Open letter from Bertrand Russell to Mr Gomulka

9 December, 1968 Mr. Wladislaw Gomulka, First Secretary,

Central Committee of the United Workers' Party, Warsaw, Poland.

Dear Mr. Gomulka,

I am writing this open letter to you because recent events in Poland do not permit the crime of silence. The wave of anti-semitism which has overtaken Poland requires that socialists everywhere speak out against such a crude deformation of social life. One might have hoped that the Fifth Party Congress in November would call a halt to the trials of students, mostly Jews, alleged to have organised demonstrations at the beginning of the year. The trials, however, con­tinue as I write, with the accused divided into small groups, the foreign Press barred and the clear hope that these disgraceful events will not be noticed. What is the heinous crime of the students? They have demonstrated against the censorship, and against the dismissal of their colleagues — and they are Jews.

Over the past eighteen months in Poland, the Press, the secret police and the Government have instigated anti-semitism quite deliberately. By some twisted logic, all Jews are now Zionists, Zionists are fascists, fascists are Nazis and Jews, therefore, are to be identi­fied with the very criminals who only recently sought to eliminate Polish Jewry. Hundreds of Jews, now by definition " counter-revolutionary ", have been purged from the Party and from responsible positions in administration, communications and the arts. In

an atmosphere of gaolings, sackings and persecution, fathers are purged because of alleged activities of their sons — even before their sons appear for trial. Not only are the " crimes " of the son held to be the crimes of the father, but it is enough that the finger of suspicion is pointed at the son for the father also to suffer. Mr. Gomulka, your own son is half Jewish. Surely you understand the criminality and danger of such a practice?

The complaint frequently made in Poland today that the proportion of Jews in the Party is too high is reminiscent of Hitler's complaints, before he came to power, of the disproportionate role of Jews in Germany. Many Jews joined the Party in Poland for the simple and commendable reason that they hoped it would protect them from the nightmares of the past. That they were tragically mistaken is now evident.

Today, on official parades, Jews are identified on posters as hook-nosed hunchbacks, and anti-semitism has been given theoretical justification in those official publications which reveal the ideological direction oi the Party. Anti-semitism has been exalted as the cover for factional struggles, the substitute for analysis of the massive unpopularity of the Government, and the means to provide scapegoats.

These facts, carefully documented and widely known in informed quarters, represent, for the small Jewish community in Poland, the horrifying life of sudden loss of livelihood, poverty, racist abuse and the threat of worse to come. Much of this might have been avoided if you, Mr. Gomulka, had used the authority of your high office to help prevent it.

How will gaoling and purging Jews increase in them that loyalty to Poland which it is alleged they lack ? How can crude racial prejudice play any role in the building of socialism which invokes the concepts of brotherhood and social justice ?

The world awaits an answer to these questions.

Yours sincerely,

**Bertrand Russell**