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'The Flying University'

The authorities in Poland attempt to control all social, political and economic life in the country. The exercise of control over education – the process of socialisation and indoctrination of youth – is considered essential.

All educational establishments in Poland, from kindergartens to universities, belong, directly or indirectly, whether run by local authorities or state-owned enterprises, to the State. The single major exception is the Lublin Catholic University, which is independent of the state, self-governing and financed solely by voluntary contributions – but even then a certain amount of pressure is brought to bear. Syllabuses are prepared centrally, and are mandatory, giving teachers little room for manoeuvre. The political leanings of teachers are carefully monitored and those considered 'unreliable' are deprived of employment, or moved to other positions. Even university rectors are appointed, not elected. Although all vestiges of academic freedom and self-government were removed in the aftermath of the 1968 student unrest, the control the authorities exercise over education is far from absolute and varies according to the political situation at any given time. In spite of controls which have been built into the system and the constant self-censorship, practised by almost all members of the academic community, there are many willing to 'smuggle' an independent thought into their lecture, or a book through the customs, or make a book they have at home available to students. There are also academics whose standing – at home or internationally – is such that the authorities would hesitate to force them into submission, but will do so nonetheless if their behaviour is thought sufficiently dangerous or when the situation requires it.

There are other factors which limit the authorities' control over education: the growing pressure for access to information, a more vocal dissident 'lobby' and the inefficiency of the bureaucracy which administers the controls. Pos-

Students suspended

In May and June of this year, a total of 14 students, members of the unofficial Students' Solidarity Committee, were suspended from Wroclaw University, following their protests against the circulation of a slanderous broadsheet attacking one of their number, Leszek Budrewicz, and carrying the forged signatures of four others. The suspension was for six months; this term could be in effect extended by their being called up for military service.

Following an appeal on their behalf by Professor Edward Lipinski, a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences and a leading figure in the dissident movement, nine of the students, including Budrewicz himself, appear to have been reinstated. Since they were suspended in the middle of the annual examinations, they will presumably have to repeat a year.

sibly, too, the distaste of some bureaucrats for the task.

Independent education has a strong tradition in Poland dating from the end of the eighteenth century. During the occupation of 1939-45, only elementary education existed for Poles, but secondary and higher level courses, organised underground, were available on a limited scale. The memory of these classes lives on.

In Communist Poland organised education, independent of the State, virtually ceased to exist. Then, at the time of the thaw in 1956, various semi-private seminars were run by eminent academics in their homes for the benefit of young lecturers and senior students, and there were small study/discussion groups.

The Society for Academic Courses

In October 1977, a group of Warsaw intellectuals

began a series of lectures devoted primarily to the social sciences and history. The lectures took place in private flats and were attended mainly by students of the various higher education establishments. This initiative, popularly known as 'The Flying University', proved to be so popular that it soon led to a degree of formalisation. On 22 January 1978, some 60 eminent intellectuals and academics signed a 'Declaration' calling into being the Society for Academic Courses (*Towarzystwo Kursow Naukowych*) or SAC. The Declaration states, 'we wish to meet the demand for a wider, richer and more complete knowledge, a demand which has recently grown livelier among students and the young intelligentsia in Poland.' The Declaration then goes on to say that the existing educational system is 'detrimental to society, its science and its culture'. To counter this danger the signatories established the SAC 'with the intention of helping all those who want to enrich their knowledge through self-education'. Soon after that, the SAC published a list of 13 approved courses, broadly covering the social sciences and contemporary history. The list was complete with names of lecturers, dates, times and venues of individual meetings. Not surprisingly, at the end of the first year of SAC's activities, one of the most popular courses (in terms of attendance) proved to be Adam Michnik's 'Elements of the Political History of Peoples' Poland', while Wiktor Woroszyński's lectures on 'Selected Phenomena and Problems of Contemporary Russian Literature' attracted fewer participants.

[Woroszyński's talks were regularly attended by 22 students; Michnik's course drew a more than capacity crowd of 180.]

According to a statement issued by SAC (see *Index* 6/1978, pp 57-9) the original plans for the first year of activities were exceeded. In all, 120 lectures, with an audience of at least 5,000, have taken place, with courses in most major towns in Poland.

It is worth emphasising that of the 60 signatories to the Declaration, there were 19 full professors, among them six members of the Academy of Sciences.

Considering the situation in which the SAC has had to operate, its first year of existence has been amazingly successful. This was partly due to the quality, resourcefulness and determination of the lecturers, and partly to the thirst for know-

ledge shown by the young generation. Two further factors also contributed: the support or at least sympathy, open or tacit, of a part of the Polish academic and intellectual community, and the support of the powerful Roman Catholic Church.

The first year has apparently also ended with an internal dispute concerning the strategy for the future: whether to aim for the maximum number of participants or, alternatively, to upgrade the academic quality which might lead to a reduction in numbers.

Reprisals

The authorities responded to the formation of SAC by attempting to prevent lectures by detaining the lecturers for short periods of time immediately before the lectures. As no legal action followed, these periods of detention can only be construed as harassment. The police have also invaded private homes where lectures were being held, demanding to see the identity papers of all present, and breaking up the meetings, sometimes by force. No violent resistance was ever offered (see *Index/*Index 3 and 4/1978 and 2/1979). The SAC, on its part, has organised a system of 'escorts', whereby lecturers are escorted to meetings by friends, so that if arrested their fate would at least be known. Another answer was to find an alternative lecturer when the original one was detained—or use a pre-recorded tape of the lecture.

As many people, both in Poland and abroad, individually and collectively, began to protest against the strong-arm methods of the police, the authorities changed their tack. Owners of apartments where lectures took place and selected participants were detained and sentenced to heavy fines and sometimes short periods of imprisonment, usually on trumped-up charges of disturbing the peace or rowdy behaviour.

Flying again

At the beginning of the 1978/79 academic year, the SAC renewed its activities. Again, a full list of lectures with all relevant particulars was published. The first lecture of the year took place in a Warsaw church, St Martin's, on 13 November 1978, and was delivered by a priest.

In addition to the now usual cycle of lectures, seminars and discussion meetings, there were also one-off lectures, delivered in at least two cases by

Unofficial lectures

In the second semester of the 1978/79 academic year the Society of Academic Courses invites students and the young intelligentsia of Warsaw to participate in educational meetings, lectures, talks, discussions and seminars.

- 1 **Social life and centralised power structures** Irena Nowakowa
Burgacka 3/13 on 4 and 18 March, 1 and 22 April, and 13 May, at 11am
- 2 **Tradition – a course of lectures**
Długa 1/7 on 5 and 19 March, 2 and 30 April, and 14 May, at 8pm
- 3 **Philosophy of knowledge** Stefan Amsterdamski
Burgacka 3/13 on 6 and 20 March, 24 and 30 April, and 4 May, at 7pm
- 4 **Education and social life** Jacek Kuron
Mickiewicza 27/64 on 7 and 21 March, 4 and 18 April, 2 and 16 May, at 7pm
- 5 **Economic history and the history of economy** Tadeusz Kowalik
Długa 1/37 on 8 and 22 March, 5 and 19 April, 3 and 17 May, at 7pm
- 6 **Selected problems of Polish literature** Tomasz Burek
Długa 1/37 on 9 and 23 March, 6

- and 20 April, 4 and 18 May, at 7pm
- 7 **Social problems in education** Adam Stanowski
Burgacka 3/13 on 10 and 24 March, 7 and 21 April, 5 May, at 2pm
 - 8 **Leading contemporary ideas** Jerzy Jedlicki
Burgacka 9/24 on 12 and 26 March, 9 and 26 April, 7 and 23 May, at 7pm
 - 9 **The peasant question and the peasant movement in Poland** Zdzisław Szpakowski
Neseberska 3/48 on 13 and 27 March, 10 and 27 April, 8 and 24 May, at 7pm
 - 10 **Contemporary history of Poland** Adam Michnik and others
Ursynów, Nutki 3/5 flat 1 on 28 February, 14 and 28 March, 11 and 25 April and 9 May, at 7pm
 - 11 **Selected problems of Russian literature** Wiktor Woroszyński
Mickiewicza 30/46 on 1, 15 and 29 March, 12 and 26 April, and 10 May at 7pm
 - 12 **Political geography of the Polish underground, 1939-45** Władysław Bartoszewski
Konopczyńskiego 4/9 on 2, 16, 23 and 30 March, at 7pm
- Further information can be obtained from Andrzej Celinski, Burgacka 3/13, tel. Warsaw 42-71-74

foreign speakers. There may have been more, but the dissidents in Poland have their own reasons for not advertising the fact.

The SAC also intends to publish various material, associated with its activities. The first such text, entitled *Jezyk Propagandy* ('The Language of Propaganda'), published in March 1979 by NOWA and edited by Stefan Amsterdamski, Aldona Jawlowska and Tadeusz Kowalik, consists of 106 closely typed pages, run off on a duplicating machine. The volume contains the text of a paper delivered at the first SAC special seminar on the same subject, which took place in Warsaw on 5 October 1978 with 26 participants, all academics and writers; a transcript of a discussion which followed; two additional contributions received from people who were unable to

participate; and a bibliography.

Reprisals against the SAC now took on a new and very dangerous form. On 19 January 1979 about 15 people broke in on a lecture on contemporary Polish literature given by Dr Tomasz Burek in his home. They attempted to interrupt the lecture, shouted abuse, etc. Two days later a similar gang invaded Jacek Kuroń's apartment in Warsaw, immediately before a lecture. They hurled insults, removed papers and destroyed some books. Kuroń decided to postpone his next lecture, scheduled for 26 January, but another gang, some 50 strong, arrived nevertheless. This time physical violence was used: Kuroń was beaten up and his son Maciej was hit. During Kuroń's lecture (again, in his apartment) on 7 March, Mięczysław Książczak and Jarema Dubiel were beaten

up outside the apartment, and Jacek Borucki and Henryk Wujec inside. Kuroń himself was thrown downstairs. On 14 March the thugs arrived at a lecture on contemporary Polish history, given jointly by Adam Michnik and Professor Andrzej Szczypiorski. The lecture had to be abandoned, and a number of the participants were beaten up.

The ugliest episode took place on 21 March, when Kuroń was again scheduled to lecture at his home. The lecture had to be postponed as Kuron's father had a heart attack – but the thugs attacked again and eight people were beaten up. The dissidents later discovered that most of these attacks were organised by the official Polish youth organisations.

These incidents gave rise to numerous protests, both in Poland and abroad, and led to the establishment of an International Support Committee.

Towards the end of May 1979, the SAC issued a statement, marking the end of its second year of activity. Unlike a similar document put out a year earlier, this time very few hard facts were published. We do learn, however, that the SAC has organised six special seminars, such as the one on propaganda mentioned above, and participation was apparently restricted to academics, many of whom are not associated with dissidents. The scarcity of facts would seem to indicate that during this academic year there were fewer lectures and participants than last year. If this is indeed the case, the explanation is probably a simple one: due to new and more brutal forms of harassment employed against the SAC, some of the less committed young people, who form the bulk of the audiences, decided to 'drop out'.

Judging by reactions, in the form of protests against police reprisals, the Society enjoys some degree of overt support, and a much wider sympathy among academics, intellectuals, students, the Catholic intelligentsia, and many bishops. An attempt to challenge the Party's almost total

Dissent in Poland 1976-7

A collection of documents,
introduced by Adam Michnik

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monopoly in the field of education, particularly in social sciences and humanities, and to counteract censorship can expect to fall on fertile ground in present-day Poland, especially as the authorities already have to battle on so many fronts: the economy is on the brink of a crisis, the position of the Church seems unassailable, the workers are aware of their power, even if they are only willing to use it very sparingly, and the dissidents are active.

It might be argued that the SAC has already had a liberalising effect on the 'official' education: certain topics only recently considered 'taboo' are slowly percolating into the syllabuses of Polish universities. This is due partly to the general political situation in the country, and to academics gaining more elbow room *because* the SAC and other similar dissident initiatives are so popular. Another possible explanation is that the authorities, by modifying their own educational policies, are trying to outmanoeuvre the SAC by taking away its *raison d'être*. This, however, seems unlikely.

Following the academic calendar, the SAC intends to resume its activities after the summer holidays, in the 1979/80 academic year. □