamation, Zdanowski's body was buried in a sealed coffin. There was no autopsy and obituaries were forbidden by the communist regime. Only his nearest relatives were given permission to attend his funeral which was conducted under the strict supervision of the secret police.

In 1947, Zdanowski was to be a candidate for election to the Sejm on the ticket of the anti-communist Polish People's Party. But the government's election committee, composed of communists and fellow travellers, eliminated him from the list ostensibly for the reason that he had collaborated with the Germans during the occupation. As usual, the regime manufactured facts to suit its purposes. The truth is that Zdanowski was one of the leaders of the anti-nazi underground. Why this hideous charge then? Until June 22, 1941, when Germany attacked Soviet Russia, Stalin's communists throughout the world collaborated with the

nazis on Moscow's orders. But after the outbreak of the war, in an effort to erase their pro-nazi activities, they made fantastic charges of collaboration with Hitler against genuine and courageous anti-nazis. Antoni Zdanowski was one of them.

"In the face of this unspeakable horror", concludes the London proclamation, "we ask all decent men and women to join with us in demanding from those responsible for the present rule in Poland: What have you done to Antoni Zdanowski?"

The report of Zdanowski's death was soon followed by other tragic news from Poland: Janina Pajdak, wife of Antoni Pajdak who was arrested by the M.V.D. in 1945, herself an active leader in the Polish labor movement, committed suicide. According to the official police version, she jumped through a window from the third story of her Cracow prison. As in the case of Zdanowski, no autopsy was permitted by the government and, of course, no obituaries, so that her friends would not know that she was dead.

Meanwhile, nothing has been heard of her husband, Antoni Pajdak, abducted by the Russians in 1945. He was to have been tried in Moscow together with other anti-nazi leaders of the Polish underground. But when his colleagues finally appeared for trial in Moscow, Pajdak, who was a prominent labor leader and Minister in the anti-nazi underground parliament, was missing. What happened to Pajdak? The Soviet authorities refuse all information and the satellite Polish regime does not want to claim this famous Polish citizen and labor leader. Has Pajdak, too, met with the fate of Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter?

What has happened to the following labor leaders arrested by the secret police, and who have since disappeared without a trace:

Antoni Wasik, Marian Bomba, Stanislaw Sobolewski, Stefan Zbrozyna, Boleslaw Galaj?

Antoni Wasik, former Secretary-General of the Food Workers' Union, was a heroic revolutionary fighter against the Russian Czar. During the nazi occupation of Poland, he took active part in the underground movement. What happened to this Polish worker whose only crime was his belief in the fundamental principles of democracy?

This list of Polish labor leaders arrested, tortured and purged by the communist regime is, of necessity, incomplete. The families of those arrested or killed are afraid to make their fate known publicly for fear of further brutal reprisals against themselves. But no Iron Curtain can hide the fact that Poland today, like all the Soviet-dominated states, is a ruthless dictatorship ruled by terror and based on widespread exploitation of the working people.

Subservience to the rules of the Soviet Politburo, to the exclusion of all national interests, is the lot of the satellite states. It was because Stalin sought to bleed Yugoslavia white in the interests of Russia that Marshal Tito broke with the Cominform. But in the satellite countries, still under the yoke of the Cominform, all deviation from the "Party line", the slightest attempt at independence, is nipped in the bud by the secret police under the direct guidance of the Soviet M.V.D.

The Polish worker is forced to toil under difficult conditions so as to feed the ever-expanding Soviet war machine and the growing bureaucracy — the new communist aristocracy — of the totalitarian state. "Poland exports coal to the Soviet Union so that the Soviet Union could import Poland's sugar". So goes a popular saying in Poland today. This is literally true. Much of what Poland produces is taken by the Soviet Union on the basis of a series of unilateral treaties concluded by Moscow with its satellites. What remains in Poland is used for the reconstruction of the country — and, it cannot be denied that, due to the enormous sacrifices on the part of the population, some progress has been achieved in the reconstruction of the country, and for the maintenance of the vast Soviet bureaucracy and its Party apparatus.

What has transpired in Poland since the communists, with the aid of Soviet armed might, seized power, is additional testimony to the basic truth that only a free and democratic society creates the conditions under which labor can advance economically, politically and socially. Communism is as much a system of labor exploitation as was Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's Fascism. It matters little to labor whether the master wields a black or red whip.

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR A FREE EUROPE, INC., is a group of private citizens who have drawn together to carry out concrete and direct action to restore and strengthen man's most valued possession — freedom.

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