THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, but while it met with stiff resistance the outcome of the struggle was never in doubt. Britain and France declared war on Germany three days later, but brought no effective aid to the outnumbered and outgunned Poles. On September 17 the Red Army acting in collusion with Germany (the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact) struck from the east. There were hardly any Polish troops available to oppose the entering Soviets.

A new partition of the country placed western lands under direct German rule, their Polish and Jewish population being deported into a central region called the General Gouvernement. There the Poles were to be reduced to the lowest material and cultural levels, and the Jews shut in ghettos and then liquidated. A similar fate awaited most Gypsies. The General Gouvernement thus became the scene of one of the most horrible developments in history, the Holocaust. The Auschwitz (Oświecim) concentration camp together with the death camps of Treblinka and Sobibor was grim testimony to the Final Solution. Occupied Poland, dotted with Nazi camps, came to be the cemetery of Polish and much of European Jewry. Jewish resistance was hardly possible, although it did flare up in the Warsaw ghetto uprising in April 1943. The death penalty for harboring Jews (nonexistent elsewhere in Europe) discouraged assistance on the part of the Poles, whose attitudes ranged from passivity to the two extremes of denunciation and active help. The Polish underground, the largest and most effective in Europe, the resistance movement in Yugoslavia excepted, extended some help and tried in vain to alert the West to the terrible plight of the Jews.

Life under the German occupation was a continuous nightmare. Arrests, hostage-taking, mass executions, were all meant to terrorize the Poles, who were denied secondary and higher education and whose elite and heritage were systematically destroyed. The eastern lands suffered comparably under the Soviets, who sought, however, to cloak their actions under the mask of pseudo-legality. Thus "elections" were held that produced the usual figures in the 90 percent range in favor of incorporation into Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Belorussia. Undesirables were "resettled," that is, deported under inhuman conditions into various provinces of the USSR. Although exact figures may never be known over one and a half million Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, and Belorussians - men, women, and children - were involved. Most of them never returned. In all, some six million Polish citizens perished in the Second World War; about half of them were Jews.

The Poles did not surrender after the lost campaign of September 1939. A Polish government which represented a legal continuity of the Polish state was constituted, mostly out of prewar opposition leaders, in Allied France. After the French collapse in 1940 it moved to England. Under the presidency of W. Raczkiewicz, General Wladyslaw Sikorski became premier and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, which were composed of Poles who lived abroad or succeeded in escaping from the occupied country. These troops distinguished themselves in virtually every European theater of war and in North Africa. Polish pilots played a disproportionately large role in the Battle of Britain. The small navy was often cited for bravery. The military underground in Poland, the Home Army, was also under the orders of the government in London.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Sikorski government found itself in a singular situation. The new ally in the anti-German coalition had so far been an accomplice of Hitler in the invasion and partitioning of Poland. It was difficult to view it suddenly as a friend. Succumbing to British pressures and wishing to free the deported Poles, Sikorski signed a pact with the USSR on July 30. It restored Soviet-Polish relations, provided for an "amnesty" to Poles in the Soviet Union, and permitted the organization of a Polish army there. Although the accord annulled the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact it did not explicitly restore the prewar borders. Henceforth, the Soviets would insist on retaining their territorial acquisitions by invoking the fake elections of 1939. The Polish government was split on the wisdom of such an imprecise accord, but Sikorski felt that no viable alternative existed. So he journeyed to Moscow to sign an agreement with Stalin on the Polish army in Russia, which was placed under the command of General Anders. But mutual suspicions lingered. The Poles did not trust the Soviets, and indeed friction over the troops ensued. Eventually, they were evacuated to the Middle East, and fought later under British command, gaining a major victory at Monte Cassino. Sikorski realized the vulnerability of Poland facing in effect two foes: Germany with which a life-and-death struggle was being waged, and the Soviet Union, which had hegemonie designs on East Central Europe. He sought to obtain the backing of the United States (during the three Washington visits) and of Britain. He tried to strengthen the position of postwar Poland and of the entire region by planning,

jointly with Beneš, a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation. But neither Roosevelt nor Churchill wished to wreck their cooperation with the USSR on the Polish rock. Churchill believed that if the Poles reconciled themselves to territorial losses in the east, Russia would not interfere with their domestic freedoms. This sounded logical, but was in reality misleading. Stalin wanted a "friendly" postwar Poland that would subordinate itself to the USSR. Only a government controlled by the communists could guarantee such behavior. Moreover, Sikorski could hardly sign away half of the country, the home of many of his soldiers, without being accused of treason. Thus the situation began to look hopeless as the Red Army stemmed the German tide at Stalingrad, and began a westward advance that would bring it to the heart of Europe.

In April 1943 the Germans announced a discovery in the Katyn woods of mass graves of Polish officers who had been captured by the Red Army in 1939. The Soviet authorities, when pressed by the Sikorski government, had hitherto professed complete ignorance as to the fate of these officers. Now that the Polish government asked the Swiss Red Cross to investigate the allegations of a Soviet massacre, Stalin accused the Poles of playing into German hands and broke off diplomatic relations with them. The Polish position deteriorated with the mysterious death of Sikorski in a plane crash, and the arrest by the Gestapo of the commander of the underground Home Army (AK). The new premier, a populist leader S. Mikolajczyk, and the new commander-in-chief General Sosnkowski, lacked Sikorski's standing. Worse still, they strongly disagreed with one another.

The hope that Soviet-Polish relations could be restored through actual cooperation in the field was dashed. The Red Army had been accepting the aid of the Home Army against the Germans, but once victorious it proceeded to arrest Polish officers and incorporate the other ranks into its own communist-led Polish units. From May 1943 a Polish division, later expanded, was organized in Russia under the command of General Berling. Its political umbrella was the communist-led Union of Polish Patriots in Moscow. Meanwhile a small communist-directed partisan movement developed in occupied Poland as a rival to the main underground. A pro-Moscow National Committee of the Homeland (KRN) was constituted toward the end of 1943, and a Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) was installed in the Soviet-occupied town of Lublin in July 1944. As the Soviets were driving the Germans out of Poland they were establishing their own military and political structure in the country.

The Western Allies felt that they had limited means of influencing the course of events. They virtually conceded all pre-war Polish eastern lands to Stalin at the Conference in Teheran in 1943. The Poles were to be compensated at the expense of Germany. The British pressed Mikolajczyk to accept and the premier went to bargain in Moscow in August 1944. Simultaneously Warsaw staged a massive uprising against the retreating Germans, hoping to clear the city of them in time to act as host to the advancing Red Army. But the Germans were still too powerful, and the Soviets withheld their aid, regarding the uprising as politically directed against them. Therefore, even British and American planes flying rescue missions were denied permission to land at Soviet airports. In the course of the next two months of fighting the elite of the Home Army perished alongside 200,000 inhabitants of Warsaw. The city was reduced to ashes. Whether the rising was necessary or avoidable is still debated.

The Warsaw uprising was perhaps the most dramatic event of the war and it left permanent scars. Mikolajczyk's subsequent efforts to preserve Poland's independence at the price of some territorial concessions proved futile, and he resigned. His successor, the veteran socialist T. Arciszewski, was merely tolerated by the Allies; his government was that of national protest. The fate of Poland was decided independently of the Poles at the Yalta Conference. There the Teheran border deal was endorsed and a formula found for recognizing the already functioning communist government which was to be enlarged by the addition of a few non-communist Poles like Mikolajczyk. It called itself the provisional government of national unity. What bitter irony!

The Red Army was in control of Poland and the communists were in power. The Berling-led troops constituted the fighting force. Sixteen leaders of the underground, lured into talks by the Russians, were arrested and flown to Moscow to be tried. The remnants of the dissolved Home Army were hunted down. Under these conditions the "free and unfettered" elections promised in the Yalta accord were hardly a realistic proposition; Poland was destined to be a Soviet satellite.

The dramatic story of Poland offered a contrast to wartime developments in Czechoslovakia. Its two parts, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and the formally independent Slovak state, in turn differed greatly from one another. The protectorate was treated as an economic base and a reservoir of the German Reich, free from Allied bombings, its inhabitants exempted from military service. It contributed 9 to 12 percent of the total German industrial output. Although the Czech intelligentsia faced persecutions - universities were closed - and the Jews were gradually liquidated, workers and farmers were actually courted. Much of the administration was in the hands of the Czechs, although under strict German control, and Protector Constantin von Neurath was a moderate compared with his sadistic

successor in 1941, Heydrich, and the governor of Poland, H. Frank. Under these conditions the Czechs sought to survive without unduly provoking the Germans, and avoided provocations and reprisals.

This did not mean that they willingly adjusted to the Nazi regime. There was an underground and a range of resistance groups. But they practiced rather passive resistance and economic sabotage. A tough line was taken by Heydrich: imposition of martial law and the execution of Premier Eliáš, who was accused of contacts with Beneš's government in London; it called for a response. A team of Czechoslovak paratroopers sent from London killed Heydrich. By way of reprisals the Germans razed to the ground the village of Lidice, shot all the male inhabitants and deported women and children, many of whom died. Advertised by German propaganda in order to overawe the Czechs - unlike massacres in Poland that were often concealed - Lidice became a symbol of Nazi brutality. It was psychologically easier to feel for and identify with a hundred or so villagers than with millions being systematically exterminated. After a certain point these just became statistics.

The post-Heydrich terror leveled off in the remaining years of the war. All in all, although the estimates vary, some 55,000 Czechs perished in the Second World War alongside some 70,000 Jews who represented three-quarters of the total Jewish population.

The Germans at first treated Slovakia as a show piece of the Nazi "New Order." For the Slovaks this was their first chance to enjoy the attributes of a national state of their own. The price, however, was heavy: an accommodation to Nazi Germany in a material and spiritual sense. Most industries came under German control; some Slovak troops joined in the war against the Soviet Union; anti-Jewish measures resulted in the deportation and death of three-quarters of Slovak Jewry. Slovakia was established as a one-party state under a constitution of July 21, 1939 that followed Austrian and Portuguese corporationist models; it was headed by Father J. Tiso as President, and after 1942 as Leader. He tried to curb the pro-Nazi extremists but enjoyed the support of Berlin, which wished to preserve a certain stability in the country. Slovak freedom of maneuver was greatly restricted. Attempts to strengthen its position *vis-a-vis* Hungary by cooperation with Romania and Croatia were opposed by Germany. Contacts with the Allies had to be most circumspect and were channeled through the Vatican. It was actually under the pressure from the papacy, as supported by some Slovak bishops, that Tiso halted the deportations of the Jews in the 1942-4 period.

Turning to Czechoslovak activities abroad, Beneš had in 1939 already begun to agitate for the creation of a political center that would be recognized by the Allies and to obtain an official repudiation of Munich. Prevailing over potential rivals, especially Hodža and those who insisted on a Czecho-Slovak federative structure after the war, Beneš in July 1940 gained Britain's recognition for his provisional government. After the German invasion of the USSR a full recognition from the three big Allies followed. By 1942 Britain and the Free French repudiated Munich, which implied the restoration of prewar frontiers. Subsequently Beneš obtained a somewhat reluctant Allied approval for the postwar deportation of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia. It was evident that Beneš attached great importance to collaboration with the USSR, which he saw as the liberator and the dominant power in East Central Europe. The role of Czechoslovakia, as he put it, was to be a bridge between the West and the East. Beneš's rather optimistic vision contrasted with that of the Poles. Under Moscow's pressure he abandoned plans for a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation, and further distanced himself from the isolated Poles by signing an alliance with the USSR in December 1943. While in Moscow he urged Stalin to eradicate "feudalism" in postwar Poland and Hungary.

As the Soviet armies neared Czechoslovakia, and Romania switched sides from the Germans to the Russians, an underground Slovak National Council, comprising democrats and communists and endorsed by Beneš, was getting ready to stage an uprising. Part of the army joined in. The uprising, precipitated by an attack by Slovak partisans on the Germans in latě August 1944, lasted for two months, but received no real Soviet aid. Its collapse was followed by the German occupation of the country and harsh reprisals. The uprising is still hotly debated. Was it a communist-inspired operation or was it a Slovak national struggle against the Germans and the satellite regime? Did it constitute (from the Slovaks' standpoint) national redemption or treason? Was it manipulated by the government seeking to maintain independent Slovakia? Be what it may, the rising was, except for military operations of small Czechoslovak units on the Western and Russian fronts, the only great battle fought against the Germans. To say that is not to dismiss the brief uprising in Prague in May, another much disputed event.

As the Red Armies were entering Czechoslovakia Beneš flew to Moscow, where he presided over an agreement with Czech and Slovak communists to form a new government. This was much more than an enlargement of the London-based ministry. From the liberated town of Košice a program was announced on April 5, 1945 that was to serve as the basis of the new Czechoslovakia. The underground in Prague, seemingly encouraged both by communists and the Košice government,

decided to rise on May 4. It was a somewhat confused affair. Czech communists did not wish the American troops of General Patton to help liberate the city; this honor was to be reserved for the Red Army. Besides, Patton had orders not to encroach on the Soviet sphere of activities. The underground was not strong enough to win militarily and was paradoxically saved from a massacre by the anti-Soviet Russian units of General Vlasov who turned against the Germans. In spite of the fact that Germany surrendered to the Allies on May 8, the local German troops were still able to negotiate their withdrawal with the Czechs. On May 9 the Red Army officially "liberated" Prague although it is not clear from whom. The entire operation cost about 2,000 Czech lives.

Unlike the Polish government, Beneš could return to Prague in triumph, but the picture was not as rosy as it seemed. Postwar Czechoslovakia no longer comprised Carpatho-Ukraine, which had been seized rather high-handedly by the USSR, and the new regime bore only a seeming resemblance to the prewar model.

The wartime story of Hungary differs sharply from that of the Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks. Driven by the constant urge to recover its former place and undo the Treaty of Trianon, an urge colored somewhat by ideological preferences, Hungary entered the Second World War on the side of Germany and Italy. First, in April 1941, acting under Berlin's pressure the Hungarians joined in the attack on Yugoslavia. The act was considered shameful by Premier Teleki, who committed suicide. Then after an incident at Košice (Kassa) that was probably manufactured, Hungary declared war on the USSR in June. There was little that Hungary could gain from this war. As mentioned earlier, Budapest had regained parts of Slovakia in 1938, annexed Carpatho-Ukraine in 1939, and received half of Transylvania under the Second Vienna Award made by Germany and Italy in 1940. Hungary reclaimed Bacska in Vojvodina from Yugoslavia after the campaign in 1941. As a result of all these territorial changes the state almost doubled its size and population. But the durability of gains depended largely on Germany, and Budapest felt that it had to compete with Romania in particular for German support. Thus the country became ever more dependent on Berlin, politically and economically, and it had to send troops to fight on the eastern front.

The Hungarians tried to convey to the British that it would be a mistake to place them in the same category as Hitler's Reich. Indeed, they harbored Polish military and civilian refugees and did not fire on Allied aircraft. The latter in turn did not bomb Hungary until the German troops occupied it in March 1944.

During the course of the war Horthy tried to continue his policies of slowing down or moderating an evolution to the right, and keeping the local Nazis on leash. This proved increasingly difficult, given the growing dependence on Germany, and resulted in political zigzags. The shock over the atrocities committed by Hungarian military, among whom the rightist radicals played an important role, in occupied Novi Sad in Yugoslavia, which claimed thousands of Serb and Jewish victims, contributed to a change of premiers. L. Bárdossy, who had been subservient to the Germans, made room for M. Kállay. The latter was well aware of the Hungarian dilemma of being caught between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, and he explored ways of getting out of the war through secret overtures to the West. The debacle suffered by the Hungarian army at Voronezh reinforced those who wanted peace. In the meantime a drastic curtailment of active war effort took place. All this was not lost on Hitler.

On March 19, 1944 German troops occupied Hungary. Kállay had to také refuge in the Turkish embassy; Bethlen, who had been using his influence to stiffen Horthy's resistance to the Germans, went into hiding. The regent gave in, and a new government was named that complied with German demands for mass deportations of Jews. Horthy prevented, however, the inclusion of those living in Budapest. While yielding to Berlin, Horthy had not abandoned his plans to bring Hungary out of the war. As Romania switched sides in August, Horthy authorized an armistice with the Russians, a maneuver which was clumsily executed and left him unprotected. This time the Germans forced him to name the Arrow Cross leader Szálasi as premier, and then removed the regent from Hungary to Germany.

The Hungarian Nazis at last tasted power and they proceeded to deport Budapest Jews and to intensify the Hungarian war effort. In September and October, however, the fighting moved on to Hungarian soil, and under the aegis of the Red Army a provisional government came into existence in Debrecen in December. It comprised three Horthyite generals, sociál democrats, populists, and communists under the premiership of General B. Miklós. The government signed an armistice with the Allies and declared war on Germany. On April 11, 1945 it was installed in a Budapest ravaged by a long siege. Both Hungary and Romania were now on the Allied side and they vied for the control of Transylvania. Would Hungary return to its post-Trianon shape, making war and all the sacrifices needless and vain? The price paid by the country, maneuvered into war, was high and the future seemed uncertain. It was clear that a new era was dawning, but it held in store many dangers and few hopes.

8

THE HARD ROAD TO FREEDOM

THE POSTWAR ERA

The Second World War, or rather its outcome, reversed the course of history of East Central Europe. Traditionally a borderland or a semi-periphery of the West, the region became a westward extension of the Soviet East. Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland found themselves in a semi-colonial relationship of dependence on the USSR which was culturally, socio-economically, and politically more backward than they. At first, the communist-imposed transformation appeared as a modernizing process. The elimination of direst poverty and remnants of illiteracy, a certain equalization and democratization of society, and an all-out industrialization pointed toward progress. But the Soviet-style industrialization with its obsessive emphasis on coal and steel, which was no longer the driving force of modem economy, became increasingly anachronistic. Rigid centrál planning promoted waste. Inefficiency reigned supreme. Disregard for the environment opened the way to an ecological catastrophe. East Central Europe had to pay a heavy price for the forty-odd years of communist experiments, and the costs included an atomization and demoralization of society that escape quantification.

For the first time in history the Russian shadow fell not only on Poland but also on Hungary and Czechoslovakia. As long as Soviet might and willpower appeared intact, all that East Central Europe could do was to try to ease the yoke and try it did. This led at times to dramatic developments, as in 1956 in Poland and Hungary, in 1968 in Czechoslovakia, and in 1980 in Poland again. But it was only when reforms in the Soviet Union and the Soviet-dominated bloc became inevitable that native forces in the three countries could sweep communism aside in the miraculous year of 1989.

The symbol of the postwar division of Europe was Yalta. This wartime conference of the Big Three was in a sense an experiment in world government in which the United States and the Soviet Union were to play the leading roles. But the West did not envisage the Soviet sphere of influence as a closed bloc, and Churchill expressed dismay over the Iron Curtain that descended, separating East Central Europe from the rest of the continent. Still, the ensuing decades of peace in this bipolar world came to rest on a balance between the two blocs and their formidable nuclear arsenal. It was regrettable that a hundred million or so East Central and South Eastern Europeans were subjected to an oppressive regime. Their resistance insofar as it weakened the Soviet colossus was welcomed, but not to the extent that it might rock the boat of West-East coexistence and endanger peace. There was a certain inherent hypocrisy in American policies toward the area, whether they went under the name of Containment or Liberation.

Was Stalin's conquest of East Central Europe the result of a master plan that involved a timetable, or of exploitation of opportunities as they arose? This type of question, reminiscent of the controversy over whether Hitler had been a fanatical conqueror or a cool tactician, is somewhat naive. Surely one cannot eliminate the pragmatic factor from either Stalin's or Hitler's policies, just as one cannot fully understand these policies without stressing ideology. In the communist case the conviction about the inevitability of socio-economic change resulting in a permanent transformation of the world was real enough. So was the faith in the Communist Party; it was viewed as more than a sum of its members, and as embodying the true ideology and the power of the working class. It had to be always right even if individual leaders could be wrong. Finally, the belief that history was on the side of communism constituted a powerful component of Marxism-Leninism.

The First World War had brought a victory of communism in Russia; the Second was likely to spread the revolution throughout the continent. But, come what may, Stalin was determined to retain all the territorial acquisitions made in collusion with Hitler, and he rounded them out by the addition of the northern part of East Prussia, of Finnish Karelia, and Carpatho-Ukraine. As for Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, Moscow expected their gratitude, for the Red Army had not only liberated them from the Germans, but also "saved" them from their own history: feudal, bourgeois, clerical, and fascist. According to Soviet views they were ripe for change in 1945, and the USSR was going to bring it about. Stalin, however, was astute enough to make allowances for local conditions. The region was different from Russia and it would first have to go through the stage of coalition governments - real or bogus - and then take the form of People's Democracies before graduating to the

truly socialist status.

Moreover, Soviet policies of shaping East Central Europe were operating within a changing international context. The two original Soviet assumptions of a continuing postwar cooperation between the Big Three and of a successful ideological penetration of Western Europe, had to be drastically revised in the 1945-7 period. With the beginning of the Cold War the former grand alliance was falling apart. French and Italian communists proved unable to gain power, and massive American aid in the form of the Marshall Pian (and the birth of Containment that restricted communism to its bloc) dispelled Soviet hopes for a westward extension of its ideological and political might. In response to this evolution and in accord with its own goals Moscow began to apply ever fighter screws on the regimes it had either installed or temporarily accepted in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

East Central Europe emerged badly scarred from the Second World War; Poland having suffered most, Czechoslovakia least. The Soviet "liberation" was accompanied by mass looting and rapes as well as by arrests and deportations. In Hungary, where some 400,000 people perished in the war, a quarter of a million were deported to the USSR, among them István Bethlen. Even the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who had been saving Hungarian Jews, was taken to Russia. Budapest had suffered greatly during the siege, and destructions elsewhere were sizeable. The Soviets, acting under the guise of the Allied Control Commission, and ignoring weak protests of their colleagues, arbitrarily collected reparations by dismantling factories and using slavě labor. In March 1945 Hungarian production stood at 30 percent of its prewar level; the total national wealth was calculated as having dropped by 40 percent.

The figures for Poland telí an even more tragic story. Population losses were proportionately the highest in Europe, and they comprised wartime dead, postwar deportees to the USSR, and the political ernigration in the West. In comparison with the prewar 35 million, Poland's population within the new borders in 1945 stood at 24 million inhabitants. The loss of $625 per capita, the destruction of 85 percent of Warsaw and some other cities, enormous cultural losses, all caused Poland to hold a number of grim records.

Territorially, Hungary returned to its prewar shape through the peace treaty of 1947; its hopes for retaining a part of Transylvania were dashed. Czechoslovakia, as mentioned, lost only Carpatho-Ukraine and gained a small bridgehead near Bratislava. The biggest and most profound changes occurred with regard to Poland, which lost nearly one half of its prewar territory to the USSR, and acquired, largely as compensation, the former German lands of Silesia, western Pomerania, and southern East Prussia. Its new territory of 311,730 sq. km was one-fifth smaller than before the war but it included a broad access to the Baltic sea with the ports of Gdańsk (Danzig) and Szczecin (Stettin). Polish coal resources doubled; those of lead, zinc, copper, and iron ores significantly increased. Postwar Poland was thus potentially a richer country than before, even though the Soviets had shamelessly dismantled factories and engaged in massive looting in the former German lands that were transferred to Poland. Furthermore the USSR forced the Poles to deliver coal at below world prices. The Poles did, however, escape joint ventures with the Soviets, which were introduced in Hungary. The devastated and dislocated Polish economy badly needed assistance, but little was forthcoming. There was some help for the population under the Allied UNRRA schemes and some direct from the United States, but the question of how to help the country without strengthening the communist regime arose early, and proved impossible to resolve.

Territorial and demographic changes amounted to a veritable socio-economic revolution, that was accelerated by communist legislation. Expropriation of estates eliminated the aristocracy and landowning gentry; gradual nationalization of industries led to the disappearance of the bourgeoisie; the intelligentsia (its Jewish component largely gone) suffered grievous losses. Deportations, migrations, and repatriations resulted in over a third of the Polish population living elsewhere than in 1939. National minorities, after population transfers that particularly affected (apart from the Germans) the Ukrainians, have become minuscule as compared with prewar times. There remained a few hundred thousand of Ukrainians and Belorussians in Poland, although their presence has been officially acknowledged only in the last few years. There is a small but active Lithuanian minority there and a Polish minority in Czechoslovakia. Hungarians in špite of some transfers in Slovakia still constitute a sizeable group. The greatest change on the ethnic map of East Central Europe, however, has resulted from the drastic reduction, in some cases disappearance, of the Germans and Jews.

With a grudging Allied blessing some 3 million Sudeten Germans, regarded as collectively responsible for treason toward Czechoslovakia, were expelled to Germany. There were Czechs who regarded this as a Pyrrhic victory, at least from a moral standpoint, but it was only after the collapse of communism in 1989 that President Havel publicly acknowledged the feeling of guilt. Indeed, many innocent people died in the "transfer" from Czech lands to Germany. The Poles, emerging from the trauma of the Nazi occupation, found it much harder to feel compassionate toward the millions of Germans who fled, perished, or were brutally expelled from lands now coming under Poland's rule. Communist propaganda

represented the Soviet Union as the only guarantor of the new German-Polish border along the Odra-Nysa (Oder-Neisse) rivers and successfully played on Polish fears of German revisionism. Thus when the Polish episcopate declared in 1965 in an address to the German bishops that the Poles forgave and asked for forgiveness, this came as a shock to many people. It is only now that the tragedy of the Germans begins to appear in the Polish eyes as an issue that needs to be faced.

The exact number of Germans living in present-day Poland is disputed and so is the definition of a German. The highest estimates put the figuře at about 750,000, which represents about 2 percent of the total population of Poland. There are only some 50,000 Germans in Czechoslovakia, that is, 0.5 percent. In Hungary, after the expulsion of roughly a quarter of a million, another quarter million remain (2.1 percent).

The Holocaust was followed in Poland's case by the emigration of most of the survivors, the Kielce pogrom in 1946 and the anti-Jewish purge carried out by the Party in 1968 providing the impetus. As a result the number of Jews dwindled to some 0.03 percent. The samé percentage is valid for Czechoslovakia; it is 1 percent in Hungary. The traditional, orthodox Jewry disappeared altogether; those who remain can best be described as of Jewish origin. In these conditions anti-Semitism, which has been resurfacing since 1945, often under the guise of anti-Zionism or anti-cosmopolitism, has differed considerably from the prewar phenomenon. The economic grounds and the external forms of separatedness have disappeared. True, the old term of Judeo-communism has retained its appeal in certain quarters, and the anti-Semitic weapon has been used in intra-party conflicts. But the church hierarchy has generally combated the religious motivation of anti-Semitism, which Pope John Paul II explicitly condemned as contrary to Christian beliefs. Finally, none of the major political figures or trends today openly admits to being anti-Semitic.

Let us now turn to East Central European society emerging from the Second World War, and facing, for the first time, communism as an all-pervading phenomenon. The communist appeal was especially directed toward the workers. In Hungary their numbers increased from some 688,000 to 919,000 in the 1938-43 period, and they constituted a potentially important force. Those in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia who had received a somewhat preferential treatment under the Nazis had high expectations, and tended to evolve toward the extreme left. In Poland, one can speak of a certain social radicalization of the masses, but more important perhaps was the mental climate. War and the occupation lowered the respect for life and undermined norms of moral behavior. A certain fanaticism coexisted with cynicism. A Polish writer tried to sum up a fairly widespread attitude: "the bolsheviks are in the country, the communists are in power, Warsaw is burnt to the ground, the legitimate London government is abandoned. Nothing worse can happen to us, we lost the war and should look after ourselves."[55]

The attitude of the intelligentsia was especially important. It also underwent radicalization, especially the younger generation, and tended to see matters in black and white. As a Czech writer put it, for many of his contemporaries this attitude was translated into an eager acceptance of a simplified scheme: progressive communism versus obsolete reaction. Not only those intellectuals who had inclined to the left, but also some former rightists embraced communism. Ambition, conviction, fear, despair, opportunism all figured in the complex motivation that Miíosz described in his *Captive Mind*. Those who withstood all temptation, who resisted and rejected the new ideology, were not all that numerous. A person had to live, and as the communists proceeded to destroy those components of the civil society that stood between the people and the statě, the lonely individual was helpless before the omnipotence of the Party.

Before we turn to a chronological survey of the communist seizure of power in 1945-8 and the triumph of Stalinism, let us look first at the character and position of the communist parties, and at those who stood in their way to power. The communist parties of Poland and Hungary were publicly seen as alien, and they were re-emerging from virtual oblivion. The Béla Kun episode and the part played by Polish communists in the Soviet-Polish war of 1919-20 were liabilities rather than assets. Moreover, the Polish communists never lived down the "error of 1926" when they had supported Pilsudski‘s coup, and the ignominy of having been dissolved as a party by the Comintern on the trumped-up charges of infiltration by counter-revolutionary elements. Most leaders perished in the great purges in the USSR; the survivors served mainly as Comintern agents. Similarly, Hungarian communists mostly vegetated at home or followed Soviet orders in the emigration.

The revival of the Communist Party of Poland, under the less offending name of Polish Workers' Party (PPR in Polish) took pláce in 1942. It had a "Muscovite" and a "domestic" wing. Boleslaw Bierut, J. Berman, and H. Mine belonged to the former, Wladyslaw Gomulka to the latter. PPR had roughly 20,000 members in July 1944, but by April 1945 it grew to 300,000, and by April 1947 to over 500,000. This rapid inerease, stemming largely from opportunistic motives, was also characteristic for Hungary. There the Party (MKP) reappeared officially on Hungarian soil in September 1944 with some 2,500 members and reached the figure of 864,000 in December 1947. The leadership consisted mostly of those who had returned from the USSR, notably the foursome (of Jewish origin) Mátyás Rákosi, E. Gero, M.

Farkas, and J. Révai, plus Imre Nagy. "Domestic" communists comprised L. Rajk and J. Kádár.

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) offered a contrast to its Polish and Hungarian counterparts, insofar as it had been a legal prewar party with a large following. Originating from a split in the Social Democratic Party, it underwent a bolshevization in 1929 under Klement Gottwald, and became an arm of the international revolutionary operation directed from Moscow. During the Second World War the communist underground, more important that those in Poland or Hungary, identified itself with the liberation struggle in the Czech lands, and with national aspirations in Slovakia. A separate party of Slovakia arose with Husák and Clementis as its leaders. The top echelons of the KSČ were in Moscow, headed by Gottwald and his deputy R. Slánský. The postwar growth of the party was even more spectacular than in the neighboring countries, in 1947 passing the one million mark.

The communists constituted a minority in the Czechoslovak and Hungarian coalition governments, which were about to build the postwar reality in accord with, respectively, the socially moderate Košice and Debrecen programs. But they held key positions in those governments, controlling the police and the economy. The situation was different in Poland where the communists openly dominated an essentially bogus coalition. The Lublin Manifesto, however, was similar in its moderate language and the absence of communist slogans to the Czechoslovak and Hungarian programs. The major forces that the communists had to contend with and destroy, in order to gain full power, were grouped around the populist (peasant) party in Poland and the Smallholders Party in Hungary. In Czechoslovakia the non-communists looked up to President Beneš and placed the real burden of decision and responsibility on his shoulders.

A closer look at the political scene permits us to see further similarities and differences in the three countries. In Czechoslovakia, the prewar right and center parties - the national democrats and the agrarians - were not allowed to re-establish themselves. The same was true for the Slovak populists. Social democrats were heavily infiltrated by communists and fellow travelers, which left the national socialists (Beneš's party), the Catholic populists, and the Slovak democrats to watch out for communist encroachments. Their leaders thought in terms of prewar coalition and parliamentary practices, failing to appreciate the nature of communism. A certain Czech-Slovak tension allowed the communists to drive a wedge between the democrats of both nations.

Beneš held fast to his assumption that while the USSR would be the dominant power in the region it was unlikely to interfere in domestic Czechoslovak affairs, regarding the country as a constructive factor in the region and as a bridge between the West and East. Beneš also believed that domestically his country would amalgamate what was best in the Western democracy and Eastern socialism. As for the communists, they appeared to him willing to participate loyally in a parliamentary system, being quite satisfied with moderate social reforms. In fact the communists were consolidating their strength in the cabinet, in the national councils in the provinces, and most important, in the factories.

Hungarian communists, like their Czechoslovak counterparts, also stressed a willingness to cooperate with all the democratic forces in the country. The latter comprised the Smallholders Party, which re-emerged in November 1944 under the leadership of the Calvinist pastor Zoltán Tildy, Béla Kovács, and Ferenc Nagy, the national populists and the social democrats. The Smallholders appeared from the beginning as the main rivals and opponents of the communists, while the other parties contained people who listened to communist wooings and weakened their parties' internal cohesion. Apart from the obvious fact that the Hungarian communists relied on the support of the army, the police, and the Communist Party of the USSR, they tried and did emulate the Smallholders' agrarian program. The communists' insistence on drastic land reform and other revolutionary economic changes found a response among the masses who otherwise opposed communism as such.

In Poland the communists ran the government and the populists represented by Mikolajczyk and a few of his associates had to choose between adjustment or open defiance. Mikolajczyk joined the Provisional Government of National Unity as a result of Western pressure, and many Poles believed that he also had the assured support of the US and Britain. He was determined to challenge the communists through the "free and unfettered elections" agreed upon at Yalta. He succeeded, unlike others, in quickly re-establishing an independent populist party (PSL) which outnumbered the communists and their allies. The latter consisted of more or less truncated socialist, democratic, and labor parties from which the old leadership had been eliminated. The large prewar National Democratic Party was outlawed.

For the Polish masses Mikolajczyk personified genuine national independence. To the remnants of the wartime underground, hunted down by the communists, he represented a hope for survival, and indeed he helped to save many of them through the two amnesties passed by the government. The communists portrayed Mikolajczyk as the tool of the West and the embodiment of all forces of reaction and anti-Sovietism in the country. As elsewhere at this stage the Polish communists

tried to cultivate an image of sociál moderation. They denied any plans of collectivizing agriculture and argued with the populists (as in Hungary) merely about the size of peasant farms. They also spoke of a native way to socialism. Paying lip service to Catholicism they were careful not to antagonize the Church unduly or offend Polish religious sentiments. The Catholic Church was hardly prepared, in ideological or practical terms, for a confrontation with communism. In Hungary the church (the Catholic-Protestant division notwithstanding) had been a great landowner, built into the socio-economic and political structure of the country perhaps even to a larger degree than in Poland. It also reacted more strongly when stripped of its privileges by the communists; the primate Cardinal J. Mindszenty publicly condemned Marxism. In all three countries, the church had a tradition of cooperation with the polirical right which was now held against it. In Slovakia, especially, accusations of "clerico-fascism" leveled against the wartime regime could not be easily refuted. But there is another side to the story. In Poland the church's stand against the Nazis led to mass persecutions of the clergy. Many bishops and priests had been sent to German concentration camps and Father Kolbe, later canonized, died for a fellow prisoner. This greatly enhanced the church's moral authority. In Czechoslovakia, Bishop Beran of Prague had been a camp inmate; in Hungary Cardinal Serédi openly defied the Nazis, and the Arrow Cross arrested Mindszenty.

COMMUNIST SEIZURE OF POWER AND STALINISM

The years 1945-8 saw a transition from coalition governments, more or less genuine, to complete communist controls and the establishment of a totalitarian state. The road leading to this end was diverse in each country. In Hungary the communists applied the "aalami tactics" of slicing off their opponents' base of power. In Poland Mikolajczyk's refusal to become a junior partner of the communists resulted in an open confrontation. In Czechoslovakia a governmental crisis was transformed by the Party into a showdown that had some features of a coup.

The Soviets maintained the troops in Hungary to guard the lines of communication with their zone in Austria but were at first prepared to be more flexible *vis-á-vis* the Hungarians than toward the Poles. The weak position of Hungarian communists in mid-1945 had something to do with that. Municipal elections in Budapest produced an unexpected victory of the Smallholders, who gained 50 percent of votes against the communist-socialist bloc of 42.6 percent. In the generál elections held in November 1945 the communists fared even worse and the Smallholders emerged with a 57 percent majority. These were to be the last free elections in Hungary for almost half a century.

Tildy became president of the republic and Ferenc Nagy (not to be confused with his better known communist namesake) premier. But by virtue of the pre-electoral accord the communists remained in the cabinet and working from within systematically undermined their opponents. Under László Rajk as interior minister non-communists were removed from the administration, and mass trials of war criminals and political opponents took place. Nationalization of the economy proceeded on a wide scale. Using rumors of a nationalist plot as an excuse, the communists successfully discredited some of the Smallholders' leaders, especially Béla Kovács, who was arrested by the Soviet police. The weakened Smallholders became isolated and vulnerable. Nagy was forced to resign and stayed in exile. The communists gained more votes than the Smallholders in the August 1947 rigged elections (22.3 percent as against 15.4); exposed to a constant pressure the non-communist parties were disintegrating. The social democrats merged with the communists and the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP) came officially into being. Tildy's resignation of the presidency marked the end of an era. Although the Party's secretary-general, Rákosi, also became prime minister a few years later, one can say that his "reign" had already begun in December 1948.

A complete communist takeover in Poland was more rapid and possibly even more brutal than in Hungary. The other political parties, infiltrated by and dominated by the PPR, had very little room for maneuver, and a confrontation between Mikolajczyk and the communists had already reached a high point in 1946. The issue was a popular referendum. Trying to compensate for the fact that the elections prescribed at Yalta were being constantly put off, the Party announced a referendum in which the voters were asked three questions: Did they approve of the socio-economic reforms? Did they endorse the Odra-Nysa frontier? Did they agree with the abolition of the senate? These were in reality non-questions, for there was a large consensus in favor of these three proposals. The current economic pian, based on public, social, and private sectors, reflected socialist rather than communist thinking. The border with Germany was seen as a major gain. The abolition of the senate was not a problem. Nevertheless, Mikolajczyk, regarding the referendum as a trial of strength and a challenge, instructed his supporters to vote "no" on this third question. This may have been a political mistake, for it revealed the extent of actual anti-communist opposition without allowing it to score a point. In an atmosphere of

intimidation, and even actual murders, of populists and their allies, a fair referendum was not possible. Furthermore, there is every indication that the final results were falsified. Only in certain areas, inadvertently or to publicize the enemies' strength, were the real numbers of nays revealed.

The campaign of terror and slander intensified, Mikolajczyk's name being constantly linked with the underground units that continued an armed struggle against the communists. In these circumstances Mikolajczyk's stiff conditions for participation in a common electoral front with the communists were hardly realistic, and his tactics of confrontation began to be increasingly questioned by his supporters. What was he counting on? Surely the communists were not likely to hold a free election or to yield power. Indeed, the elections of January 1947 proved to be as fraudulent as the referendum. The communist-led electoral bloc gained 394 seats; Mikolajczyk's party only 28. Thus the populist attempt to wrest power from the communists proved a total fiasco, and in October Mikolajczyk, fearing for his life, escaped from Poland. In December 1948, in a greatly changed international atmosphere, PPR absorbed the socialist party and adopted the name Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR).

The course of events in Czechoslovakia also resulted in a communist victory, but the story differed in many respects. As mentioned, postwar Czechoslovakia superficially resembled the first republic. The president's extensive powers imposed special burdens on Beneš, and indeed the land reform, the nationalization of industry, and the prosecution of "traitors" were all done by presidential decree. In dealing with the Soviet leaders Beneš continued to be deferential, anxious to please and be accommodating.

The first elections, held in March 1946, made the communists the largest party (with 38 percent of the vote, 40 percent in the Czech lands and 30 percent in Slovakia). The national socialists trailed with 18.2 percent, the remaining parties having obtained between 12.9 and 15.6. Gottwald was named prime minister, and the communists appeared to be satisfied with the status of the first among equals.

In 1947, however, the situation began to change. As the Cold War was beginning, the offer of the Marshall Plan was first accepted by Prague and then turned down on express orders of Moscow. The foreign minister, Jan Masaryk, for one, realized that Czechoslovak independence was illusory. This came as a shock. The Kremlin berated the Czechoslovak communists for their timidity, and they concentrated their activity on Slovakia, where the local autonomous authorities (Board of Commissioners and the Slovak National Council) were dominated by democrats. The wartime experiences had not made Czech leaders more understanding of Slovak national aspirations. Beneš failed to use the presidential pardon with regard to the collaborationist President Tiso, who was tried, condemned, and executed in April 1947. This was a political error. When he communists proceeded arbitrarily to eliminate the Slovak democrats from power, there was no outcry among non-communists in Prague. By late August 1947 the Party was put on "fighting alert," and the stress put on extra-parliamentary means should it come to a showdown with the non-communists. Such a showdown was in fact brought about by a move, reminiscent of prewar parliamentary tactics, in February 1948. Protesting against the arbitrary measures of the communist minister of police, the non-communist ministers submitted their resignations, hoping that Beneš would either refuse to accept them, or dissolve the parliament and order new general elections. It was typical of the indecisive leadership of the non-communist parties to place all the burden of responsibility on the ailing president. His decision to stand above the conflict, as he put it, amounted to a capitulation. While the communists mobilized the factory workers and the minister of defense General L. Svoboda neutralized the army, the non-communists were not prepared for a physical confrontation. The isolated and overawed Beneš accepted the resignation of the ministers, making it possible for Gottwald to fill the vacancies with his own appointees.

The "victorious February," as the communists called it, was a coup only in the sense of the ever-present threat of violence that accompanied the event. Soviet involvement, which included encouragement and the possibility of armed intervention was real. Still, the Gottwald cabinet was regularly appointed by Beneš (who resigned a little later) and it received a parliamentary vote of confidence on March 10. Czechoslovakia slid into communist rule in a manner which made the Czechs think of Munich and the heavy price paid for non-resistance. Even the death of Jan Masaryk in March can no longer be be ascribed with certainty to foul play, and seems to have been suicide caused by despair. As in Hungary and Poland communist consolidation in Czechoslovakia involved the absorption of the socialists. As in Poland two token non-communist parties (three in Hungary) were preserved as junior partners.

The events in Prague shocked Western public opinion and were seen as proof of communist determination to annihilate democracy. The United States had been willing to accept a Soviet sphere of influence in East Central Europe, provided it would be open to commerce and a flow of ideas. A closed bloc of satellite states appeared unacceptable. In these conditions Containment, which seemed to have written off the region, came to be regarded as timid and inadequate. The new

doctrine of Liberation arose. Espoused by President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary John Foster Dulles it did not aim at freeing the region through a crusading war. Its object was to feed the flame of freedom among the oppressed nations, through propaganda and support of political émigrés, and to undermine Soviet controls. But as defined in 1949 "the satellite question" was "a function of our [American] main problem - relations with the Soviet Union."[56]

From 1948 communism in East Central Europe began to assume its extreme Stalinist form, characterized by rigid uniformity in following the Soviet model and in subordination to Moscow. "Love of the Soviet Union does not tolerate the slightest reservation," said the Czechoslovak *Rudé Právo* on May 25, 1952. A network of treaties, going back to the Soviet-Czechoslovak alliance of 1943 bound all the countries to Moscow and to each other. A reorientation of trade toward the USSR represented a drastic change from the prewar situation. In 1949 the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA or Comecon) was set up in response to the Marshall Pian, but remained inactive for more than a decade. Its subsequent role of integrating the satellite countries through a division of labor led to friction and failed to produce desired results. Finally, in 1955 the Warsaw Treaty Organization arose, as a counterpart to NATO. In fact, its main function came to be containing, policing, and stabilizing the region itself.

This new trend was heralded by the organizational meeting of the Cominform in 1947 at Szklarska Poreba in Poland. The Cominform, Moscow's instrument for ideological control, was used a few months later against Marshal Tito. The breach between the USSR and Yugoslavia became the first chink in the Stalinist armor, but it also intensified the offensive against the "nationalist deviation" as represented by Titoism. A rigid ideological uniformity, embracing all walks of life, came to be associated with the name of its arch-priest Andrei Zhdanov. Does the adjective "totalitarian" most adequately describe Stalinism? By striving to dominate the totality of man and by claiming to represent the power governing all reality, the system was totalitarian in theory, although not always in practice. One of its characteristic elements was a total rejection of truth as an absolute: hence, the big lie that the Party decreed to be the truth. The adulation of Stalin, the final authority and the final arbiter, was part of the system. The cult of personality permeated the entire communist ladder of power, but as Gomulka later put it, the cult of the lesser leaders was only "a borrowed light. It shone as the moon does." This was true for the dominant figures of this era: Bierut, Gottwald, and Rákosi.

There was a basic similarity in the developments in Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the economic sphere rigid planning patterned on the USSR resulted in full nationalization of enterprises and virtual destruction of the prosperous private sector. Emphasis was placed on the development of heavy industry. Collectivization of agriculture ran into stubborn resistance in Poland, where only 10 percent of peasant land was collectivized, and produced tensions in Hungary where a restructuring of agriculture by 1953 bankrupted agrarian production. The situation was different in Czechoslovakia, where 90 percent of agriculture was collectivized and the country's strong economic base was less visibly affected.

In an increasingly atomized society the church represented the only spiritual and in a sense political power. Hence the Party switched now from conciliatory to openly aggressive policies toward it. The communists sought not only a separation of church and state, but a subordination of the former to the latter. The church was to be confined to the altar and the confessional; religion was to be eliminated from schools and religious orders deprived of any social functions. The relations with the Vatican were interrupted. In essence this was a contest not over God, but over man and his dignity. The attack went against the Christian roots and traditions of East Central European culture.

In Hungary, where the communists exploited the division between the Catholic and Calvinist churches, as well as in Czechoslovakia, the attack came earlier and was more brutal than in Poland. The defiance on the part of Cardinal Mindszenty led to his arrest and a show trial in February 1949, at which he confessed to all unlikely charges. Other bishops and clergymen were executed or imprisoned. The religious orders were suppressed in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia, but not in Poland. In Czechoslovakia and Hungary the Party sought to undermine the church through so-called Catholic Action and a Peace Movement (Pacem in Terris), and it also struck against the respected Archbishop of Prague, Beran. He was first isolated in his residence and then transported to a monastery. By 1951, exposed to relentless pressure, nine out of thirteen bishops and most of the lower clergy had sworn loyalty to the regime. Others were imprisoned.

The situation in Poland differed insofar as the church was stronger, and the primate, Cardinal S. Wyszyński, was a man of great calibre who knew how to combine a rigid adherence to principle with flexibility of tactics. In 1950 he signed, largely on his own, a *modus vivendi* with the state which committed the church only to

"respect of law and state authority." An accord signed the same year by the Hungarian church hierarchy engaged the church to "support the state system." For the communists these agreements were temporary arrangements. In Poland they sponsored the so-called Patriots-Priests and supported the Pax organization. Set up by a prewar extreme rightist, Boleslaw Piasecki, Pax aimed at finding a common Catholic-communist platform that would enable the group to share in governing the country. The resistance of the church to these attempts, designed as they were to undermine its cohesion and impose further concessions, led to reprisals. In 1951 Bishop C. Kaczmarek was arrested and two years later given a severe sentence. The climax was reached in 1953, when even after Stalin's death, Cardinal Wyszyński himself was arrested and interned.

The struggle against the church was part of the Stalinist offensive in the realm of culture. It ranged from an imposition of "socialist realism" on art, through making Lysenko's theories binding on natural sciences, to elevating Stalin's own views on linguistics into a dogma. Anything that diverged from these doctrines was eliminated; the ideological terror reigned supreme.

Political evolution was officially reflected in the passing of Hungarian and Polish Constitutions of 1949 and 1952 that were modeled on that of the USSR. The countries became known as People's Republics or People's Democratic Republics. Constitutions filled with high sounding principle were little more than a facade. Behind it arbitrariness reigned supreme with law as a political instrument, judges as obedient executors, and the police as a state within the state. In Poland communist terror was first applied on a major scale against the wartime underground and Mikolajczyk's supporters. It also claimed numerous victims among the anti-communists in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. After the Titoist schism Party purges followed. In Hungary the tough interior minister Rajk was arrested in May 1949, confessed in a show trial to being an "agent of imperialism," and executed. In the ensuing purges some 2,000 people perished and 150,000 were imprisoned. This represented an incomparably larger figure than of the victims of the Horthy regime. Among ranking communists Kádár was jailed, and Imre Nagy withdrew from public life.

This orgy of judicial murders, with a free use of torture, was duplicated in Czechoslovakia. Assisted by expert Soviet advisers, a veritable witchhunt began for "Trotskyites," Slovak bourgeois nationalists, Zionists, class enemies, and spies. The victims included such dignitaries as Clementis, Husák, and the secretary-general of the Party himself, Slánský. After a mass trial in 1952 in which the prosecution made ample use of anti-Semitism, eleven of the fourteen accused being of Jewish background, Slánský and his co-defendants pleaded guilty and were executed.

In contrast to Hungary and Czechoslovakia there were no show trials in Poland, and Soviet suggestions to resort to anti-Semitic pronounce-ments in purges were resisted. While terror claimed new victims, notably high-ranking army officers, several of whom had returned after the war from abroad, the nearest Polish equivalent to Rajk or Slánský, namely Gomulka, was never brought to trial. Although much more than they a believer in a native road to communism, hence vulnerable to charges of nationalist Titoism, Gomulka was expelled from the Party and arrested with a number of his associates in 1951. He stayed in prison while a case against him was being prepared, long enough to outlive Stalin.