

# The March of 1968





*scenerio*

prof. Jerzy Eisler,  
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*translation*

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*artistic conception*

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*realisation*

Agencja DUX

*photos and archival records*

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The March of 1968 is one of the most important events of Polish history after the Second World War. It was one of major experiences for a large part of young Polish intellectuals. However, this stipulated term covers several different threads. Depending on who is viewing the March and what his aim is, they concentrate on those aspects which had been concerning themselves the most.

For those who were studying in 1968 the most important is usually the student stream of “the March events”. Their memory was imprinted with student strikes, manifestations and mass meetings. For many of them the March seems to be the event which influenced all their lives. Students in Poland, who were coming out under the banners of liberty, were appealing to similar banners and values as their Czech and Slovakian colleagues during Praha Spring. Appealing to the leftist phraseology, they were fighting for democratisation and liberalization of the Communist system, as well as for the right to live in the truth. “The March events” contributed to creating in Poland “the 68’ generation”. Many people of this generation worked for the anti-Communist opposition in the seventies, and after the August of 1980<sup>1</sup> belonged to the activists and advisers of Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity”.

Those who emigrated from Poland after the March usually speak of disgraceful anti-Semite campaign, ineffectively hidden by the officials under anti-Zionism slogans. A large part of emigrants believed in the March propaganda which denied their right for Polish nationality, thus later they preferred to say, “I’m from Poland” instead of “I’m Polish”. Some of the emigrants, coming from long assimilated families and facing anti-Semite campaign in 1968 decided to come back to their Jewish roots.

For those who belonged to the world of art, culture and science the March is predominately a pogrom against the intellectuals. It was then when the press and other mass media were attacking scientists and writers with the unusual brutality. The common point of these publications was the fact that together with the party activists they refused to acknowledge not only moral and

ideological values of the attacked but also their professional qualifications. At the same time new people emerged in the cultural life. They owed their quick promotion not to their abilities, but to their political opportunism. Scientists with recognized output were expelled from universities and replaced with careerists of no scruples.

Numerous books whose authors were decided to be not submissive were stopped from being published, e.g. sent for pulping. Films that had been found to be “anti-Polish” were put onto shelves, among others the movie by Jan Rybkowski “Rassenschade – kiedy miłość była zbrodnią” (“Rassenschade – when love was a crime”) made with the West-Berlin co-producer. The film was telling the story about erotic relationships of Germans and people of other nationalities and races, which was forbidden by Hitler legislation.

The least known thread of the March events is still the complicated political contest among the leaders of the Polish United Worker’s Party (PZPR). In the sixties an informal group of party and state activists gathered around the Minister of Interior gen. Mieczysław Moczar. There were called “the partisans”, as Moczar and some other people belonging to the group were fighting in the Communist underground army during the Second World War. Gradually the position and range of influences of this group was growing, while the group, using populist, anti-Semite, anti-intellectual and nationalistic slogans, preached the need to create strong dictatorial authorities. The real aims of “the partisans” and their supporters in 1968 are not exactly known, it is still not sure whether Moczar wanted to overthrow Władysław Gomułka and replace him, or he just wanted to be “the first one after the First Secretary” and become the power behind the throne of the system.

All these aspects of one of the most important historic events in Poland under the Communist rule are tried to be shown on the exposition “The March of 1968”, and you are the ones to decide how successful it is.

Professor *Jerzy Eisler*

<sup>1</sup> The wave of strikes on the Polish coast, especially in the Gdansk Shipyard, which contributed to creating independent Trade unions, later turned into the “Solidarity”

The period of late sixties was the time of many tensions and changes of virtual importance.



The Council in St. Peter's Basilica

In 1965 the Second Vatican Council initiated by Pope John the Twenty-third was over. The Council was a turning point in the history of the Catholic Church. It introduced liturgy in national languages and it opened Catholicism onto other, not only Christian, religious communities. The Pope Paul the Sixth also broke with the diplomatic isolation of Vatican City.



War in Vietnam

The United States on one hand, and the USSR and China on the other were engaging into the military confrontation in Vietnam. The Soviet-American armaments race and rivalry in the space were also speeding up.



“The Cultural revolution” in China. Procession with flags at Tien-an-men Square

Alexander Dubcek

“The cultural revolution” in China started by Mao Tse-tung intensified the conflict between the USSR and China over leadership in the “Communist family”. While in China another step towards totalitarian communism was being made, in Czechoslovakia large fractions of the society were fighting for “socialism with a human face”, which was to be symbolised by the smiling face of Alexander Dubcek, the First Secretary of Central Committee of Czechoslovakian Communist Party.



The Beatles

Generation of people born after the Second World War was stepping into their adult life. A wave of youth contestation rolled over the world; moral revolution symbolised by the hippies – “flower children” spread over the world. In 1968 vehement youth demonstrations took place.



Street fights in the Latin district in Paris



In June 1967 in the Middle East there was an outbreak of war later to be called a Six Day War. Israel, which was supported and armed by the United States, within six days defeated Egypt, Syria and Jordan helped by countries of Warsaw Pact and equipped with the most modern weapon from the Soviet Union. The consequence of war was break of diplomatic relations with Israel by all (with the exception of Romania) countries of the Warsaw Pact.



In October 1956 millions of Poles were setting their hopes in Władysław Gomułka, who was coming back to power. It was commonly believed that he would be able to make the system to be more just, human, and economically efficient.

Władysław Gomułka, the First Secretary of Central Committee of the Polish United Worker's Party (KC PZPR), pronouncing a speech on the mass meeting at Plac Defilad in Warsaw.



In the end of the fifties Poland entered the period of "little stabilisation". A room divider, TV set, washing machine, transistor radio, and in exceptional cases Syrena car or another car imported from countries of "people's democracy" became the determinants of life standards of Poles.



Standing from the left: Jan Józef Lipski, Paweł Jasienica, Melchior Wańkowicz



Antoni Słonimski – initiator and author of the text of "The letter of the 34"

Władysław Gomułka among writers

During the following years hopes set with Władysław Gomułka, the First Secretary of KC PZPR were gradually fading. The process of systematic "screw tightening" was ongoing. There were political prisoners in Poland again – although not in such a scale as in the Stalinism period. In 1964 a group of thirty-four Polish writers and scientists addressed an open letter to the authorities, in which they were protesting against the censorship and limitations of paper allowances for publishing needs.



In 1966 the sharpest crisis in relationships between Church and state occurred. The church celebrations of Millennium of conversion of Poland to Christianity were opposed with lay celebrations of Millennium of Polish statehood.



Mieczysław Moczar with a group of combatants of Polish Armed Forces on the West



The “partisans” gathered at gen. Mieczysław Moczar, the Minister of Interior, were one of informal groups of party and state activists in the sixties.

Their reliance was the Union of Fighters for Liberty and Democracy. They represented a political stream called “national communism”, based on national, or even nationalistic and anti-Semitic ideology. They were openly anti-German, and unofficially they criticized the USSR as well, which helped them to gain support of some of catholic and independence circles. Seeing their “guide” and a possible successor of Gomułka in Moczar, young activists were considering quick promotion, mainly at the cost of old Communists, who were often of Jewish origin.



“Partisans” picnic



Edward Gierek and Mieczysław Moczar in Sejm benches – rivals or allies?



Gen. Franciszek Szlachcic, vice-Minister of Interior



Gen. Grzegorz Korczyński, vice-Minister of National Defence – the closest partner of Moczar

Another circle with growing ambitions was the “Silesian group” gathered round Edward Gierek, a member of Political Bureau and the First Secretary of Provincial Committee of PZPR in Katowice. The group included young pragmatic activists from the local and central party authorities. Some of them in a veiled way tried to use populist and sometimes nationalistic slogans.

“Contradictions Searchers’ Club” was a popular name of Interschool Discussion Club created at the initiative of a secondary school student Adam Michnik and formally existing under auspices of The Soviet Youth Association. A part of Club members used to belong to “Walter” scout patrol lead by Jacek Kuron. The club, in which many heated discussions were held, was dissolved in the summer of 1963. A Political Discussion Club with Karol Modzelewski as a chairman, which for over a year existed at Warsaw University, was also dissolved. In both cases a pretext for interference was excessive freedom of discussions.



A meeting of Contradictions Searchers’ Club. From the left: Jacek Kuron, Stanislaw Manturzewski, Aleksander Perski

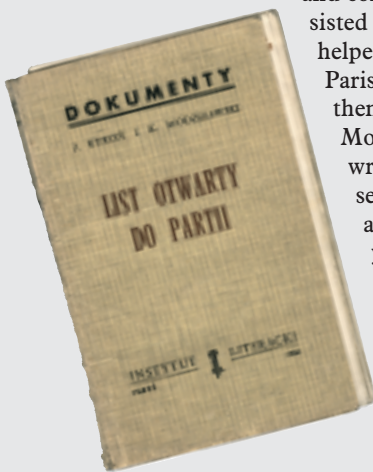


Adam Michnik



Seweryn Blumsztajn

In the autumn of 1964 a circle of students and young scientists started to emerge at Warsaw University. They gathered at Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski, and were called “commandos” by party authorities. As real commandos, they were performing “landing operations” at party meetings and Socialist Youth Association meetings, at which they were asking “difficult”, and sometimes provocative questions. A large part of that society consisted of children of prominent Communist activists, which definitely helped them to travel to Western Europe, have regular contacts with Paris “Kultura”<sup>2</sup> and emigration publications. A kind of manifest for them was “Open letter to the Party” by Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski. For writing it they were sentenced for three and three and a half years of prison.



Cover of the Paris edition of “Open letter to the Party”



Jacek Kuroń



Karol Modzelewski

<sup>2</sup> An independent Polish magazine, published in Paris, edited by Jerzy Giedroyc.



Bronisław Baczko



Leszek Kołakowski

After their arrest Adam Michnik became an informal leader of the group. Intellectual and political guides of “commandos” were scientists accused of “revisionism” by the Party, such as: Bronisław Baczko, Zygmunt Bauman, Włodzimierz Brus, Maria Hirszowicz, Leszek Kołakowski, Stefan Morawski, Janina Zakrzewska.

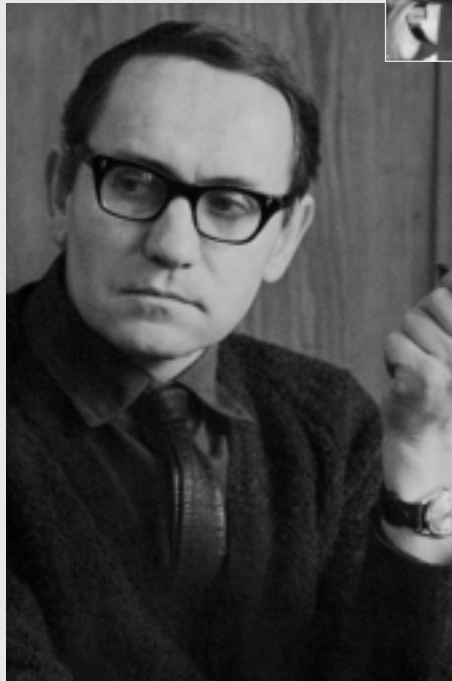


Włodzimierz Brus



Wiktor Woroszyński

An important event in “commandos” history was a meeting of Warsaw University students with Leszek Kołakowski and Krzysztof Pomian, which was organised on the tenth anniversary of Polish October<sup>3</sup>. The speakers, with the applause of the audience, criticized the policy of the people of Gomułka. Soon both of them were expelled from PZPR, which was the direct cause of a conflict between the Party authorities and scientists and writers. In the following weeks such people as Jacek Bocheński, Marian and Kazimierz Brandys, Igor Newerly, Tadeusz Konwicki, Wisława Szymborska and Wiktor Woroszyński left the Party.



Tadeusz Konwicki



Jacek Bocheński

<sup>3</sup> Attaining power by Gomułka in 1956

The end to the several hundred years' presence of the Jews in Poland was put by the greatest tragedy in the history of the Jewish people and at the same time one of the largest crime in the history of the humanity – the Shoah. In extermination and concentration camps the German Nazi murdered six millions European Jews, half of whom were Polish citizens.



Anti-Semitism stirred by the Nazi affected part of Polish society. Violent incidents of anti-Semite character occurred in Poland. The most tragic, and consequently the most well known one was pogrom of the Jews in Kielce on 4th July 1946. Forty-two people were killed and many others wounded. The circumstances of that tragedy have never been completely cleared up. Although provocation has been suggested, the direct responsibility for the crime was bore by people who took part in the pogrom.



Many of the Poles believe in the stereotype of the „żydo-komuna”<sup>4</sup>. It is believed that people of Jewish origin have a dominating role in the Polish and international Communist movement. After the Second World War this stereotype was fixed in the conviction that there are too many

Jews and Poles of Jewish origin in the Communist authorities, especially in the machinery of Stalin period. Although they were a small part of security apparatus at large, they predominated at the management posts. Participation of Jews in Party authorities was symbolised – for many people – by members of the Political Bureau of KC PZPR: Jakub Berman, Hilary Minc and Roman Zambrowski, and in the security apparatus – Julia („Luna”) Brystygierowa, Anatol Fejgin, Józef Rózański and Józef Światło.



Jakub Berman



Roman Zambrowski

Hilary Minc

Julia Brystygierowa



Józef Rózański

Józef Światło

Anatol Fejgin

<sup>4</sup> Participation of Jews in the Communist system in Poland.



In Poland, where in 1967 there were not more than thirty thousands of people of Jewish origin the Six Day War became a catalyser of processes which had been growing for several years. The saying “Our Jews have beaten their Arabs” was becoming popular among those who understood the defeat of Arabic countries to be defeat of Soviet Union in the “correspondence” war with the United States. At the same time Władysław Gomułka during his speech on the Sixth Trade Union Congress not only condemned Israel, but also called Polish citizens of Jewish origin the “fifth column”. This expression had been removed from the published text of the speech.

*We believe that each and every citizen of Poland should have only one motherland: the People's Republic of Poland – Władysław Gomułka*

*I understand that I must have one motherland, but why should it be Egypt? – Antoni Słonimski*

In many institutions party and workers’ meetings were held, on which “criminal Israel aggressors” were condemned, and people who were against this campaign were expelled from PZPR or even fired. This was accompanied by provocations organised by Ministry of Interior, aimed at discrediting inconvenient people. The deepest purge was made in Polish People’s Army, especially in the Air Force. It was to strike at Minister of National Defence Marian Spychalski.



Marian Spychalski



During Party meetings in army units following voices were heard:

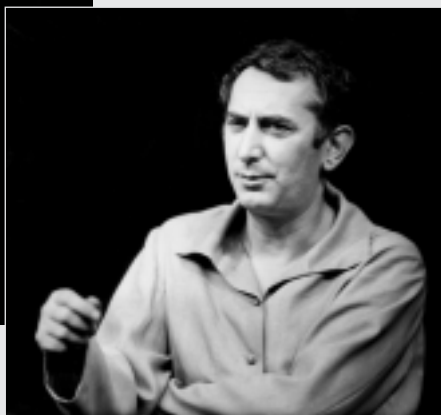
*There have always been problems with the Jews, and not only on the Middle East.*

*There will be more vacancies in the army, because those who have Israel connections are to be fired.*



Józef Duriasz in "Forefathers' Eve"

On 25<sup>th</sup> November 1967 in the National Theatre in Warsaw a first-night performance of "Forefathers' Eve" by Adam Mickiewicz was held, directed by Kazimierz Dejmek. Party authorities got interested in the staging, being alarmed by Security Apparatus revelations about the heated reactions of the audience, especially when "anti-Russian" fragments were played. Soon it was gossiped in Warsaw that the Soviet Embassy demanded banning the spectacle.



Gustaw Holoubek as Konrad-Gustaw

*Nie dziw, że nas tu przeklinają,  
Wszak to już mija wiek,  
Jak z Moskwy w Polskę nasyłają  
Samych łajdaków stek.*

Adam Mickiewicz, *Dziady*, część III.

An anti-Russian excerpt of "Forefathers' Eve" Part Three, one of those which gained the largest applause.



Józef Dajczgewand and Jan Lityński, arrested by militia

In such an atmosphere the authorities decided that the last, tenth performance of "Forefathers' Eve" would take place on 30th January 1968. "Commandos" and students of State College of Theatrical Arts used this spectacle to organise protest against censorship. After the performance they went to the statue of Adam Mickiewicz, put down red and white flowers, and hang a banner saying, "We demand next performances". Demonstrators were dispersed with cudgels by militia, thirty-five people were arrested. Nine of them had to pay high fines. The following day the "commandos" decided to start an open protest standing up for "Forefathers' Eve".



Irena Lasota

*We, the youth of Warsaw, protest against banning performances of "Forefathers' Eve" by Adam Mickiewicz in the National Theatre. We protest against the policy of withdrawing from the progressive traditions of Polish nation.*

An excerpt from petition lodged in Sejm by Irena Lasota.

On 29<sup>th</sup> February at 4 p.m. about 400 writers took part in the Special General Meeting of the Warsaw Department of Polish Writers' Association. In secret voting they accepted a resolution criticising censorship and arbitral cultural policy of the Party, which was manifested by the ban to perform "Forefathers' Eve". A discussion on the cultural policy of the authorities was especially heated. Among those who spoke most violently were i.e. Jerzy Andrzejewski, Paweł Jasienica, Mieczysław Jastrun, Stefan Kisielewski, Leszek Kołakowski, Artur Międzyrzecki, Antoni Słonimski.

*We demand reintroduction of "Forefathers' Eve" directed by Kazimierz Dejmek. Its withdrawal from the stage has caused understandable bitterness of Warsaw audience – an excerpt from the resolution accepted on the meeting.*



Andrzej Kijowski – author of the text of the accepted resolution



Antoni Słonimski

*When talking about the letter of the 34 I said that I am on a weaker side, I do not have police, security apparatus and listening-ins to help me. There is only my output to speak for me.*  
– Antoni Słonimski



Paweł Jasienica

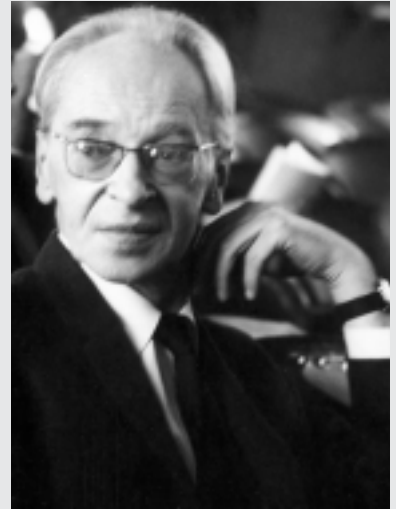
*I believe that those youngsters who demonstrated against banning "Forefathers' Eve" are the good youngsters, those who show that there is something else but their own career that bothers them.*



*If we say that for the last 23 years there have been enough other proofs for correcting the history of literature and correcting the modern literature, it means that this is the act of moral vandalism, which must lead to dwarfishness.*

Stefan Kisielewski

Stefan Kisielewski



*The contemporaneousness is mendacious, history is falsified. We have found ourselves in the situation in which we – Polish writers – should with all the power and most emphatically sound the alarm, as the very being of Polish culture and Polish cultural output is in danger. Where are we going?*

Jerzy Andrzejewski

Jerzy Andrzejewski

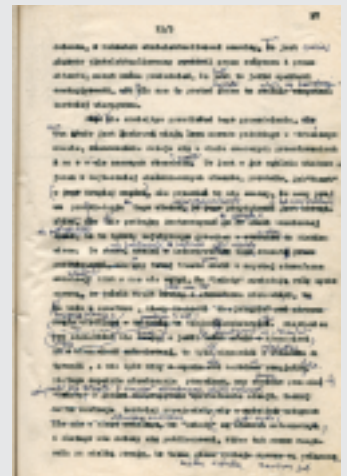


It was remembered what had been said and who had said those words that day. Authors of the most critical statements in the March became one of the main targets of brutal propaganda attacks. Paweł Jasienica and Stefan Kisielewski paid the highest price. On 11th March “unidentified perpetrators” attacked the latter one, whose designation “dictatorship of morons” was well remembered by Gomułka.

Artur Międzyrzecki



Mieczysław Jastrun



The minutes of the meeting with the hand made corrections by Mieczysław Jastrun and Jan Maria Gisges, Secretary of Main Board of Polish Writers' Association

In February public prosecutor was making an investigation against Adam Michnik and Henryk Szlajfer about giving information to a foreign journalist. On 4th March the decision of the Minister of Education Henryk Jabłoński to expel both of them from Warsaw University was pronounced. According to law, the decision was illegal. A few days later the “commandos” decided to organise a mass meeting on the yard of Warsaw University to support their colleagues. At the same time they wanted to support the resolution accepted by the writers. The authorities were also preparing for that meeting.

Henryk Szlajfer



Henryk Jabłoński, Minister of Education

**A mass meeting to stand up for democratic privileges  
Friday, 12 o'clock  
Warsaw University yard  
Down with repressions!  
University autonomy is in danger!**

A leaflet by Jacek Kuroń, one of many distributed at Warsaw University.

On 8<sup>th</sup> March at 12.00 a meeting started in front of the building of Warsaw University Library, and the crowd was growing with every minute.



In the resolution accepted by acclamation students protested against infringing the Constitution of Poland, repressing their colleagues who demonstrated against banning “The Forefathers”<sup>5</sup> and decision to expel Michnik and Szlajfer from the university.

Some of the students, who were stood up for at the meeting:



Marta Petrusiewicz



Sławomir Kretkowski



Wiktor Nagórski

The second resolution, read by Wiktor Górecki and Mirosław Sawicki, expressed solidarity with the opinion of Warsaw Department of Polish Writers’ Association which condemned making censorship more rigorous and banning “Forefathers’ Eve”.



Mirosław Sawicki



Wiktor Górecki – according to “Trybuna Ludu” of 11<sup>th</sup> March<sup>5</sup> “known of rowdy acts”

When students were going to disperse, “Tourist” coaches drove into the yard. Several hundreds men wearing civilian clothes got off them. They were asking students to disperse peacefully, but they started to behave aggressive themselves. It came to blows.

*They looked like an excursion from Moscow. Everyone was wearing overcoats with herringbone pattern, with cudgels hidden in the sleeves. A participant of the meeting.*

*Suddenly I saw a civilian man pulling girl’s hair. She was wearing a coat. She started to scream, and she fell down into the dirt. I think I remember this incident the most. Maciej Rosolak.*



<sup>5</sup> The largest Communist newspaper of that time in Poland.







Students were pushed to Kazimierz Palace<sup>6</sup> and prorector Zygmunt Rybicki appeared on the balcony. He asked everybody to leave the territory of university within 15 minutes. “Thank you, comrades”, he said to the “tourists”.

A delegation of students went to the rector’s office. Meanwhile, dean of Economy department professor Czesław Bobrowski and dean of History Department professor Stanisław Herbst were trying to persuade students to disperse, explaining that the meeting had served its purposes.



Czesław Bobrowski



Stanisław Herbst

Some of the members of student delegation.



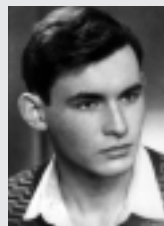
Michał Osóbka-Morawski



Barbara Toruńczyk



Ryszard Bugaj



Marcin Król



When students started to disperse, a unit of militia wearing uniforms entered. At the same time members of Voluntary Reserve of Civic Militia with cudgels and “tourists” came out again, beating students. Fights at Krakowskie Przedmieście continued until the evening.

*They were beating us with those short, hard, black cudgels. They were hitting only heads, which were bleeding, and my friend was repeating, as immensely amazed as me: “Poles, people, don’t beat, Poles...” He was standing held up with blows.*

Teresa Bochwic

<sup>6</sup> Headquarters of rector’s office.

In the following days the situation in Warsaw was tensed. The “commandos” and active participants of emerging student movement were being arrested. There were a solidarity mass-meetings held at Warsaw University of Technology. There were also street manifestations, the largest ones took place on 11th March. On that day there were also fights near Warsaw University, in front of University of Technology, in front of KC PZPR headquarters, near Main School of Planning and Statistics and at Krakowskie Przedmieście near Trasa W-Z.

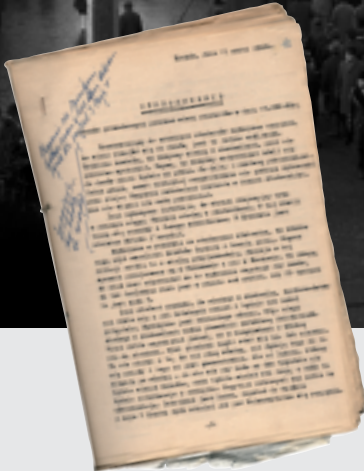


Starting with 11<sup>th</sup> March a wave of student protests spread over all civil academies and universities in Poland. Sit-downs to support Warsaw students were organised at universities. There were street demonstrations and encounters with Militia in the following days in Gdańsk, Lublin, Łódź, Katowice, Cracow, Poznań, Szczecin and Wrocław, and in four towns which did not have academic schools in 1968: Bielsko-Biała, Legnica, Radom and Tarnów.

Mass-meeting in front of the Łódź University Library



Cracow



Message of 17<sup>th</sup> March about the situation in Radom

*At 18.40 in the other place, at the crossing of Żeromskiego and Moniuszki streets, a crowd of young people and rowdies gathered again. The crowd consisted of about 1000 people. Hostile shouts, such as "We solidarize with Warsaw students", "Down with Moczar's servants" could be heard, and stones were*

*thrown into Militia patrols, in one case a bottle with petrol was thrown onto a passing Militia car. Motorised Militia forces and fifty men of both services were used to disperse this group. During the intervention cudgels were used against the aggressive youngsters. After the 15-minute action the crowd was dispersed and order restored.*



Gliwice

Gliwice

The violent anti-Semite campaign in mass media also started on 11<sup>th</sup> March. It was ineffectively hidden under anti-Zionism slogans. At the same time meetings were held in institutions all over Poland, on which students, as well as “political bankrupts” and “trouble-makers” were being condemned. Party leaders were rising to speak.



Józef Krępa, First Secretary of PZPR Warsaw Committee



Edward Gierek, member of the Political Bureau of KC PZPR and First Secretary of PZPR Provincial Committee in Katowice

*(...) Silesia has never been playing into their hands. And if some are still trying to make us abandon goals chosen by the Polish people, they will end up as losers.*





The popular propaganda slogan “Writers are for writing, students are for learning” was completed by the latter with “aspirins are for headache”

*Daddy, how do you spell “Zionist”? I don’t know, dear, but we used to write it with “j” before the war – a joke popular in the March*



Tadeusz Walichnowski

Kazimierz Kąkol

Wiesław Mysłek

Maria Osiadacz

“Purge” which started after the Six Day War among the party members gathered momentum, especially in circles of science, culture, mass media, army, diplomacy and economics. During the following months many anti-Semitic opinions were expressed. In the atmosphere of anti-Semite campaign many people of Jewish origin decided to leave Poland. Within few years about 15 thousand people emigrated. The anti-Semite and anti-intellectuals campaign raised on the West a wave of protests and gestures of solidarity with the persecuted. It damaged the world image of Poland for many years.

On the district PZPR conference in Polesie district in Łódź the following was said:

*The working class sees that hoax foxes are sitting at management posts. The hoax foxes fish in troubled waters. Water should be cleaned, so it is good for drinking. (...) A national minority cannot place themselves on posts, and national majority cannot maintain them.*



An excerpt from message of Provincial headquarters of Civic Militia in Gdańsk:

*... all Jews must be removed from high posts, because those who stay on their posts will sooner or later promote their compatriots onto management posts.*

On 19<sup>th</sup> March in the Congress Hall of Palace of Culture and Science Władysław Gomułka led a meeting with Warsaw party active members and pronounced a speech transmitted by radio and television. In his speech he attacked Kazimierz Dejmek, Stefan Kisielewski, Janusz Szpotański, Paweł Jasienica and Antoni Słonimski, and it had anti-Semitic implications. The First Secretary of KC PZPR was insinuating that Paweł Jasienica not only was a soldier of “Łupaszka” band<sup>7</sup>, but also co-operated with the security apparatus. Some of the party activists, deciding the speech to be not radical enough, were scanning the war pseudonym of Gomułka (“Wiesław, Wiesław!”) together with “Gierek, Gierek!”.



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Władysław Gomułka about Janusz Szpotański:  
 (...) he was sentenced for three years of imprisonment for the reaction libel, breathing with sadistic hatred to our Party and to the state authorities. At the same time that composition contains pornographic hideousness, which can be thought of only by a person stuck in the deprivation of gutter, a person of souterer morality.

*Jeśli chcesz mieć różowy balet,  
 Wygodną chatę, wózek, szkło,  
 Nie licz na żadną z twoich zalet,  
 Lecz wstąp czym prędzej do MO.  
 Gdy kurczy się ogólna pula  
 I socjalizmu gasnie blask,  
 Wtedy na Cichych się wybulą,  
 By ściszyć ludu wrzask*

Coded message of Provincial Headquarters of Civic Militia in Gdańsk

(...)Scanning “Gierek, Gierek” at mass meeting in Warsaw should mean a forecast of promoting the First Secretary of Provincial Committee PZPR in Katowice onto higher party or state post. Comrade Gierek in a firm way, accepted by most of party and society mebers, puts Zionism problem.

Janusz Szpotański,

An excerpt from opera *Cisi i gegacze* (“The silent and the gagglers”) saying that if one wants to lead a comfortable life they should become a militiaman.

Coded message of Provincial Headquarters of Civic Militia (KW MO) in Kielce

Comrade Gomułka has explained everything well, but he did not say much about the Jews. More was said about that on various mass-meetings. It seems that some important Jews still are to govern us.



<sup>7</sup> A military unit of Polish independent underground, which was fighting against the Communists until 1947

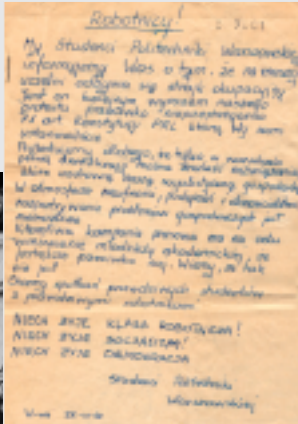
The speech of First Secretary of KC PZPR did not calm down feelings among protesting students; on the contrary, it became the direct cause of sit-down strikes at Warsaw University of Technology and Warsaw University in 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> March.



Warsaw University Gate



Building of Warsaw University of Technology



Mass meeting in the Main Hall of Warsaw University of Technology

On 25<sup>th</sup> March, without informing university authorities, Minister Henryk Jabłoński issued a decision to dismiss six scientists from Warsaw University. Three days later in Auditorium Maximum the last March mass meeting was held, on which Declaration of Student Movement – the most important document of the March movement at universities – was accepted. It was a summary of ideological output of three weeks protests. Students stood up for dismissed scientists.

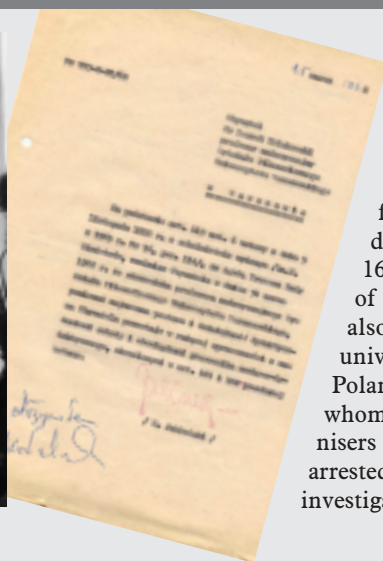
We ascertain that Polish sociology school does not exist without Bauman, Hirszowicz-Bielińska, that Polish philosophy school does not exist without Baczek, Kotakowski and Morawski, and Marxist political economy does not exist without Brus. Fragment of accepted resolution.



Zygmunt Bauman Maria Hirszowicz-Bielińska Stefan Morawski Janina Zakrzewska



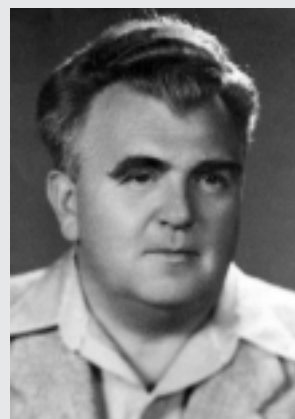
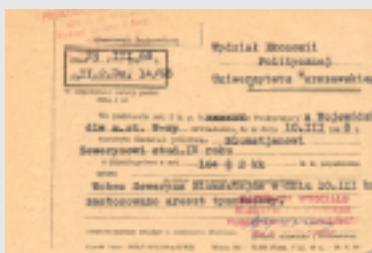
Leszek Kołakowski



In response to the mass meeting of 28<sup>th</sup> March members of Student Committee of Department Delegates were arrested. Several students were expelled from Warsaw University. Several departments were dissolved, thus 1616 people ceased to be students of Warsaw University. Repressions also affected students of other universities and academies all over Poland. Most of “commandos” to whom the role of initiators and organisers of protests was attributed were arrested, and their cases were to be investigated in autumn.



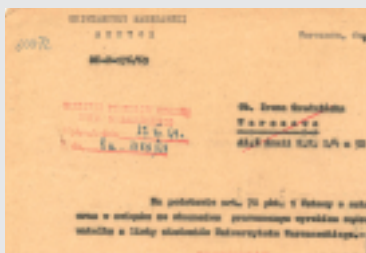
Seweryn Blumsztajn



Stanisław Turski, rector of Warsaw University



Irena Grudzińska



On 10<sup>th</sup> April in Sejm the Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz answered questions of parliamentary club “Znak”<sup>8</sup>, asked a month earlier, which referred to militia and Voluntary Reserve of Civic Militia intervention at Warsaw University yard. For two days delegates from “Znak” were brutally attacked. Zenon Kliszko, secretary of KC PZPR, a member of Political Bureau, took the part of main accuser.



*The patriotic care for the interests of Polish nation and Polish state cannot be seen in the attitude of parliamentary club “Znak”. This Club, forgetting the Polish reasons of State, in fact took the side of Zionist and revisionist individuals who inspired and organised provocation aimed at ruining the peace of our Motherland. Zenon Kliszko*

*Not every writer can be the conscience of the nation. Various jasienicas, slonimskis, and others are not, and have never been, the conscience of the nation. (...) the real conscience of the nation is the Polish United Workers’ Party. Czesław Domagała, First Secretary of PZPR Provincial Committee in Cracow.*

Zenon Kliszko

Delegates of Znak were horrified and lonely. In the aggressive atmosphere, after giving a dramatic speech in Sejm, Jerzy Zawieyski was dismissed from the function of State Council member.



Tadeusz Mazowiecki

Stanisław Stomma

Jerzy Zawieyski

Konstancy Łubieński

Janusz Zabłocki

At the same Sejm session a member of KC PZPR Political Bureau Edward Ochab resigned from the function of a Chairman of State Council, protesting against “anti-Semite affair”. The President of Sejm Marian Spychalski became a new chairman. He was replaced on the post of Minister of National Defence by gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, which caused a wave of speculations.



Edward Ochab



Wojciech Jaruzelski

Report of KW MO in Kielce

*Spychalski should resign, just like Ochab did (...), because Spychalski is more popular as a Jew than Ochab was. Moreover, he introduced too many Jews into the army.*

Report of KW MO in Rzeszów

*Choosing Marian Spychalski to be chairman of the State Council has been very disappointing. There are many opinions and commentaries that comrade Moczar, who had cleaned his ministry from Zionist elements, should hold the post of the Chairman.*

<sup>8</sup> A small group of delegates from catholic circles, a kind of “legal” opposition in the Communist Sejm

Events in Poland evoked great interest over the world. The most important were probably letters of support for students and intellectuals from their Czech and Slovak colleagues.



Czechoslovakia was the arena of political experiment, later to be called Praha Spring. Countries belonging to Warsaw Pact were pressing Czechoslovakian authorities to put an end to the experiment. Leaders of Czechoslovakian Communist Party, gathered round Alexander Dubczek, were not going to give up.

At night of 20/21 August armies of Warsaw Pact started armed intervention called “fraternal help” in the propaganda. Although Czechoslovakian authorities asked their citizens not to resist, there were street fights in many cities. The most violent were Prague events.



Participation of the Polish Army in invading Czechoslovakia lead to protests in Poland. Bogusława Blajfer and Eugeniusz Smolar were among those who were most engaged in those protests. Soon a new wave of arrests among students arrived.

Bogusława Blajfer



Eugeniusz Smolar



*Wyprowadzili żołnierza  
Na to czeskie Psie Pole  
Z nowym hasłem:  
Za waszą i za naszą niewolę.*

Marian Hemar

A poem referring to insurgent slogan “for our and your Liberty” – this time Polish soldiers were to fight for “our and your servitude”.

Zielona Góra, Polish Army units coming back from Czechoslovakia

The most touching protest against participation of Poles in the “Danube” operation was made during harvest home festival on Stadion Dziesięciolecia in Warsaw. Ryszard Siwiec from Przemyśl committed an act of self-burning. He died a few days after the event.



The fifth Congress of PZPR, which was held in Warsaw from 11<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> November was a kind of a wind-up of the course of events initiated by the Six Days War. Władysław Gomułka defended his position and was chosen to be First Secretary of KC PZPR one more time. However, for the history of Central Europe another fact was of more importance. Leonid Brezhnev, First Secretary of Central Committee of Communist Party of the Soviet Union, proclaimed a doctrine which allowed Soviet armed intervention in the countries of the Warsaw Pact “to defend socialism”. It went down to posterity as “Brezhnev’s Doctrine”.

In the course of history it appeared that the longest lasting heritage of the March was the 68' generation, which was of vital importance for opposition of late seventies, the "Solidarity" movement and, finally, for political system changes initiated in Poland in the end of the eighties.



## **The Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation**

was created on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1998 with of the act of Sejm (Lower Chamber) of Parliament of Republic of Poland. It is aimed at persecuting Communist and Nazi crimes committed against Polish citizens between 1939 and 1989, as well as at collecting, exploring and preparing documents concerning those crimes. Such materials are subsequently made available both to the injured parties and the scientists. The Institute consists of three integral parts: Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation, Office for Preservation and Dissemination of Archival Records and Public Education Office. Each of them has its equivalent in ten branch offices; their range areas are similar to those of corresponding appellate courts.

**Office for Preservation and Dissemination of Archival Records** prepares and makes available archival records coming from archives of i.e.: civil security apparatus of Communist Poland (Security Bureaus – Security Apparatus), Military Information Service, Ministry of Interior, Civic Militia, Domestic Security Corps, military courts and public prosecutor's offices. The Office also holds documents left by Chief Commission for Examination of Hitler's Crimes. Ninety kilometres of files is to be collected in the Institute's archives.

### **Public Education Office**

conducts educational and scientific activities. It organizes courses for teachers and students, prepares educational sets and equipment for history teaching. It also carries on a number of independent research programmes, both on the central and branch levels. It publishes two periodicals: a monthly *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* (IPN Bulletin) and a quarterly *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* (Remembrance and Justice).

### **Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation**

investigates crimes for which there is no statute of limitations, committed against Polish citizens during the Second World War, as well as Communist crimes committed between 17<sup>th</sup> September 1939 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 1989. It continues the activities of the Chief Commission for Examination of Crimes against the Polish Nation.

*design & DTP: Krzysztof Siwiec*



