

Indeed, had the government parties showed any genuine respect for the spirit of the Yalta postulate of free and unfettered elections, the contention of M. Kiernik and M. Wycech might well have been more reasonable, on the ground that Poland's unsettled state did not permit the luxury of party politics.

The conduct of the government, however, before and during the elections of January of this year proved that far greater principles were at stake than mere inter-party arrangements. The division within the P.S.L. therefore assumed a fundamental character. At the end of February the supporters of M. Kiernik and M. Wycech openly declared their opposition to M. Mikolajczyk, and started to publish a new weekly newspaper "The Peasants and the State." In this paper M. Dec, one of the opposition leaders, maintained that it was only the obstinacy of M. Mikolajczyk which had prevented the P.S.L. from joining the Government "bloc," and that it was in the interests of the peasants to co-operate with the workers' parties. There have also been reports of spontaneous dissolutions of the P.S.L. in various parts of Poland, especially in the regions of Bialystok, Wroclaw (Breslau), and other Silesian districts. The dissidents are said to have joined either the "Bloc" Peasant Party (S.L.) or the ranks of the moderate Socialists. That M. Mikolajczyk will resign himself to such a state of affairs seems unlikely. On the 14th March the P.S.L. Executive suspended the editors of "The Peasants and the State" from their party membership, on the ground that they had started publication of a paper without the Executive's permission, and that their action was detrimental to the Party's interests.

According to Warsaw Radio and the official Soviet news agency "Tass," General Karol Swierczewski, the Polish Vice-Minister of Defence, was murdered by Ukrainian Fascists near Sanok on the 28th March. (Sanok is in the south of Rzeszow province, some fifteen miles from the Polish-Russian frontier.) Swierczewski, who was born in Warsaw at the end of the last century, was one of the Poles of Russian Poland who became almost more Russian than Polish. Between the two world wars he became a Soviet officer, graduating at the Frunze Academy. In July 1936, under the name of General Walter, he commanded one of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, and was later in charge of the Polish contingent. During the recent world war,

he acted as deputy to General Berling, the Polish Commander of the Polish troops fighting in Russia. He was placed in charge of the Second Polish Army, promoted to the rank of Colonel General by the Soviet Government and, according to Warsaw radio, distinguished himself during the battles for the Western Neisse, the river now claimed by Poland as part of its frontier with Germany. He became Vice-Minister of Defence in March 1946.

#### SOVIET UNION

Mr. Bevin was received by Generalissimo Stalin on the 24th March. On the whole, attacks on Great Britain in the Soviet press have been on a smaller scale than before the Moscow Conference, though specific criticisms continue. The tour of the delegates of the Supreme Soviet visiting this country has been reported in daily *Tass* messages; the Prime Minister's dinner on the 24th March was given one and a half columns, Mr. Attlee's speech being condensed into fifteen lines, and M. Kuznetsov's reply being reported in full. It is of interest that this is one of the very rare occasions since the end of the war when the Soviet public has been allowed to read any praise of the British war effort or expression of confidence in British intentions.

Mr. Truman's proposals for aid to Greece and Turkey have been kept before Soviet readers, but there has been no further comment after the original *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* leaders, which themselves were relatively mild in tone. It does not seem that a major press campaign is to be launched comparable with that devoted to Mr. Churchill's Fulton speech. The atmosphere in Moscow would seem to indicate a feeling that the Soviet Government may have pushed its policies rather too hard since the war, as such a strong American reaction has been provoked. The line put forward by Soviet citizens in conversations with H.M. Embassy staff is to point out how right the Soviet Government has been about the expansionist tendencies of the U.S.A. and to suggest Anglo-Soviet co-operation in resistance to American domination.

M. Molotov reaffirmed on the 24th March his Government's view that it would be expedient for the present Council of Foreign Ministers to discuss the fulfilment of the Moscow Agreement on China, and on the following day the first Soviet press comments on the question began to appear. A long *Tass* message from

Shanghai emphasised that "democratic" Chinese circles were in favour of the proposal to discuss China, and the same point was elaborated in a *Krasnaya Zvezda* article, which denounced American imperialist interference in Chinese affairs.

Reporting of the Conference of Foreign Ministers has continued on the same lines as hitherto, though the account of the proceedings of the 25th March was deliberately distorted so as to give the impression that it was the U.S.S.R. which had taken the initiative in inviting the participation of Persia. The Secretary of State's proposal to associate Persia was completely omitted. The bulk of comment on the Conference in the press has been devoted to different aspects of the German problem. The main attacks on British policy in Germany have been concerned with the question of patents and of the Ruhr coal. Patents were described as a very important article in reparations, in contradiction to the Secretary of State's statement, and Great Britain and the U.S.A. were said to have already received more than a milliard dollars under this heading. As for the Ruhr, the British were said to be deliberately restricting Ruhr coal production to prevent further competition on European markets, in view of Britain's present lack of coal for export. The most important articles on the German problem have been two in *Izvestiya* and *Pravda* by the well-known writers Tarle and Zaslavsky. Tarle attacked federalisation on the usual lines, but while highly critical of this country and the U.S.A. he never referred to the French. Zaslavsky, surprisingly enough, in view of his usual unrestrained invective, devoted himself exclusively to the political structure of Germany without criticising the Allies. He actually allowed some virtues to the Weimar Constitution, saying that the restoration of many of its features would be useful, as it would be utopian (the greatest condemnation from the lips of a Marxist), to attempt to return to the pre-Bismarck structure of Germany. He concluded by affirming the responsibility of the German people themselves for the future structure of their country. Nothing permanent could be imposed on them from outside.

The decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. prohibiting marriages between citizens of the U.S.S.R. and foreigners was only published in the official bulletin on the 18th March, though it was dated 15th February. It

does not appear as yet to have been reproduced in the Soviet daily press. H.M. Ambassador had spoken to M. Molotov concerning such marriages on the 31st December to the effect that it might be better to forbid them than to refuse to allow wives to join their husbands. The decree may, however, be mainly designed to prevent marriages between Soviet occupation troops and civilian employees abroad and foreigners. No success has so far been achieved in securing permission for Soviet wives of British husbands to leave the U.S.S.R.

The negotiations between this country and the U.S.S.R. over fish supplies have at length been concluded, and a contract signed providing for the shipment over two years of 150,000 cases of tinned salmon and 25,000 cases of tinned crab weighing 48 lbs. each from the Soviet Union to Great Britain. Before the war the United Kingdom imported 2½ million cases of salmon of which 700,000 came from Russia. The main obstacle encountered during the course of the recent negotiations, apart from the price, was the Russian demand for 1,000 tons of tinplate; only 500 were necessary for the amount of salmon offered.

(For the arrival of an Icelandic Trade Delegation in Moscow see under "Scandinavia.")

General Golikov has issued a statement on Italian prisoners-of-war in the U.S.S.R., asserting, in contradiction of earlier reports, that the repatriation of Italians from the U.S.S.R. had been completed by the end of 1946. He gave a total of 21,065 and stated that a further 146,756 Italians had been liberated from German captivity by the Red Army in Poland, Germany and Austria and had been repatriated. According to Italian sources, 60,000 Italian prisoners have disappeared in the U.S.S.R. without trace and are believed to have died in concentration camps.

The serious agricultural situation in the Ukraine was discussed at a recent plenary session of the Ukrainian Communist Party; M. Kaganovich, who has recently been sent specially by the Central Committee to become Chairman of the Communist Party of the Ukraine (replacing M. Khrushchev, who remains Chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers), drew special attention to the serious lagging behind in the production of summer wheat and emphasised the importance of restoring the sugar beet acreage. The provincial committees of the Ukrainian