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Abstracts

Tomasz R. ALEKSANDROWICZ, 1968 – the beginning of terrorism?

The article attempts to provide an answer to the query as to what role fell to the year 1968 in the development of terrorism. Being but one of its chapters, it was clearly not that of the beginning of terrorism. The author describes briefly the genesis of terrorism and points out that, after 1945, terrorism had returned to its revolutionary connotations, namely, to fighting the incumbent regime, as well as the colonial regimes. It was then that the concept was born of terrorism as a weapon of the weak and the poor, of those who got into trouble and of the oppressed, for whom reaching for the methods of terrorism reflected their desperation and dejection. From the end of the 1960s, together with the youth rebellion (in May 1968!), the political arena is entered by ideologically motivated groups for whom it is fighting the social and political system as such, rather than a specific regime, that has become the basic motivating factor. The circumstances which contributed to the emergence of post-1968 terrorist organisations and the process of radicalisation which led from the debates and public speeches to terrorism, are analysed by the author, who also points to the specific combination, in West Germany’s case, of 1968 and nationalism.

Jerzy EISLER, 1968 in Poland – the crisis of authorities, the crisis of the society, the beginning of the changes?

The fundamental question articulated in the article addresses the issue of whether what happened in Poland in 1998 was a social crisis, and if it was, what its background was and what its specific features were? Can we, and should we, thus refer to a crisis of the then authorities? And what did it mean, in general, under the actual conditions of real socialism? And finally, can one say that 1968 marked the beginning of the systemic changes? Pointing out that, in Poland, this process was, by its nature, multi-faceted, the author is of the opinion that, a term inadequate as far as its logic is concerned, namely, ‘Marches ’68’ (that is, plural rather than singular) should be applied, bearing in mind that this concept encompassed several diverse, not necessarily inter-related, and sometimes even mutually exclusive and contrary strands. An opinion is voiced that the ‘March events’ also contributed to the formation of something which may be symbolically referred to as ‘the ‘68 generation’, consisting of the 20-year old youths who were then students. The circumstances of the student protests in Poland, differing from those in the West, are emphasised. The author also maintains that the then events in Poland may be possibly compared to the Prague Spring and the Czech reform movement alone. Recapitulating, the author posits that what happened in 1968 in Poland was both a serious social crisis and a crisis of authority, or perhaps, more precisely, a crisis of leadership in the PUWP.
**Jerzy HOLZER, The triumph and crisis of communism – 1968**

The article subjects the role performed by communist ideas in the events of 1968 to an analysis. The main thesis is an assertion that these events were not only the last episode of the fascination with Communism, which occurred in 20th century Europe, but also the apogaeum of the communist ideas widely understood after the World War II. The author points to the diverse causes leading to the growing crisis of Communism, and not only in its Soviet form. They took a different form not only in particular Western countries, but also in West and East Europe. In the latter, everywhere except the GDR, they brought defeat to revisionism, while the events in Poland and in Czechoslovakia dealt a blow to the idea of reforming the Communist systems from within and introducing elements of democracy into them. The lack of faith in the communist ideas and of the possibility of reforming the Communism from within, which had previously been adhered to by Soviet dissidents, gradually became widespread across the entire Soviet block. From then on, the crisis of Communism in Eastern part of Europe developed until those systems collapsed.

**Wanda JARZĄBEK, The impact of the events of 1968 on the FRG’s Ostpolitik and its reception in Poland**

The impact of the 1968 events on the FRG’s Ostpolitik and its reception in Poland may be considered in the short and the long term. What the article takes into consideration are the short-term effects of this political approach, observed in the years 1968–1969. Writing about the events of 1968, the author dwells on March 1968 in Poland, or more precisely, on those of its aspects which were related to the formation and implementation of the state’s policy, namely, the turbulence in ruling circles, the replacing of the people who occupied the high-ranking posts and the staffing changes in Poland’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the creators of Germany’s Eastern politics, what was fundamental was the intervention of the Warsaw Treaty armies in Czechoslovakia. The rebellion among the youth was of lesser importance to the current politics at the time. Its consequences were felt mostly in the succeeding years and were related, i.a., to public opinion in the FRG and its attitude toward the forms and extent of normalising relations with the countries of East Europe, including Poland. After 1968, in the case of the FRG, the mode of implementation of its Eastern politics was modified. It was concluded that it is the Soviet Union which must be the main partner in any talks (though it was the most important interlocutor anyway, albeit attempts were also made to hold autonomous talks with the satellite countries) and that attention must be paid to avoiding the impression that for Bonn, Ostpolitik is just an instrument to help loosen intra-block dependencies. For Poland, the events of 1968 implied a reduced field of manoeuvre, not so much because not only in Bonn, but also in other Western capitals, it was formally acknowledged that the priority lies with Moscow, but also because of diplomatic practice. Warsaw did not, however, intend to give up the right to pursue its interests, tangible evidence of which was provided by the diplomatic activity of 1969, manifest both by a turn in its policy toward Germany, and by undertaking efforts to sell its own vision of the European Conference.
Eugeniusz Cezary KRÓL, Polish culture and science in 1968. The determinants and basic problem of existence

The author presents the determinants and basic problems of existence of Polish science and culture in the period preceding the turbulent year of 1968, as well as the events directly related to this key date in Poland’s history. The departure, by Mr Gomułka’s team, from the ‘achievements’ of the Polish October of ’56, that is, from certain concessions of a democratic nature, evoked deep disappointment in both institutions and the scientific, cultural and artistic milieus, and this, in time, led to attempts at protest. The tightening of censorship, restrictions in the allocation of printing paper for books and periodicals, the closing down of newspapers, weeklies and magazines ‘inconvenient’ from the point of view of the authorities, the lack of opportunities for dialogue and constructive criticism, repressions against those who openly expressed their independent opinions, and the systematic surveillance of the scientific and creative milieus, were only a part of operations undertaken by the PRP powers-that-be in the second half of the 1960s. It was the shortcomings of the centralised, command economy and the growing shortages in the shops which resulted in Poland’s situation becoming unstable and threatening to explode. The role of the fuse was performed by the events of March 1968, which were enacted in the cultural and scientific milieus: the turbulent meetings of Warsaw’s men and women of letters, the removal of Adam Mickiewicz’s Dziady (Forefathers’ Eve) from the National Theatre’s repertoire, the manifestation in protest against the removal which followed the last performance, and finally, the students’ rally in the courtyard of Warsaw University, as well as the strikes on the part of students and the personnel of higher education institutions in Warsaw and other Polish cities as the continuation of that rally. It was after these events, when the party had launched an anti-intelligentsia campaign, supplemented with an anti-Semite witch hunt and smear campaign, unleashed by the ‘partisans’ faction around Mieczysław Moczar and by Mr Władysław Gomułka himself. An ‘ethnic criterion’ was applied to the Polish scientific and cultural milieus, eliminating, in the climate of a media witch hunt, renowned academic teachers, scholars, film-makers, publishers, journalists, men and women of letters of Jewish extraction and, finally, driving them to emigrate from Poland. It was in this period that Polish culture and science toughened up and delivered itself of illusions; however, it also suffered losses, the recouping of which would be a painful process and, subsequently, would subsequently take its full toll of years.

Piotr MADAJCZYK, The impact of 1968 on the shaping of the image of Poland and the Poles in German public opinion

The article is an initial presentation of the problem of the reception of the Polish events of 1968 in other countries, and in particular, in Germany. Two areas have been subjected to a preliminary scrutiny. The first pertains to the attitude to Czechoslovakia and the participation of the Polish armed forces in suppressing the Prague Spring by force. This participation is interpreted as a result of the Brezhnev Doctrine. What is more controversial is the balancing of the relations between the positive elements, namely, a pro-democracy social movement, and the negative ones which, apart from the policy of the Communist authorities, also included anti-Semitism and nationalism as social phenomena. References to the positive elements seem to dominate in historical studies. The situation in the mass media requires an even more detailed analysis, as emotions take the upper hand there.
Piotr MADAJCZYK, Joanna SZYMONICZEK, *The events of 1968 in the West, as portrayed in the Polish media*

The mass communication media are one of the most effective means of influencing public opinion. It was for this reason that exercising control over them was so important for the authorities in the People’s Republic of Poland. Thanks to the censorship and the guidelines as to what could be presented, and how, society received a pre-set image of events, subordinated to Poland’s foreign policy. Television, radio and the print media communicated a depressing vision of the Western states coping with gravely serious problems, both domestic and in foreign policy. In 1968, there were two central negative characters, the USA and the FRG. The USA was presented as a state breaching human rights, both in the international arena and in its domestic policy, immersed in deep social and moral problems, with political assassinations, employed as a dubious method of solving political problems being pointed to as evidence of that situation, and with the murky ties of leading politicians to the mafia structures providing the basis of the economic success so envied by other nations, including the Poles. The RFG, in its turn, was treated as a real threat to European and global peace and security, because of its running a revisionist policy, its expectations in regard of arming the country, and the West German opposition to disarmament. Against this backdrop, only the manner in which France was presented was markedly distinct, this being in view of the differences in the manner by which it carried out its foreign policy and, in particular because of its criticism of the USA and its reservations regarding Germany’s growing role in Europe, as well as its blocking of the enlargement of the European Communities. The other Western States were the focus of attention on the part of the Polish press, radio and television only occasionally.

Tadeusz Paweł RUTKOWSKI, *The events of March ’68 and the Polish historical scholarship*

The genesis of changes in Polish historical scholarship, for which the events of March 1968 became a catalyst, is rooted in the first half of the 1960s. It was then that the ever clearer generational splits became marked among Polish historians, related to the academic advancement of historians belonging to the younger generations, who had already obtained their education in the People’s Poland. It was some of the scholars who had made their careers in the 1950s who took a standpoint which was increasingly clearly opposed to the PUWP’s policy, the latter being tinted with nationalism. On the eve of the events of March, the Polish historians’ milieux were thus split, with the intra-community conflicts reinforced by the restrictive censorship policies of the PUWP authorities and their striving to make scholars conform to the current policy. The events of March 1968 became a catalyst of both the processes occurring in Polish historical scholarship in the 60s and the PUWP policy aimed at strengthening political control over scholarship.

The brutal dispersal, by the ‘Citizens Militia’, of the students’ rally in the courtyard of Warsaw University on 8th March resulted in protests not only on the part of the students, but also on that of the professors of Warsaw University and the Polish Academy of Sciences. Among their numbers were the historians Juliusz Bardach, Bogusław Leśnodorski, Tadeusz Manteuffel, Henryk Samsonowicz. The attitudes of the scholarly staff of Warsaw University’s Department of History were strongly influenced by the prestige of the ‘old’ professors. To a limited degree, the historians’ milieu was affected by the repressions on the part of the
authorities after the March events. The institutions which suffered most were the Jewish Historical Institute and the Institute of History at the University of Łódź. The number of appointments of so-called ‘March docents’ among the historians was relatively small and most of them have later written and defended their post-doctoral dissertations. As a result of the anti-Semitic campaign, more than a dozen historians of Jewish extraction probably left Poland. Another effect that the March events had on scholarship was the re-organisation of scholarly structures and numerous personal changes in institutions and to the editorial committees of scholarly journals, as well as the acceleration of the generational change. Some liberalisation of the censorship also occurred between March and September 1968, and the assessment of the image of Poland’s history changed to become more optimistic.