

SPEECH DELIVERED BY PAUL ELUARD

(1948)

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

I have been requested to read out to you a poem tonight. Peace and striving for peace are indeed a matter for poetry. The courage of those fighting for life and for the future is poetry as well. But barbarianism is not. What I am going to do tonight is enumerate for you, at this very place, the testimonies of barbarianism for xenophobic actions rank amongst the major war-inciting factors.

Let me mention them at random. And I should like to remark that the workers I am going to refer to are indispensable to maintain the present level of production in France.

I shall quickly list the detentions and expulsions from France of individuals who have run organisations and have been official representatives of people's republics [*a brief enumeration follows*]:

Mr Laroche,¹ Chief Secretary of UGEVRE,² member of the Administrative Council of UFAC,³ Knight of the Legion of Honour, awarded with the Cross of Valour, nominated Captain of the French Army, was detained after a search on 15 November and interrogated in detail. He was finally released without any explanation of the reasons behind his detention.

¹ Jean-Marie Laroche (1882–1957) was Chaplain at the Lycée Châteaubriand and the Church of St Louis of the French. He was Knight of the Legion of Honour and was decorated with the Cross of the War of 1914–18 and the Vermeil Medal of the Order of the Oak Crown of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Appointed Prelate of the Papal House in 1948.

² UGEVRE, i.e. Union fédérale des Groupement Engagés Volontaires et Résistants d'origine Etrangère, was an organisation set up in 1947, whose members were foreign members of the Résistance. The UGEVRE archives are kept in Nanterre.

³ UFAC, i.e. Union Française des Associations de Combattants et de Victimes de Guerre, was a French association of war-veteran organisations, composed of participants and victims of wars.

Arrests of Romanians and Friends of Romania

Ms Jeanine Tillard,⁴ Chief Secretary of the Association France-Roumanie, was detained on 15 November after a long-lasting and uncalled-for search. She had to leave her two little children and two children of miners she had taken under her protection. During the long hours of interrogation, Mr. Wibot,⁵ Director for Defence of Territorial Security [*Défense de la Sécurité du Territoire*], threatened her, a France citizen [?], with torture unless she admitted she had received money from the Cominform,⁶ and signed a relevant statement. Confronted with Mr Tillard's resolute and dignified stance, and since no actual charge could have been brought against her, Mr Wibot had to release her.

Six other people from the Romanian colony in Paris, whose only crime was that they were of Romanian nationality, were arrested – among them, Messrs. Grama and Floresco,⁷ members of the Committee of the Board of the Association 'Romanians, Friends of France' [Association des Roumains, Amis de la France]. The Association was disbanded, and their publication of the monthly *Roumanie libre* banned.

⁴ Jeanine Tillard is an unidentified person, possibly identical with Jeanine Devers, née Holodenko, Chair of the Association for Civic Information, awarded with the Legion of Honour in 1999.

⁵ Roger Wybot (1912–97), born Roger-Paul Warin, was a French soldier who ran the Counterintelligence Section of the Central Bureau of Intelligence and Action. Follower of General de Gaulle during the Second World War, he joined the ranks of the Free French Forces (France Libre et les Forces françaises libres). In 1944, he organised the *Défense de la Sécurité du Territoire*, a territorial defence office which he presided till 1959. Decorated with the Commandery of the Legion of Honour, the British King's Medal for Courage, the Cross of the War 1939–45, and more.

⁶ The Cominform is the acronym name based on the Russian name for the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties, an international organisation established in 1947 to consociate European communist parties. Inspired by Stalin, the organisation was meant as a response to the Eastern Bloc's refusal to join the Marshall Plan. While its main declared purpose was to coordinate the actions of the communist parties, the Comintern was primarily an instrument of expansionist policy pursued by the Soviet Union.

⁷ Mr Grama, Mr Floresco are unidentified figures.

Actions against members of the staffs of the Embassies of people's democracy countries

Mr Kowalski,⁸ a member of the Embassy of Poland, detained on 15 November; during the Occupation, he was arrested for his activity with the French Résistance.

Doctor Gregor,⁹ Commercial Attaché with the Embassy of Czechoslovakia, detained on 15 November 1948.

Ms Lewinson,¹⁰ of French nationality, employed at the Legation of Romania, detained for the third time in the last few months.

Arrested members of leadership teams of Polish organisations

Mr Degorski, Władysław,¹¹ Chairman of the Polish Organisation for Aid to the Homeland [Organisation Polonaise d'Aide à la Patrie],¹² set up at the time of combat against the occupiers.

Mr Degorski worked for fifteen years in French mines. He was active with the Résistance. He was detained on his way home from work; the Police refused to give any information and even denied that he had been arrested at all. Several weeks later, Mrs Degorski received a letter from her husband informing her that he had been arrested and immediately expelled from France.

⁸ Mr Kowalski might be Artur Kowalski, the editor-in-chief of the daily *Gazeta Polska* which was published in France and supported by the Polish embassy in Paris.

⁹ 'Doctor Gregor' is unidentified. At the time (until 1951), Czechoslovakia's Ambassador at Paris was Adolf Hoffmeister, artist, writer, and diplomat.

¹⁰ Ms Lewinson is an unidentified person.

¹¹ Władysław Degorski was an activist with the Polish diaspora. Based on a decision dated 13th April 1948, he was decorated with the Gold Cross for his outstanding merits in the organisation of the repatriation and re-emigration of the Poles; see <https://www.prawo.pl/akty/m-p-1948-43-184,16912324.html> [Accessed: 9 Oct. 2020].

¹² The Organisation Polonaise d'Aide à la Patrie was an independence-oriented organisation formed in the summer of 1942 by Polish socialists residing at the time in the south of France; by the following year, it was dominated by communists. It was eventually dissolved on 11 Jan. 1950. During the war, the organisation published its periodicals, including *Jedność Polska* (1942–4, in Lyon and Grenoble, edited by Julian Andrzejewski and Roman Kornecki; circulation 3,000 to 7,000 copies); *Głos Kobiet* (1943–4, an organ of Polish Women's Associations in France, subsequently renamed as M. Konopnicka Association of Polish Women; irregular circulation, approx. 1,200 copies).

Mr Eisner, Victor,¹³ member of the Polish National Council [Conseil National Polonais], was a soldier with the International Brigades in Spain; he was wounded during the war; detained on 15 November.

Mr Zaremba, Longin,¹⁴ employed with the Association of Polish Youth 'Grunwald'¹⁵ [Organisation de la Jeunesse Polonaise 'Grunwald'], was detained in front of his domicile on 15 November. The policemen instructed the witnesses not to notify his family about his arrest. Mrs Zaremba, in the eighth month of her pregnancy, has received no information from her husband yet.

Steps taken against miners (Moselle)

A number of Polish miners who were detained on 26 October [19]48 at Stiring-Wendel¹⁶ were put in the prison of Forbach; no reason for the arrest was given to them. Among them was Wajkieszko, Michel [Michał],¹⁷ born 11 August 1897, a father of seven. Many Polish miners were detained in Cite-Créhange,¹⁸ and then expelled; among others, Chodor, Edward,¹⁹ born 16 July [19]26. As he was out shopping together with his mother, he was detained by the Mobile Guard [Gardes Mobiles] and released on the following day, without trial.

Within the Notre-Dame shaft area (belonging to the Douai licence), in the Commune of Waziers, in the week of 8th to 14 November,

¹³ Wiktor Eisner joined the Dąbrowski Battalion in the Spanish Civil War; together with Józef Supiński and Zofia Szleyen, he co-edited the periodical *Dąbrowszczak*.

¹⁴ Longin Zaremba served later in Beirut as a correspondent of the newspaper *Sztandar Młodych*.

¹⁵ Established in 1944 on initiative of the Organisation for Aid to the Homeland and with support from the French Communist Party, the Association of Polish Youth 'Grunwald' was joined by Polish diaspora youth active with the *Résistance*. Among its founders were Stanisław Stęplewski, Halina Małek and Józef Zakrzewski. The organisation had approx. 340 members and published a periodical *Grunwald* (1943–4); it was dissolved in 1950.

¹⁶ String-Wendel is a locality in northern France, Region of Grand-Est (Moselle); between the two World Wars, this mining town was an important workers' centre. It was a scene of severe fights during the Second World War; after the war, a number of POW camps for Germans were situated in its vicinity.

¹⁷ Michael (Michał) Wajkieszko is an unidentified person.

¹⁸ Créhange is a small town in northern France, Region of Grand-Est; before 1870 it was part of the German Empire (as was String-Wendel).

¹⁹ Edward Chodor is an unidentified person.

several hundred Poles were gathered, from whom identity cards were requisitioned, and then they were told, "Do you want to work, or not? If yes, go down now. When you bring a labour certificate signed by your employer, you will get your cards back; if not, you will be expelled".

– On 18 October, in Merlebach,²⁰ [Department of] Moselle, two aliens, boys aged thirteen and fourteen, were detained.

– On 29 October, in Carvin,²¹ Celina Szczepaniak,²² a Polish woman whose sister Emilienne Mopty²³ was beheaded with an axe in her presence as she was imprisoned in Upper Silesia, was detained and mauled.

– On 28 October, in Carvin, a fifteen-year-old Pole named Mataziak [was] hit with a butt.

– On 2 November, in Lallaing, five-hundred gendarmes and CRS²⁴ surrounded the buildings in which foreigners stayed. The law enforcement entered the accommodations and threw outside the miners together with their families. On this night, some of the children were seen walking around virtually naked.

– On 5 November, in Noeux-les-Mines, a CRS officer attacked miners in the town's central area, calling the Polish workers 'riffraff' and jostled an elderly seventy-year-old Polish woman.

– On 10 November, in Carmaux,²⁵ [Department of] Tarn, repressive measures against aliens grew severer. In the midst of the night, [some] Polish families were detained and carried away in cars hastily attached to a cargo train.

²⁰ Merlebach is a town in Lorraine, Region of Grand-Est.

²¹ Carvin is a small town in the Region of Hauts-en-France, Department of Pas-de-Calais; the localities mentioned below are also within this particular region in the north of France.

²² Céline (Celina) Szczepaniak is an unidentified person.

²³ Emilienne Mopty (1907–43) was a French communist movement activist and fighter during the Second World War. Eluard is wrong in ascribing Polish roots to her (her maiden's name was Wantiez). In 1941 she was a leader of the workers' strikes in Nord-Pas-de-Calais. In 1942, she was arrested by the Gestapo and then tortured at the Citadel of Arras, where she was sentenced to death by the military court. She was beheaded in Arras on 18 Jan. 1943.

²⁴ CRS, i.e. Compagnie Républicaine de Sûreté [Republican Security Troop] was a preventive force formed in 1944 in France to replace the Group mobile de réserve established by the Vichy Government. Since its reorganisation in 1948, CRS have been supporting the Police in maintaining order and used, among other things, to suppress demonstrations.

²⁵ Carmaux is a small town in the Region of Occitane, Department of Tarn.

The most acute repressions towards foreign workers took place in Carmaux. They were driven there with butts and a whip onto the lorries and carried away to labour elsewhere. The Spaniards were threatened with getting extradited to Franco's regime.

In the face of these repressions, the fact should not be ignored that the Résistance Monument in Carmaux, among the commemorated fifty-seven names, features twenty-four Poles, three Italians, and nine Spaniards.

– In Sin-le-Noble, Echy, and Abscon,²⁶ between 8 and 14 November, the CRS forces broke into the Italian and North African camps where they demolished the canteen there and took off the straw mattresses and quilts since the immigrant workers were not willing to resume work.

– On 26 October [19]48, in Thivencelle, nine Polish miners, who had entered the mine's area to clock in, were arrested. The CRS forces surrounded the area and detained those present, separating the French workers from the aliens. The Frenchmen were released after their identities were checked, whereas the Poles were transported to Valenciennes. They were sentenced to two months in prison on the same day.

Steps taken against Italian miners

– On 23 October, the Police seized the Volay camp and battered the miners present.

On the night of 17 to 18 October, also the Firminy camp was seized by throwing tear missiles and wounding sixteen miners, one of whom got severely hurt.

– At the Fleming camp in La Chapelle, a miner named Vento, Salvatore,²⁷ father of three aged up to five, was expelled together with his whole family. He was forced to leave France within forty-eight hours.

– In Sin-le-Noble, two hundred Italian miners of the new immigration refused to go down the mine on CRS's command. They were

²⁶ Sin-le-Noble, [D]echy, Abscon are small towns in the Region of Hauts-en-France, Department of Nord; 'Echy' is apparently misspelled as there is no such locality in the region, and Dechy is most probably meant. The localities mentioned below are located in the same region.

²⁷ Salvatore Vento is an unidentified person.

removed from the camp and left without a roof above their heads and without the right to attend the canteen.

– In Gardanne,²⁸ [the Italians] Marchetti and Ingibeni were removed and forthwith brought to the border in Vintimille. Their parents have not heard from them. Marchetti was escorted away dressed in a shirt alone as he was not allowed to take a jacket with him.

In France, at the gates of Paris, we can now observe an alien general staff, a war staff, being formed. We appeal to all the French intellectuals that they rise and oppose it together with the enormous army of working people united in the struggle for peace and progress, for this is the real army of peace – the most powerful of all the armies.

Address delivered by Paul Eluard at the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace in Wrocław, August 1948, and at the Salle de la Mutualité in Paris on 23 November 1948.

transl. Tristan Korecki

verification of the English translation against the French original

Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow

²⁸ Gardanne is a locality in Provence, Department of the Bouches-du-Rhône, southern France.