

# TODAY ABROAD

by Joseph Clark

## The Upheaval In Poland

FROM THE MOST diverse source comes evidence of a genuine liberalization in Poland. I. F. Stone, who felt that the Soviet Union was still Stalinist, was tremendously impressed by the fresh winds blowing in Poland.

Richard Crossman, left-wing British Laborite, recently visited Poland and described the exciting time he had discussing politics, literature, science with students in Warsaw. In *New Statesman and Nation*, May 5, Crossman quotes the remarks of a student in a public discussion, saying:

"My class intends to stage a revolution against compulsory lectures on Marxism. My own desire is to make an objective comparison between Russian Communism and Western Social Democracy."

Free and uninhibited debate took place among the students.

"It epitomizes," Crossman wrote, "the spirit I met everywhere—a vivid reaction against the abuse of power combined with acceptance of the revolution of 1945; the keen pleasure that Western ideas and contacts are no longer treasonable. Combined with a cool, well-informed critique of Western policies."

CROSSMAN says the Poles are grappling with a difficult problem also troubling the Yugoslavs—how to secure freedom in a one-party system.

Even in the worst years of the Stalin influence, Crossman notes Poland had made two outstanding advances. One was in industrialization, the other in education. It is these achievements which today make this "rebellious, stiff-necked, romantic people, despite an orgy of self-critic-

ism, loyal to the Communist regime," Crossman feels.

Stone describes a report made recently by the first secretary of that Jewish cultural life is flourishing—the Polish United Workers Party, Edward Ochab, warning against attacks on the Party in the press and elsewhere. But Stone continues:

"If Ochab's speech was intended to dampen down enthusiasm, it did not succeed in its purpose. The week I was there, that which began on April 23, saw the first meeting of a Communist parliament in which there was real debate, real differences of opinion and real criticism of the government. This was no Supreme Soviet, invariably unanimous even in condemning its own past. . . ."

FAR FROM discouraging criticism and conflict of opinion, Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz "invited them in his opening address," Stone says. The Polish Premier said:

"... in the atmosphere of political activation, when in the course of this great debate the political armor is growing more perfect, when the maturity of the masses is certainly growing at a double rate, while complaints and grievances are being revealed and, thanks to this, can be overcome, the enemy is finding it increasingly difficult to operate. . . . Of what importance are insinuations, slanders, gossip, whispering campaigns and intrigues at a time when all of us are openly exposing all shortcomings and errors. . . . ?"

Stone notes the active participation of Catholic deputies in the Polish parliament—the Sejm. He also shows that there was

genuine unanimity on a bill—to give freedom to 30,000 prisoners under an amnesty.

"Most indicative of all, Stone felt, "was the decision to restore the full civil rights of all who fought in the rightist Polish Home Army during the last war."

AS ANOTHER contrast with the Soviet Union, Stone found in Poland. There are Yiddish newspapers and theatres.

Interesting among Stone's conclusions is his belief that Poland, rather than Yugoslavia, will be a model for independent development of libertarian socialism in Eastern Europe.

Regarding the orientation of Poland's Communist leaders in this gigantic transformation, Stone writes:

"The Polish leaders feel that the old policy of trying to play an independent role between Germany and Russia is bankrupt, that Poland must for its own safety stand with the USSR. But they are determined to find a way within these lines to a freer society.

"For them this does not mean the restoration of capitalism—or that mixture of feudalism, fascism, clericalism and capitalism cannot be combined with freedom of thought and security of the person. This is a struggle to liberate Poland which deserves sympathy from all liberals and socialists abroad. And in my opinion it may, far better than Tito's Yugoslavia, provide model and inspiration elsewhere in Eastern Europe."

It is perhaps ironic, that a process which was inspired from the USSR by the 20th congress moves so much swifter in Poland than where it originated. But the need for democratization is as imperative in the USSR as in Poland. I think it has begun in the Soviet Union too.