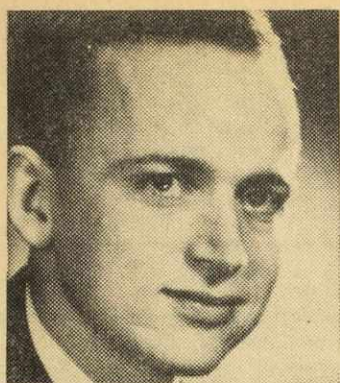


JOE POLE AND THE NATION

BY H. H. MacKAY



Editor's Note:

Harold MacKay, B.A., Saskatchewan, President of the Dalhousie Law Society and Vice-Chairman of WUSC on campus, is a native of Weyburn.

This past summer he travelled in Poland as Dalhousie's delegate to the World University Service of Canada Seminar, In the last of three articles, the views expressed are those of the author and neither WUSC nor the Gazette assume any responsibility.

What does Communism do for the individual and what does it do to him? This is probably as significant a question of the Communist system as a person from the West can ask. For the basis of our opposition to Communism is that it is bad for the individual. In this last article I should like to consider the role of the individual in Polish society.

It is undoubtedly true that the Polish citizen enjoys rights not always possessed by Canadians. For example, he is guaranteed a job—even though such a guarantee may reduce his efficiency on the job. He is guaranteed a place to live at a reasonable rent of only a few cents per month. He is guaranteed adequate and modern medical treatment for any of his ills. His children are guaranteed the financial means to receive higher education. All of this has been achieved and most of this is good. But in Poland, in contrast to some West European nations such as Sweden, it has been achieved at the sacrifice of other freedoms.

Joe Pole lives in Warsaw. He is a worker in a factory and his wife is a clerk in a retail store. Joe and his wife are free to change jobs, provided they give proper notice which may mean a period of several months. They are free to move to Poznan, provided they can obtain accommodation there which may require a period of a year. They are free to travel to Canada for vacation, provided that a Canadian will pay their transportation expenses to the Polish travel agency in non-Polish currency. They are free to think that Mr. Gomulka is a bad leader, provided they do not say so in public. They are free to establish a retail business, provided they obtain a license from the Communist authorities and provided they are willing to shoulder the heavy tax burdens placed up-

on private enterprises. They are free to run for the Polish Parliament, provided their candidacy is certified by the National Front, a tool of the Communist Party. In short, in these regards Joe and his wife are not at all free.

NO FREEDOM

This forfeiture of freedom is justified in Communist theory by placing emphasis upon service of group needs rather than upon service of individual needs as the important end of society. Stress is laid upon a man as a member of a group and as a citizen of the nation rather than upon a man as himself.

What this means in business affairs is that no individual ownership of any factory employing labour is allowed in Poland. In addition, most retail outlets have been nationalized or arranged in the form of cooperatives so that by 1961 only 2.2 per cent of the dollar volume of retail trade was carried on by private business. Professional men such as doctors and lawyers are for the most part arranged in cooperatives and are subjected to very high excess profits taxes.

At present, the struggle for individual freedom is being fought in the matter of Polish agriculture. In contrast to Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R. where collectivization of farms was forced upon the people with a notorious lack of success, Polish Communists have never used such coercion. This may have been so because of the tenacious desire of the Polish peasant to retain his own land. Last year in Poland 89 per cent of agricultural production came from private farms most of which were of less than twenty acres in size. Poland is an agricultural nation and as such, its agricultural production is a matter of real concern to the Communists. They will admit that the peasant does pretty well, con-

sidering that he uses the ox and scythe.

But quite reasonably they point out that larger farms and modern equipment would lead to even greater efficiency. Here a very real dilemma confronts the Gomulka government. It could teach peasants modern techniques, but this would only consolidate the peasant's desire to retain his own farm, something undesirable in Communist theory. It could do nothing, but the other Communist nations need Polish food very badly. It could force collectivization of farms, but that would be politically dangerous and might not, if the Russian experience is repeated, increase production significantly. What to do? The government has sought a temporary solution by the encouragement through tax incentives of a system of cooperative farms, in which several farmers pool their lands voluntarily and from which they may withdraw if they wish. This type of organization is in sharp contrast to the few collective farms in which the land is owned by the state, the laborer receiving only a salary for his efforts.

It is difficult to comment on the efficiency of Polish collective farms. The one which I visited consisted of 1000 flat and fertile acres near Poznan. On the farm, 95 workers were employed and they had at their disposal seven tractors and two combines. To me, schooled in the Canadian traditions of agriculture, this hardly seemed to be an efficient way to grow the wheat, cabbages and potatoes produced by this farm. Nor did the dwellings of the workers appeal to me. In the dull brick building, each family is allotted its own few square feet of space, partitioned off from the neighbour. The door leading into the house is low; the rooms, in comparison to those of private homes, are small. The privacy of the family and within the family

are sacrificed in this experiment in group life.

COLLECTIVISM EVERYWHERE

Not only is the emphasis on the nation and the group present in business and rearing its head in agriculture, but also it may be seen in contemporary housing patterns. For example, in Nova Huta, the model city, everyone lives in one of the grey, rectangular apartment buildings which stand in endless rows along every street.

The "group" emphasis is everywhere. On Sunday, groups of children are taken on hikes. It is a common sight to see groups of workers being packed into trucks and transported to the nearest vacation resort. Student travel almost inevitably takes the form of group visits. But out of this emphasis on the group has come an important pole for a new kind of individual, the member of the special group called the United Worker's Party. His apartment glitters in Western luxury as he confidently says, "Communism is good for Poland." He is assisted by the state to take trips abroad. He is able to purchase a car or at least a motor scooter. Despite Marx's dream of a classless society, a new privileged class is certainly emerging. But such privileges are given mainly because of the group loyalty of the Party member, not out of any realization of his individual qualities.

INDIVIDUALISM ALIVE

Despite this concerted attack on the individual as a social entity, I found that the traditional Polish individualism is very much alive. It can be seen in the faces of the peasants sitting in front of their small farmhouses. It can be seen in the films produced by Polish film studios, films which paint warm and sensitive portraits of strong Polish characters. It can be seen in the thriving success being enjoyed by the private pastry shops in Warsaw.

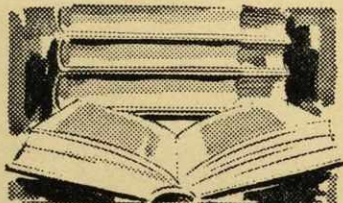
One of the recreational activities planned for the Canadian students was a raft trip down a river in southern Poland. As our ten-passenger raft was poled from the shore, a trio of gaily-clad gypsies serenaded us (for a few zlotys in return, of course). Then we noticed about fifty yards downstream the Polish individual. With pants rolled well above his knees, he was standing in the midst of the current playing his battered violin, and seeking in this way to win the attention and the favours of his audience.

To people such as this man, freedom and the initiative it carries with it dies very hard. And I think I may say with assurance that they are not yet dead in Poland.

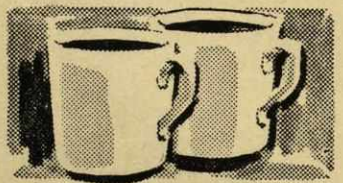
Joke of the Week



"Don't be so possessive!"



BOOK-TIME



BREAK-TIME

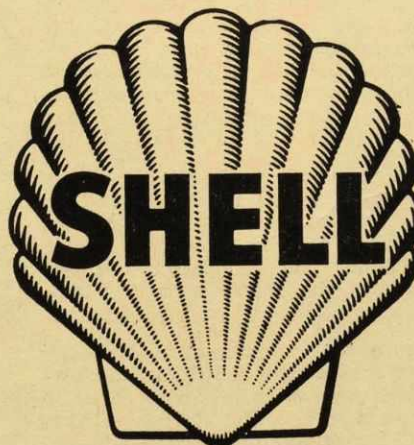


DATE-TIME



FILTER Players

...the best-tasting filter cigarette



will be on campus to interview students for summer and regular employment in the following departments

**EXPLORATION
PRODUCTION
(OILFIELD ENGINEERING)**

**REFINING
MARKETING**

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

NOVEMBER 6

For details see posters and obtain company brochure from your placement office.

SHELL OIL COMPANY OF CANADA, LIMITED