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THE ATTITUDE OF BRITISH DIPLOMACY
TO THE EVENTS OF 1968 IN POLAND*

We do not need to emphasize that Great Britain and Poland are not geographical neighbours and that over the many ages of their history their political ties have been weak. The Polish–British alliance during World War II, formally established on 25 August 1939, turned out to be an episodic event, although it bore significantly on the mutual relations of the two countries. The heritage of World War II left on them its imprint in the form of the presence of the Polish emigrant community in the British Isles and the conviction of many Poles that treacherous England left Poland at the mercy of Stalin. At the beginning of the Cold War Poland, as a vassal of the USSR, did not play a major role in the policy of London. The climate of relations between Great Britain and People's Poland was especially unfavourable in the years 1949–1953, when the Cold War was at its height. Beginning with 1955 the situation gradually started to improve hand in hand with the introduction of political changes in Poland, which gathered momentum in the next year, leading to the significant internal liberalization (in comparison to the model of a Stalinist country) and extension of the scope of Poland's sovereignty in the international arena. From the perspective of British diplomacy, the events of October 1956 were overshadowed by the Suez Crisis. However, the Foreign Office perceived the importance of the transformations taking place in Poland, and much hope for an evolution of its system was set on the construction of what was called national communism. Although the new First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (*KC PZPR*), Władysław Gomułka, was not regarded as an imitator of

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the Yugoslav leader Josip Broz-Tito, his ability to come to terms with Moscow was welcomed with relief, all the more because due to him Poland did not share the tragic fate of Hungary¹.

From October 1956 for over a decade Polish-British relations were good, in so far as it was possible for the relations between two countries belonging to two hostile politico-military blocs. The Polish People's Republic (PRL) held a separate place in British policy, in comparison to other countries of the Warsaw Pact, with the exception of the USSR, of course. This was corroborated by frequent visits of ministers, a growing commercial and cultural exchange as well as the increasing number of individual travels between the two countries. For the next decade Great Britain was the most important political and economic partner of Warsaw among the European capitalist countries. It is true that Gomułka's regime did not shun the credits of the USA government calculated in zlotys, which allowed it to buy American grain and to soften its shortage on the domestic market, yet political contacts with Washington, the main adversary of the USSR, although they were not avoided, bore the stamp of ideological disloyalty, which was not so flagrant in the case of Poland's relations with London. The political, military and economic positions of Great Britain and Poland in their respective alliances seemed to be outwardly similar. At any rate, Polish diplomacy directed from 1956 onwards by a pre-war socialist from the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), Adam Rapacki, tried to maintain this impression and emphasized in its talks with the British that both countries should exert a softening influence on the Super Powers. This was welcomed by the British diplomacy, which was in favour of the *détente*, although the aggressive actions of Nikita Khrushchev, his demand that the Western Powers withdraw from Berlin, his placing of the nuclear missiles in Cuba, which surprised not only the world, but also his own allies, did not improve the relations between East and West.

¹ M. Kula, *Paryż, Londyn i Waszyngton patrzą na Październik 1956 w Polsce (Paris, London and Washington Observe October 1956 in Poland)*, Warszawa 1992. It would be difficult to find a better contrast of personalities than the leader of the Hungarian Revolution, Imre Nagy, an NKVD agent in the USSR in the 1930s who sent to death at least over a dozen Hungarian communists and Władysław Gomułka, see J. Granville, *Imre Nagy aka "Volodya" — a Dent in the Martyr's Halo?*, "Bulletin Cold War International History Projects" (henceforward: BCWIHP), issue 5, pp. 28, 34-37.

To the disappointment of the British, Gomułka officially declared his solidarity with the foreign policy of the USSR, although he was in fact critical of Khrushchev's actions, all the more because in the case of the Berlin and Cuban crises Moscow did not achieve anything, but only imperilled the prestige of the whole communist block². Gomułka's policy sprang from his communist views, which were well-known to London from the moment he came to power, but also from his conviction that the USSR was the only power which guaranteed that Poland would retain its border on the Oder-Neisse Line. In this matter the British formally took the stand of the Potsdam Agreement, which said that the Polish-German border would be ultimately delineated at a peace conference. In 1962, under the influence of the endeavours of the leaders of the Polish emigré community in London, General Władysław Anders and Edward Raczyński, the then conservative Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Lord Home assured, first these politicians personally, and later the authorities of the Polish People's Republic that his country, in the case of Germany's unification would not treat the issue of the Polish western border in terms of a bargain. These protestations were voiced by the British without the knowledge of their NATO ally, that is the FRG. However, they remained secret and despite the corroboration of their validity to Rapacki in Warsaw in September 1965 by the Labour successor to Lord Home, Michael Stewart, the British diplomacy did not intend to disclose its stand in public, fearful of the reaction of Bonn³. Such fears were not shared by General Charles de Gaulle, who as early as 1959 declared for the creation of a united Germany that would include only the territory of the FRG, the German Democratic Republic and Berlin. Only in the middle 1960s did Great Britain start to lose, in favour of France, its position as the most important political partner of the Polish People's Republic among the Western Powers. De Gaulle, at first received with much distrust,

² *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego PRL-ZSRR 1956-1970 (The Secret Documents of the Polish People's Republic-USSR Political Bureau, 1956-1970)*, Londyn 1998, pp. 249-252.

³ J. Tebinka, *Brytyjskie zapewnienia w sprawie granicy na Odrze i Nysie Łużyckiej z 1962 r. (British Assurances of 1962 Concerning the Oder-Neisse Border)*, in: *Gdańsk — Gdynia — Europa — Stany Zjednoczone w XIX i XX wieku. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana prof. A. Ciencialu*, ed. by M. Andrzejewski, Gdańsk 2000.

despite his statements on the matter of the Oder–Neisse border, strengthened his position in the eyes of communist Warsaw, and above all of Moscow⁴, due to his anti-Americanism, the highest point of which was the withdrawal of France from the structures of the NATO, as well as due to his counteracting of the further integration and expansion of the European Communities.

London's approval of the scope of internal liberties in Poland, (considerable if compared with the other countries of the Soviet bloc, though differing by far from the model of a democratic country), was not an essential element in the British policy towards the Polish People's Republic. A priority issue for the economy of Great Britain, outdistanced by its European rivals, was the export of its highly-processed manufactures. In the 1960s Poland was Britain's main economic partner, second only to the USSR, among the countries of the Warsaw Pact. The trade turnover constantly increased, despite the limited export possibilities of the Polish economy, to reach 104.9 million pounds in 1967 (British import amounted to 56.2 million and export to 48.7 million pounds). British diplomacy, trying to meet the demand of Warsaw, was liberal in its approach to the restrictions on the export to communist countries introduced by the COCOM agreement. Great Britain played an essential part in the attempts at a modernization of the Polish economy under Władysław Gomułka.

Mutual cultural contacts of the two countries were relatively free. In contrast to the cultural exchange with other communist countries, they were not restrained by the conditions of any formal international agreement. After World War II the British Council resumed its activity in Poland, although it was only after the changes following October 1956 that this institution could become more active in disseminating the knowledge of Great Britain and the English language, mainly at an academic level. Apart from the traditional stream of cultural exchange, embra-

⁴ *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego*, pp. 447–450, 494–495.

⁵ E. Barker, *Britain in a Divided Europe 1945–1970*, London 1971, p. 269. About 2/3 of machinery investments imported at that time to Poland came from Great Britain, the Archives of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warszawa (henceforward AMSZ), N° 19/75, file 5, note by T. Wiśniewski of 4 November 1968. Information about the licenses and technological processes purchased in Great Britain was secretly passed to the USSR, see *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego*, p. 299.

cing cinema films, television productions, visits of theatre companies and music ensembles as well as art exhibitions, an increasing influence, especially on the young generation in the 1960s, was exerted by English rock music. The music of "The Beatles" and the "Rolling Stones" enjoyed great popularity, and the concert given in 1967 by Mike Jagger and his group in the Congress Hall in Warsaw became a legend⁶. "The Rolling Stones" were not favoured at that time by the British Establishment, but they enhanced the interest, especially of large sections of Polish youth, in the Western World and Great Britain, much more than the BBC radio broadcasts in Polish, no longer jammed at that time.

In 1967 the number of individual trips amounted to 15 thousand in each direction. This number did not increase any more because, on the one hand, the British showed little interest in travelling to Poland, and on the other the Polish side put restrictions on passports and foreign currency. Both countries maintained the visa system for safety's sake, thus exercising full control of the movement of travellers. Paradoxically, it was the authorities of the Polish People's Republic that proposed to shorten the time of waiting for a visa, and the British who resisted this project.

At the beginning of 1968, over a decade after the Polish October, the British-Polish relations were marked by strong disappointment on both sides, which does not mean, however, that they were in a state of crisis. The hopes set by British diplomacy on the transformations that followed the Polish October were replaced by disappointment with Gomulka's conservative policy, his reluctance to take up economic reforms, the limitation of internal liberties in Poland, his unyielding stand in face of the great coalition in the FRG, as well as his support for Moscow in any international conflict. On the other hand, Gomulka set great hopes on Labour's coming to power in London in the autumn of 1964. Three years later it became clear these hopes were far from being fulfilled. It is true that Harold Wilson's government contributed to the rejection by Washington of the conception of multilateral nuclear force (MLF) headed by the NATO, a project which according to Warsaw threatened that the

⁶ No report on "The Rolling Stones" concert in Poland sent by the British Embassy in Warsaw has been preserved in the Foreign Office.

FRG would get access to nuclear arms, but this does not mean that the British wanted to leave the Atlantic alliance⁷.

Although in the essential question of the Polish western border British diplomacy, directed by Labour ministers, did not desist from its assurances of 1962, Gomułka understood their cautious policy as a withdrawal from the stand taken by Harold Wilson, still as leader of the Opposition, who declared for the recognition of the Polish border on the Oder–Neisse Line during his visit to Warsaw in June 1963⁸.

The year 1967 was not good for either of the two countries. The economic position of Great Britain deteriorated to such an extent that in November Wilson's government, wishing to save the balance of payments, had to make the long-delayed decision about the devaluation of the pound. The politico-military consequences of this decision were not slow in coming. In January 1968 the British Cabinet decided to withdraw its armed forces from the bases east of Suez, with the exception of Hong Kong. The implementation of this decision was to extend into several years, yet it was a visible sign of the end of the British Empire and of bidding farewell to the status of Britain as a Power. However, the next attempt at bringing London closer to Europe ended in failure when in November 1967 President of France General Charles de Gaulle for the second time put a veto on the British application for membership in the European Communities⁹.

In the case of the Polish People's Republic the symptoms of an economic crisis were different, but this was due to the specificity of the country where the nationalization of the means of production and the state-directed economy and allocation of funds and materials had led to the creation of permanent shortages. At least from the middle 1960s onwards it was completely clear to the British diplomacy that Poland's potential for develop-

⁷ H. Haftendorn, *NATO and the Nuclear Revolution, A Crisis of Credibility, 1966-1967*, Oxford 1996, pp. 113-145, 162-3; D. Healey, *The Time of My Life*, London 1989, pp. 301-306.

⁸ Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warszawa (The Archives of Modern Records — henceforward AAN), KC PZPR, XIA/25, fol. 327, Władysław Gomułka's talk with H. Wilson 13 June 1963.

⁹ D. Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role, British Foreign Policy since 1945*, Basingstoke 1990, pp. 112-120; P. M. H. Bell, *France and Britain 1940-1994. The Long Separation*, London 1997, pp. 210-214; S. George, *An Awkward Partner. Britain in the European Community*, Oxford 1998, pp. 35-38.

ment under Gomulka was running out. Although in 1967, a year considered good in respect of the growth of production, Polish authorities managed to introduce another rise in the prices of meat without causing an outbreak of social protest, the British saw that stagnation almost in every field of life could sooner or later lead to a change of the leadership of the PUWP.

This does not mean that British diplomacy was hoping for another crisis in Poland. At the beginning of January 1968 Whitehall decided that any attempts at encouraging the East European States (a term that replaced Soviet Satellites in 1964) to break away from the USSR were dangerous. The aim that Whitehall set to itself was to develop a wide network of various contacts between these countries and the West, and thus help to reach an understanding with the USSR on the matters of disarmament and the German question as well as to lessen international tensions and the threat of a nuclear war¹⁰.

Despite their belonging to two opposed alliances, the relationships between the two countries seemed to be normal. This was testified by the issues raised by British and Polish diplomacies at the beginning of 1968: the creation of conditions for the growth of commerce, the right of fishing in the British continental shelf, visa problems, or even the manner of solving spy affairs. Both sides tried to minimize the influence on their mutual relations of international conflicts, especially in the Third World, where they were usually in the opposite camps, as for example during the war in Vietnam, but sometimes on the same side, although not necessarily for the same reasons, as for example in the case of Biafra's secession or the problem of Rhodesia.

The British Embassy in Warsaw carefully watched the development of the internal situation in Poland, focussing in the first place on the changes at the highest levels of the state authorities, their policy towards the intellectuals and the Catholic Church as well as the symptoms of growing anti-Semitism that since the six-day war in Israel appeared in the dealings of the communist regime. However, at that time, these dealings did not entail any negative consequences for the relations between the two countries which in January and February 1968 developed without any major obstacles.

¹⁰ The National Archives, Public Record Office, Kew (henceforward: TNA, PRO), PREM 13/2636, memorandum by J. A. Thompson of 9 Jan. 1968.

Polish diplomacy tried to give these relations a new impulse when after coming back from consultations in Warsaw, Ambassador Jerzy Morawski together with the Embassy Counsellor Tadeusz Wiśniewski met the Deputy Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, Peter T. Hayman and the Head of the Northern Department in the Foreign Office, Howard Smith on 1 March 1968. Morawski proposed a number of new ministerial visits, including that of Rapacki's deputy in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Marian Naszkowski. Polish authorities traditionally regarded the exchange of ministerial visits as an important element of relations with capitalist countries, although they were rarely followed by an actual intensification of co-operation in concrete fields. This did not prevent the British diplomats from taking a favourable attitude to the Polish proposals, which were regarded as a sign of the intention to continue the political dialogue. On the other hand, Hayman and Smith were relieved to find that their Polish interlocutors did not touch on the issue of Peter and Helen Kroger, the Soviet agents sentenced for espionage to imprisonment in Great Britain. This couple, all of a sudden claimed the citizenship of the Polish People's Republic, which the British did not intend to accept¹¹.

Nobody supposed at that time that the dynamic of the development of events in Poland and in the international arena would soon thwart the planned ministerial visits. It is true that the Foreign Office received the reports from the British Embassy in Warsaw on the taking off of the performances of Mickiewicz's *The Forefathers' Eve* and the resultant arrests of students,

¹¹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/281, NP 3/14, P. T. Hayman to T. Brimelow 7 Mar. 1968. The real names of the Kroger couple were Lona and Morris Cohen. They had spied for the USSR since World War II, first in the USA, and from 1954 onwards in Great Britain, playing an important role as links of the spy rings. The British counter-espionage got on their track while looking for the agent indicated by Col. Michał Goleniewski, the officer of Polish Secret Service who fled to the West. The Cohens were arrested in 1961 and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. The British authorities set them free in October 1969 in return for Gerald Brooke, freed by the Russians. Brooke was a teacher who smuggled political literature of a Russian organization to the USSR. He was sentenced to several years in a labour camp, and then threatened with another trial so as to extort concessions from the British. The Cohens left by air for Warsaw on 24 Oct. 1969. After a short stay in Poland, which was to justify their earlier claim of being Polish citizens, they went to the USSR, see N. West, O. Tsarev, *The Crown Jewels. The British Secrets at the Heart of the KGB Archives*, London 1998, pp. 256–271. C. Andrew, V. Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield. The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, London 1999, pp. 409–411.

or the meeting of the Warsaw Section of the Union of Polish Writers on 29 February 1968, during which Stefan Kisielewski used the term “dim-wits” to define the dictatorship of the PUWP. However, these events were not treated as the prelude to any large-scale protests¹². Nor did British Intelligence foresee the impending upheaval. To justify the British, one must say that this was not easy for any observers of the Polish scene, since the student protests developed spontaneously, even if one assumes that they were provoked by the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs (MSW) headed by Mieczysław Moczar. It was even more difficult to foresee the reaction of the Polish authorities with Gomulka at the head, who unleashed an anti-intelligentsia and anti-Jewish campaign¹³.

On 8–11 March 1968, at the height of student protests in Warsaw, the British Embassy passed a detailed account of these events to London. Some telegrams describing them were sent on the air even without being coded *En clair*, which meant that they were intercepted by the Polish Sigint Intelligence. They were based on the direct observations of British diplomats as well as information they got from their Polish friends. We need not reconstruct the course of March events on the basis of their reports, since their descriptions do not contain any new facts, although when we confront them with our present knowledge we have to note that they were prepared in a very careful and objective way. British Ambassador, Thomas Brimelow, and his subordinates tried to avoid any direct commentary, hence their reports from Warsaw do not contain any deeper interpretation. In the situation where the British did not possess any consular offices outside of Warsaw, it's no wonder that they did not inform the headquarters about other Polish towns that were the scene of student protests. These reports came with a delay, for example the account by Norman Davies, a young historian then staying in Cracow, which came about half a year after these events, and was for this reason merely of historical significance¹⁴.

¹² TNA, PRO, FCO 28/293, NP 9/7, I. R. Rawlinson (Warsaw) to Foreign Office (henceforward FO) 5 Feb., 1 and 8 Mar. 1968.

¹³ On the March events see more extensively J. Eisler, *Marzec 1968. Geneza, przebieg, konsekwencje (March 1968. Origin, Development, Consequences)*, Warszawa 1991; D. Stola, *Kampania antyżydowska w Polsce 1967–1968 (The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland 1967–1968)*, Warszawa 2000; *Marzec 1968. Trzydzieści lat później (March 1968. Thirty Years Later)* (henceforward: *Marzec 1968*), vol. I: *Referaty (Papers)*, ed. M. Kula, P. Osęka and M. Zaremba, Warszawa 1998.

The news of the demonstrations and clashes with the militia in Warsaw did not cause much sensation in the Foreign Office. The reaction to them was not, however, confined to the decision-making process of this Ministry, which on 15 March 1968 sent a circular to the British diplomatic offices all over the world. It said, among other things, that the significance of the incidents in Warsaw should not be exaggerated, since they could not be compared with the process of transformations in Czechoslovakia, such as, for example, the abolition of censorship. The circular predicted that the Polish authorities would soon take control of the situation, although Gomułka was defined as an “out of date” politician whose rule was slowly coming to an end. On the other hand, the blaming of the Jews for inspiring the incidents was defined as “unpleasant”¹⁵. At any rate, the British diplomacy was too pragmatic to attach too much importance to the anti-Zionist campaign conducted with renewed intensity by the Polish propaganda.

Almost simultaneously, the Polish diplomacy tried to spare no pains to minimize the significance of student demonstrations. On 15 March 1968 the representatives of the Polish Embassy in London presented J. D. Boyd, a diplomat from the Northern Department of the Foreign Office, with their version that innocent students had been manipulated by the ex-Stalinists, such as Roman Zambrowski. If the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs still entertained any doubts as to the British stand, they were dispelled by Boyd, who informed his interlocutors that the British saw no reason why the incidents in Warsaw should cause a deterioration in the bilateral relations and the calendar of the planned visits to the two countries¹⁶. The same day in Warsaw, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Józef Winiewicz told the First Secretary and Head of Chancery of the British Embassy, Derek Tonkin, that “the students could not have chosen a more difficult time to make their protests”. Brimelow interpreted these words

¹⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/294, NP 9/8, Brimelow to FO 8, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 16 Mar. 1968. D. Tonkin to FO 8 Mar. 1968, I. Rawlinson to FO 9, 11 Mar. 1968. The latter was the subject of surveillance by the Polish Secret Services, who were, however, rather annoyed by the engagement of USA diplomats in the observation of the events in Warsaw, see *Marzec 1968*, vol. II, source appendix, comp. M. Zarem-ba, Warszawa 1998, pp. 28, 137, 141.

¹⁵ TNA, PRO, PREM 13/2114, FO Guidance of 15 Mar. 1968.

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/281, NP 3/14, note by J. Boyd of 15 Mar. 1968.

in his telegram to London as a reference to the faction struggle within the PUWP before its Fifth Congress which was to take place at the end of the year¹⁷.

While the official British bodies kept silent about the events in Poland, we should note the voices of British public opinion. The second half of the 1960s saw an extraordinary expansion of television. In this case, however, as there were no pictures from Warsaw, the voices of the British press were of the greatest opinion-creative significance. However, a survey of the main dailies shows that even at the climax of the March events they did not devote much space to Poland. Most press articles appeared on 11–15 March 1968 when “The Times” and “The Guardian” informed every day of student demonstrations in Warsaw and other towns and of the anti-Jewish propaganda campaign. The conservative “The Daily Telegraph” devoted less attention to Polish affairs, trying to maintain a neutral position. The British papers as well as the whole of the Western press found it difficult to obtain information on the Polish events, since only a few most serious titles: “The Times”, and the French “Le Monde”, had their correspondents in Warsaw. After the outbreak of the upheavals, the Polish authorities, according to the opinion of Polish diplomats, by refusing to grant entry visas to journalists, stopped several hundred of them from all the world over from coming to Poland¹⁸. Other newspapers had to rely on the accounts by Western press agencies or the friendliness of their own Ministries of Foreign Affairs, which could give them access to the fragments of reports made by their representatives in Poland. In the latter case British diplomacy had at its disposal the most specialized system (among the NATO countries) of inspiring press publications as well as of influencing the media. Its centre was the Information Research Department created in 1948 within the framework of the Foreign Office, which on the basis of intelligence and diplomatic information prepared source material, as well as its elaborations which it then passed to reliable journalists. One of their recipients was Victor Z o r z a, a Polish Jew who emigrated during the war, author of a number of articles published in the leftist “The Guardian”, who especially brought to the fore the

¹⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/294, NP 9/8, Brimelow to H. Smith 15 Mar. 1968.

¹⁸ Two BBC reporters were not admitted either.

anti-Semitic threads of the dealings of the Polish authorities¹⁹. The accounts by Richard Davy, a Warsaw correspondent for "The Times", were more balanced. However, after two articles he was expelled from Poland, although before March 1968 his accounts could hardly be regarded as hostile to the Polish People's Republic. The communist authorities, not used to open criticism, were almost hysterical about any critical voices, treating them as an anti-Polish action, and considerably exaggerating the influence of one or another article on the shaping of the opinion about Poland²⁰. The British press informed every day of violent incidents the world over and the news from Poland disappeared among a multitude of other events. What testified to the importance of those problems was that they were discussed in editorial commentaries, and very few dealt with the March events. From the point of view of an ordinary inhabitant of Great Britain, Poland was a distant country which aroused little interest.

In the British Isles most interest in the development of the situation in Poland was shown by the Polish and Jewish communities. Neither of those groups was strong enough to influence the decision-making processes of the British authorities in a direction that would be favourable to them. While analysing the preserved archival material we may risk a statement that the British Jews were a group more active in trying to influence the MPs from their constituencies and through them to effect an intervention of the British diplomacy in defence of the Polish Jews. The Poles, on the other hand, turned out to be more efficient in organizing manifestations in London, and on 16 March 1968 they brought together several thousand people in front of the Polish Embassy, who protested against the internal repressions in Poland. The Polish emigré community, hostile towards the

¹⁹ P. Lashmar, J. Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War 1948-1977*, Stroud 1998, pp. 120-121. On the IRD see "History Notes", N° 9, *IRD. Origins and Establishment of the Foreign Office Information Research Department 1946-48*, London 1995; W. Scott Lucas, C. J. Morris, *A Very British Crusade: the Information Research Department and the Beginning of the Cold War*, in: *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War, 1945-51*, ed. by R. J. Aldrich, London 1992, pp. 85-110.

²⁰ The probable cause of the expulsion of "The Times" correspondent was the reference to his reports (*sic!*) made by Radio Free Europe, see *Marzec 1968*, vol. II, p. 141. In the 3rd Department of the MSZ a folder was prepared entitled *Anti-Polish Zionist Campaign in Great Britain 1968*, of which very few fragments have been preserved, AMSZ, N° 19/75, file 6.

communist regime, was interested primarily in the defence of Polish interests. Its leadership, the Executive of National Unity, said it had nothing in common with the anti-Semitic campaign of the communist authorities, but on the other hand they tried to counteract the effect of the most extreme anti-Polish voices coming from the Jewish communities in Great Britain by recalling the role of the Poles in rescuing the Jews during World War II²¹. It is difficult to assess to what extent the attitude of the leaders of the Polish emigré community in Great Britain towards the situation of Polish Jews was representative of the whole Polish population there.

A more insightful picture of the student demonstrations and the initial reaction of the Polish authorities is given in the long letter of Brimelow sent on 14 March 1968, which reached the Foreign Office four days later. The British Ambassador first recalled the origin and course of events in Warsaw on 8–13 March 1968, emphasizing that after being surprised, the peace-keeping forces brought the situation under their control. Brimelow was surprised by the lack of an official declaration of the top authorities of Poland concerning the protests. He called into question the credibility of the version of March events propagated so far by the Warsaw section of the PUWP, who blamed “the Zionist elements” for everything, and was right in predicting that many Poles would use this for their attacks on Jews. However, information collected by the British diplomats did not allow him to state, whether and to what extent the workers were hostile towards student protests, and this issue was crucial to the restoration of public peace. He admitted that he did not know anything about the correlation of forces in the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the PUWP, or whether Gomułka was able to survive and eliminate his rivals, including the Minister of Internal Affairs Mieczysław Moczar, the leader of the so-called “partisans”. At least from the middle 1960s onwards the British saw Edward Gierek, the First Secretary of the Voivodeship Committee of the PUWP in Katowice, as a possible successor to Gomułka, although Brimelow was not able to say to what extent his chances grew after the March events. In his deliberations, the

²¹ *Druka Wielka Emigracja 1945–1990 (The Second Great Emigration 1945–1990)* (henceforward DWE), vol. I: A. Friszke, *Życie polityczne emigracji (The Political Life of the Emigré Communities)*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 347–351.

British Ambassador did not forget the strategic situation of Poland. He concluded that Gomułka could not allow any further escalation of street protests which would imperil public order, since ultimately, the state of anarchy would be tantamount to inviting an intervention of the USSR. In Brimelow's opinion this factor, combined with the conservative and autocratic posture of the First Secretary of the PUWP, in the nearest future ruled out Poland's entering on the road of reforms. The Foreign Secretary George Brown was of the same opinion before he left his office in the middle of March 1968. His subordinates generally agreed with the sad conclusions of Brimelow's report, although they still hoped that the speedily-advancing process of liberalization in Czechoslovakia would influence the course of events in Poland²².

These illusions were soon dispelled by Gomułka's speech delivered on 19 March 1968 at his meeting with party activists in the Congress Hall, a speech the contents of which were sent by the British Embassy to London on the next day, followed by Brimelow's letter which discussed its main parts and reached London on March 25. However, regardless of the unyielding stand of the First Secretary of the Communist Party revealed among other things in his attacks on the intellectuals, the British ambassador thought that its purpose was to lessen the tension, and the Northern Department shared this opinion. The very atmosphere of the meeting in the Congress Hall reminded Brimelow of Hitlerite mass-meetings (in 1939, as a young diplomat, he worked for the British Consulate in the Free City of Gdańsk), especially the shouts *Wiesław, Wiesław*, which resembled *Sieg Heil*. The British noticed Gomułka's words that Zionism could not endanger Polish communism, but the head of the Northern Department, Howard Smith, had no doubt that this did not mean that the anti-Semitic campaign was drawing to a close²³.

Polish Ambassador to London Jerzy Morawski tried not to allow the Polish-British relations to deteriorate. This was rather a thankless role, the more so because as an ex-member of the

²² TNA, PRO, FCO 28/294, NP 9/8, Brimelow to Brown 14 Mar. 1968, H. Smith to Hayman 22 Mar. 1968, note by Hayman of 25 Mar. 1968; PREM 13/2114, Brimelow's talk with Pierre Gregoire (Luxemburg's foreign minister) 11 Mar. 1968.

²³ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/294, NP 9/8, Brimelow to M. Stewart (Foreign Secretary since 15 Mar.) 21 Mar. 1968, note by H. Smith of 29 Mar. 1968. For the atmosphere of this meeting see also M. F. R a k o w s k i, *Dzienniki polityczne (Political Diaries)*, vol. 3: 1967-1968, Warszawa 1999, pp. 164-165.

Political Bureau he was almost stigmatized as a "revisionist" and was soon to be removed from his post by Moczar's people in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. On 22 March 1968 he met Smith at a lunch on the occasion of a visit of Polish experts on management. The Polish Ambassador was known to the Foreign Office as a man using a different language than the representatives of other communist countries. This time he did not disappoint the head of the Northern Department, either, telling him with a smile that he had good news of Antonin Novotny. However, Smith had already known about the resignation of the last president of Czechoslovakia from his post. While referring to the unrest in Poland, the British diplomat said he was worried by the anti-Semitic campaign conducted with the motto of struggle against Zionism. Morawski did not try to deny the facts, but drew attention to Gomulka's speech, which, although it contained an infelicitous division of Jews into three categories, was a "clever" attempt to show that the criticism of Zionism was not directed against every Jew. Both interlocutors soon returned to the development of events in Czechoslovakia and Morawski gave expression to his cautious optimism, saying he hoped the Czechs would succeed better in achieving what the Poles did not achieve after October 1956, although he did not rule out an eventual threat of Soviet intervention²⁴.

In his talk with Smith the Polish Ambassador, probably deliberately, did not insist on a speedy answer of the British concerning the earlier proposed ministerial visits. On the same day Brimelow sent a letter to Hayman on this subject, supporting the visit of Naszkowski to Great Britain in the autumn of 1968, but suggesting that the visit of Stefan Jędrychowski, the head of the Planning Commission of the Polish Cabinet, be better prepared. However, Brimelow was against inviting a group of journalists from Poland²⁵. The British diplomats in Warsaw did not realize that on 21–22 March 1968 a debate of the local party organization was held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which became the prelude to a personal purge in this ministry. During this debate Vice-Minister Naszkowski, absent because of his trip to Scandinavia, was attacked on account of his improper personnel policy in his ministry and a pro-Zionist attitude, which under

²⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/281, NP 3/14, Smith to Hayman 22 Mar. 1968.

²⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/281, NP 3/14, Brimelow to Hayman 22 Mar. 1968.

the circumstances meant that a judgement was passed on him by default²⁶. The above-mentioned session of the PUWP Executive was the last debate attended by Minister Rapacki. After three strokes he left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs without trying to retain his post. He was not able to defend his collaborators now attacked by false accusations. The British generally did not attach too much importance to personal data, especially regarding the communist functionaries, but they could not overlook the fact that Rapacki recognized the value of relations with London, which he tried to visit en route for the UN sessions in New York. His, for the time being, diplomatic illness, connected with his leaving the Political Bureau on 8 April 1968, hampered the efficiency of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Unrest in the institutes of higher education, just as the disturbances in the streets did not end on 11 March, although on the following days their intensity was incomparably smaller. In the second half of that month the British Embassy sent to London detailed information on this subject, including that about the strike at the Technical University of Warsaw on 20–21 March 1968, as well as about the attacks of the propaganda of People's Poland on Zionists and revisionists²⁷.

However, the unabated political tensions in Poland did not have much influence on Great Britain's policy towards the Polish state. The report that reached the new Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, before his talk with Ambassador Morawski on 26 March 1968, said in the rubric Bilateral Relations: "No immediate problems". Stewart's subordinates, probably without realising that Naszkowski had fallen from grace, suggested that consent be given to his arrival, however, because of a tight calendar they ruled out the visit of the head of British diplomacy to Warsaw in

²⁶ J. Eisler, *op. cit.*, pp. 369–371; *Marzec '68. Między tragedią a podłością (Between Tragedy and Meanness)*, comp. G. Soltysiak, J. Stępień, Warszawa 1998, pp. 309–319. Polish Ambassador to India R. Spasowski accused Naszkowski of planning to inform Israel of the visit of the Polish delegation to Egypt. In his memoirs Spasowski omits this thread and says that the party organization in the MSZ ordered him to send a telegram criticising Naszkowski for his links with the USSR (*sic!*), and then another telegram where he referred to the weak parts in the vice-minister's character, see R. Spasowski, *The Liberation of One*, New York 1986, pp. 428–429. In connection with Spasowski's telegram, Naszkowski denied he told Spasowski to go to Israel for diplomatic consultations, *AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/233*, Naszkowski to Gomułka 20 Apr. 1968.

²⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO, 28/294, NP 9/8, Brimelow to FO 22 and 23 Mar. 1968.

1968. Students' protests were regarded as their discontent with Poland's lagging behind other communist countries in respect of internal reforms and their lack of hope for any changes in the leadership of the state. Nevertheless, British diplomacy was convinced that the authorities of People's Poland had brought the situation under control²⁸.

The fact that on 26 March 1968 Stewart granted an audience to Morawski, certainly testified to the respect the Polish ambassador enjoyed with the British. In reply to Morawski's invitation, the foreign secretary said he was willing to come to Poland, but only in 1969. The idea of this visit was assessed in London from the point of view of the changes occurring in Czechoslovakia; the British probably hoped that the political situation in Warsaw would undergo an evolution before this visit²⁹.

Meanwhile things in the capital of Poland calmed down, and the British Embassy sent a report to this effect on the eve of Stewart's meeting with Morawski. The Embassy did not perceive any attempt at referring to the Czech experiences in Polish protests, and this was attributed to the ill-feelings of Poles towards their southern neighbours. On the other hand, the British diplomats found with regret a lack of precision in the formulation of the protesters' aims. They had to wait for it until the meeting of students at Warsaw University on 28 March 1968, where a resolution was adopted demanding economic reforms, freedom of action for student organizations, as well as a greater role of the Sejm and abolition of the Small Penal Code. The British Embassy soon came into possession of the content of this resolution, and towards the end of the first decade of April assessed that the action of Secret Services had undermined the students' morale, although it was hard to foresee what their feelings would be when they came back to school after the Easter break³⁰.

All throughout this time the anti-Zionist propagandist campaign in Poland did not subside, and the Foreign Office kept being

²⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/281, NP 3/14, Courtesy Call by Morawski on Secretary of State 26 Mar. 1968.

²⁹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/281, NP 3/14, Smith to Hayman 5 Apr. 1968. There was some confusion at the beginning of April after the written reply in the House of Commons to an MP's question, where it was mistakenly asserted that the issue of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs' arrival in Poland was not recently the subject of bilateral talks. Smith apologized for this mistake to the Polish Embassy.

³⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/294, NP 9/8, D. Tonkin to R. O. Miles 25 Mar., 29 Mar., 3, 8 and 9 Apr. 1968.

precisely informed of its symptoms. It was accompanied by the personal purge, which gathered momentum, and was not confined to persons of Jewish descent. This was detrimental not only to the picture of the communist state, but also Poland *per se*, which effect was perceived by the British, although the international reaction to March 1968 in Poland cannot be overestimated. The relatively unanimous opinion of the British Embassy and the Foreign Office saw the main reason for the anti-Semitic campaign in Poland in the struggle for power at the top level of the PUWP, and only in the second place in the susceptibility of Poles to anti-Jewish slogans. Polish diplomacy tried to set bounds to the losses that the anti-Zionist campaign caused to the image of Poland in Great Britain, without perceiving the actual reasons for the protests of the Jewish community in London, and even calling them, with some exaggeration, an anti-Polish campaign. The main element of the propaganda of the Polish side was inspiring the voices that emphasized the contribution of the Poles to rescuing the Jews during World War II. These actions coincided with similar endeavours of the Polish community in Great Britain³¹.

Before the talk, planned for 11 April 1968, between the Minister of State in the Foreign Office, Goronwy Roberts, and Ambassador Morawski, the British thought it advisable to show good will to the authorities of People's Poland in the further development of their contacts. They decided to consent to the visit of Vice-Minister Naszkowski, without realising, to all appearances, that his career in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*MSZ*), was already foredoomed. However, they were more cautious as regards the journey of Jędrychowski, and waited for the further development of events in Poland. Documents show that Roberts passed to Morawski a positive answer in the matter of the visits by Naszkowski and diplomats from the *MSZ* (in return for the visit of Hayman), although he said that to his regret, the President of the Board of Trade, Anthony Crosland, would not go to the Poznań Fair, and would be replaced by Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Par-

³¹ *AMSZ*, N° 19/75, file 6, Morawski to E. Milnikiel (Head of the 3rd Department) 27 Mar. 1968. On 19 Apr. 1968, the communist journal "Morning Star" published Władysław Bartoszewski's article on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. On 20 Apr. 1968 "The Observer" published Edward Raczynski's letter *The Jews in Poland* where he described the assistance given to the Jews during the war by the Polish Government in London.

liamentary Under-Secretary of State in that ministry³². There were no indications, however, that the rank of the head of the British trade delegation was lowered in connection with the March events in Poland. This is corroborated by the favourable climate of the exchange of opinions between the two diplomats.

However, dark clouds had already gathered over the person of Ambassador Morawski, so highly valued by the British. Independent in his opinions, and even worse, speaking his mind in the face of the representatives of a Western Power, from the point of view of the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs, he was an excellent target for attack as a diplomat who was not fit to perform such an important function. On 12 April 1968 in the Polish Embassy in London a party conference took place, staged by those of its employees as well as officials of the Commercial Councillor's Bureau who were actually employed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs as intelligence officers. As a result of a conference that lasted many hours, Morawski was excluded from the PUWP, which the authors of this decision understood as the end of his activity in London. The Ambassador immediately flew to Warsaw where Gomulka, furious at the wilfulness of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, ordered him to return to London and continue acting in his capacity. The Basic Party Organization, meeting the directive from the headquarters, reinstated him as a member of the PUWP several days later³³. We do not know to what extent the British Intelligence and diplomacy were aware of those dramatic events, which sometimes verged on comedy. No doubt, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) found it difficult to obtain information from Warsaw. However, it could not have overlooked the intensified travelling activity of Morawski. The above-mentioned party conference was attended by at least 70 people, which means that its substance was probably soon known to the Foreign Office³⁴. Regardless of the favourable attitude of the British

³² TNA, PRO, FCO 28/281, NP 3/14, H. J. Arbutnott to G. Roberts 10 Apr. 1968, record of Roberts's talk with Morawski 11 Apr. 1968.

³³ A. Gałicki, *Z tajnych archiwów (From Secret Archives)*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 329–335; M. F. Rakowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 241–242; W. Borodziej, *Dyplomacja PRL w i wobec Marca (Polish Diplomacy in and versus March)*, in: *Marzec 1968. Trzydzieści lat później*, pp. 96–98. The stand taken by the participants in the meeting can best be assessed in the light of the earlier debate of the Basic Party Organization of the PUWP, which took place in the Polish Embassy on 18 Jan. 1968. All the speakers praised the report by Ambassador Morawski. AMSZ, N° 19/75, file 5, Morawski to E. Milnikiel 14 Feb. 1968.

diplomacy towards the Polish Ambassador, information about his shaky position did not help either him or the whole Embassy, to continue their work in London.

In the second half of April 1968 the British diplomats in Warsaw acquired a clearer picture of the personnel purge in the MSZ. This can be seen from the report of Ambassador Brimelow on his talk of 23 April 1968 with Minister Winiewicz, who after Rapacki's dismissal directed the ministry and had been known for a long time to London. Brimelow raised the matter of Naszkowski's visit, but as he wrote to his headquarters: "Winiewicz was careful not to say anything about Naszkowski's personal position", and only confirmed the fact that a "reorganisation" was going on at the Polish ministry. The picture of confusion in the MSZ becomes more complete when we learn that Winiewicz was not able to give his British interlocutor even the names of the diplomats who were setting off to London in return for the 1967 visits of Hayman and Smith to Warsaw where they mainly discussed the problems of European security. Probably, in order to set his interlocutor at rest, the Polish vice-minister clearly emphasized that he did not envisage any changes in the directions of Polish foreign policy and that one of its aims was to continue a dialogue with London³⁴. It seems doubtful, however, that in face of the virtual paralysis of the actions of the MSZ, Winiewicz's opinions might dispel the British doubts as to the further development of events in Poland.

The British intended to sustain the exchange of visits at the ministerial level and Brimelow confirmed that the Minister of Housing and Local Government, Anthony Greenwood, who was not a member of the British Cabinet, would visit Poland in May in accordance with the earlier arrangements. In London, before the March events, there were some doubts as to the purposeful-

³⁴ One month later E. Berthoud, the ex-British Ambassador to the Polish People's Republic, sent to Smith a relatively precise description of the problems Morawski encountered, but P. T. Hayman said that there was nothing new in this report. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/281, NP 3/14, Hayman to Lord Hood 16 May 1968.

³⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/282, NP 3/14, Brimelow to Hayman 23 Apr. 1968. For the beginnings of Winiewicz's career in communist diplomacy see T. Marczak, *Granica zachodnia w polskiej polityce zagranicznej w latach 1944-1950 (The Western Border in Polish Foreign Policy in the Years 1944-1950)*, Wrocław 1995, pp. 255-257. The memoirs of the Polish vice-foreign minister are of little help to learning the secrets of his ministry, see J. Winiewicz, *Co pamiętam z długiej drogi życia (What I Remember of My Long Path of Life)*, Poznań 1985.

ness of this visit, since housing industry was not an area that would create any wider perspectives for mutual co-operation, however, what prevailed, was a wish not to offend the authorities in Warsaw. The British Embassy's reports of the end of April on the unthwarted resumption of work by the institutes of higher education in Warsaw after the Easter break, gave an impression that the Polish authorities had brought the situation under control³⁶.

Anthony Greenwood, the son of Arthur, Labour Minister at the time of World War II, a friend of Poland, although not of the communists that were in power, stayed in Poland on 13–16 May 1968 at the invitation of the Minister of Housing and Building Materials of People's Poland, Marian Olewiński. Although Greenwood was of Jewish descent, this fact, despite the on-going anti-Semitic campaign in Poland, was of no significance to the course his visit took. For the Foreign Office, this was no problem, and the Polish authorities were glad of his arrival which meant that the dialogue with London would continue and that the situation in Poland was normal. During his short visit Greenwood acquainted himself mainly with Polish experiences of the restoration and reconstruction of historical cities. Apart from his talks with his Polish counterpart, the British politician conferred merely for 35 minutes with Vice-Premier Eugeniusz Szyr, whose political position was very unsafe, as well as with Winiewicz. The British felt that the climate of these meetings was not the best, although according to Brimelow's report, the Polish side tried to create the best possible atmosphere around the visitor from London. No wonder that under the circumstances Winiewicz was very cautious in his talks with Greenwood, whose father he knew during the War, and consequently the British did not learn anything new about the designs of Polish diplomacy³⁷.

Although the results of Greenwood's visit were not spectacular, it seemed to confirm that British-Polish relations were developing normally and the internal crisis in Poland did not influence them in any significant way. In fact, however, they suffered more and more and not only because of the picture Poland created of herself abroad as a result of the anti-Jewish

³⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/294, NP 9/8, I. Rawlinson to R. Miles 25 Apr. 1968.

³⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/75, N 18/2, Brimelow to Smith 18 May 1968, Brimelow to Stewart 23 May 1968.

campaign. The struggle for power in the PUWP, Rapacki's dismissal, personnel purges in the MSZ and fear of the resumption of new independent initiatives by the diplomatic personnel that had not been dismissed, all this paralysed the work of Polish diplomacy in the spring and summer of 1968.

Since the very beginning of the March events questions were pouring in to the Foreign Office from the MPs who had been receiving appeals from various Jewish organizations in Great Britain for a government intervention in Warsaw concerning the persecution of Polish Jews. This was augmented by the endeavours of the representatives of the World Jewish Congress who sometimes presented a picture of the fate of Jews in Poland that had nothing to do with the truth, as for example the assertions of A. L. Easterman, the Director of International Affairs of this organization, that policemen were standing in front of their homes, and those who were leaving were allowed to take only 5 kilogrammes of personal belongings. These alarming reports did not find any confirmation in the observations of the British Embassy in Warsaw³⁸.

The Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart, showing much empathy with the anxiety of the Jewish communities, thought that an official intervention in the matter of the policy of the Polish authorities towards the Polish citizens of Jewish descent would not be successful and might even worsen their situation. In May 1968 the Labour M. P. from the House of Commons, James Wellbeloved, asked Stewart whether the latter might make a statement about the attitude of Great Britain towards Poland. The Foreign Office immediately realised that this question would be followed by many others concerning the matter of anti-Semitism in Poland. The British diplomats thought that British-Polish relations were not excessively affected by the March events and the anti-Semitic campaign. Some difficulties posed by Warsaw in granting entry visas as well as some corrections in the exchange of academic workers were not able to influence the mutual

³⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/294, NP 18/16, G. Thomas to Stewart 22 Apr. 1968, note by Smith of 19 Apr. 1968, Horn to Smith 29 Apr. 1968. On 1 May 1968 at the House of Commons, in the talk with the Polish Embassy Counsellor T. Wiśniewski, the board of the British-Polish parliamentary group gave expression to their concern about the information coming from Poland about the anti-Semitism that was spreading there. Wiśniewski in his reply resorted to arguments taken from Gomułka's speech, AMSZ, N° 19/75, file 6, Morawski to Milnikiel 8 May 1968.

relations permanently, hence Smith suggested the British reply should emphasize the normality of relations with Warsaw. Letters were sent to this effect. On 20 May 1968 the Minister of State in the Foreign Office, Fred Mulley, answered Wellbeloved that the British side attached much importance to its contacts with Poland which were developing well, and intended to continue its previous policy, including the exchange of the visits of ministers³⁹. Such a position of the Foreign Office was very welcome to the Polish diplomacy and testified to London's wish to minimize the significance of the March events in the mutual relations of the two countries.

The British did not change their stand in June, although the anti-Zionist campaign continued in Poland. This, however, did not stop them from sending Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Board of Trade, on a visit on 12–15 June 1968, at the invitation of the Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade, Tadeusz Olechowski. During her talks with him, as well as with the head of this ministry, Witold Trąmpczyński, described by the British diplomats as "our friend", she insisted above all that Warsaw should increase purchases in the sphere of investments and consumer goods in Great Britain, so as to balance the trade exchange. The Polish hosts said they were willing to fulfil the obligations taken on in November 1965, when Trąmpczyński, in a special letter to his British counterpart, promised to diminish the difference between the Polish export to and import from Great Britain. At the same time the Polish side drew Mrs. Dunwoody's attention to the non-competitive price offers of the British enterprises and asked whether it would be possible to obtain a governmental credit for investments during the next five-year plan. This proposal was, however, rejected politely by the British delegation, which replied by indicating London's private banks as a source of credit. Mrs. Dunwoody did not touch on political questions in her official talks, and the British got the best possible impression of the visit. The report that summed up its results said: "The whole visit was conducted on an extremely friendly basis and Mrs. Dunwoody felt that this was a quite genuine feeling"⁴⁰.

³⁹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/28, NP 3/14, Smith to Hayman 8 May 1968, Parliamentary Question 20 May 1968.

⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, BT 11/6928, note by G. N. Lord of 28 June 1968, G. Dunwood's talks with W. Trąmpczyński 12 June and T. Olechowski 14 June 1968.

Thus March 1968 did not produce any negative effects on the relations with Great Britain, since the latter did not expect any internal revolt in Poland and treated the upheavals there as an internal problem of the Polish authorities. However, a side-effect of the March events which was certainly very unpleasant also to the British, was the purge in the MSZ⁴¹. Combined with the atmosphere of intimidation it caused a paralysis of the diplomatic activity of People's Poland, if only to be seen in the lack of new initiatives along the East-West line, even before the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The dismissal of Rapacki, the weakened positions of Morawski and Winiewicz also brought the British-Polish relations to a standstill⁴². This did not mean, however, that they were in crisis. The anti-Zionist campaign had no influence on the official relations between the two countries in the spring, although it was received with disgust by the pragmatically-minded British diplomacy. However, the position of the Jewish lobby in the British Isles was not so influential as to cause, through its appeals to the MPs in the House of Commons, a British intervention in Warsaw concerning the persecution of the Jews. The Foreign Office consistently upheld its stand that such an attempt would draw a blank, without bringing any benefit to the Jewish community in Poland⁴³. One can hardly accuse of anti-Semitism the governmental circles of Great Britain, and even less so the Labour MPs who were more friendly to Israel than the conservatives, yet the ordinary diplomats and officials in Great Britain were still conscious that 20 years earlier it was the Jews who shot at the British in Palestine⁴⁴.

⁴¹ More extensively on his subject see W. Borodziej, *op. cit.*, pp. 88–95.

⁴² It is not clear why, despite the negative opinion of the Special MSZ Commission of 29 May 1968 Morawski remained in his post of Polish Ambassador to London till the end of the year, see A. Garlicki, *Z tajnych archiwów. Czystka w MSZ (From Secret Archives. The Purge in the MSZ)*, "Polityka", 2 Oct. 1993. Perhaps this was due to the abortive first attempt of recalling him, inspired by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MSW). The later recall was delayed by the invasion of Czechoslovakia. In view of the deteriorated relations a prompt exchange of the ambassador might entail further negative consequences. We cannot know whether in the autumn an *agrément* could be obtained for a new ambassador to London.

⁴³ On 13 June 1968 Foreign Secretary Stewart sent a reply to the letter by a conservative MP in the House of Commons — Keith Joseph (the future economic mentor to Margaret Thatcher) concerning the situation of Polish Jews. Stewart repeated in it the already well-known view that any attempts at an intervention in Warsaw might only make things even more difficult for the interested persons. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/294, NP 18/16, Stewart to Joseph 13 June 1968.

⁴⁴ See Appendix.

From the perspective of London, the March events were not of much importance, which was testified by the fact that in the spring of 1968 the British Cabinet did not preoccupy itself with this problem, and as far as decisions were concerned, the reaction of London did not go beyond the walls of the Foreign Office. Public opinion at that time did not have much influence on the shaping of the British foreign policy, which was traditionally an area reserved for this ministry. It is true that in 1968 the British Foreign Office was not an institution as shut off from external influences as several years earlier, yet even the mass protests against the support given by Harold Wilson's government to the American operations in Vietnam did not make the British Cabinet change its stand. The general interest in the events in Poland was incomparably smaller. This is shown by the lack of any mentions of March 1968 in the memoirs and diaries of the most prominent British politicians and diplomats⁴⁵. For the British these events were of an incomparably smaller significance than the breakthrough of October 1956 in Poland.

The British hopes for a peaceful liberalization of the communist system had been since January 1968 pinned on the quickly advancing transformations in Czechoslovakia. The Labour Government, however, tried to remain cautious in its contacts with Prague, so as not to give an impression that it wanted to wrench this country from the Warsaw Pact and in this way provide arguments to the capitals of this pact which were openly hostile to the Prague Spring. The USA and the NATO countries conducted a similar policy. At the beginning of July 1968 the Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, thought that after his September visit to Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, the next stage in the opening of Britain to the Eastern European countries would be contacts at the level of prime ministers, all the more because this had already been done by France and Italy. He wanted to invite to Great Britain the heads of the governments of the three states which he had visited earlier. London did not

⁴⁵ This concerned both Labour politicians: H. Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-1970. A Personal Record*, London 1971; G. Brown, *I My Way. The Political Memoirs of Lord George-Brown*, London 1971; D. Healey, *The Time of My Life*, London 1989; G. Thomas, *Mr Speaker. The Memoirs of Viscount Tonyypandy*, London 1985; and the conservatives: E. Heath, *The Course of My Life. My Autobiography*, London 1998; Lord Home, *The Way the Wind Blows*, London 1976; W. Whitelaw, *The Whitelaw Memoirs*, London 1989; Lord Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past*, London 1988.

mean, however, to treat Czechoslovakia or Poland less favourably. In the case of the former, however, Vice-Premier Oldrich Černík did visit London in 1966, while the situation in Poland at the top level of power seemed so unstable that it was decided to wait till the 5th Congress of the PUWP in November 1968 for the possible change of staff. On 8 July 1968 Premier Wilson complied with Stewart's proposal, and only requested the distribution of the terms of visits over the period of a year and a half⁴⁶.

At that time the international situation around Czechoslovakia was becoming ever more tense. The USSR was deeply annoyed by the results of an attempt to construct socialism "with a human face"⁴⁷. The vision that the communist system might be dismantled alarmed, apart from the Soviet leadership with the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Leonid Brezhnev, at the head, especially the dictator of the GDR, Walter Ulbricht, and Gomułka. The latter was also afraid that after the political changes in Prague, his policy of refraining from establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG by the countries of the Warsaw Pact, would prove abortive. The strategy of intimidating the Prague authorities was also joined by Bulgaria ruled by Todor Zhivkov, who was faithful to Moscow, and with some caution by the Hungary of János Kádár. However, the interference of those countries in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia aroused criticism on the part of the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, motivated not so much by support for the process of democratization, as by a fear that Romania, which exhibited an increasing independence of Moscow in her foreign affairs, might become the next country that might be called to order by the USSR⁴⁸.

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, PREM 13/2626, Stewart to Wilson 5 July 1968, Wilson to Stewart 8 July 1968.

⁴⁷ The March protests of students in Poland did not arouse much apprehension on the part of Moscow. According to a KGB report they had little influence on the attitudes of students of Russian and Ukrainian nationalities in the USSR, and rumours about anti-Jewish purges in Poland were received by these milieus with satisfaction, see "Spill-Over" from the Prague Spring — a KGB Report, BCWIHP, issue 4, pp. 67–68.

⁴⁸ The collection of documents *Zaciskanie pętli. Tajne dokumenty dotyczące Czechosłowacji 1968 (The Tightening of a Loop. Secret Documents Relating to Czechoslovakia 1968)*, comp. A. Garlicki and A. Paczkowski, Warszawa 1995, shows how the decision matured on an armed intervention of a part of the Warsaw Pact countries in Czechoslovakia. Moscow knew nothing of the greatest "betrayal" committed by Romania. In October 1963 the Romanian Foreign Minister C. Manescu assured the Secretary of State of the USA D. Rusk that Romania

Despite the increasingly more brutal pressure exerted by the remaining members of the Warsaw Pact on Prague, the British Cabinet was completely surprised by the USSR and its satellites' invasion of Czechoslovakia on the night of the 20th–21st of August 1968. Great Britain immediately reacted by condemning the aggressors, freezing her political contacts with them and recalling the planned visits of ministers. This was accompanied by great indignation of public opinion in the British Isles, which turned above all against the USSR, and to a smaller extent against the executors of its policy. Moscow, by destroying the Czechoslovak experiment, seriously disgraced itself in the eyes of the British society. The memory of the 30 years earlier Munich Agreement was still alive in the British Isles. London could not remain unmoved by the first military aggression in Europe since 1956, but it was aware of realities and the impossibility of changing the situation without a nuclear holocaust. Symptomatically, two members of the Cabinet who were resting in Cyprus, were not even called to the first session of the Cabinet following the invasion. Underlying the official reactions was a conviction that Czechoslovakia belonged to the sphere of influence of the USSR which would better not be infringed. Realising their own helplessness, the British intended to make use of the forum of the UN where they counted on gaining the support of non-aligned countries in condemning the operations of the USSR and its allies⁴⁹. Little came, however, of these plans. Moscow's right of veto in the Security Council as well as her promptness in breaking the political resistance of Dub(ek, in the face of the failure of the initial plans of raising to power the members of the Czechoslovak Political Bureau who were obedient to the USSR, made it impossible for the West to engage for too long in the matter of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in the UN.

would maintain its neutrality in the future in a conflict similar to the Cuban crisis aroused by the deployment of the Soviet missiles in Cuba. The Americans said they would respect Romania's neutrality if they could rest assured that there were no nuclear weapons in Romania and received a satisfactory answer to this effect, see R. I. Garthoff, *When and Why Romania Distanced Itself from the Warsaw Pact*, BCWIHP, issue 5, p. 111.

⁴⁹ *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, series III, vol. I: *Britain and the Soviet Union 1968–1972*, London 1997, pp. 69–74; TNA, PRO, PREM 13/1993, note of 22 Aug. 1968; FCO 28/54, N 2/30, OPDO (1968) 7th meeting, Cabinet Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, 22 Aug. 1968; DWE, vol. II: P. Machcewicz, *Emigracja w polityce międzynarodowej (Emigré Communities in International Politics)*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 208–209.

British politicians did not intend to antagonize the USSR, and strove for a détente in their relations with it, although the aggression upon Czechoslovakia became a serious obstacle. In his most pessimistic scenario, the Minister of State in the Foreign Office, Goronwy O. Roberts, saw even the possibility of a resumption of the alliance between Moscow and Peking and a return of the communist expansion in the world. In the next days both Wilson and Stewart were full of apprehension about the possibility of the Soviet attack on Romania or Yugoslavia. Especially the latter would mean the upsetting of the existing balance of power. Yet the British, just like Washington, did not know how they could help Tito in case of aggression. The anxiety caused by 21 August 1968 was augmented by the alarming reports of the Intelligence about the Soviet preparations for the next invasion, this time of Romania, which under the conditions of distrust in the relations with Moscow created the threat of a premature reaction of the NATO states⁵⁰.

Poland's participation in the aggression upon Czechoslovakia had a very negative effect on her political relations with Great Britain in the following months. London suspended the planned official visits, and British diplomats were told to confine their contacts with the representatives of the aggressor countries to the indispensable minimum. The criterion of the purposefulness of meetings was the benefit that the British side might derive from them⁵¹. A few days after the invasion, deliberations started between the Foreign Office and the British Embassy in Warsaw as to the measures that could be applied to punish the Polish Government. One of the first steps was the withdrawal of the British representative from the international song festival in Sopot. Other measures, discussed in the Embassy's telegram of 26 August 1968 were also of a symbolic character. It was proposed to recall the athletic contest between Poland and Great

⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 49/240, RS 3/2, G. Roberts to Stewart 21 Aug. 1968; FCO 28/57, N 2/35, UKDEL NATO to FO 31 Aug. 1968, Washington to FO 31 Aug. and 1 Sept. 1968. On threat to Romania see A. M a n i a, *Bridge Building. Polityka USA wobec Europy Wschodniej w latach 1961-1968* (*Bridge Building. The USA Policy Towards Eastern Europe in the Years 1961-1968*), Kraków 1996, pp. 130-133.

⁵¹ British Embassy was to pass an official invitation for Minister Trąpczyński on 22 Aug. 1968, but after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, before they received instructions from London, they recalled the meeting in the Polish MSZ, TNA, PRO, FCO 28/282, NP 3/14, Warsaw to FO 21 Aug. 1968.

Britain (29–31 August), to withdraw the British team from the Tour de Pologne, to suspend the screening of BBC and ITV films on Polish television, to suspend the sale of British films to the Polish Film (a thing that only the hard-line communists might dream of) and not to allow the exhibition of the treasures of Polish museums in Great Britain. This ambitious plan, however, failed completely. It turned out that no governmental money was engaged in any of these enterprises, hence the British authorities were deprived of the most effective methods of exerting pressure on the interested British institutions. On top of that the BBC, despite the suggestions of the Foreign Office, showed a transmission of the above-mentioned athletic contest⁵². Despite these strange conceptions, the British did not intend to destroy the existing substance of their mutual relations with Poland. As regards cultural exchange, including the sale of films to Poland, they soon came to the conclusion that restrictions in this area would be suicidal. The slump in political contacts did not affect the trade, which at any rate developed on the basis of long-term contracts. Both sides were very interested in increasing the turnover, and the mutual relations did not suffer much because of the cancellation, on the initiative of the municipalities, of the Polish trade exhibition in Glasgow, as well as of the visit of the Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade, Franciszek Modrzewski, on the same occasion, and the visit of a group of British experts on town-planning to Poland⁵³.

The Polish authorities, just like Moscow, treated the actions in Czechoslovakia as introducing order in the socialist camp, hence they did not feel guilty for taking part in the invasion of their southern neighbour and counted on a speedy return of their relations with Great Britain to normality. Following the instructions from Warsaw, at the beginning of September 1968 Ambassador Morawski requested an audience with the Minister of State in the Foreign Office, Roberts, so as to discuss the bilateral relations. In contrast to the representatives of Bulgaria and Hungary, who were called by the Foreign Office immediately after the aggression upon Czechoslovakia to be informed of the recal-

⁵²TNA, PRO, FCO 28/282, NP 3/14, I. J. Rawlinson to R. O. Miles 26 Aug. 1968, R. O. Miles to I. J. Rawlinson 29 Aug. 1968, A. B. Horn (Warsaw) to T. C. Barker 5 Sept. 1968.

⁵³TNA, PRO, FCO 28/282, NP 3/14, note by Smith of 4 Sept. 1968.

ling of Minister Stewart's visit, the Polish diplomat had no occasion of contact at such a high level. The audience took place on 5 September 1968. Morawski asked for an explanation of the British policy towards Poland in the light of contradictory statements, on the one hand by Stewart, that contacts should be limited, and on the other by Wilson, who spoke of the need to strive for a *détente*. The Ambassador presented the justification of the Polish participation in the invasion of Czechoslovakia, which was already well-known to the British; it boiled down to a fear that this country might be wrenched from the Warsaw Pact, which would strengthen the West-German forces hostile to the recognition of the border on the Oder-Neisse Line. This explanation only helped Roberts in his reply. He pointed out that previously the aggressors cited the invitation to march in formulated by "certain leaders" whose names remained unknown. The Minister of State described the invasion as an infringement of the UN Charter, which was also a serious blow to the Polish-British relations. He said their development depended on the posture of Warsaw and the withdrawal of the troops from Czechoslovakia, although he at the same time assured Morawski that the government in London did not intend to impede the commercial or cultural relations⁵⁴. This did not prevent the British side from declaring on 20 September 1968 that it would not take part in the 5th Round Table conference planned in October in Jabłonna, to be attended by journalists, scholars, scientists and politicians from both countries; it also recalled the visit of the school sailing-ship "Sir Winston Churchill" in Gdynia. In reply to the letter of the Polish Co-Chairman of the conference, Stanisław Leszczycki, in which he expressed his regret on account of this cancellation, his British counterpart and ex-Ambassador to Warsaw Sir Eric Berthoud wrote on 1 October 1968 in "The Times", "We do not need to go to Warsaw to hear the official Polish line"⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/282, NP 3/14, talk between G. Roberts and Morawski 5 Sept. 1968. Moscow expected its supporters in the Political Bureau of the Czechoslovak Communist Party to request its intervention, following which and with the help of the invasion by the Warsaw Pact troops, it would take over the power. This scenario collapsed, because the adversaries of reforms were too weak. The letter signed at that time by A. Indra, D. Kolder, A. Kapek, O. Svestek and V. Bilak, in which they requested the assistance of the USSR against counter-revolution, was published together with the names of its signatories as late as July 1992, see M. Kramer, *A Letter to Brezhnev: The Czech Hardliners' "Request" for Soviet Intervention, August 1968*, BCWIHP, issue 2, p. 35.

The tone of Leszczycki and Berthoud's discussion was far from confrontation, yet its substance showed that the mutual relations were at the lowest point since 1956 and there was no prospect of a radical change in the situation in the near future. It is true that the highest civil servant in the Foreign Office, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Paul Gore Booth, was then of the opinion that the invasion of Czechoslovakia was one of the most important events in the history of Europe and the world, and pointed out that "In an unexpected way the Czechoslovaks seem to have shown that there are things in this life which are not in the long run tolerable to civilised and sophisticated people and sooner or later human nature and the human spirit will reassert themselves", but his hopes, shared by the Ambassador to Prague, William Barker, for the downfall of communist regimes, referred to a vague future and not to the present⁵⁶.

Despite the shock caused by the action of the Warsaw Pact, the British politics did not give up hope that some way could be found to come to an understanding with the USSR again. Moscow, from the very moment of its aggression upon Czechoslovakia was sending signals through various channels to the West that its move was only one of the elements of setting its own ranks in order, which did not create any threat to the NATO⁵⁷. The British did not intend to declare their formal acceptance of the Soviet rule in Eastern European countries, but on the other hand they were not able to change the situation without a world war. However, it was difficult to overcome distrust a few months after the invasion and to take up a serious political debate between the two politico-military blocs in Europe, therefore in the autumn of 1968 the British-Polish relations could not be improved.

This became clear to Ambassador Morawski when he talked to the Deputy Under-Secretary of State, Hayman, at a reception in the Soviet Embassy on 23 October 1968. This was their first talk since the invasion and although Hayman felt a need to meet

⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, 28/282, NP 3/14, A. B. Horn to T. C. Barker 27 Sept. 1968; "The Times" 1 Oct. 1968.

⁵⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/57, N 2/35, Gore Booth to W. Barker 12 Sept. 1968, W. Barker to Gore Booth 17 Sept. 1968.

⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, PREM 13/2114, talk of Stewart with Swedish Premier T. Erlander 27 Sept. 1968; PREM 13/1994, Helsinki to Foreign and Commonwealth Office (henceforward FCO), a ministry created by a merger of Foreign Office and Commonwealth Relations Office 17 Oct. 1968, (for the sake of briefness called Foreign Office in the main text) 18 Oct. 1968.

the Polish diplomat regularly, he had to follow the instructions to limit his contacts with the representatives of the aggressor countries to the minimum. Morawski asked about a possibility of improvement in mutual relations. His interlocutor said this depended on the withdrawal of Polish troops from Czechoslovakia, in which connection the Ambassador could assure him that this process was already under way, and would be soon finished⁵⁸.

The evacuation of the Polish Army from the territory of the southern neighbour, finished in the first half of November 1968, did not entail a radical change in the bilateral relations. The British diplomacy focussed its attention concerning Polish affairs on the 5th Congress of the PUWP, which took place on 11–16 November 1968. Initially a strong rivalry for leadership was expected and Mieczysław Moczar and Edward Gierek were seen as the main rivals of Gomułka, but it turned out that the position of the latter was not threatened despite the social clashes and stagnation in the economic development. Ambassador Brimelow, while watching the progress of the debate, could not, however, take an over-optimistic view as to the future relations between East and West. The speech by the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the PUWP that opened the Congress did not bring any surprise in the field of Polish foreign policy, although he omitted Great Britain in his attacks. However, the revenge-seeking politicians from the FRG, and American imperialists fighting with “democratic Vietnam” got a proper hiding. According to Gomułka the reaction of the communist bloc to the events in Czechoslovakia showed the power of the Warsaw Pact. Leonid Brezhnev, who was the Congress’s guest, presented this problem in a wider context, pointing out that the “socialist camp” was bound to help the state where the construction of socialism was threatened. The meaning of these words did not need to be explained to the British diplomacy, although it took time before this was called “the Brezhnev Doctrine”⁵⁹.

In the autumn of 1968 Polish diplomacy persisted in trying to find out when the British would change their unrelenting attitude towards Poland. On November 11 the problem was taken

⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/718, ENP 3/548/2, Hayman to Brimelow 24 Oct. 1968.

⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/707, ENP 1/2, Brimelow to Stewart 31 Oct. 1968, Brimelow to FCO, 12 Nov. 1968; Brimelow to Stewart 17 Dec. 1968.

up by Vice-Minister Winiewicz, the head of the *MSZ*, in his informal talk to Brimelow, in which he cited the justification, already well-known to the British, of the Polish participation in the invasion, interpreting it as an attempt to stop the West-German intrigues in Prague. Regardless of the withdrawal of Polish troops from Czechoslovakia, the British Ambassador doubted that the bilateral relations could soon come back to normal, especially in the light of Gomułka's assessment of the situation in that state expressed on the opening day of the 5th Congress⁶⁰.

From the summer of 1968 the matter of faction strife within the *PUWP* and the anti-Zionist campaign that accompanied it was clearly pushed into the background in British-Polish relations, prominence being given to the consequences of Poland's participation in the intervention in Czechoslovakia. This did not mean, however, that the British diplomats in Warsaw lost sight of this problem. They systematically sent telegrams to the headquarters in London presenting the picture of personnel revolution that was taking place in various state institutions under the pretext of fight against Zionism, as well as the arrests and trials of persons accused of initiating student protests. British bureaucracy was not well-disposed to the settlement in the British Isles of the Polish Jews forced to emigration. The Embassy in Warsaw, while granting visas to Polish citizens did not make any differences between the applicants on the ground of their descent⁶¹. Since 1956 the British authorities, for economic reasons, were generally far from encouraging the newcomers from People's Poland to settle down in Great Britain for good.

The fate of Polish Jews was the subject of interest of the members of the Jewish community in Great Britain who in November intensified the campaign of sending telegrams and

⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/718, ENP 3/548/2, Brimelow to Giffard 12 Nov. 1968.

⁶¹ See Appendix. For this reason it is difficult to define the number of Polish Jews who obtained the visas. The British estimates, made on the basis of the surnames, show that in April they were granted to 107 people, in May to 105, and in June to 115 people of Jewish descent. Only on 24 Jan. 1969, following the intervention by the Jewish lobby in Great Britain, Home Secretary James Callaghan did decide to simplify the procedure of granting entry visas to the Jews from Poland, especially those who had some family or a guaranteed place of work in the British Isles. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/732, ENP 18/3, Callaghan to B. Janner (MP) 24 Jan. 1969. For the departures from Poland see K. Lesiakowski, *Emigracja osób pochodzenia żydowskiego z Polski w latach 1968–1969* (*The Emigration of People of Jewish Descent from Poland in the Years 1968–1969*), "Dzieje Najnowsze", 1993, N° 2.

letters to the Foreign Office, requesting an intervention in Warsaw. On 19 November 1968 Minister of State Roberts received the delegation of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. However, the official bodies in London did not intend to engage in this problem, and merely expressed their sympathy while emphasizing that any intervention with the Polish authorities would be of no avail. Roberts was not to rest long from the Jewish question, since there already gathered at his door a whole line of the representatives of the World Union of Jewish Students. The Head of East European and Soviet Department, Sydney Giffard, who after the reorganization of the British Foreign Office dealt with Poland and other countries of the Warsaw Pact, in his note to Roberts supported the idea of another meeting, although he warned that some part of the reports coming from the Jewish sources about the persecution in Poland might have been exaggerated⁶².

The person who was definitely against any attempts at the intervention of British diplomacy for the sake of Polish Jews was Ambassador Thomas Brimelow. In his telegram of 30 November 1968 to the Foreign Office he pointed out that there were no legal grounds for taking this matter up with the Polish authorities, and if it were taken up, the chances of success would be none. Although far from sympathising with the policy of the Communist régime, he pointed out that one should distinguish between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism in the official propaganda. Brimelow saw the only way of helping the victims in facilitating the visa procedures to the persons who wished to leave for Great Britain⁶³.

London consistently stuck to its stand worked out earlier on of not interfering in the internal affairs of People's Poland. On 3 December 1968 Minister Roberts received a delegation of the World Union of Jewish Students, expressed sympathy with their stand on the grounds of human rights, at the same time, however, renounced any possibility of intervention in Warsaw and dissuaded them from publicizing the meeting to which he consented. A week later, to dispel any possible suspicions, British diplomacy

⁶² TNA, PRO, FCO 28/732, ENP 18/3, note by Giffard of 20 Nov. 1968.

⁶³ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/732, ENP 18/3, Brimelow to FCO 30 Nov. 1968. Szymon Szechter and Nina Karsow could stay in Great Britain only due to the intervention of E. Raczyński, DWE, vol. III; R. Habielski, *Życie społeczne i kulturalne emigracji (The Social and Cultural Life of the Polish Emigré Communities)*, Warszawa 1999, p. 269.

passed a fairly exact report on this meeting to the Polish Embassy⁶⁴. It can be doubted that an ordinary inhabitant of the British Isles might be very interested in the problem of the way persons of Jewish descent were treated in a distant communist country, however, this problem did not add to the reputation of Poland among the opinion-creative circles of journalists and scholars, as the editor-in-chief of the "Polityka" weekly, Mieczysław F. Rakowski, himself quite innocent of the situation that emerged, could see, when he visited London in December 1968⁶⁵.

The British political plans continued to be dominated by the conviction that a détente should be sought in the relations with the USSR and other countries of the Warsaw Pact. However, the mutual distrust, deepened by the intervention in Czechoslovakia, seemed to remove this process to the distant future. The representatives of the Polish authorities also seemed to be more realistic. Vice-Minister Winiewicz in his talk with Brimelow of 5 December 1968 expressed a hope that the exchange of official political visits could be resumed next spring, a view to which his interlocutor seemed to incline, although he could not make any binding declaration without new instructions from London⁶⁶. It is true that the first steps in this direction had already been made at the informal level, such as Rakowski's visit, but he had no concrete influence on the decisions of Warsaw, and the mutual relations were still bad. The Polish-British trade negotiations on 9-19 December 1968 concerning the co-ordination of the protocol of commercial exchange in 1969 produced no result, although not for political reasons. They were suspended at the request of the British who complained about Warsaw's making no steps to decrease the Polish trade surplus which already surpassed 18 million pounds⁶⁷.

Although the British authorities did not refrain from the public condemnation of the participation of People's Poland in

⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/732, ENP 18/3, note by T. C. Baker of 29 Nov. 1968, note by Miles of 10 Dec. 1968; AMSZ, N° 19/75, file 6, note "Wielka Brytania" of 18 Dec. 1968.

⁶⁵ M. Rakowski, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

⁶⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/718, ENP 3/548/2, Brimelow to Hayman 10 Dec. 1968.

⁶⁷ In January 1969 it was agreed that both delegations would meet before the end of June to negotiate an agreement, and up till then the trade protocol of 1968 would be binding. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/724, ENP 6/548/2; for economic relations see J. Lutosławski, *Polska — Wielka Brytania. Gospodarka, stosunki ekonomiczne (Poland — Great Britain. Economy, Economic Relations)*, Warszawa 1969.

the aggression upon Czechoslovakia, they showed a far-reaching restraint in the matter of the internal situation in Poland. After Labour MP Eric Moonman submitted to the House of Commons a question about the state of British-Polish relations, Giffard prepared a note discussing the main problems concerning these relations. Because Moonman was of Jewish descent, the Head of East European and Soviet Department recalled the origin of the anti-Semitic campaign in Poland, pointing out that at its source lay the struggle for power within the PUWP; nevertheless, he also perceived that it found favourable conditions because of the susceptibility of the Poles to anti-Jewish slogans. Gomułka's attempt to distinguish between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism was in his opinion of no practical consequence. On the other hand, on the basis of the reports sent by the British Embassy, Giffard questioned the picture of persecution aimed at the persons of Jewish descent in Poland presented by the Jewish organizations in Great Britain⁶⁸. Minister of State Roberts, who was expected to answer Moonman, feared that posing a question about the relations between Great Britain and Poland could lead to raising in the UN the question of London's policy regarding anti-Semitism in general. The Foreign Office soon prepared additional material for the Minister, which showed that the British representatives had already criticised the treatment of the Jews in the USSR and Eastern Europe in the UN, but treated it as an element of a broader problem of religious discrimination, so as to avoid the suspicion they supported Jewish nationalism. It is true that in one of the UN committees Lady Gaitskell, the widow of the dead Labour leader, took liberty to compare the anti-Zionist propaganda in People's Poland to the actions of the Nazis, but Roberts was strongly dissuaded from assuming the same attitude⁶⁹.

A short discussion of the British-Polish relations took place in the House of Commons on 16 December 1968 when Goronwy Roberts replied to the question of Moonman by pointing out that London was not responsible for their deterioration and it is up to the Polish side to restore the mutual confidence indispensable for their reconstruction. Moonman's next question about a possi-

⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/718, ENP 3/548/2, note by Giffard of 9 Dec. 1968.

⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/718, ENP 3/548/2, note by T. C. Barker of 12 Dec. 1968; AMSZ, N° 19/75, file 5, Morawski to MSZ 18 Dec. 1968.

bility of addressing the Polish Government with a note about student trials was repudiated by Roberts, who pointed out that the British authorities had always followed the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries⁷⁰.

The year 1968, so unfavourable to the bilateral relations, closed with changes made in Warsaw in the ministries concerned with foreign policy. On the strength of the act of the Polish Sejm of December 22 Adam Rapacki, the minister of foreign affairs, and Witold Trąpczyński, the minister of foreign trade, were removed from their offices (the Polish Press Agency PAP informed of it two days earlier)⁷¹. Both politicians had directed their ministries for 12 years and their dismissal was for the British diplomacy a loss of well-known partners. Trąpczyński was regarded by Ambassador Brimelow as a person who was friendly towards the British economic interests in Poland. The formal recall of Rapacki did not come to the British as a surprise, since in fact he had not been directing the ministry since the spring. Yet the appointment to this post of Stefan Jędrychowski, the previous head of the Cabinet's Planning Commission, was received with some astonishment, although Ambassador Brimelow did hope that as a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the PUWP he would be able to restore the efficiency of this ministry, and saw an improvement in the relations with the West as his main task. In his letter to Stewart, the British Ambassador devoted some space to the previous activity of Rapacki, beginning with the disarmament plan, and on the one hand criticised his unrelenting attitude to the FRG, but on the other remembered with pleasure his contacts with the Ministry under Rapacki's control, before the wave of personnel purges carried out after the March events. The British diplomacy bade a symbolic farewell to Rapacki by sending Brimelow's chauffeur with flowers from the Ambassador for the ex-Minister on 23 December 1968⁷².

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/718, ENP 3/548/2, debate in the House of Commons 16 Dec. 1968.

⁷¹ T. Mołdawa, *Ludzie władzy 1944-1991 (The People in Power 1944-1991)*, Warszawa 1991, p. 124.

⁷² TNA, PRO, FCO 28/707, ENP 1/2, Brimelow to FCO 21 Dec. 1968; FCO 28/705, ENP 1/1, Brimelow to Stewart 2 Jan. 1969. Rapacki had already had three strokes (1962, 1964 and 1966), he died on 10 Oct. 1970.

Political problems, in particular the participation of Polish troops in the aggression upon Czechoslovakia caused a deterioration in British–Polish relations in 1968. However, the main substance of these relations consisted of economic links to which both sides attached much importance and neither of them allowed political problems to slow-down the trade turnover. After the Polish troops had been withdrawn from Czechoslovakia in the first decade of November, the main obstacle to improvement in the bilateral relations was removed. However, it was only in the first half of 1969 that the first signs of their normalization appeared. The visits of ministers were gradually renewed. From the Polish point of view, however, Great Britain began to lose its attractiveness. The creation of the SPD–FDP coalition allowed the intensification of the Polish dialogue with Bonn, which a year later had led to the conclusion of the agreement of 1970 and the ratification of the border on the Oder–Neisse Line. Also in the economic respect the FRG was becoming an ever more valuable partner. After Edward Gierek came to power in 1970, this trend, unfavourable to London, gathered strength. The new leader's sympathies and experience directed him towards France, and economic calculations towards West Germany.

(Translated by Agnieszka Kreczmar)

APPENDIX

1. Minute by Ivor J. Rawlinson, 1 October 1968
TNA, PRO, FCO 28/304

THE JEWISH EXODUS

1. I was told by the “New York Times” stringer that the Dutch Embassy actually issued 200 Israeli entry visas to Polish Jews in the week 23–28 September. As I have noted on another minute, 180 visas were issued in the first week of September by the Dutch Embassy. Last week’s figures are the highest since the Dutch took over Israeli affairs. The majority of Polish Jews obtaining visas have received University education in Poland.

2. In a private letter from a friend in London, a Pole, I am told that there are at least 2,500 Polish Jews now in Vienna. I quote... “all are being taken care of by the HIAS Organisation who try and make out papers for them. Helena Brus (Prof. Włodzimierz Brus’ daughter) her mother and sister are among them and I keep up quite a correspondence with them. They’re all feeling very lost and forlorn, and expect to be stranded there for at least another three months before their papers are through. It all makes me very sad...”. “Apparently the main trouble is that although nearly all the Western countries are prepared to receive these people they literally don’t have any document onto which a visa can be stamped. On the other hand, quite a few have arrived in the U. K. holding tourist visas — and none of them have had any trouble whatsoever with the Home Office in extending their visas...”. “There is an arrangement between the Home Office and the Jewish organisations in London under which the latter are helping with all the formalities...”

2. Minute by E. F. Lewis, 2 October 1968
TNA, PRO, FCO 28/304

The question of the entry of Polish Jews into the United Kingdom is a matter of Government policy.

We have to conform to the regulations laid down in various directives, and anyone, in principle, provided he conforms, can obtain an entry visa for a visit.

An alien must possess a travel document (and this includes a Stateless travel document) which is currently valid and allows the holder to enter another country (other than the U. K.) or to return to the country which granted the travel document. If he possesses funds or holds an invitation from a resident of the U. K., then he will get a visa, unless permanent residence is suspected. In such a case, the Home Office might well refuse entry.

As regards Polish Jews leaving Poland, those we have come across, are all in possession of a travel document which is valid for travel to Israel. The story is not, I feel, quite so tragic as the friend in London portrays.

It may be relevant to recall that in the establishment of the "Promised Land", the lives of many British soldiers and civilians fell to the bullets and bombs of Jewish terrorists in the period up to 1948.

We are in fact receiving applications for visit visas from Polish Jews who hold normal passports valid for return to Poland. They are treated no differently from Christian Poles. In general, of course, we do not know what the applicant's faith is — we never ask and it does not figure among the questions on the visa application form.

I find it difficult to believe that the Jews in Vienna do not possess a travel document. If the Western countries referred to really wanted these Jews then they could grant themselves travel documents to these apparently documentless refugees.

Undoubtedly H. M. G. has to bear in mind that there are many thousands of Commonwealth citizens, many with U. K. passports, who do not have the right of entry into the U. K., and to open the doors to Jewish refugees and other such as Czechs would certainly raise a storm of protest in Commonwealth countries such as Kenya, India and Pakistan.

In short, it is the Home Office in London which says "Yes" or "No" to entry for aliens.