such a 'sacrament' could not have been confected, the Pope remained silent.

Had the dramatic impulse of the play not been blunted by the author's private inclinations, had he shown more fidelity to the exigencies of his craft than to his extra-esthetic biases, he would have written a tragedy of the highest order, and one which by that very fact would have probably been closer to the truths of history.

Polish Culture at the Millennium

ANTONY BLACK

After the millennial celebrations of the founding of the Polish state and the conversion of Poland to Christianity, the Poles may look back with some pride and with some horror. In modern times they have been perhaps the least favoured of European nations, with a recent past consisting of dismemberment, unsuccessful rebellion, two great wars, and the suffering of the worst imaginable crimes; under the Nazis there were about twelve extermination camps in Poland, of which Auschwitz was only the most well-known. This was followed by the poverty and oppression of the post-war and Stalinist period. Being poised between east and west has not been in Poland's favour, however interesting the phenomenon; only in the last seven years has it turned strangely to their advantage. October 1956 was the great moment in the history of modern Poland; they look back on it now as 'The Polish October' and 'The October Springtime'. The bitter but concealed intrigues in the back-streets of Warsaw, by which Wladyslav Gomulka came to power and bloodlessly achieved a change of régime that deserved the name of revolution, demonstrated the political genius, and reversed the destiny of Poland. So did the glowering crowds, assembled in imitation of the earlier Poznan rioters and with no clear idea of what action they were going to take; when, rather to everyone's surprise, they accepted Gomulka's assurances quietly. They stood in the background as a lever for Gomulka against the Russians, but without committing any indis-

cretion which might have incited Russian reaction. (The Polish adage has it that in 1956 the Poles behaved like Hungarians, the Hungarians like Poles, and the Czechs like pigs).

It came as no less of a surprise later on that the promises of Gomulka were capable of being carried into effect. The liberal socialism of present-day Poland is no small political achievement; it is an answer to Engels' charge that the Poles had nothing whatever to contribute to history. Its measured success is illustrated in such current cracks as: Czech dog enters Poland, Polish dog, 'Why have you come here, you get enough to eat at home?' Czech dog, 'I want to have a good bark'—and: hare from Russia leaps across the boundary into Poland, Poles, 'Why have you come to our country?' Hare, 'Because I do not like Russia.' Poles, 'Quite right, but why not?' 'Because they are killing off all the camels there.' 'But you are not a camel, you're a hare.' 'That's what I told them, but they wouldn't believe me.'

Since 1956, there has been much social progress of a valuable and durable kind. Industry has expanded with rapidity, and so have the cities, including new foundations like Nowa Huta; there is both reconstruction of old cities and the building of new housing-estates (such as the one outside Lublin) which combine attractive modern architecture with full social amenities (clubs, schools, playgrounds), so that they obtain a life and character of their own. There is no unemployment at all. Agriculture, returned to the hands of individual peasants aided by co-operatives, produces more than in the days of attempted collectivization. There is a price, however, which the Polish people, with their quick political wit, and their critical attitude towards impositions, however beneficent, from above,[1] are not slow to point out: the generally low living-standard, and favouritism towards those with the right political outlook, which, judging from Gomulka's speech a while ago, may involve a drive against abstract art. There is also the ever-increasing indirect pressure on the Church, in the form of heavy taxation, the abolition of religious teaching in schools (which had been re-admitted in 1956) and of religious educational institutions, and the obstacles placed in the way of building any churches in the new districts or new towns.

But the most striking achievement of Poland seems to be a cultural one, and this is the reward of their rapidly increasing system of education and of cultural organization. New universities and schools of art,

[1]Cf. the unpopularity of the Palace of Culture at Warsaw, the effluence of Stalin's generosity in 1947: 'timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes'.

films, etc., have been created since the war and still more since 1956. Polish culture, though still looking ardently westward, is no longer a derived entity. We are familiar with the Polish cinema (whose centre at Lodz is lodged in the house of a pre-war textile capitalist), and with their glassware, pottery, textiles, etc. The manufacture of these things is carried out in close contact with the local arts schools which contribute the designs. Painting, engraving and woodwork are all making serious progress; I met one of the leaders of the new generation of Polish artists, Olaf Krzysztofek, whose promising talent and personality will one day be known in the West. Far too little is known in the West of contemporary Polish prose and poetry; the latter particularly is now appearing in large quantities, in newspapers, magazines, and individual books. One of these, *My Left Angel*, by Sbigniew Kosinski deserves special mention for its poignant and often ironic tenor and pungent, creative wit. Another promising young poet, also from Lodz, is Roman Gorzelski, who writes in the now increasingly popular oblique-symbolist style, and who translates fluently from English and Russian.

But it is not only for their individual achievements that the Polish intelligentsia is now remarkable. The fortunate visitor also encounters amongst them a singular corporate life and sense of unity with public life. This is reflected in their public status. If there is a new class in Poland, it is the intelligentsia,[2] with their high salaries, their press clubs and writers' clubs in every town, easy access to the numerous printed pages of journals, periodicals and books, and opportunities for work and recreation together during weekends and the summer months at such stately homes as Nieburov (formerly owned by the Radziwills, or Rogervilles, relations of Mrs Kennedy). Such institutions provide ample opportunity for ease of access and collaboration between, say, authors and theatre-managers; it is a single community. Correspondingly, there is a spirit of public responsibility and a consciousness that they are contributing to a society that needs them, which characterizes the Polish intellectuals. This is partly the influence of socialism, partly of personal and national feeling; it is free, in all the best cases, from any

[2]This term is intended to cover the following (primarily): writers, artists, directors and organizers of theatre, film, television, radio, the press, editors, teachers at universities, arts and technical schools, upper ranks among doctors, lawyers, officials; (secondarily) other teachers, doctors, officials, etc., and anyone working with their brain. Members of the Seym (parliament) are often drawn from these professions; for example, an Independent member we met, who was a lecturer at a university and an expert on the co-operative movement, closely in touch with his local co-operative.

enslavement to a mere 'cause'. One has the impression that the intelligentsia fills a social position, like doctors or farmers; they create and they impart, and the community is conscious of them, looks up to them, and is in many ways influenced by them.

This is no less true of philosophers than of artists. To a remarkable degree they influence the thinking of ordinary people, no doubt reflecting it too; in particular the Catholic philosophers centred at Lublin, some of whom have received with enthusiasm Teilhard de Chardin (whose significance is accentuated in a marxist context), and the revisionist marxists, like Kolakowski. He is probably the most outstanding Polish philosopher at present, and concentrates on the individualist, humanist and democratic elements in Marx, studying especially his early writings; he represents something similar to New Left, and was recently mentioned unfavourably at a party meeting on ideology. This group is thoroughly in tune with the principles of the 1956 revolution; which was vigorously supported by the writings of intellectuals, for example Dr Katz with his famous anonymous (then) article, 'Free marxism from lies', in the now extinct left-wing periodical *Speaking Frankly*. They have one notable orthodox marxist philosopher in Adam Schaff; even he is occupied with questions like 'The social determinants of individual happiness.'

The intelligentsia are a distinct and self-conscious group, but with their ranks open to all. It is typical that Poles should speak about them as 'our philosopher so-and-so . . . our poets . . .'. On the whole, then, state patronage of the arts and of intellectual life seems to work well in a country of liberal socialism. Social realism is favoured, but not enforced; as one non-realist artist remarked, 'I paint social realism—bears, forests, factories—with my left hand, for money you know. They ask me to do it.'

It is in cultural terms that one feels their position between East and West has at last paid off. Consciously, they look much more to the West; to T. S. Eliot and the American Beat writers in literature, to the impressionist and post-impressionist styles in painting. This corresponds of course, to the popularity of jazz and modern western dance-music, as well as to the thoroughly western style of dress and deportment amongst educated (and that means most young) Poles; the Polish ladies are serene and quick-witted, with a sharpness of approach, an integrity, and a poise of feature and dress that can be more than overwhelming. Yet the Poles have also the flash and enthusiasm of Slavonic people, who have recently fought their way from tyrannical oppression, whose

power of soul is fresh and undaunted. They have plenty to say, they have only been waiting for the opportunity to speak; there is no ennui. Their big neighbour, Russia, provides (if little else) a contrast, as well as that slight threat to security that seems to help keep art vigorous. Apart from the old classics, Russian culture does not seem very influential; the higher intellectual strata regard the latest efflorescence of 'advanced' and 'liberal' Russian writers as crude, childish and barbaric.

The convergence of Eastern and Western, communist and liberal, ways of thinking in Poland is a commonplace. We find it too in the Polish films, which combines the study of society and political groups with the study of individual psychology. But what does the average Pole think and believe? To begin with, most are Catholic, though this applies more to the peasant and working classes than to the intellectuals; not that the latter are anti-religious, they are quite often believers but with little interest in the outward forms of religion. Many Poles would call themselves socialist (not considered the opposite of Christian or anything of that sort), but this is not such a popular title among students. Some are marxists; though with both them and the socialists the word is not so much a label as the beginning of a sentence explaining what they each do or do not hold with. There is all the difference between socialist and communist, of course. There are communists to be found, but they are often not popular, and even they may try to modify their credo. Many people call themselves part-socialist, or part-marxists; which usually means agreeing with its economic aspects, but having one's philosophical roots elsewhere, in religion or in some kind of positivism—or indeed in both.

The other important question here is how far the Church and socialism (or the State) go together in Poland. Certainly the authorities of each do not at all, and for this both are blamed; the State for its dishonest indirect means of persecution, and the Church hierarchy for its traditionalism and intolerance. It is said that the Polish bishops were not willing to follow the friendliness of Pope John; and when, for instance, they commented on *Pacem in Terris*, they said nothing at the passage which recommended co-operation with non-Christian social movements (by which socialism was especially meant) in practical matters that need not concern ideology. Their attitude is sometimes justified by saying that the people would be offended by any move towards reconciliation with a State they so dislike and have come to regard as the enemy of Christianity. Some Catholics justify a hostile attitude to the State by an appeal to the principle of private property; but, as was

pointed out to me by a Catholic, this is a ridiculous argument in a country where 86% of the land is privately owned, not to mention personal and moveable possessions, and sometimes living accommodation. At the other end of the scale is the Pax organization, a state-church group under the iron grip of the eccentric Piasecki, whose son was mysteriously kidnapped and murdered some years ago. It owns several factories, and publishes religious papers and books, but is not respected or liked by either side. Similarly a parliamentary group calling itself the Christian social movement is consistently pro-government, non-democratic and purely opportunist. But the majority of thinking Christians belong to neither extreme. Rather more critical of the government perhaps than the average intellectual, they nevertheless accept the basic structure of socialism now existing, appreciating its good features, in housing, say, and education, and pressing for democratizing reform as much as possible. They are excellently represented by the parliamentary group called Znak, the Clubs of Catholic Intelligentsia in the main cities, and the journals *Weiz*, *Znak* and *Tygodnik Powszechny* (Everyman's Weekly).

But we must not forget, finally, that for the average Pole life is, on the surface, difficult and dour; everyone has to work hard for a bare living. It is only when he begins a conversation, as he will do, that you realise he is humorous, alert and above all friendly to oneself and one's country. But then, like his intellectuals, he knows how to make the most of a situation that is both precarious and promising.