Poland’s Place In The Soviet Bloc: Historical And Cultural Linkages, Political Transformation, And Everyday Economic Alternatives In Gdańsk and Wałbrzych

Stephen W. Mays
*Marshall University, s.wm@hotmail.com*

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By
Stephen W. Mays

Approved By:
Dr. Phillip Rutherford, Committee Chairperson
Dr. Anara Tabyshalieva
Dr. Richard Garnett

Marshall University
Huntington, West Virginia
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Acknowledgements

This project began in 2008 as a master’s thesis in sociology and first resulted in publication of a book titled *A Synthetic Analysis Of The Polish Solidarity Movement* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012). It then expanded into an oral history project concerning the Polish Solidarity Movement and comparison of the lived experience of the last decade of socialism in Gdańsk and Wałbrzych, Poland. Eventually, it included also an investigation of Poland’s place in the Soviet Bloc from 1945 to 1989, and thus became a master’s thesis in the History Department of Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia. The completion of this project - from fall 2008 to spring 2014 - resulted from much assistance, advice, and support from many people.

I would especially like to thank my two thesis committee members from Marshall’s History Department, Dr. Phillip Rutherford and Dr. Anara Tabyshalieva, for a plethora of recommendations, much encouragement, and for many exceptional classes in Western and Eastern European history, Soviet and Russian history, as well as Eurasian and Asian history. I also want to thank Dr. Richard Garnett from Marshall’s Sociology Department. Dr. Garnett served on both my sociology and history thesis committees and supervised the IRB approval process for both projects. He also assisted in preparation of the interview schedules for both projects and taught several social theory classes from which much of the historical, political, and economic analysis of this thesis is derived.

I also want to thank Dr. William Palmer for classes in early and modern European History and Dr. Chris White for classes in 20th Century US involvement in world affairs; Dr. White’s experience in US involvement in Latin America and Vietnam, and likewise, Dr. Tabyshalieva’s experience in US / Soviet Cold War history and Soviet Bloc / US relations in general, were all of great significance to my political understanding of historical events described in this thesis. Additionally, Dr. Tabyshalieva’s classes on Russia, the USSR, the Russian Federation, and study of current Eastern European events (i.e., the 2014 Ukraine – Crimea – Russia crisis), informs the content of this thesis – and simultaneously – the background of the thesis may inform understanding of the present events.
I am also greatly indebted to many people outside of Marshall University, and can mention only a few here: I thank Dr. Barbara Wejnert, University at Buffalo, State University of New York, for recommending many of the secondary sources used in this thesis and for sharing with me a profound personal insight into pro-democratic processes in Eastern Europe and the former USSR. I also want to thank Mr. Andrzej Falkowski and Ms. Marta Rutkowska of Gdańsk, Poland, for their invaluable assistance in arranging interviews within Stocznia Gdańska (the old Lenin Shipyard where Solidarity began) and with active members of Centrum Solidarności. Much thanks goes to Dr. Paula Gorszczynska, Ms. Marta Skibinska, and Ms. Aleksandra Kristiansen, all of Uniwersytet Gdańsk, Gdańsk Centre For Translation Studies, for their assistance in personal interviews and translations. I also want to thank Zofia Rudnicka and Tadeusz Drzewiecki for their help in arranging and translating interviews in Wałbrzych and other towns of Lower Silesia. I especially want to thank all the interviewees and contributors from Gdańsk and Wałbrzych who shared with me their many stories and personal histories which are the central theme of this project.

Finally, I want to personally thank a very prominent contributor from Wałbrzych who wishes to remain anonymous. This individual provided invaluable historical material toward completion of this thesis, and in return asked that I include in it a short article about Wałbrzych’s Jewish population. The thesis ends with a reprint of the article, titled Before The Multilingual Hum Quietened: The Birth Of Polish Wałbrzych, by Marek Malinowski and Paul Wieczorek (page 256.) It is dedicated to Wałbrzych’s current Jewish citizens. They are the sons, daughters, and grandchildren of the survivors of the Gross-Rosen concentration camps, forced labor in Wałbrzych and other Sudetenland towns during WWII.
Preface

On The Relevance Of This Study To Current Events, Historical Falsification,
And The Unfinished Twentieth Century

At the time of this research project’s completion (April, 2014) US troops are being deployed to Poland, Ukraine is on the brink of civil war, and American / Russian relations are nearly as strained as during the darkest days of the Cold War. Concurrently, in American universities, Russian studies and the former ‘Sovietology’ field are of ever decreasing levels of importance, enrollment, and funding; the thinking seems to be – ‘why study a failed system?’ Post-Cold War US triumphalism has not only negated the achievements of the USSR but has also relegated an entire chapter of world history to irrelevance. However, neoconservative faith in ‘the end of history’ has proven, in recent months, to have been very shortsighted.

Understanding of the deep historico-cultural linkages between Poland and Russia, Poland’s place in the former Soviet system, and Russia’s economic and geopolitical aims – both ‘noble’ and ‘dastardly’ – are more pertinent than ever as East Central European events take the world stage. This study contributes, in a limited way, to the type of holistic understanding lacking in many discussions of the current crisis. It invites further research on a variety of related topics – for example, Pan-Slavism and the Roman Catholic / Eastern Orthodox ‘schism,’ political-economic perceptions of former Soviet Bloc citizens per generational segment and the weltanschauung of citizens per each nationality, nationalist ambitions in Ukraine and the ‘pull’ of the West in relation to Russian ambitions of ‘empire restoration,’ and Polish-US geopolitical and economic strategies and ‘conspiracies’ (i.e., stated and unstated goals of the Eastern Partnership Community). It also begs questions concerning recent geopolitical alignment in relation to historical antecedents. For example, Poland has had very little ‘brotherly love’ for Ukraine until recently, Ukraine being - unlike the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary - more traditionally aligned with Russia, and more culturally, linguistically, and religiously similar (only 6% of Ukrainians are Roman Catholic whereas over 90% of Poles and some 60% of Slovaks and Hungarians are Roman Catholic). The old saying ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’ comes to mind here.

Furthermore, this study refutes prevalent historical falsifications – common both in the ‘everyday understanding’ of average Americans and common also among some American academics – concerning the nature of the Socialist system in the USSR and its Eastern European satellites, and the goals inherent in this system’s transition. US right-wing narratives, steeped in Reaganesque, neoconservative economic agenda-making, generally seek to justify world capitalist ‘victory’ by way of a supposed Eastern European (and Russian, for that matter) rejection of socialism and longing for unregulated free-marketism and an end to the ‘social safety net’ which is portrayed by neoconservatives as a form of ‘dependence’ which negates personal
initiative. This study demonstrates, by way of first-hand interview data with high-level Solidarność activists (for example, Jerzy Borowczak, current director of Fundacja Centrum Solidarności), that the Solidarity Movement’s goal was establishment of a form of social democracy very similar in philosophy to that of Sweden’s Social Democratic Party – not a ‘dictatorship of capital’ and an ‘every man for himself’ mentality as fetishized by America’s Republican Party, its far-right factions, its wealthy ultra-conservatives, and its lower-class supporters, in which have been installed a ‘false consciousness’ congruent with elite agendas. Those such engaged in an effort to rewrite the past per mythologies spun from the 1989 – 1991 Soviet Bloc transition era, in an effort to influence the future in justification of impoverishment and exploitation of the general public at the expense of a small, elite, privileged class, are in denial of facts, willfully disregarding historical reality - or else they are entirely ignorant of the observational evidence and interview data which substantiates the arguments of this thesis and many other non-Westerncentric historical research projects.

Post-1989 Poland, per the Solidarność Party’s agenda, was similar to that of the ultra-liberal Kerensky Government of Russia in 1917 (the Provisional Government before takeover by the Bolsheviks), in its advocacy of worker’s rights, women’s rights, civil liberties, and powerful progressive hopes for giant leaps forward in social justice, culture, science, and humane economic growth. Solidarność also advocated free universal health care, affordable advanced education, and continuity of the State-sponsored social security system. This study refutes both the demonization of social democracy by Western historical falsifiers as well as the degradation of Soviet Bloc-era individuals - industrial workers, union activists, and all common citizens - per the inaccurate Western assumptions and outright falsifications that these individuals somehow lacked self-initiative, creativity, ‘the work ethic,’ or self-agency. As demonstrated by interview data, Soviet Bloc citizens, by very necessity, exhibited an abundance of each of these qualities, far exceeding most US citizen’s experience in capacity for daily self-reliance, and long-term survival innovations and strategizations.

This study also refutes Western assumptions which generalize all the events in Eastern Europe and the USSR during 1989 – 1991 as ‘the collapse of communism.’ The aim of such reductionist portrayals is usually an attempt to provide evidence of the certainty that capitalism was, is, and always will be the best and only economic system for all humanity. The argument is then skewed by its proponents in several ways following this ‘logic’: The Soviet Bloc collapsed because communism failed > Therefore, capitalism is superior to communism > Therefore, not only a rejection of communism is necessary, but also an intensification of capitalism. Two other elements are then added: the economic systems of capitalism and communism become synonymous with political systems: capitalism = freedom and democracy, and communism = slavery and dictatorship. In fact, communism becomes an interchangeable word for dictatorship and capitalism for democracy. Next, all gradations of either system are removed: Scandinavian-style social democracies, for example, are lumped together with the most extreme socialist regimes, such as the Khmer Rouge, and likewise, capitalist systems - regardless of their
tendencies for human exploitation, environmental destruction, and imperialism - are lumped together and branded as generators of prosperity for all. Bangladeshi sweatshop workers and Wall Street hedge fund operators thus become brothers in a system that offers equal opportunity for all if one will simply apply himself diligently; if you are poor, so goes the mythology, then you have failed to apply yourself adequately.

This thesis demonstrates that all the above-mentioned assumptions are entirely false. The Soviet Bloc was dissolved for a wide variety of reasons, economic issues being only one of many. In fact, Poland’s economic dysfunctions – the everyday alternatives to which are a central focus of this study – were, to a great degree, ‘self-inflicted’ by both Moscow and Warsaw as a ‘punishment’ for the rebelliousness of Solidarność, and then, in a ‘feed-back mechanism’ economic dysfunctions were amplified (State crackdowns on Solidarność through creation of artificial shortages were answered by labor strikes which resulted in decreased production and supply-chain bottlenecks, which in turn caused natural shortages). The true ‘economic collapse’ came after transition to capitalism, as global market forces caused rapid and massive deindustrialization – a deindustrialization across 12 time zones and equivalent to the US deindustrialization of the past 30 years compressed into 3 years! Other reasons for the dissolution include: the centrifugal pull of nationalism and ethnic aspirations, political infighting, rejection of ‘internal colonization’ of Eastern Europe by the USSR, the rejection of ‘ideological orthodoxy’ and its accompanying economic implications, a generational shift and generational disparity between citizens and leaders (a young, modern, educated citizenry was governed by a gerontocracy), the longing of this younger generation for ‘the imagined West’ along with the success of Western propagandists in creating and disseminating ‘the imagined West,’ and the ‘over-success’ of Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika and glasnost.

Additionally, per the previously mentioned Western assumption of lumping all forms of socialism into one category – all forms being assumed equally dysfunctional and equally ‘evil’ – this thesis demonstrates that the version of socialism which evolved in Lower Silesia worked very well and was very much accepted by average citizens. The reality of this construct is that both capitalism and socialism exist, in the real world, on continua of ‘ideological orthodoxy,’ and are couched in widely varied political systems. The all inclusive demonization of every form and function of socially beneficial public policy and all versions of socialism across time and geography originates in Capital; everything that benefits the capitalist agenda is praised and justified – everything that does not is condemned as unpatriotic, un-American, anti-religious, immoral, degenerate, or an outright lie (consider, for example, issues as wide ranging as FDR’s New Deal, ‘creationism,’ gun laws, minimum wage, climate change, or ‘Obama Care’). Attempts at creation of a ‘false consciousness’ in the general public ensues in order to operationalize the ‘approved mindsets’ most beneficial to Capital.
Finally, closely related to the above-mentioned constructs, this study provides many examples of ‘the power of the people’ to alter the course of history. This is evident in Solidarity’s mantra, ‘evolution not revolution,’ in the many alternative and parallel political, social, and economic activities Poles devised (both in the 20th and 19th Centuries), in Gorbachev’s Perestroika – perestroika ‘from below’ and ‘from above’ – and ultimately in the 1989 - 1991 transitions across the Soviet Bloc. This ‘people power’ was based on a Marxist-inspired ‘fraternal proletarian solidarity’ and was simultaneously used in opposition to a misguided version of Marxist-Leninism, namely Stalinism, and its legacies. These ideas are very relevant and utilitarian to current progressive concerns of America’s takeover by oligarchic capitalism and world domination by multinational capital, and the apparent resignation of much of the general public that change is impossible in light of powerfully embedded bureaucracies, privileged groups, and propaganda-driven media. Poles and Russians drastically changed their societies in an era when public communications were censored and opposition to ‘the system’ might mean exile, imprisonment, or death. There is much Americans can learn from these ‘Marxist freedom-fighters’ - Poles and Russians - many practical and theoretical lessons to be applied in operationalizing a ‘21st Century American Perestroika,’ and in revaluating the unfinished ideological business of the 20th Century.
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Abstract

The aim of this study is to arrive at a holistic understanding of Poland’s place in the Soviet Bloc, 1945 – 1989. Throughout, the study considers historical and cultural linkages between Poland and Russia, drawing parallels and contrasts which have shaped the destinies of both nations. It explains how Poland became part of the Soviet system, the successes and failures of the system, and how common people adapted to and eventually altered the system. Special emphasis is placed on the ‘lived experience’ of the last decade of socialism (1979 – 1989), including oral histories of subsistence economic strategies, black market trading, alternative employment scenarios, parallel political action, and underground communications (samizdat or bibula.) The study makes several contentions based on interview data, oral histories, and direct communications with over 50 individuals, mainly in the cities of Gdańsk, on the Baltic Coast, and Wałbrzych, 400 miles south on the Polish – Czech border. Among these contentions is that survival in Poland’s dysfunctional economy during the last decade before the 1989 transition depended on innovation, self-initiative, networking, and risk-taking - traits usually associated (by Westerners) with entrepreneurialism within a capitalist economy - not with daily life in a communist state. The study refutes other commonly held Western beliefs concerning socialist-era Poland and the USSR, including negative assumptions about ‘socialist work habits,’ inaccurate generalizations about the uniformity of socialist economic and political orthodoxy, and false interpretations concerning the 1989 – 1991 transition of the Soviet Bloc. In short, to each of these three items respectively, the study demonstrates a prevalence of a ‘proletarian work ethic’ rivaling any found in the West, two very different ‘versions’ of socialism (greatly dysfunctional in Gdańsk while a ‘golden age’ in Wałbrzych), and a vast propensity for a transition bringing social democracy, not unregulated ‘Wild East’ capitalism as fetishized by Western neoconservatives in an effort to co-opt the Soviet Bloc transition to their service.
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Introduction

This thesis is about how citizens of the Polish People’s Republic managed to survive major economic upheavals as their political system collapsed around them. It explains how Poland became part of the Soviet Bloc economic system, how the system succeeded and failed, and how common people adapted to and eventually altered the system. Building on preliminary research conducted in writing a sociology master’s thesis, A Synthetic Analysis Of The Polish Solidarity Movement (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012), this study focuses on alternative economic practices in Gdańsk and Wałbrzych from 1979 to 1989. Rather than a rigid chronological narrative of world, national, or local events that contributed to the above mentioned scenarios, the study aims for a wider conception which allows for a synthesis of lived experiences (oral histories) and formal history (‘official history’) per published sources and archival records.

The study fills a gap in published accounts on this topic per the following observation: In conducting background research for the above-mentioned sociology thesis it became evident that English language versions of local-level oral histories from former Soviet Bloc states are relatively uncommon in academic literature. This may be due, in part, to translation issues, or to the fact that until relatively recently (post-1989), limited access and travel in Eastern Europe and
the USSR hindered such projects. Prior to 1989, limitations to access encouraged a preponderance of top-down research strategies, focusing on macro-level analyses and statistical data – the results thereof only as accurate as the sketchy figures made available by central planning committees. Likewise, post-1989 studies concerning the transition to capitalism and restructuring of state economies generally focus on formal economics, macro-level politics, or statistical analysis, these too perhaps skewed in the chaos of ‘Katastroika’ (the dark term inferring ‘catastrophic restructuring’). Little attention has been given by Western researchers to the lived experience of economic transition in the last decade of the Communist Era. This study contributes to the topic as its primary research focuses on the lived and felt history of individuals rather than analysis of macroeconomic trends as represented by graphs, charts, and equations.

The thesis contends that survival in Poland’s dysfunctional economic system of the 1980s depended on innovation, self-initiative, networking, and risk-taking - traits usually associated (by Westerners) with entrepreneurialism within a capitalist economy - not with daily life in a communist state. In short, many residents of Gdańsk and Wałbrzych became involved in private economic activities which were the seeds of a ‘proto-capitalism' within a state-owned economy. Such individuals, prepared by their informal entrepreneurial experiences under a dysfunctional version of socialism, were thus ‘pre-adapted’ to the post-1989 market economy.

Dispelling common Western assumptions that life in a socialist system breeds laziness, dependency, inefficiency, and incompetence, this thesis contends the opposite: In order to simply survive in the late-stage socialist economy of Poland (and across the Soviet Bloc, for that matter), an entrepreneurial spirit was necessary along with a wide repertoire of concrete, economic strategies outside of the official economy. This was especially true for those individuals marginalized by connections to the labor union, Solidarsość, and through dissident
activities related to the Solidarity Movement, but it was generally true for all non-Party members across Poland.

Various forms of a shadow economy emerged throughout Poland as a solution to major shortages of food, shortages of nearly all basic consumer items, and a general lack of common consumer services. Work was traded, agricultural products were privately produced and traded, deals were made to secure hard-to-get items, and small-scale, independent 'businesses' were established; all of these were informal, 'off the record' and technically, illegal. It was not only individuals that had been fired from jobs for dissident activities who participated in the shadow economy. For example, individuals working 60 to 80 hour weeks in Stocznia Gdańska (the former Lenin Shipyard), were also involved in alternative economics as this was necessary regardless of income - and incomes were very much leveled regardless of occupation - simply in order to obtain basic necessities and to stretch legally earned incomes. Thus, those entirely without official employment as well as those working grueling hours in heavy industry both participated in alternative economic activities.

This thesis also notes that many full-time workers, such as skilled tradesmen at Stocznia Gdańska, were generally very dedicated and highly productive employees, regardless of external commitments to shadow economies. Again, this conflicts with common Western misconceptions in which workers in State-owned industries are imagined to be inefficient, uncommitted, or even involved in acts of sabotage or deliberate production slow-downs. Interview data indicates a high degree of long-term, even generational, commitment to the shipyard, which continues today. This is not to say that workplace dedication was universal in Soviet Bloc industry – far from it. Neither is it to say that Socialist industries were more efficient as compared to Western industries – they were not. Rather, dedication to a particular craft and/or to a specific workgroup
often times made up for managerial incompetence, technological backwardness, systemic dysfunctions, infrastructure limitations, and outright corruption on the part of the nomenklatura. Again, this finding validates the overarching construct that individuals, as opposed to the socialist system as it had evolved in Eastern Europe and the USSR, were generally, by necessity, highly innovative and very dedicated to the capitalist notion of the ‘work ethic’ – that is, an entrepreneurial spirit prevailed in a socialist world.

Additionally, in telling the story of 1980s Poland, the lived experiences of individuals in Gdańsk and Wałbrzych are compared and contrasted. Although the entire nation suffered from economic dysfunction during this period, generally speaking, Lower Silesia fared better than the Baltic Coast. This can be attributed to the fact that major ‘socialist showcase projects’ in the south, such as Nowa Huta, Katowice, and Kokstownia Wictoria, were given ‘preferential treatment’ by the State, whereas the rebellious Baltic shipyards – Stocznia Gdańska being the birthplace of Solidarność – were ‘punished.’ Interview data supports this notion, and it is reflected in the fact that Wałbrzych residents generally reported less variation in alternative economic strategies and participated less in informal economic practices in comparison to residents of Gdańsk. Thus, southern Poland was, to some degree, pacified by the State and rewarded for its loyalty to the existing socialist system. In fact, outright hostility toward Solidarność was expressed by some Wałbrzych interviewees who blamed the union for closure of local coal mines, an attitude never encountered in interviews on the Baltic Coast.

The thesis also continually refutes its antithesis and several related assumptions stemming from the 1989 – 1991 transition of the Soviet Bloc. As argued and reinforced throughout, the transition of Eastern Europe and the USSR came about as a result of many factors which accumulated over decades, not by oversimplified single causes or grand generalizations such as
‘the inevitable failure of communism.’ The thesis actively points out common assumptions, usually made by critics of any form of planned, rational state intervention in an economy with the aim of developing natural and human resources, in defense of the notion that unregulated global capitalism is the highest and ‘end form’ of human socioeconomic evolution. The daily economic strategies of working class citizens in Poland’s socialized economy, by necessity, entailed much ‘informal entrepreneurialism.’ However, this fact was not an indication that Poland’s citizenry or Solidarność - the independent labor union that opposed Soviet interference in Poland’s political and civil affairs - were yearning for a 180º turn from socialism to ‘Wild East Capitalism,’ the post-Soviet equivalent of American Neoliberal free market anarchism.1

The general political stance and long-term goal advocated by Solidarność, as the labor union evolved into a political party, was creation of a social democracy, with a government organized more along the ideological lines of Sweden’s Social Democratic Labor Party, rather than a Reganesque, laissez faire, ‘law of the jungle’ free-for-all, as posited by some Neoliberal observers. The mythology disseminated in the West of the ‘triumph of capitalism over socialism’ was accompanied by a Neoliberal backlash advocating ‘maximum privatization of everyday life’ as opposed to the early Stalinist era construct of ‘maximum socialization of everyday life.’ In reality, the Soviet Bloc transition was not ‘The End Of History,’ ‘The End Of Ideology,’ ‘The Death Of Marx,’ or an affirmation of the ultimate triumph of the ‘good’ unregulated capitalism over the ‘evil’ social democracy.2

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1 David E. Hoffman, The Oligarchs: Wealth And Power In The New Russia (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2002). Hoffman popularized the term ‘Wild East Capitalism’ in reference to the mad dash for ownership of privatized State property and enterprises by Russia’s ‘new oligarchs,’ most of them former nomenklatura.

2 Francis Fukuyama, The End Of History And The Last Man (New York: Avon Books, 1992). Some authors, politicians, journalists, and academics jumped to conclusions in the 1990s assuming that an Americentric liberal democracy and globalized unregulated capitalism were the highest and ‘end forms’ of human socioeconomic evolution; the ‘collapse’ of the Soviet Bloc was supposed to be evidence of this construct. Soon thereafter, refutations began to emerge, ranging from Samuel P. Huntington’s cultural arguments in The Clash Of
Rather, the transition was driven more by the centrifugal pull of nationalism, personal political ambitions, legitimacy issues against a stagnated geriatric leadership, and the desires of a well-educated, politically sophisticated, modern middle-class to overturn the ‘paternalistic hand’ of its ruling bureaucracy. ‘Economic dysfunction,’ as so often incorrectly cited by Western academics and political pundits as the sole reason for the ‘collapse’ (more accurately, secession of states from a union and end of single party domination in the union’s sphere of influence), was but one of many factors in the transition, and to a great degree, an **effect** of long-term political disintegration rather than a **cause**. The concluding chapter of this thesis briefly addresses these issues as they are complex, integral, and essential components of any discussion of Soviet Bloc transitology. It summarizes points made throughout the thesis in an attempt to clarify the contradicting makeup of the underlying economic and political order of the former Soviet Bloc – constructs that are often grossly distorted or entirely misunderstood in the West.

By the same token, a generalization of ‘the West’ as being dominated by views generally held in the United States alone (or trumped-up in the US to validate Neoliberalism) is also inaccurate. For example, the German interpretation of the 1989 – 1991 transition is **not** based on the notion of ‘the triumph of capitalism over socialism,’ but rather on the triumph of détente in reducing geopolitical antagonisms and the success - rather, ‘oversuccess’- of perestroika in releasing the

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*Civilizations* (1993), to Jacques Derrida’s ‘anti-neocon triumphalism’ in *Specters Of Marx* (1993) with its ‘Ten Plagues Of Global Capitalism.’ In popular journalism, the trend for free market neo-con evangelization continued long after most academic observers had reconsidered the deeper meaning of the 1989 – 1991 transitions. For example, Thomas L. Friedman’s ‘psuedo-economics’ books, *The Lexus And The Olive Tree* (2000), and *The World Is Flat* (2005), posited a bright new world made prosperous by unregulated global capitalism, seemingly oblivious to counter-forces in the Islamic World, the rise of China and other ‘Asian Tigers,’ the recovery of Russia and its trend toward authoritarianism, the downward spiral of Africa into the chaos of ‘privatized violence,’ and the growing dissatisfaction over vast economic inequalities in the US, high unemployment and un-survivable underemployment.
pent-up frustrations of a ‘civil society’ or ‘public sphere’ stifled (except in Poland) since Stalin’s time.³

**Methodologies and Fieldwork**

The research for this thesis has been conducted using local-level, ethnographic and sociological techniques in conjunction with conventional use of published historical sources and a limited number of archival materials. Four methods have been used to explore the lived experiences of individuals during the last decade of communism in Poland, especially in relation to everyday economic alternatives: (1) oral histories have been gathered from persons living through this period – from individuals as well as focus groups; (2) ‘expert interviews’ have been conducted with key informants who worked in local industries, were members of local unions, or otherwise had access to information or experiences not typical of the general public; (3) informal conversations with individuals knowledgeable of this topic have been recorded and analyzed; (4) direct observations in and around Gdańsk and Wałbrzych have been undertaken, informed by locals knowledgeable of the past and up-to-date with current trends.

The interview process has been informed by published academic accounts and adjusted accordingly to focus on specific topics per the expertise of individual subjects. Unique personal documents (scrapbooks, memoirs, hand written essays, samizdat publications, Solidarity newsletters, publications from Stocznia Gdańsk, photographs, etc.) have been given to the

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³ Stefan Meister, ‘Putin Has Berlin In A Tight Spot,’ *Aljazeera America*, 3/13/2014, [http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/3/13/germany-russia-ukraine.html](http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/3/13/germany-russia-ukraine.html) Poland was the only Soviet Bloc state to retain a vibrant ‘civil society’ even under Communist Party domination, economic subjugation, and Martial Law. This is a ‘cultural tradition’ stemming from the Partitions, reinforced by the ‘Polish Enlightenment,’ and operationalized by such institutions as the Polish Catholic Church, ‘Flying Universities’ (informal itinerant schools), samizdat writers (bibula), and a strong, defiant, inteligencja tradition stretching back to Copernicus and beyond.
author by some interviewees, and further contribute to holistic understanding of the late-Socialist Era and transition to a market economy.

In total, twenty three individuals from Wałbrzych and thirty one individuals from Gdańsk contributed data to this study. The Gdańsk interviews were conducted in March and December, 2010, and the Wałbrzych interviews were conducted in June 2011 and June 2012. The first group of interviewees was located by chain reference starting off from initial contacts at the Solidarność union hall in Gdańsk and at Uniwersytet Gdański. The author was assisted in Polish-English translation by Andrzej Falkowski and Marta Rutkowska, local business operators in the Gdańsk area, and by Marta Skibinska and Aleksandra Kristiansen, under the direction of Dr. Paula Gorszczynska of Uniwersytet Gdański. Similarly, the Wałbrzych interviewees were located by chain reference from initial contacts by Zofia Rudnicka and Tadeusz Drzewiecki, former residents of Wałbrzych, who arranged the interviews and translated them to English. Of the total fifty four interviews, fifteen were conducted entirely in English.

Ethical Considerations and General Structure of the Thesis

An open-ended interview questionnaire was constructed in 2009, approved by the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity, and updated and modified for continued use in 2010, 2011 and 2012 (IRBNet ID # 146051 – 6). Copies of the interview schedule and other relevant documents in both Polish and English are included in the appendix. In order to protect the privacy of interviewees, per the prescribed IRB protocol, fictional names are used throughout this thesis, in both the vignettes that open each chapter and in the bodies of the chapters themselves. Only those individuals quoted or discussed in the text of the thesis are referenced in the bibliography. When fictional names are used they appear in quotations (for example:
Interviewee ‘Maciek’ joined Solidarność in 1990. In certain cases actual full names have been used, by permission. These include names of professionals consulted or interviewed, such as university professors, labor union leaders, translators, and also certain ‘key informants’ consulted multiple times, in-person or by email, telephone, or Skype.

Each chapter opens with a vignette based on personal experiences of the author while conducting fieldwork in Poland and/or on narratives told the author by interviewees. The vignettes are intended to convey subtle observations which often carry deep meaning, thus contributing to a holistic understanding of the research topic. The content of each vignette is linked to the subject matter of the chapter it precedes. The vignettes are also meant to humanize the thesis, as the rather ‘lyrical’ nature of the narratives set the stage for more academic discussions in the bodies of each chapter.

The opening chapter of the thesis is devoted to setting up deep background history and the cultural constructs that tie together Poland and Russia. The author’s philosophy is that the roots of contemporary history are found in a deeper past and that the study of history should therefore inform our understanding of the present. Likewise, in regard to the particular subject matter of this thesis, the interaction of traditional cultures with ‘foreign’ ideologies have produced monumental societal upheavals; Marxist-Leninism is very much a Western European ideology derived from Enlightenment thought and classical social liberalism (the individualist branch of liberalism usually being associated with capitalism and the collectivist branch usually associated with socialism), and its application beyond its culture of origin – be it in Poland, Russia, China, or Cuba, for that matter – has resulted in ramifications that can be understood only in consideration of the cultural context in which they evolved. The opening chapter sets this
cultural tone, and likewise, the second chapter ties together culture, ideology, and economy in an historical context.

Chapter three describes how the accumulated layers of culture, ideology, and economic theory were operationalized in historical praxis, resulting in the dysfunctional ‘Soviet Legacy,’ and how dissent and radicalization against this legacy came to be. It also describes the formation of Solidarność as an alternative to the failings of the system.

Next, chapters are devoted to description of daily life in Gdańsk and Wałbrzych during the 1980s, emphasizing the historical events that led to economic dysfunction on a grand scale and alternative solutions to the faltering system. Interview data concerning specific alternative economic strategies is woven into the general narrative. Descriptions by ‘key informants’ from Stocznia Gdańsk and Kokstownia Victoria are used to construct a narrative portraying the lived experience of workers in state-managed heavy industry during this period – workers who were not justly rewarded for their work and found it necessary to supplement their incomes by any means available. Space is devoted to the stories of individuals entirely excluded from the formal economy by virtue of their association with Solidarność. Similarly, the story of how Solidarność, the Catholic Church, and Western labor unions aided those in need is included.

Chapter seven gives a very condensed history of the actual state transition to a market economy in Poland and ties the local lived history of interviewees to the broader spheres of economic change – globalization, deindustrialization, and marketization. Throughout, a constant consideration is given to linkage of lived history and formal history, local change and global change.

The final chapter includes a discussion of the many factors that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, again, per the theme of this thesis, emphasizing the importance of historical
events, structural flaws, and systemic failures as opposed to typical Western assumptions that place primary blame on ‘theoretical’ characteristics and behaviors of Soviet Bloc workers or on the ‘inevitable collapse doctrine.’ In this regard, the thesis contends such ‘theoretical constructs’ should rather be labeled ‘imaginary’ as they are based more on projection of Western values onto stereotypically imagined individuals in non-Western, non-Capitalist societies, in lieu of actual ‘on the ground’ investigation.
1. Mythology And Reality

Poland And Russia In Historico-Cultural Perspective

Synopsis

A summary of the deep historical and cultural connections between Poland and Russia opens the thesis, necessary in light of their 20th Century linkage in ‘fraternal proletarian solidarity.’ The two nations are best understood together, yet ‘mythology’ has often obscured ‘reality’ in the formal historical record. For example, Poland has been portrayed as a ‘sheep to the slaughter,’ or as ‘the Christ among nations’ sacrificed for Europe's redemption. Russia has been portrayed as brutal and mindlessly expansive. In fact, the true ‘aggressor states’ have been Western European; Russia’s two main agendas have been resistance to Western aggression, and attempts at modernization. Russia always lagged behind the West, and always feared the West (with good reason). Although they have common ‘ancestral roots,’ Poland and Russia began diverging early on in several ways: While Poland developed a modern economy, and a sophisticated private financial sector by the second half of the 18th Century (during and despite Partitions), Russia remained primarily an agricultural nation until the early decades of the 20th Century. Poland was a leader in European industry and commerce, as well as a pioneer of civil liberties, while Russia remained locked in its Medieval, agricultural past. Yet, the agricultural commune of Russia was as traditional, and as functional per its intended purpose, as the Hanseatic trading ports on Poland’s Baltic Coast. Thus, Russia’s eventual modernization took a different path than had Poland’s. With little tradition of private entrepreneurialism, a poorly developed financial system, low population density, and vast geographical territory, Russia’s industrialization took Statist form. Russia chose a different economic path than did Poland for functional considerations. It made as much sense to centrally organize this vast, capital-poor region of scattered peasant communes as it did to decentralize and deregulate the crowded, subdivided lots of Poland. Two different but simultaneously functional paths had been taken by Poles and Russians, both choices being rational, considering the conditions. Different material conditions and differing phases of economic development affected Polish and Russian modernization, and both came to be expressed in societal differences as well. In a nutshell, Polish progressivism often clashed with Russian traditionalism, but both were functions of material conditions and
circumstances. There existed no inherent ‘flaw’ in Russian character anymore than there existed ‘nobility’ in Polish character; rather, their different paths to modernity were determined by different demographic, geographic, and climatic set-points, in conjunction with different historic trajectories.

Mythology and Reality

Mr. Motyka takes great pride in his garden and he shows off fruit trees as an art connoisseur would show a Picasso. “The variety of gooseberry bushes we grow here is called Chekov’s,” he commented, and I wondered if they truly came from Chumbaroklov Waste. The bushes were blooming profusely along a rickety wooden fence made of discarded shipping pallets that divided the front yard from the barnyard, but the air smelled more of souring rye silage than it did flowers.

“This is the time of year to plant beets and to put manure around the horseradish plants,” he said, “how can you have ćwikła z chrzanem alongside the Christmas Eve ham if you neglect now this work of spring? Here, I will show you how to make come up fast the beetroot seeds: soak them in water overnight, and after you sow them in rows, press down the soil with a

…it was tedious to listen to the story of that poor devil of a clerk who ate gooseberries.” Mr. Motyka seemed a character straight out of Anton Chekhov’s novel Gooseberries, and he attributed the varietial names of his prized plants to literary references. Like Nikolay Ivanych, he was lord of a tiny estate and philosopher of cosmic proportions, a cherished Slavic archetype in both Poland and Russia. Above: his cherry trees and gooseberry bushes.

Anton Chekhov, Gooseberries, 1898
board as wide as your hand and as long as your leg. Press down the board heavily; the seeds like to feel themselves very snug in the soil as do we in our home. Remember, “Szlachcic na zagrodzie równy wojewodzie (The noble on his estate is equal to the governor of the province).”

I thought to myself, how literally petit-bourgeois, is this ‘estate,’ this farm of three-quarters of an acre, its noble szlachta owner a true farmer-philosopher – a regular Thomas Jeffersonski, he is! As Stalin said, ‘Communism fits Poland like a saddle fits a cow.’

After touring this Polish Ponderosa we went inside and sat around a creaking wooden table – I think Lenin had built it as a school boy – and drank tea brewed in an iron pot from Stalin’s foundry. Above the table hung an old brass lamp that filled the kitchen with a warm, opaque, red glow. So the legend goes, it was bought at Mrs. Khrushchev’s yard sale. The quality of light it produced was very complementary to the icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa on the wall, behind the table. It gave the image a near life-like look. The tin-box of an oven, manufactured the year Gerick proclaimed he would ‘build a new Poland,’ appeared so shoddily made that I wondered what kept it from setting fire to the house. But out of that oven Mrs. Motyka took a beautiful pan of hot, dark, brown bread. She topped each huge chunk with a pat of butter shaped like a lamb – while family and friends argued whether it was Lech Wałęsa or Mikhail Gorbachev who had sown the wheat to make the flour to bake the bread. However, all were in
agreement that John Paul had lit the fire in the oven, not only to bake bread, but to warm the house; General Jaruzelski, half snow-blind from a decade in a Siberian work camp, had gotten too accustomed to cold.

It was June 22 - środek lata – midsummer’s eve or Noc Świętojańska (St. John’s Night). Mr. and Mrs. Motyka’s teenage granddaughters had made wreaths of yellow and white wildflowers to toss into the lake. Each wreath had a lighted white candle and together with many other girls’ wreaths they would float in hopes a young man would find them. Bonfires would be lit at midnight and celebrations would continue till dawn.

This old pre-Christian Slavic tradition has been resurrected - and modernized to include ‘totally epic’ partying and rock concerts - in the past decade. Popularized more through the internet than through revival of local customs, it has found a new place in young Slavic identity. June 22 is also The Day Of Memory And Sorrow in Russia, the remembrance of the beginning of The Great Patriotic War. Flowers are placed at the Eternal Flame Of Our Memory at the Leningrad Memorial, and at the feet of Mother Russia on the gigantic burial mound of Stalingrad. It is also customary for newly married Russian couples to balance their personal joy with the collective sorrow by laying flower wreaths at war memorials immediately after their wedding. The past is never far from the present in a place where tradition, culture, and ideology intertwine with history.
One cannot understand Poland without understanding Russia; clarification: you must understand something about them both in order to put in context the economic ramifications of their linkage in ‘fraternal proletarian solidarity.’ The clarified aim is possible but the general aim is deceptive, because the more one comes to know, the greater is the realization of how little is understood. The best an outsider can hope for is the etic perspective, even if one visits the countries, meets the people, reads the history, and sees the places where it all happened. Even if the outsider was told stories of ‘Slavic heritage’ and horrific stories of family members’ experiences of World War II, it is nothing at all towards understanding what Eastern Europeans felt when armies marched, when States were torn apart by revolution, when cities starved, and when abstract ideology took the place of proletarian common sense.

In living memory of the oldest generation of Poles and Russians is Hitler’s war of extermination, reconstruction and starvation afterward, Stalin’s terror, Solidarity’s rise, Jaruzelski’s martial law, Communism’s disintegration, and the Capitalist resurrection. The post-war generation of Poles - the age cohort equivalent to US ‘baby-boomers’ - learned the Russian language as school children, sang ‘happy birthday’ to Lenin (Sto Lat! They said – may he live 100 years), and dreamed of making a trip to West Germany to buy jeans and Coca Cola. By 1992, ‘Gen-X’ Russian girls were dreaming of escaping the chaos of the crumbling Vechnoe Gosudarstvu (The Eternal State) with an “American Boy” (Американ Бой), the title of a catchy song by pop group Kombinaciya, while their parents alternately cursed and blessed Mikhail Gorbachev for liberating/impoverishing the nation. The side effects of Lech Wałęsa’s Evolucja nie Rewolucja (Evolution not Revolution) were as devastating for Silesian coal miners as they
were for Magnitogorsk steel workers – as the former Soviet Bloc entered the global economy its workers got a taste of good old fashioned American Rustbelt deindustrialization. Be careful what you wish for, you just might get it, and in an interconnected world it might cause a seismic economic shift. But such dramatic shifts are really nothing new in Polish and Russian history.

In the collective memory of generations now gone - the Polish and Russian archetypal memory, if you will – is Poland’s partition, as Caryca Katarzyna (Czarina Catherine - ‘Beloved Yekaterina,’ to the Russians) sought to ‘recover what was torn away’ (she wore a gold medal around her neck congratulating herself on doing this) by means of her lover, Stanislaw August Poniatowski, the final king of pre-partition Poland.\(^1\) Remembered also is the revenge by Prince Adam Czartoryski, who later pursued in the court of Czar Alexander I the idea of reconciliation of Polish/Russian identity within the framework of a single Pan-Slavic super state, while he simultaneously befriended the Czar and fathered a child with the Czarina. Czartoryski's methods were complex, pragmatic, and a bit Machiavellian, but above all, strategic, perhaps a forerunner of Zbigniew Brzezinski's notion of 'strategic diplomacy' with a touch of soap opera melodrama thrown in for good measure. Czartoryski was determined to create a ‘Slavic Union’ - if not by politics then by genetics.\(^2\)

Also remembered are the decades of *praca organiczna*, literally, ‘organic work,’ when during the partitions Polish bankers, industrialists, farmers and entrepreneurs of all sorts worked quietly and cooperatively to build the Polish economy through expansion of the private sector, infrastructure improvements, modernization and mechanization. ‘Russian Poland,’ *Zabór*

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Rosyjski – the Russian Annexation, was not going to be an object of their efficient German neighbors’ condemnation and reproach. The *liederliche polnische wirtschaft* - the ‘slovenly Polish economy,’ as the German Partitioners called it\(^3\) - was transformed by Poland’s indigenous *burzuazja zajęcia* (the enterprising bourgeoisie classes) while simultaneously the *Polska inteligencja* kept alive Polish language, culture, and *prawdziwa historia* (true history) in ‘*uniwersytet latajacy*’ (‘flying universities’).\(^4\) These underground schools counterbalanced linguistic Russification and *лакаровка* (lakarovka) - the ‘official’ meddling with facts and history - so common in Russian culture and later in Soviet bureaucracy that the practice earned this specific name.\(^5\)

Love and hate, friendship and intrigue, brotherhood and betrayal – these extend far into the past between *Rodacy nasza Ojczyzna Polska* (the Family which is Poland) and Мир Общинна Родина (the Communal Refuge of our Motherland). The outsider is hard pressed to grasp the emotional significance of this Polish/Russian relationship, but we can talk about it in historical terms and hope to convey a semi-accurate rendering of the lived and felt experiences. For our immediate purposes, we could start with WWII, as the modern Polish economy – and all its dysfunctional chaos – emerged directly from Soviet annexation. However, there are historical

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\(^4\) Dr. Barbara Wejnert, interview by author, 1/23/2010. Dr. Wejnert, a former member of *Solidarność* and scholar of Polish history, provided extensive firsthand information concerning *uniwersytet latajacy* in the 18th, 19th, and 20th Centuries. Dr. Wejnert participated in *uniwersytet latajacy* in Poznań in the 1980s.

\(^5\) Dr. Jeffra Flaitz, interview by author, 10/3/2008. So common was the practice of ‘manipulating facts’ in Russian culture that the practice had a specific word to describe it, ‘*лакаровка*’ (lakarovka). This holds true throughout Russian and Soviet history (post-Soviet also?) and the practice probably has Byzantium roots. The term is usually applied to ‘official’ manipulation for the benefit of the State. Лакаровка was practiced in diplomacy, State communications (in Soviet Russia by Pravda), and in Statecraft in general. Dr. Flaitz observed the practice first-hand in Leningrad and Moscow prior to the 1991 transition. A common form was obvious and blatant discontinuity between observed reality and/or Western news reports in relation to Pravda reporting.
The antecedents necessary to understanding how and why the USSR made the Lublin Committee the nucleus of post-war Polish government even before the Red Army entered Warsaw on January 17, 1945. There are also cultural connections and dissimilarities between the two nations, some of which helped shape the historical trajectory that led to creation of The People’s Republic of Poland. Briefly examining some high points of the long background history of Poland and Russia will set the stage for elaboration of the 20th century topics that are the focus of this thesis.

In the late 1500s the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was the largest state in Europe and one of the most prosperous. It encompassed what is now Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus and much of Ukraine. It was created on July 1, 1569, from The Act Of Union (The Union of Lublin) in which Zygmunt Augustus, last of the Jagiellons, was elected by Polish and Lithuanian szlachta as monarch of the combined kingdoms. The Act was both politically expedient and a rational security measure — the ‘Great Gathering’ of Ivan the Terrible was underway and some 6000 of his опричники (oprichniki - the modern equivalent of ‘death squads’) were at work operationalizing Ivan’s personal will as ‘The Hand Of God.’ The oprichniki saw to it that Ivan’s enemies - and potential enemies – were boiled in oil, roasted alive, impaled, crucified upside down, had their tongues cut out, or had their limbs torn off by charging horses; the oprichniki took their job very seriously. With Poland’s Zygmunt Augustus heirless, and the magnates of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania losing sleep over Ivan’s plans for

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6 M.K. Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party Of Poland: An Outline Of History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 184. The headquarters of the pre-war Polish Communist Party was at Lublin. On December 31, 1944, The Lublin Committee declared itself to be the provisional Polish government, this act protested by Warsaw but supported by Moscow. Of course, Moscow had its way as the Red Army began liberation of Poland from Germany and simultaneously its own occupation.

7 Nicholas V. Riisanovsky and Mark D. Steinberg, *A History Of Russia* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 140 – 149. ‘The Great Gathering’ is the semi-legendary accumulation of the vast Siberian empire by Ivan IV. Most of the expansion was into sparsely populated regions inhabited by unorganized, indigenous groups. There was much less legitimate threat to the West.
expansion (and the possibility of meeting up with the *oprichniki*), combining the Seyms and the military resources of the two countries made perfect sense.\(^8\)

Now, traditional world history textbooks often strike the difference between Poland and Russia at this particular point in time. Russia is portrayed as mindlessly expansive, with a succession of insanely brutal dictators bent on world domination proceeding in a direct line from Ivan the Terrible to Joseph Stalin and beyond. This sort of perspective perpetuates Ronald Reagan’s ‘Evil Empire’ notion and grossly simplifies and distorts historical reality.\(^9\)

Conversely, Poland is often portrayed as a ‘victim’ - a sheep to the slaughter - and even authors with the best of intentions sometimes inadvertently insult Polish pride in this context. Timothy Garton Ash’s *The Polish Revolution*, while highly sympathetic to the Solidarity Movement and to the movement’s agenda, introduces the subject via this type of background. He begins with a rather emotionalized discussion of the 'betrayal' of Poland at the Yalta Conference ("...their country was delivered up by their western allies, Britain and America, into the famously tender care of Uncle Joe Stalin"), and continues this 'messianic theme', citing Adam

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\(^9\) Not only entry level textbooks are guilty of this. The well known eleven volume series, *The Story of Civilization*, by Will and Ariel Durant (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967) is overtly anti-Russian – that is, in the fifty pages devoted to Russia out of a total of nearly 10,000. Chapter XVII (Volume X: Rousseau and Revolution), titled “Russian Interlude,” opens with Frederick the Great bemoaning the necessity to cultivate the friendship of barbarians, that is, Russians. Durant and Durant concur, stating in sickeningly elitist terms that the fate of the average Russian was to be defeated by his own masters and government, and those who survive, “...crept back to their task of fertilizing the women with their seed and the soil with their blood” (423). The authors’ blatant racism continues on page 425 in discussion of alleged common Russian characteristics: “Among the people language was coarse, violence was frequent, and cruelty correspondent with the strength of the frame and thickness of the skin. Everyone gambled and drank according to his means, and stole according to his station...” After a few kind, but rather condescending, words for Catherine the Great, the chapter following is titled “The Rape Of Poland.” Monstrous Russia, peopled by ignorant barbarians, is hungry to gobble up noble Poland and all the world – this is the Durant take on the subject.
Mickiewicz's notion of Poland as "the Christ among nations" sacrificed for Europe's redemption.\(^\text{10}\)

More carefully researched histories paint a much different picture, especially those written in the post Cold War era and lacking a covert political agenda. For example, Marshall T. Poe’s *The Russian Moment In World History* contends that the Russian agenda has continually been focused on defense against the West rather than on conquest of it.\(^\text{11}\) Again, this perspective flies in the face of ‘conventional’ US accounts, especially those written between 1945 and 1991. The idea deserves brief elaboration as it is a key in understanding the background leading up to Poland’s annexation by the USSR in 1945.

Poe reminds readers that Poland once conquered and annexed a great part of the Russian empire, actually occupying Moscow from 1610 – 1612. Additionally, he notes that Russian expansion was generally eastward into lightly populated regions inhabited by indigenous people lacking formal organization; he cites Siberia as an example. As with all early states, expansion and conquest was part and parcel of their existence. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth expanded into Russia during a period of Russian vulnerability – ‘The Time Of Troubles,’ as it is called, after the death of Ivan the Terrible and before the Romanov Dynasty was established.\(^\text{12}\) Political disarray along with civil war, drought and famine had weakened Russia and the


\(^{12}\) Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, The USSR, And The Successor States* (Oxford: The University of Oxford Press, 2011), 3 – 5. Suny’s chapter on “The Imperial Legacy,” (3 – 46) describes ‘The Time Of Troubles’ as being from Ivan’s death in 1584 to the establishment of the Romanov line in 1613. Complex political intrigue was the order of the day during ‘The Troubles,’ with two ‘False Dmitris’ appearing to claim the Russian throne. Both claimed to be Ivan the Terrible’s sons, but were instead Polish impostors. Their aim is said to have been not only to gain political control of Russia for the Commonwealth but also to steer Russia away from Orthodoxy and toward Roman Catholicism. The famous play ‘Boris Godunov’ recounts this time – it is said to have been Joseph Stalin’s favorite play.
Commonwealth simply exploited the situation to its advantage. This was ‘standard operating procedure’ for dynastic states in this era, the point being that neither Poland nor Russia was ‘obsessed’ with expansion at this stage of its existence any more so than were other European states.\(^{13}\)

Poe continues this theme, arguing that the differential in wealth and material development between Russia and Western Europe was a primary factor in generating Russia’s anxiety toward the West. The central idea here is that Russia, even after its recovery from ‘The Time Of Troubles,’ continued on as a pre-modern, agricultural state in competition with the rapidly advancing, proto-industrial, militarily-driven, ‘super states’ of Western Europe.\(^{14}\) These were the true ‘aggressor states,’ and it was Russia’s misfortune to find itself next door to the most technologically, economically, and militarily advanced nations on earth. Russia’s history from this point forward can be seen as a continual game of ‘catch-up’ with the West, culminating in the 20\(^{th}\) Century with Stalin’s foresight in forcing industrialization, the pyrrhic victory of WWII, and then the Cold War. From the ‘Time of Troubles’ to December 25, 1991, the primary struggle for Russia (and later the USSR) had been an economic struggle – and for any modern state this entails also a military/technological struggle. Eastern Europe was pulled into the USSR’s sphere of influence after World War II and thus into Russia’s economic troubles. Poland and Russia’s paths to modernity had diverged 500 years earlier and their short ‘partnership’ in the 20\(^{th}\) Century would be a stormy one.

Early on, Poland’s economy was structured very differently than Russia’s, and to a great degree this stemmed from political and ideological differences. In simplest terms, Poland was an

\(^{13}\) Poe, *The Russian Moment*, 1-3.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 42 – 45.
‘open society’ and Russia was ‘closed.’ Adam Zamoyski notes several highly significant indicators of this.\footnote{Zamoyski, \textit{The Polish Way}, 116 – 125.} For example, a Polish royal decree granted absolute freedom of the press in 1539, and in 1791 the Sejm ratified the first purely constitutional government in Europe. In 1630 Poland recognized six different languages for legal purposes: Polish, Latin, Ukrainian, Hebrew, German, and Armenian. The old Hanseatic city of Gdańsk had large populations of German, Dutch, and Scandinavian traders, and Elbląg had large colonies of English and Scots. Kraków and Wilno had large Hungarian and Italian communities. Not overwhelmingly Roman Catholic until after the Partitions (and as a result of resistance to the religions of the Partitioners), Poland’s religious tolerance drew large Jewish communities in nearly every city. No Polish monarch or government ever decreed an ‘official’ religion by officially outlawing another; loyalty to a particular faith was always a personal matter for Poles, not the realm of public legislation. Thus, by the standards of the time, Poland was highly cosmopolitan, a melting-pot of languages, cultures, and ideas, not unlike the modern US.

In economic terms, such diversity is highly desirable as it is an indicator of commercial interest beyond the borders of the country. New populations bring innovation and competition, thus stimulating economic growth. Again, as described by Zamoyski, pre-partition Poland seems to have been nearly as ‘neo-liberal’ as Reagan-era Washington. Zamoyski contends that while the Hapsburgs, the Bourbons, and the Tudors were attempting to impose ever increasing control over their populations through growing bureaucracies, Poland’s Sejm continued to decentralize government and liberalize its economic policies. Zamoyski summarizes,

The Poles had made an article of faith of the principle that all government is undesirable, and strong government is highly undesirable. This belief was not based on some kind of inherent love of chaos, but on a deeply felt conviction that one man had no right to tell
another what to do, and that quality of life was impaired by unnecessary administrative superstructure… These attitudes – the rejection of authority for its own sake, the rejection of the theory that the public good could be served by exerting pressure on the individual, and the belief in the inalienable rights and dignity of the individual – were not new in Poland. They had been evidenced throughout the Middle Ages…and in the sixteenth century they became institutionalized…  

‘Polish-ness’ has thus been traditionally defined by Enlightenment standards of liberalism, pluralism, democratic rule, respect for human rights, and separation of church and state. By contrast, Russia’s notion of ‘Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and Nationality’ was traditionally heavy-handed to say the least, more akin to Byzantine traditionalism than Philosophe progressivism. Ash simplifies the differences as, "...the clash of Polish democracy with Russian despotism, Polish individualism with Russian collectivism, and Polish Catholicism with Russian Orthodoxy.”  

To a great degree, Orthodoxy seems to have influenced the political culture of Russia, its traditionalism maintained and even amplified over time, whereas Roman Catholic Poland was able, very early on, to separate Church from State. In Russia, Church was State and the Czar was head of both, this a throwback to Byzantium customs.

The traditional belief in the all-powerful Czar, and all that such belief entails, is aptly illustrated in a description by Robert Massie. Speaking of pre-20th century Russia, Massie

16 Ibid., 104.


18 Khan Baliquist, “Mongolian Exclusiveness or Жизнь Монгол,” in A Thousand Miles Of Moonlight: Casting An Uneven Light Across East Asia,  http://www.cjvlang.com/moonlight  . Here Baliquist discusses the simultaneous isolation and protection of Russian Orthodoxy from the Crusaders by the Mongols, preserving Byzantium traditions and hindering transmission of Western culture: “The Mongols wanted to capture West Europe, and to do that, they had to pass through Russia. They invaded Russia many times destroying key cities. The Mongols had profound effects on the Russian civilization including a relationship between serfs and landlords (which kept Russia an unsophisticated country for a long time), economic development due to opened trade routes, reorganization of the military and tactics, and isolation of the Orthodox Church which protected it from Crusades but caused it to lack in Western development.”

states, "From infancy, Russians have been taught to regard their rulers as god-like creatures. Their proverbs embodied this view: ‘Only God and the Czar know,’ and, ‘Tis death for anyone to reveal what is spoken in the Czar's palace.” Massie even ties these attitudes to ideational constructs beyond religion, stating that, “…as Western Europe moved through the Reformation and the Renaissance and into the Enlightenment, Russia and her church remained pure - petrified in their medieval past.”

Additionally, William Taubman provides a modern example of this persistent cultural attitude toward Czarism. In 1945 Nikita Khrushchev was assigned by Joseph Stalin the job of overseeing the rebuilding of war-devastated provinces of Ukraine. When he arrived in decimated villages to survey damages and offer help, villagers would sometimes say to him, "You are our Czar," to which he would reply, "No, I'm only the "Czarovich" (son of the Czar), thus referring to his boss, Joseph Stalin, as the People’s Czar. ‘Father Stalin’ cultivated this paternalistic notion, replacing Orthodoxy with the religion of Marxist-Leninism.

According to Ronald Suny, this traditional Russian paternalism was manifested in the everyday economic conditions of peasants in imperial Russia. The Czar was imagined as God’s equal on earth - all powerful and all knowing – with all earth and sky belonging to him. Peasants worked the Czar’s land and did not imagine personal ownership of it. Collectivism was natural in this perspective, as peasants perceived themselves as the Czar’s children and he their Great Father. Labor conveyed the right of all to partake in a share of whatever the communal property

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20 Massie, Peter The Great, 56.


produced, and indeed, according to Suny, personal accumulation of wealth was socially condemned. As with Massie’s quoted Russian proverbs, above, Suny adds these to make his point: “God smiles upon him who is satisfied with what he has.” “Wealth is a sin before God, but poverty is a sin before people.” “What the Mir ordains is what God has decreed.”

The point here is that Russian traditionalism, steeped in Orthodox beliefs, is postulated to have produced a common mindset concerning economic values nearly the polar opposite of those that evolved in the West. Whereas the Poles perceived even the smallest landowner as a szlachta of sorts - a ‘mini-noble,’ if you will - endowed by his Creator with the inalienable right to turn a profit, traditional Russian beliefs disdained such a notion, ‘kulaks’ (the Russian equivalent of the szlachta) being labeled as “…the village extortioners, the ‘skinners alive,’ those who ‘eat up the commune’…” This traditional negative mindset concerning ‘rural capitalism’ was effectively exploited by Lenin (and even more ruthlessly, later, by Stalin) in the process of ‘dekulakization’ and collectivization of agriculture. Stalin’s notorious frustration with attempts to collectivize Polish farms is legendarily condensed in his well-known saying, ‘Communism fits Poland like a saddle fits a cow.’

The ultimate manifestation of this dissimilar economic outlook between East and West - between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism (which seems, in Poland’s case, to have rubbed shoulders with ‘The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism’), between liberal constitutionalism and conservative autocracy – is that the West modernized exponentially faster than the East. Returning to the formerly mentioned thesis of Marshall T. Poe (this being that Russia’s main objective has historically been defending itself from Western domination), we can

23 Ibid., 13 – 14.

note the threat posed to Russia by the ‘European Miracle’ in both its economic and military ramifications.

Poe states that Russia was the only ‘extra-European empire’ to resist European domination throughout the early modern period.\textsuperscript{25} He cites the cases of the New World; the Aztec, Inca, and Maya being conquered by Spaniards and the rest of indigenous American civilizations entirely displaced by the English, French, and Portuguese. In the Middle East and Orient, nearly the same; the British colonized India, forced trade on China’s coast, dismissed the Ottoman’s ‘sick man of Europe,’ and ran roughshod over the Safvid, Mogul, and Qing empires. The ‘Scramble For Africa’ was more nearly a ‘status symbol game’ than meaningful expansion; Western European nations played the game because they could. Again, by Poe’s terminology, Russia was a pre-modern, agricultural civilization throughout all this, thus a potential target for Western imperialism which they effectively resisted. He cites a list of invasions of Russia by the West from the 16\textsuperscript{th} to 20\textsuperscript{th} Centuries to demonstrate his point:

Early on, the Poles, Swedes, and Prussians invaded multiple times. The British, French, and Ottoman Empire invaded Crimea in 1853, and the US headed a multinational invasion force of no less than fifteen different countries in attempt to intervene during the Russian Civil War in 1918. Germany’s notorious invasions during both world wars are as well known as Napoleon’s famous 1812 fiasco; of course, his defeat was due more to ‘General Mud’ and ‘General Winter’ than to the skills of Marshall Kutuzov.

Poe summarizes by stating that in all the above cases Russia was on the defense against an aggressive West; the myth of Russia as the ravenous wolf is as inaccurate as is the myth of

Poland as the sacrificial lamb. Russia was vulnerable to the West because it was economically and technologically less developed than the West. It held off invasions – just barely, usually, and at great cost – because of its enormous human and material resources, World War II being the prime example of a longstanding and highly destructive trend.26

Russia was rich in natural resources but poor in capital and infrastructure, a colossus created in the Medieval Era that did not evolve a modern financial system as did its smaller Western neighbors. Russia remained overwhelmingly rural, with only 17% of its population living in towns and cities as late as 1917, the majority of this number centered around two cities, Saint Petersburg and Moscow.27 It lacked a middleclass of any size or importance, and thus an entrepreneurial base and a private financial sector until very late in the imperial age – just as this class was emerging, revolution liquidated it.

Poland, by contrast, was nearly Russia’s opposite in this respect. A financially progressive state that looked to the West and to the future, Poland’s large middleclass modernized the domestic economy even when dominated by Russia during the Partitions and despite a ‘capital drain’ caused by exile of many Polish business magnates. In fact, Polish banks had excess capital to invest overseas even during the Partition. For example, during the 1860s, Peter Zaleski, a Warsaw banker and financial manager, invested what would be the current equivalent of one

26 Peter Hopkirk, “The Russian Bogy,” in The Great Game: The Struggle For Empire In Central Asia (New York: Kodansha America, 1994), 57 – 68. Hopkirk explains the origins of “the Russian bogy” in the minds of Westerners to have originated after the 1812 defeat of Napoleon and the pursuit of his army back to Paris by Czar Alexander’s troops. One British observer in particular, Sir Robert Wilson, is said to have widely promoted overblown accounts of Russian atrocities and aggressive militarism, perhaps in attempt to simply sell his own books. Wilson published A Sketch Of The Military And Political Power Of Russia in 1817 and in it contended that Russian czars were under “…Peter The Great’s supposed death-bed command that they conquer the world” (60). Wilson claimed that Russia posed a far greater threat to Europe than Napoleon ever had, and he condemned Britain’s leaders for not recognizing this.

billion dollars in the iron and coal industry of Vinton County, Ohio. Zaleski’s Warsaw clients reaped investment returns on the Ohio venture which they used to further develop Polish infrastructure, this being a relatively common practice during the Partition Era.\(^{28}\) By contrast, one year after Zaleski’s initial investment in Ohio, in 1861, Czar Alexander II freed Russia’s 23 million serfs - about 40% of the total population, the majority of the remainder communal peasants with no concept of finances beyond the immediate concerns of survival on the *Mir*.\(^{29}\)

The point here is, as partitioned Poland modernized with the help of interest payments from foreign investments, much of Russia was just escaping the Middle Ages.

The realization of Russia’s deficiencies in contrast to Western Europe, and Russia’s accurate perception of its need to rapidly address these deficiencies, came very late indeed. England, for example, was moving into a second phase of industrialization as Russia was embarking on its first. As noted by Suny, it was not until the 1890s that Russia undertook industrial development

\(^{28}\) Tadeusz Drzewiecki, personal communication, 4/22/2012. Poland has a long history of overseas investment, even during the Partitions. Polish bankers exiled to France and England managed the accounts of their clients who remained in Poland, often investing in the US. Likewise, a considerable number of Polish American businessmen invested in Poland during the economic transition of the 1990s. Russia has no comparable tradition of foreign investment. The above example of Peter Zaleski, discussed at Ohio University’s (Athens, Ohio) yearly history conference in April 2012, was further researched by the author of this thesis at Zaleski, Ohio. Peter Zaleski’s investments contributed greatly to the Hanging Rock, Ohio Iron District during the US Civil War. The town of Zaleski, Ohio grew around an iron furnace and coal mines financed by Peter Zaleski. Marek Zaleski, a descendant of Peter Zaleski, was translator and coauthor of a book about the Solidarity Movement along with Józef Tischner, who was known (unofficially) as ‘The First Chaplain of Solidarity: Józef Tischner and Marek Zaleski, *The Spirit Of Solidarity* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), published in Poland as *Etyka Solidarności* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1984). Marek Zaleski also translated the autobiography of Lech Wałęsa, *A Way Of Hope* (New York: Henry Holt and Co. 1989), originally published in France as *Un Chemin D’espoir* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1987).

\(^{29}\) Marta Skibinska, personal communication, 10/23/2011. *Мир* (*Mir*) is equivalent to *Община* (*obshchina*), the *obshchina* being literally an agricultural commune. The *Мир* is the village commune, a traditional Russian settlement pattern dating back into antiquity. *Мир* also has a connotation attached to it of peacefulness toward anyone entering the *Мир*, or perhaps seeking refuge in it. “*He от Мира сего*” is a saying implying a person from a different place has found peace in the commune (in the *Мир*). It also has the connotation of ‘sanctuary,’ a removal of oneself from the pressures of ‘the world’ rather as do monks in a monastery. No similar tradition exists in Polish culture, in fact the opposite is true: the saying ‘They are trees, we are birds’ means that Russians stay home in ‘self-exile’ while Poles migrate ‘like birds.’ The traditional Russian conservatism and Polish progressivism is captured in this saying.
in any meaningful way, and when it did, the projects were mainly state-financed rather than privately initiated.\(^ \text{30} \)

Czar Alexander II is credited with helping establish a version of state-capitalism, a ‘joint venture’ of sorts between private entrepreneurs and the Czarist state. With little available capital (on the scale necessary for constructing industrial infrastructure) and no experience in managing industrial facilities, few existing Russian entrepreneurs were willing or able to undertake investment and operation of heavy industrial plants. In effect, the Czar and a small group of advisors appointed by him took the role usually played by private investors in the West, bringing in foreign engineers and managers, financing and overseeing industrial start-ups from beginning to end. No liberal opposition to government taxation or regulation evolved in Russia as the small bourgeoisie class gladly aligned itself with the Czar, who financed development and protected it from foreign competition. Thus, statism rather than private entrepreneurialism characterized the earliest industrial development in Russia – when these developments finally did emerge.\(^ \text{31} \)

This statist approach was as much a result of Russia’s particular geographic and demographic situations as it was cultural tradition. Russia was a vast, undeveloped wilderness, capital-poor, with the smallest entrepreneurial and merchant class in Eurasia. It had no ‘bourgeoisie tradition’ from which to build a capitalist base – neither in the raw economic sense or the social sense of building a vibrant capitalist class. In effect, the constellation of Czarist-Orthodox-collectivist traditions that had served Russia well for centuries did so because of Russia’s particularly rural and agrarian nature; form followed function.


\(^{31}\) Ibid., 18 – 23.
Per the theories of Karl Marx, capitalism emerged in the towns of the early Middle Ages – the ‘burghers’ originally being displaced peasants who came to town and eventually elevated themselves to challenge the aristocracy. Suny makes some interesting and very telling demographic observations along these lines concerning Russia and its late attempt to enter the modern Western capitalist system. Suny notes that as late as the eve of World War I, the average distance between Russian towns (west of the Urals) was fifty-five miles, whereas in Western Europe towns averaged five to nine miles apart. East of the Urals, into Siberia, towns averaged an unbelievable 307 miles apart. Other than Moscow and St. Petersburg, the next eight largest cities were all in non-Russian, ethnic borderlands: Warsaw, Odessa, Riga, Łódź, Kiev, Kharkov, Tiflis, and Vilna. Lack of cities equates to lack of potential for economic modernization, the dense population centers of Central Europe being the birthplace of Northern European capitalism.

Obvious climatic differences also contributed to Poland’s dense population and rapid economic development as opposed to Russia’s sparse settlement and subsistence economy. Poland’s winters are far from mild, yet they pale in comparison to the legendary Russian winters, so extreme that they provide a natural defense from invasion – so extreme also that modern commercial agriculture failed to develop to any degree until the Stalin era of collectivization. By contrast, Gdańsk was a major export center for wheat and rye by 1500, Polish grain from the plains along the Wisła feeding Western Europe during the 200 years of its Commercial Revolution and beyond. Thus, in regards to commercialization of agriculture, historically the

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32 Ibid.

first step in the economic modernization of most nations, it can be said that Russia lagged behind Poland by some 500 years.\(^{34}\)

Russia remained in the early 20\(^{th}\) Century, to a great degree, what it had been when Ivan the Terrible ‘gathered together’ its great landmass – an empty wilderness. One can imagine population density and economic development on a negative continuum, both beginning to decline east of Warsaw, falling rapidly east of Saint Petersburg, and fading into oblivion in the empty expanses beyond the Urals. Russia chose early a different economic path than did Poland simply for functional considerations. It made as much sense to centrally organize this vast, capital-poor region of scattered peasant communes as it did to decentralize and deregulate the crowded subdivided-subdivisions of Poland; the ‘mini-nobles’ clinging to their half-acre farms, and the multi-ethnic traders of the Baltic port cities neither needing or wanting anyone regulating their economic lives. Early on, two different but simultaneously functional paths had been taken by Poles and Russians, both choices being rational, considering the conditions.

Polish and Russian culture and religion simultaneously supported and affirmed their respective economic systems which emerged as functions of demography, geography, and climate. At various times, the two nations were merged, ‘Polish Russia’ and ‘Russian Poland’ being descriptors of dominance in various eras. Several attempts were made at Pan-Slavic unification, stretching at least from the days of the Commonwealth to Pope John Paul II’s 1985 advocacy of a ‘Slavic Union’ from the Baltic to the Pacific. Too many obstacles stood in the way of this half-

\(^{34}\) For example, several Pomeranian seaports were showpieces of prosperity and advanced agricultural and commercial technology as early as the 14\(^{th}\) Century. The author visited the Żuraw crane on the banks of the Motława Channel in Gdańsk. Built in 1367 and considered a ‘medieval technological wonder,’ the crane was used to load grain onto ships headed for the Baltic, Gdańsk being a commercial hub for grain trade at this early date. The crane was powered by a half-dozen men walking inside a gigantic ‘mouse wheel,’ the rotational effort of which was said to be able to hoist more than a ton of grain in a single lift. The crane is flanked by four grain silos with a capacity of 5000 bushels each.
hearted notion, more a political statement than a realistic plan. Russia always lagged behind the West, always feared the West (with good reason), and after 1945 made for itself a barrier against the West. Eastern Europe became both an ‘exploited periphery’ of the Russian core state, to use Emmanuel Wallenstein’s terminology, and also a buffer zone against potential Western military threats. Eastern European history took a sidetrack for 45 years (from the end of WWII to the Perestroika Era), co-opted by the Russian plan for modernity, but ultimately Russia changed its direction as it became obvious that restructuring was imperative for economic survival.
2. From Under The Rubble

Post-War Poland Enters The Soviet Sphere Of Influence

Synopsis

Chapter two explains how Poland entered the Soviet sphere of influence in the final months of WWII. It also begins to refute commonly held notions that the Soviet system was ‘inherently flawed,’ a theme clarified and expanded upon as the thesis progresses. By the 1930s, Czarist Russia’s old modernization dilemma had been solved by Stalin’s application of economic strategies based largely on British and German WWI ‘wartime socialism tactics.’ In effect, a Medieval agricultural kingdom populated by subsistence farmers was transformed to a technologically advanced global superpower in less than 30 years, despite the unprecedented destruction of the Second World War. By the same token, the grand goals of Stalinism – to catch up with Western Europe, to defeat Nazi Germany, to rebuild after the enormous set backs of the war, and then, later, during the Cold War, to catch up with the US -- strained the Soviet system and its citizens tremendously. In order to achieve such goals and to maintain faith in the hope of long-deferred rewards (ultimately, the Marxist ideal of ‘bringing the Kingdom Of Heaven to earth’), Soviet ideological constructs were deployed on a massive scale. This entailed not simply the perfection of a planned economy, but also a planned society with a positive theory of social organization, in which announced collective goals would be achieved, with the utmost speed of movement toward these goals, under a single, authoritarian leadership apparatus. During the Stalin era, the USSR spent upwards of the equivalent of $500 million per year toward ideological indoctrination in Eastern Europe alone, seeking to create ‘New Soviet Man,’ in effect, the largest ‘social engineering project’ ever undertaken in world history. It was under such conditions that the People’s Republic Of Poland was conceived, was set into motion, and was co-opted into the service of the USSR. The prime agenda for Poland, as determined by its new place in the Soviet system, would be maximum socialization of everyday life through

1 The title is a reference to Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s book of the same name. It alludes to the physical emergence of Poland from the rubble of WWII and the later emergence of the Soviet Bloc from the Stalinist Legacy. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, From Under The Rubble (New York: Bantam Books, 1976).
nationalization of all means of production, urgent industrialization on a grand scale, and collectivization of agriculture. These plans were both the antecedent of Communism’s success and simultaneously the seeds of its eventual downfall, as preceding chapters will demonstrate.

From Under The Rubble

It was a deceptively warm day for mid-March. The south-facing slopes were bleeding a runoff of dirty snow water but ice fishermen still smoked and dozed on three-legged stools on the frozen delta of the Martwa Wisła. Behind the fishermen rose the vertical mansions of old Hanseatic League merchants. Bathed in afternoon sunlight, the tall, narrow, structures took on an aura of antiquity, their earthy beige, brown, and rust colored brick façades topped with red clay roof tiles. Women with tall boots, long coats, and fur hats walked briskly along the granite cobbled lane that followed the Martwa Wisła; they ignored the simple, retired fishermen but smiled and silently nodded as they passed white-haired businessmen wearing stylish black cloaks, tailored
in Milan. A few brave souls forced early-season openings onto the sidewalk cafés, sipping steaming hot tea while shivering and adjusting their chairs to maximize incoming sunlight and stored warmth radiating from massive brick walls. Timeless as this scene was, Grand Duke Casimir could well have been philosophizing in Krakow and Ivan the Terrible, Czar of all Russians, could have been ranting in Moscow. Danzig was as much a cosmopolitan trade center in the 16th Century as was Gdańsk in the 21st – all that changed were the individual actors that played recurring roles.

Inspired by the unusually bright day, Andrzej and I decided to look for a high place from which to take a few panoramic shots. The city is surrounded to the south by wooded hills, the highest being Gradowa Wzgorze, on which is erected the Millennium Cross, a monument to 1000 years of Christianity in Gdańsk. From here we had a perfect view of the old town. Its many green copper spires, tall linden trees - still bare from winter – and the iconic shipyard cranes all pointed skyward. Stretching from the backdrop of hills, brick architecture extended along the
coastal plain, to Zatoka Gdańska (the Bay of Gdańsk). As far along the coast as we could see, it ran – churches, apartments, stores, offices, factories, homes – all made of brick. As with the Hanseatic mansions, all topped with similar red tile roofs, the walls varying in a narrow band of earth tones – rusty brown, to beige, to deep rose. In the calm of that premature spring afternoon, Gdańsk looked serene and eternal.

“You know all of this was rebuilt, don’t you?” remarked Andrzej.
“This was an ocean of rubble just after World War II. Even the Hanseatic League district and the old churches were heavily damaged; most of the city was entirely flattened – it was just piles of brick after the Nazis and the Red Army were done. You would never know to look at it now, but it was all ruins in 1945. Families lived in the ruins with sometimes just a tarp stretched over them to keep off rain and snow. They say that outside of town, some lived in holes in the ground covered with branches and ferns. There was no other choice because there was no place else to go. All the cities of Poland were like this, and so also was Germany, and so also was Russia. A few German families were left here - old folks, women, and kids mostly – they paid for the crimes of their nation, some did - some paid dearly, in terrible ways.”
Born in Gdańsk in 1939, Andrzej remembered much of the ruined city before the major rebuilding projects of the mid-1950s and 1960s. The mass destruction of World War II created a housing shortage that affected the next three proceeding generations of Central and Eastern Europeans. Andrzej grew up in a two room apartment with his mother, grandparents, and a brother and sister; his father was killed in the war. He recalled, “When I got married, we moved in with my wife’s family. We lived with them for twenty years waiting for our own apartment. That was typical. It was common to wait twenty or twenty five years to get your own apartment. Typically two or three generations lived together until the oldest ones died. Today it is less common, but for everyone in my generation, we had no choice – that’s how it was.”

Andrzej continued, giving a sweeping economic history of Poland, aptly condensing three-quarters of a century in a few sentences: “Between WWI and WWII Polish currency was strong – similar to the German mark or Swiss franc. It was a prosperous country, nearly as prosperous as France. Poland had a very strong economy then. After the war, of course, it took years to rebuild, but it was in the late 1970s that we realized disaster was coming. Poverty, shortages, misery, riots, martial law – the buildings collapsed in the war, but society collapsed in the 1980s.”

Poland’s economic predicament throughout the 1980s was shared by all the Soviet Bloc nations. It came about as part of the gradual disintegration of a particular political-economic system that originated with the founding of the Soviet State in 1917 and that was later extended to the USSR’s ‘sphere of influence’ after WWII. However, even in the first decade of its

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existence the system evolved far differently than its founder, Vladimir Lenin, had intended. The Russian Revolution was followed by political infighting, bloody civil war, economic chaos, social disorder and famine. Faced with an incredible simultaneous array of societal upheavals, Lenin’s domestic policies oscillated from immediate forced collectivization of all means of production (‘war communism’), to partial relaxation of this policy (NEP), to reversal again (after Lenin’s death in 1924), followed by intensified effort at the original aim. The regime’s early political orientation swung wildly from revolutionary democracy, to statism, to a party-state, to an authoritarian dictatorship headed by Joseph Stalin. The degree to which Stalinism shaped the historic trajectory of the USSR and Eastern Europe – Stalinism as a political and economic system as well as a cultural construct – cannot be overemphasized. Poland became embedded in the Stalinist system at the end of World War II and the temporary ‘Khrushchev Thaw’ did little to alleviate its excesses and dysfunctions.

3 Suny, The Soviet Experiment, 235 – 240. In a desperate effort to save the nation from economic collapse Lenin initiated the New Economic Policy in March, 1921. The overnight conversion of a continent-sized nation’s economy from capitalism to socialism was a monumental undertaking to say the least. In the chaos of change industrial and agricultural production plummeted and poverty and famine gripped parts of the young Soviet Union. The NEP allowed for a temporary resurgence of economic privatization – in effect, a reversal of the ideology that the Revolution and Civil War had been fought over. Lenin died in 1924; NEP was annulled in 1928 and was replaced by Stalin’s First Five Year Plan. By this time Stalin had entrenched himself as central leader of the nine member Politburo, and shortly, through supreme Machiavellian intrigues, he would come to dominate all political and economic policy making of the USSR.

4 Stephen Kotkin, Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism As A Civilization (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University Of California Press, 1995). Per the subtitle, Kotkin’s thesis is that Stalin’s particular type of leadership and economic development resulted in creation of a distinct ‘Stalinist Civilization.’ This pattern of civilization was duplicated from Eastern Europe to the Pacific; ‘de-Stalinization’ did little to change its basic form.

5 Vladislaw M. Zubok, A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union In The Cold War From Stalin To Gorbachev (Chapel Hill: The University Of North Carolina Press, 2009), 23 – 33. Zubok explains Stalin’s determination to acquire Poland as a buffer territory near the end of WWII. Using arguments ranging from Pan-Slavism (Russia was deemed the ‘older brother’ of the Poles), to repayment for Polish liberation, to invoking fear of future German aggression (Poles were reminded that Germans were the mortal enemy of all Slavs), to suggestions of US and British ulterior motives (insinuating that Western nations wanted to exploit the Poles for economic gain), Stalin had no intention of allowing any Western sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Zubok reports that Stalin flatly told Provisional Polish Government leader Władysław Gomułka (who headed the Polish Communist Party in January, 1945) to “reject the open door policy of the Americans…as they want to tear away our allies – Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria” (33). Stalin felt an ‘historical mandate’ to acquire territory and/or spheres of influence as the rightful
In telling the story of Soviet communism, in proceeding from the opening remarks above, it is common practice in many general histories to see next something to this effect: “It was a flawed and failed system to begin with…” or, “The USSR imposed on its freedom-loving neighbors a system of slavery, and hoped to extend this system worldwide.” The author of this thesis remembers Cold War era high school history books that proceeded in this manner – it was fashionable to do so, in the US, from the 1950s to the 1980s.

However, some contemporary researchers, lacking the political bias of the Cold War era, contend that the Soviet system was highly effective in its early stages, throughout WWII, as well as into the early post-war decades.\(^6\) By the late 1970s - yes - the writing was on the wall that the system of the East was lagging behind the system of the West. By 1980 nightly news broadcasts showed average Americans what ‘Red scare pundits’ had preached about for thirty-five years; bread riots in Gdańsk were evidence that Lenin had failed - 65 years late, but still he had finally failed, and the radical right was thrilled.\(^7\) Sidestepping the politicized rhetoric of neo-liberal conservatives, let us look back and very briefly examine the ideology and the ‘nuts and bolts’ of

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\(^6\) For example, Ronald Grigor Suny, Stephen Kotkin, and Marshall T. Poe, all quoted at length in this thesis.

\(^7\) The riots in Gdańsk, Sopot, and Gdynia in December, 1970 drew world attention as Polish National Guard troops killed upwards of 80 demonstrators, wounded and beat up perhaps hundreds more. No exact figures were arrived at as many of the victims were ‘buried like dogs’ – at night, without a funeral – by local authorities. Other protestors later ‘simply disappeared,’ evidently removed by police for ‘relocation.’ Wounded and beaten protestors were afraid to seek medical attention at hospitals as they feared ‘relocation’ more than their injuries. The Baltic Coast Riots of 1970 were covered in US newspapers but it was not until the 1980s that cable TV news brought regular video coverage of Poland’s struggle into American homes. The author of this thesis attended the 40\(^{th}\) anniversary ceremony of the shootings at Stocznia Gdańska on December 16, 2010, interviewed eyewitnesses of the shootings, and also attended a conference titled Grudzień ’70 (December ’70) in which local historians presented papers on the Baltic Coast Riots and the shipyard shootings. Interview data from this event is included in this thesis later on.
the Soviet system, where and how it originated, how it came to Poland, and under what circumstances.

The ultimate positive aim of this system, derived from the idealized Marxist tradition, entailed creation of a worldwide egalitarian workers' society in which each individual had the economic means to reach his/her greatest human potential. The exploitation of human beings by extraction of cheap labor, the alienation of workers from their jobs, the cold-hearted utilitarianism inspired by the profit motive, the chaotic market swings of a capitalist economy and the associated societal instability, class-based economic inequality, poverty and misery in general— all these things would be eliminated by transition from capitalism to socialism. In her well known memoire Under A Cruel Star, Heda Kovály captures the essence of ‘Marxist utopianism’ as she describes “the proliferation of pamphlets printed on cheap paper…” in early post-WWII era Eastern Europe, all of which eventually arrived at the conclusion "...that all injustice, discrimination, misery, and war stem from... the exploitation of the working class. As soon as the working people - the creators of all value - understand what must be done, they will overthrow the exploiters... and the Kingdom of Heaven will come to earth."8 No doubt, many adherents of this ideology truly believed that they were elevating the material conditions of humankind and that their system could provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

8 Heda Margolius Kovály, Under A Cruel Star: A Life In Prague, 1941 – 1986 (New York: Holmes and Meir, 1989), 54 – 55. Originally published in Czech as Na Vlastní Kůži, the book’s vivid accounts of the author’s life, from internment in the concentration camp of Łódź, escape and survival, post-war affiliation with the Communist Party, disillusionment, and finally immigration to America, is itself a condensation of the Eastern European experience in general. Kovály’s husband, Rudolph Margolius, was executed after being convicted of ‘Titoism’ in the infamous Slánský Trial of 1952. Devoted to Czechoslovakia and the positive ideals of Communism, Rudolph Margolius was caught up in the last of Stalin’s purges. The idealized notion of “Bringing The Kingdom Of Heaven to Earth” was a forerunner of Alexander Dubček’s slogan, “Socialism With A Human Face,” of 1968. This kind of liberalization was answered by ‘The Brezhnev Doctrine,” stating that the USSR would intervene if nations in its sphere of influence attempted to steer their economies toward capitalism.
Unfortunately, few of the lofty goals of ‘Utopian Marxism’ were ever realized in Eastern Europe and Russia. Perhaps the ‘Middle Way’ of Scandinavia’s Social Democratic Party, with its mix of centralized management of primary industries alongside, and cooperative with, small-scale private enterprise came closest to ‘bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth.’ However, the Soviet version of Marxist-Leninism was highly successful in modernizing Russia – per the main theme of the previous chapter of this thesis, economic modernization was the major dilemma confronting the USSR at the time of its creation. In effect, the USSR applied the Marxist-Leninist model to ‘fast-forward’ itself from a medieval kingdom populated by subsistence farmers to a technologically advanced global superpower in less than 30 years. The system was also effective when applied to the rebuilding of war-devastated Eastern Europe.

Yet in the long run, the Soviet system proved to be too ideologically rigid in comparison - and in competition with – the openness, energy and innovation of Western capitalism. As in the imperial age, when “Russia and her church remained pure - petrified in their medieval past,” likewise the USSR became petrified in the purity of Marxist-Leninism, its internal structure, from the workings of its political bureaucracy to the working of its steel mills and chemical plants, locked in the age of ‘The Great Stalin.’ Despite the best efforts of Nikita Khrushchev, de-Stalinization only went so far; purges and terror ended, but the basic operating principles of the system remained the same.

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9 Klaus Misgeld, Karl Molin, and Klas Amark, *Creating Social Democracy: A Century Of The Social Democratic Labor Party In Sweden* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1992). According to the authors, the Scandinavian model of a mixed socialist/capitalist economy managed more by economic experts than by politically driven opportunists (as in some capitalist nations) has been very successful, producing the highest standards of living in the world.

10 Massie, *Peter The Great*, 56.
The combination of Russia's unique cultural heritage (as described in the previous chapter; condensed by the national slogan, ‘Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality’), and the Leninist version of Marxism that evolved from the Bolshevik Revolution set the stage for a particular kind of authoritarian, centrally-planned, centrally-controlled socialism;\(^\text{11}\) perhaps a ‘puritanical version’ in comparison with the ‘vulgar plurality’ of Scandinavian Social Democracy which had its roots in Menshevik ideology.\(^\text{12}\) Lenin had interpreted Marx's notion of the class conflict that emerges from the ownership of private property, the division of labor, and the exploitation of human potential for the sake of profit, as absolutes that must be eradicated by force. Lenin would not wait for the dialectal progression of history, nor did he have faith in the Proletariat to make changes on its own. He believed that only the intellectuals with a complete grasp of Marx's theories could lead the working classes out of alienation and exploitation. There emerged then a "...leadership that claimed the right to control all because they knew all."\(^\text{13}\) This idea fit perfectly alongside the old Czarist authoritarianism and its paternalistic traditions. The radical Bolshevik wing of the Russian Social Democratic Party (as opposed to the more moderate Mensheviks), or as they eventually became known, simply, the Communist Party Of The Soviet Union, claimed

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\(^{11}\) Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 239. Beyond the cultural constructs commonly called on to ‘justify’ the parameters of Soviet political evolution, Suny explains that the particular path taken was as much a result of material circumstances some of which early Soviet policies inadvertently had set into motion. “...their (Lenin, Stalin, and the close circle of early Soviet leaders) improvised responses to a series of crises they themselves had caused, laid the foundation for a political system the Stalinists themselves did not envision. Backwardness and ruthlessness combined with the personal ambitions of Stalin forged an autocratic regime that single-mindedly would try to drive a continent into the industrial age.” Among the crises Suny refers to here was the near fatal economic crash just prior to enactment of NEP. Once ‘on track’ again (after 1929) and with political power consolidated in Stalin, the continent-wide drive into the modern era, as per Stalin’s vision of such, continued till Stalin’s death in 1953 and beyond. The People’s Republic Of Poland, as we knew it from 1945 to 1989, was to a great degree Stalin’s creation.

\(^{12}\) Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 81. Lenin found fault with Trotsky, ‘branding’ him a Menshevik, and criticizing him over his more moderate and pluralistic ideas. Trotsky’s ideology would come to define Social Democracy much as it was practiced in Scandinavia. ‘Purifying’ the Party became Lenin’s obsession and expelling all moderates was his passion.

to have all the ‘correct’ answers, and plural forms of government were not, in their view, correct; pluralism led only to factionalism, and thus internal conflict, which hindered progress. The Bolshevik answer was a one party state with an enlightened ‘Vanguard of the Working Class’ imposing the correct solutions for the good of the people.\textsuperscript{14}

The Soviet system was founded on the principles of abolition of private property and private means of production, the appropriation of all property and means of production by the State, centralization of planning for the means of State production, and avoidance of factionalism by a one party political system.\textsuperscript{15} Additionally, many former cultural idioms underwent a ‘transubstantiation’ of sorts, in the conversion of the nation from Orthodoxy to Marxist-Leninism. For example, near total authority was invested in a single Czar-like leader, the Party Chairman, and unquestionable and unwavering allegiance to State/Church (being one and the same in Czarist Russia) was replaced with total loyalty to the Soviet Union/Marxist-Leninism. The expansionary policies reminiscent of Ivan the Terrible’s era were replaced with the notion of inclusion of all nations in ‘fraternal proletarian solidarity.’ The collectivism and camaraderie of the \textit{Mir} was replaced with ‘planned social solidarity’ and ‘joyful fulfillment’ of five-year plans.\textsuperscript{16}

Written before excessive accumulation of ‘political toxicity’ in the Cold War era, Robert S. Lynd’s “Planned Social Solidarity In The Soviet Union” provides a rare first-hand account and

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 3 – 11.

\textsuperscript{15} Lewin, \textit{The Making Of The Soviet System}, 3 – 45

objective analysis of the Soviet system by a Westerner researcher.\textsuperscript{17} Written in 1945, it includes an overview of the organization of the Soviet Union, the stated goals of the nation, and the nation’s intended goals for its citizens, on the eve of the USSR’s annexation of its Eastern European satellites. By extension then, the descriptions of the goals and intentions as outlined by Lynd were necessarily identical for all incoming members of the Committee For Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), in the early post war era. Founded in 1949, COMECON initially included the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania; the German Democratic Republic and Albania were included soon after. COMECON was basically the economic equivalent of the Warsaw Pact and both were made up of the same nations. Due to the significance of Lynd’s study, below, several long quotations are taken from it to help explain and summarize the ‘mission statement’ of the USSR which was soon thereafter applied to Poland and all other nations in its sphere of influence:

The Soviet Union, being a planning society with a positive theory of social organization, unlike our society, has a positive theory of social cleavages. Its aim is the activation of all citizens for mass goals and the elimination of cleavages. Sharp cleavages were inherited from czarist days, and other potential cleavages are involved in the leadership of the Communist Party and in the rapidity of forced change. The Party undertakes to remove these old and new threats to social solidarity by familiar and novel devices... (183)

It is a society with (a) announced collective goals; (b) the utmost speed of movement toward these goals...; (c) a single, authoritarian leadership apparatus and geographical segment in the pursuit of these goals; and (d) a positive policy of encouraging total social

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid. Robert Lynd, a professor of sociology at Columbia University, co-authored with his wife, Helen, a study of small-town American life titled Middletown: A Study of Contemporary American Culture (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1929). Praised for its methodological objectivity, it remains a classic for students of sociology. Lynd applied similar methods to his study of Soviet society. However, with the publication of his work on the USSR he became an early target of the ‘Red Scare.’ Although Lynd served as a senior advisor to the Washington, D.C. based Institute For Propaganda Analysis, was an executive member of American Committee For Democracy and Intellectual Freedom, and served in a plethora of similar academic and political organizations, he came under investigation by the FBI as a person suspected of ‘Un-American Activities.’ In striving for objectivity, Dr. Lynd’s article, “Planned Social Solidarity in the Soviet Union,” seemed too ‘uncritical’ of the USSR to many of his contemporaries. Mr. and Mrs. Lynd were called before a senate investigation committee during the McCarthy era trials, but no legal action was taken against them. However, the FBI continued to compile extensive files on the Lynds well through the 1960s. The files are available online at FBI.GOV listed under ‘Freedom Of Information/Privacy Act/ Section: Subject – Robert S. Lynd’
organization for the achievement of these goals and changing, or where necessary, destroying all tendencies to opposition and cleavage at every level in the society, including the leadership apparatus itself... Here is a society that sets bold objectives for itself, or, more accurately, has them set for it by the Communist party; that conceives of these objectives as necessarily the objectives of everyone in the society; that encourages everyone to identify his personal goals with the stated social goals; and that allows no organized opposition. (184)

Cleavages due to illiteracy are being obliterated by programs of universal education which constitutes one of the great achievements of the Soviet Union. Marx had lamented “the idiocy of rural life’ and “the deaf villages” in which four-fifths of the czarist population lived… Lenin insisted in 1921 that socialism has no place for the illiterate, and he went on to say this means not mere reading of newspapers but a population universally engaged in study… (188)

Lynd’s analysis continues with description of Soviet techniques used in mass communication and indoctrination of citizens into the prescribed social, political, and economic mindset of the nation. The Soviet Union invested very heavily in promotion of its ideology, Suzanne Labin estimating the Soviet budget for direct propaganda to Eastern Europe alone at equivalent of $500 million per year (during the 1950s and calculated in that era's currency value) with 140,000 full-time government workers employed in this specialized area.18 Lynd outlines an exhaustive array of indirect propaganda methods and activities, ranging from art, movies, contests, awards and many more conventional modes to outlandish projects such as ‘volunteer road building and city reconstruction.’ Below, per Lynd, several of these are listed and very briefly elaborated on, as they constitute the communicative basis for Soviet ideological indoctrination, applied in the USSR proper and all its satellites. Per the interview data obtained for this thesis, most citizens of The People’s Republic Of Poland were indoctrinated in exactly the same way, with several interviewees recounting childhood memories from the 1950s and 1960s that perfectly match

Lynd’s listed activities compiled in 1945. Ideological indoctrination was simultaneously carried out in conjunction with real-world activities aimed at the actual and literal building of socialism and the infrastructure of socialist society and the inclusion of all citizens, young and old, into the nationalist project. Some of the “aggregative devices systematically used in Soviet society” include:

1. Insistence in speeches, and all forms of official public communication, on the solidarity of the people as a fact…For example, Stalin declared in a speech… “The friendship among the peoples of our country has stood the test of all the hardship and trials of the war and had been still further cemented together…”

2. Insistence on top leaders, especially Stalin, as the source of all good things and friends of all the people…School children write at the end of their compositions, “Thanks to Comrade Stalin for our happy childhood…… Also, resurrection of Peter The Great and czarist heroes…in the teaching of history to school children…

3. Use everywhere and on all occasions of pictures of Marx, Lenin and Stalin…[so prevalent that it is]…reminiscent of icon worship.

4. Use everywhere of quotations from Marx, Lenin, and Stalin…to confirm the rightness of Soviet policies…It is difficult to find a single important statement on any subject that does not contain a reference…to the words or writing of… ‘Comrade Lenin.’

5. Copious use of medals and awards for outstanding work, cultural achievements, military service…even for motherhood…

6. Regular staging of spectacular civic celebrations…patriotic holidays, Women’s Day, Youth Day…and ‘volunteer action days’…[on which] rest time or days off are spent in collective civil projects such as road or irrigation building projects, work on collective farms (at harvest time), work in factories, with mass honor given to participants…A wide band across the population undoubtedly feel real enthusiasm for ‘the building of

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19 For example, Tadeusz Drzewiecki (interview by author, 1/23/2010), Zofia Rudnicka (interview by author, 6/6/2012), and Henryk Król (interview by author 3/20/2010) all recalled near ‘icon worship’ of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin as children, the celebration of these leaders’ birthdays in primary school with singing, and the receiving of official awards and recognition for studies in Marxist-Leninist inspired courses. As adults, they all recalled continuous promises through State-controlled media of a brighter future summarized in ever-changing ‘slogan campaigns,’ the heart of each built around a contrived version of Polish nationalism in conjunction with Soviet ideology.
socialism’ and take pride in it… Youth are recognized and integrated into…the world of adult purposes as Soviet citizens…

The central planning and propagation of this ‘mass society with bold objectives for itself,’ as Lynd described it in 1945, became known simply as Sovietization, and it was by this process that Polish society was transformed into ‘The People’s Republic’ in the wake of World War II’s devastation. Poland’s post-war economy and political system was reconstructed in the image of the USSR, as were those of the other COMECON nations. Regardless of the ultimate negative consequences of this process (that is, the economic catastrophe of the 1980s) and the objections to it by nationalists in Poland and the other Eastern European nations, it is a credit to the Soviet Union’s organizational skills that such a comprehensive and coherent system was capable of being actuated and applied considering the wartime situation.

The Sovietization of Poland began in the months prior to the end of the war. According to Timothy Garton Ash, as Red Army units liberated Poland from Nazi military occupation, simultaneously, NKVD operatives (forerunners to the KGB) 'liquidated' all potential political resistance in anticipation of a post-war incorporation of Poland into the Soviet sphere of influence. The NKVD systematically arrested all pre-war Polish leaders - both Communist and non-Communist leaders alike - effectively rendering post-war Poland a 'blank slate,' politically speaking.

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20 Lynd, “Planned Social Solidarity In The Soviet Union,” 191 – 193. The six examples given are simplified and condensed from Lynd and demonstrate the basic ideological constructs and the methods by which they were transmitted to Soviet Bloc citizens. Slight modifications to syntax have been made in order to make the constructs into direct statements and some separate constructs have been combined. Lynd’s original paper elaborated on 12 general “aggregative devices” and 7 more “control devices against cleavages.”

M. K. Dziewanowski gives a more detailed account of the events than does Ash. In July, 1944 the Red Army liberated Lublin, the largest Polish city east of the Wisła and established there the Polish Committee Of National Liberation. The 'Lublin Committee,' as the group became known, evolved into a Soviet-controlled puppet government. It displaced all previous Polish Communist Party members, most of whom were either exiled to Siberian labor camps or executed by the NKVD. Upon the liberation of Warsaw on January 17, 1945, the Lublin Committee declared itself the Provisional Polish Government, establishing an office in Warsaw, which was at the time reduced to little more than piles of snow-covered rubble. Dziewanowski notes the psychological importance of this move - establishing immediately a Soviet-linked government in the ruins of the former Polish capital. Although both Washington and London still recognized the Polish government in exile (in London), the Lublin Committee's actions in Warsaw sent a plain message of its intentions.

Dziewanowski also mentions that on December 16, 1944, President Roosevelt had pleaded with Stalin not to recognize the Lublin Committee as a provisional Polish government (though obviously Stalin had called for its creation). Stalin skillfully replied to Roosevelt, praising the Lublin Committee's early efforts at reconstruction and stabilization of liberated Polish cities. This reply was intended to signal to Roosevelt that the Polish masses were grateful to the Lublin

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22 Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party Of Poland*, 208 – 230. Władysław Gomułka would become Stalin’s ‘blank slate’ for writing Polish Communism. Gomułka, always loyal to Moscow, won Stalin’s favor and reorganized the bare remnants of the existing Polish Communist Party even before WWII was over (starting in January, 1945 as the Red Army liberated eastern Polish territories). By 1947 he had consolidated all meaningful political power in Poland into the *Polska Partia Robotnicza* (Polish Worker’s Party). Gomułka lost Stalin’s favor in the year before Stalin’s death by pushing too hard for the right to enact meaningful economic policy changes in Poland. Gomułka was expelled from the party, but was ‘rehabilitated’ by Khrushchev in 1956. Gomułka’s ‘feistiness’ was partially responsible for inciting the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Hungarians wrongly interpreted Gomułka's reinstatement and ‘bargaining’ with Khrushchev as a sign that the time was right for making drastic political changes. The Hungarians quickly learned they were mistaken as Soviet tanks and soldiers squelched the uprising, killing some 2500 rebels.
Committee for reestablishing basic infrastructure operations and general order after the Red Army drove out the Nazis.\textsuperscript{23}

To Stalin's credit, the initial reestablishment of any semblance of normality in this period was no small accomplishment, and in doing so, the USSR established precedents that would define the politics and economy of Eastern Europe for the next forty years. Most of Poland's cities lay in total ruin at the end of WWII. Baltic Coast cities such as Gdańsk and Silesian cities such as Wrocław had been prime targets by virtue of their industrial capacity, but others, such as Wieluń, in the Łódź voivodeship, had simply been 'terror targets' - bombed to oblivion by Nazi Germany for no rational reason, just as, for example, had been Dresden by the Allies. Similarly, Warsaw - or rather the bombed-out ruins of Warsaw - was under order to be "razed without a trace" by German soldiers on the ground using dynamite and bulldozers.\textsuperscript{24} Davies describes Warsaw as "...a city reduced to ashes...a moonscape...[in which] such totality can hardly be matched by the horrors of Leningrad or Hiroshima..."\textsuperscript{25}

Much of the USSR was in similar ruin, but on a grander scale. William Taubman describes the unimaginable economic setback and human losses that the Soviet Union encountered as a result of WWII.\textsuperscript{26} He cites war casualties as an estimated 27 million lives; 1700 towns destroyed, 70,000 villages destroyed, 32,000 factories destroyed, 52,000 miles of railroad destroyed, and 100,000 collective farms laid waste. Taubman estimates that these figures

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., 184.

\textsuperscript{24}Davies, \textit{God's Playground}, 355.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 354 - 355.

\textsuperscript{26}William Taubman, \textit{Khrushchev, The Man And His Era} (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003), 179.
translate into nearly a 70% loss of industrial and agricultural capacity for the USSR with nearly 40% of its national wealth gone.

In contrast, the United States' economic infrastructure emerged from WWII virtually unharmed and, in fact, 'geared up,' due to massive war-time industrial investments. Due to the ideological conflict that emerged between the United States and the Soviet Union in the early post-war years (manifested primarily in economic, military, and scientific competition), the USSR was forced again to ‘play catch-up' with Western capitalism – as Russia had done before WWI and the USSR did afterward. This was accomplished not only by rapid and urgent rebuilding of industrial and economic infrastructure within the Soviet Union proper but also by developing and expropriating industrial and agricultural production in the Soviet sphere of influence. 27

It was under the above mentioned historic and economic scenario that the post-WWII Polish People’s Republic came to be. Thus, the USSR politically co-opted Poland (and much of Eastern Europe) by establishing Communist Party provisional governments in the chaos and destruction immediately following WWII, while simultaneously establishing 'clones' of its economic system throughout – each clone headed by a ‘little Stalin.’ The prime agenda for Poland, as determined by its new place in the Soviet system, would be maximum socialization of everyday life through nationalization of all means of production, urgent industrialization on a grand scale, and collectivization of agriculture.

The rationale of the Soviet system, in purely economic terms, is the supposed efficiency of a centrally planned system. Edward Luttwak notes that the original set-up of a centrally planned

27 Dr. Barbara Wejnert, interview by author, 1/23/2010. Dr. Wejnert likens the post WWII exploitation of Eastern Europe by the USSR to that of an ‘exploited periphery of a core State’ as per Immanuel Wallerstein’s World System Theory. Dr. Wejnert, as well as several more interviewees in this thesis project, were eyewitnesses to confiscation and shipment of Polish agricultural production to the USSR during the dire food shortages of the 1980s.
economy in the Soviet Union was not necessarily a specification of Marxist-Leninist ideology but was rather a copy of German and British war-time economies. To early Soviet leaders "...central planning seemed an innovation of epic proportions," as it was seen as the force behind the tremendous industrial production of these two nations during the first world war. The concept seemed simple: the State would control all means of production, limit consumption, and invest surplus to expand the economy and provide services to its citizens. The State would operate the national economy like a business - determining production priorities, monitoring performance, investing for future growth, and providing for employees (in this scenario all citizens were the 'employees' of the State).

The basic principle of a Sovietized economy is the substitution of centralized, rational planning by a group of experts for the otherwise free-market allocation of prices and wages. In a free-market system, all commodities and services are allocated on the market by a price system driven by supply and demand (theoretically assumed as a freely operating mechanism; in reality, in capitalist economies, much manipulation occurs - tariffs, subsidies, wage/price freezes, interest rate adjustments, special interest influence, labor disputes, market speculation, etc., etc.). It is further assumed that a market equilibrium for all commodities will be the end result of free competition, considering labor as a commodity also; that is, labor as expressed quantitatively as wages (again, obviously, total market freedom does not exist in any economy). Prices and wages in a Sovietized system were not based on market principles – or the theory of market principles as in capitalist economies - but were arbitrarily set by planners.

29 Ibid., 22.
In purely ideological terms, the elimination of the market mechanisms - as per Marxist doctrine - was intended to relieve the working class, the proletariat, from the exploitation of the bourgeois, who extracted surplus value from labor. Marx's classic 'value theory of labor' (simplified) states that the value (as opposed to a price) of any commodity is equal to the amount of labor time necessary to the commodity's production.\footnote{Edwin Mansfield, *Principles Of Microeconomics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), 394 - 418. This explanation and its elaboration is based on Mansfield's discussion of basic Marxist economic principles and on Mansfield's section titled "The Doctrines of Karl Marx."}

It was believed that rational, scientifically based management techniques could maximize the use of labor, resources, and productive capacity far better than could the chaotic and haphazard free-market system. This idea is taken to various degrees, as described by economist Raphael Shen, ranging from the moderately socialistic economies of Germany and France, for example, to the social democracies of Scandinavian countries, to the total 'command economies' of the former USSR and its satellite nations.\footnote{Raphael Shen, *The Polish Economy: Legacies From the Past, Prospects For The Future* (New York: Praeger, 1992), 16.} To a great degree, it was the 'ideological purity' and inflexibility of the Soviet model that eventually brought about its demise.\footnote{A plethora of causes can be listed that facilitated the collapse of the Soviet system, and these will be addressed in the conclusion of this thesis. However, one major issue usually cited by scholars of this topic was the USSR's ideological rigidity and inability to adapt to change. Social democracies, such as those of Sweden and Denmark, are among the best functioning economies, highly socialized, as was the USSR, but with the pragmatic capacity (and common sense) to allow free market activity when it is socially beneficially, alongside socialization of means of production, when it is economically expedient. The USSR's 'religious commitment' to 'Orthodox Marxist-Leninism' - its insistence on 'ideological purity' and total State control of all resources - was one of its downfalls. The so-called "The Middle Way" - the successful Scandinavian version of Socialist Economics - is discussed in: Klaus Misgeld, Karl Molin, and Klas Amark. *Creating Social Democracy: A Century Of The Social Democratic Party In Sweden* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University, 1992).}

In the decade following the end of WWII the Polish economy took on a "...full-blooded Stalinist form...a politbureaucratic dictatorship...with all economic decision making tightly
controlled by the ‘nomenklatura’ (economic managers/Communist Party members.)”\(^{34}\) The nomenklatura did not individually own any of the means of production but collectively controlled them. The system was hierarchical with each level of local management responsible to a higher level, eventually reaching a Central Planning Commission in Warsaw. Beyond this level, all economic activity - planning of all industrial production, agricultural production, trade, investment, public services, etc., - was ultimately coordinated in Moscow under the rubric of 'Five-Year Plans' (known in Polish as piąticetki).\(^{35}\)

According to Mansfield, most nations in the Soviet Bloc made substantial and rapid economic growth through the 1950s and well into the 1960s, with the gross national product of the USSR growing at about 7% per year.\(^{36}\) However, this growth rate was achieved through much sacrifice on the part of the citizens. Communist Bloc planners held down per capita consumption to 1920s levels and reinvested nearly 30% of gross national product into industrial capacity. Consumer goods were given low priority in order to build a 'military-industrial complex' to rival that of the West. Given the starting-point of this process (with the destruction of some 40% of the productive capacity of the USSR in WWII, as mentioned earlier) this was an incredible accomplishment on the part of the people and leaders of the Soviet Bloc nations. Communism did work quite well as an ‘emergency measure’ for the USSR in its goal to catch up with Western Europe, to defeat Nazi Germany, to rebuilding after the devastation of the war, and then


later, during the Cold war – to catch up with the US. But many problems are apt to arise when an ‘emergency measure’ must, by necessity, be endured for decades.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{37} Suny, \textit{The Soviet Experience}, 422. Suny makes the point that many Soviet foreign policy specialists and economists were convinced of the necessity to break from the Stalinist-era mentality of isolation and political repression long before the days of Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika and glasnost. However, they were trumped by the defense community who held steadfast to the notion that Eastern Europe must remain, \textit{at all costs}, under Soviet hegemony as a security buffer against the West. Releasing Eastern Europe from Communism, actively building positive economic relations with the West, and throwing off the USSR’s traditional ‘cloak of secrecy’ that persisted since Stalin’s era – in short, engaging the Soviet Union with the modern world – flew in the face of hardliners who were willing to endure massive economic dysfunction rather than violate ‘ideological orthodoxy.’ By holding on so tightly to an Eastern Europe that had clamored for liberation for decades the USSR inadvertently drove the arms race which so greatly contributed to its economic problems. Suny summarizes, “The USSR was faced with a profound ‘security dilemma.’ The policies and programs it adopted to increase its security were perceived as threats by the United States, and the rest of the world, which responded to them by building up military might, thereby making the Soviet Union more vulnerable.” Many interviewees in this thesis project – direct, high-level participants in the Solidarity Movement – voiced the opinion that Gorbachev covertly welcomed the Solidarity Movement as the necessary ‘historical moment’ in reforming the USSR. Why else, interviewees often commented, were Soviet troops not called to suppress Solidarność as had happened in every other liberation movement since 1956 – in Berlin, Poznjen, Budapest, Prague, Tallinn, Vilnius, Riga, and countless small uprisings? Martial law under General Jaruzelski was a serious affair, still, it was nothing in comparison, for example, with the 2500+ civilians killed by Soviet soldiers in the Budapest uprising of 1956. Jerzy Borowczak, director of Fundacja Centrum Solidarności, commented, “It would not have even been necessary to call in Soviet troops. They were already stationed all over Poland at various military bases. One phone call from Moscow could have activated them and the Solidarity Movement would have gone down in history same as the Hungarian Revolution” (interview by author, December 13, 2010).
3. Stray Dogs Write Bibula

Polish Dissent And The Stalinist Legacy

Synopsis

This chapter begins the explanation of how the ‘Soviet legacy,’ more accurately, the Stalinist legacy, was transferred to Poland, and how this legacy became expressed in terms of economic dysfunction and various forms of dissident activities. Samizdat publishing, protests, riots, strikes, and ultimately the creation of Solidarność - all such forms of civil disobedience in the People’s Republic Of Poland - stemmed mainly from public dissatisfaction with the paranoia of police-state authoritarianism, and the economic dysfunction that, in part, was caused by the antidemocratic tendencies of the system. The Communist Party Of The Soviet Union, in conjunction with the Red Army, established political dominance in Poland in the final months of WWII. The Polish Worker’s Party, Polskiej Robotnicza Patria, established in 1948, was the direct predecessor of this interim Soviet government. With the PRP came full Sovietization of Poland, in effect making it a ‘clone’ of the USSR, politically, economically – and it was hoped – socially and culturally. To help operationalize this agenda, Beszpieka agents were deployed across Poland. The beszpieka were trained by the KGB to use ‘approved practices’ of Soviet policing, including interrogations, beatings, detention, and torture. A network of some 75,000 ‘secret informants’ loyal to the PRP was established by the beszpieka with operatives strategically placed in all major Polish industries. At the same time, all Polish industry and enterprises came under direct control and management by the nomenklatura, these being essentially ‘Party bosses.’ This chapter explains how the combination of beszpieka-driven paranoia and nomenklatura incompetence and corruption helped establish, in the early postwar decades, a culture of economic dysfunction that was perpetuated until its ultimate dismantling in the 1989 transition. Locked in this ‘Soviet Legacy,’ most Eastern Bloc enterprises failed to modernize as did their Western counterparts – this refers not only to material-technical modernization, but also in terms of the increasing complexity of financing, management, operations, marketing, logistics, and all other aspects of modern Western commercialism. This situation was exacerbated by strict Party-enforced adherence to ‘ideological orthodoxy’ in all
economic sectors. Outbreaks of civil disorder fluctuated with publicaly perceived periods of ideological relaxation in conjunction with periods of major economic hardship. Both dissident activism and, by necessity, informal or alternative economic activities, arose from the dysfunctions in the formal organizations of politics and economics.

**Stray Dogs Write Bibula**

Snow was piling up fast and the temperature was minus 25º F. At sunset, which came at 3:00PM, the sky was deep purple with silver stars that looked like crosses. Sheets of thick grey ice floated slowly down the Wisła to the Baltic Sea. You feared cold like this because you realized it could kill you. Stray dogs – and Mrs. Danka had once been a stray dog – sometimes froze to death on nights like this. ‘Stray dogs’ (bezpański pies) were political dissidents living on the margins of Polish society. They were toxic or plagued or rabid; you could not help them anymore, you must avoid them. They lived in abandoned buildings and had no possessions.
That was 30 years ago and Mrs. Danka had a home now – well, at least a loft apartment, and it was warm. Cactuses grew in clay pots on the cast iron radiator beneath a lead-glass window that looked out on the Baltic. Jasmine tea with orange slices accompanied our yellow cake, spiraled with black poppy seeds. Not too bad fare for a former stray dog. Mrs. Danka talked about the past and lit a little candle under the kettle to kept the tea hot.

“I was hiding in those days. I was on a list of people the police were looking for. If they found me I would go to jail or maybe ‘just disappear.’ That happened, you know – a knock on your door in the middle of the night and you were never seen again.”

“Work was compulsory in those times. The very worst person in a Communist country was the person without a job. Well, I was without a job - because if I worked a real job I would be found, and caught, and arrested. I would go to jail for my printing. My ‘job’ was printing truth in a country where truth was not allowed.”

Unusual ‘shrine’ featuring Our Lady of Częstochowa and Our Lady Of Fatima surrounded by samizdat bulletins from Solidarność chapters in Lower Silesia. The opened scrapbook displays pictures of Lech Wałęsa and General Wojciech Jaruzelski. Eclectic implications abound – Jaruzelski was simultaneously a Polish Nationalist, practicing Catholic, and loyal servant to Moscow. He claims to have saved Poland from Soviet invasion by imposing Martial Law, December 13, 1981. He advocated strong Polish identity and fraternal proletarian solidarity with the USSR. Lech Wałęsa advocated a Poland free from all ties to the USSR.
“During martial law it got so bad that I nearly starved – everyone was afraid and I cannot blame them. I got sick – I thought I would die – I had no one left to turn to. Finally, I ended up hiding in an abandoned warehouse – no heat, no electricity, no water. Only my brother knew where I was and he brought to me enough food to keep me alive. Those were the darkest days of my life. Back then, and for many years after, if I even heard someone talk about their home I would burst into tears. I was worse than homeless – I was a stray dog that could never have a home again – that’s what I believed. But somehow I survived those days and by 1985 people like me could show their face again. Still, it was difficult because no one would hire me. Finally, Solidarność was able to get me a job in an office... I still have nightmares about being a ‘stray dog.’”

‘Mrs. Danka’ had been an underground publisher - a producer of dissident political literature condemning the Communist Party and calling on Poles to unite in peaceful Solidarity to bring about a social evolution – ewolucja nie rewolucja (evolution not revolution). Traditionally called ‘samizdat’ (самиздат) in Russian, underground journalism became known as ‘bibula’ (literally, tissue paper) in colloquial Polish. The name comes from the fact that shortages of nearly every consumer item in the last two decades of the Polish People’s Republic - paper and ink included - forced underground publishers to use any kind of paper they could get their hands on for print stock. Mrs. Danka remembered printing philosophically elaborate Marxist-inspired critiques of Marxist-Leninism on meat wrapping paper with homemade ink pigmented with goryczki fioletu (‘gentian of violet’ – an inexpensive, over the counter antiseptic; she went from store to store buying one bottle at a time as to not seem suspicious).

Bibula pamphlets and newspapers kept the Solidarity Movement alive during its outlawed years and transmitted its ideology to ‘the masses.’ An official conviction for bibula production or
distribution meant prison time or deportation; ‘off the record’ arrests meant the perpetrator simply ‘disappeared’ – ‘shot and buried in the night like a stray dog,’ as another samizdat publisher commented during an interview. Underground journalists and individuals marginalized by lesser varieties of political activism - strike organizers, protest leaders, and even ‘bill stickers’ (messengers who posted signs) - endured greater financial hardships than average citizens as they were excluded from the formal economy. Likewise, as in Mrs. Danka’s case, participation in even the shadow economy would give away their whereabouts. Thus, the subculture of ‘stray dogs’ and later, ‘former stray dogs,’ were among the most disadvantaged of all Polish citizens.

Conditions for Polish ‘stray dogs’ in the 1970s and early 1980s - the time in which Mrs. Danka experienced life on the streets - was cruel and precarious to say the least. As Solidarność grew in strength and numbers (created in 1980, forbidden in 1981, reborn in 1985), some ‘stray dogs’ were taken into ‘shelters’ - no-kill shelters at that! Funded by weekly paycheck deductions and increasingly large donations from Western trade unions, Solidarność eventually came to the rescue of thousands of political dissidents, providing not only food and shelter but legal services as well.¹

Yet, decades earlier, the conditions which necessitated the entire Solidarity Movement and all it entailed were set in place. Before returning to the stories of interviewees like ‘Mrs. Danka’

¹ Arch Puddington, “Solidarity Forever,” in Lane Kirkland: Champion Of American Labor (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, 2007), 163 – 190. America’s AFL-CIO and the French equivalent, CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail – The General Confederation of Labor) were the main Western financial sponsors of Solidarność. LO, The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (Landsorganisationen i Sverige) was the main conduit for delivering Western aid to Poland, smuggling millions of dollars worth of printing equipment, radio communications equipment, food and clothing through the port of Gdańsk. American and French union members contributed generously to this cause, spurred on by AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland. Kirkland’s Czech-born wife, Irena, and President Jimmy Carter’s National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brezezinski were instrumental in persuading the AFL-CIO to back Solidarność. Union members had 1% of their weekly earnings deducted from paychecks to support the movement. Legal services were provided free of charge by lawyers who created the KOR (Komitet Obrony Robotnikow), the worker’s defense committee.
and their daily lives in Gdańsk and Wałbrzych, it is necessary to explain how brutal elimination of an earlier generation of dissidents (1945 – 1965) simultaneously contributed to stagnation of the Polish economy and fueled the social unrest that eventually exploded on the Baltic Coast in December, 1970. The macro-level conditions that precipitated political dissent and social movement formation in the 1980s had roots in practices established shortly after WWII. The resulting economic dysfunction is what created ‘stray dogs’ and every other kind of dissident, from priests, to labor union supporters, to students and housewives. As we shall see, ironically, the highest-ranking Communist Party leader of the era, Nikita Khrushchev, ‘saw the writing on the wall’ and predicted the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Bloc economic system based on his observations of the 1970 Baltic Coast strikes. Unfortunately, Premier Khrushchev, who did much to de-Stalinize the USSR and its Eastern satellites, could not entirely free the region’s economic system from its dysfunctional ‘Soviet Legacy.’

According to Andrzej Paczkowski, the Soviet Union conducted in Eastern Europe a highly organized “…conquest of the State through mass terror” from the end of WWII throughout the 1950s. In effect, Polish society and the Polish economy were Sovietized by force during this period. The end result, in strictly economic terms, was establishment of a ‘Communist-crony

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2 Suny, The Soviet Experience, 451. Suny uses this term, ‘Soviet Legacy,’ to describe the accumulating economic dysfunctions that persisted until the Soviet Bloc dissolved. A hyper-centralized command economy based on crude planning set forth in five year increments worked well in transforming Russia’s primitive, agriculturally based system into a modern industrial state. Likewise, the same plan worked well in rebuilding Eastern Europe after WWII. However, the method and its practice remained static long after wartime emergencies had ceased. Rapidly growing complexity in all aspects of the economy – from financing to production to marketing - characterized Western nations after WWII, whereas Soviet Bloc economies actually became more inflexible and less responsive to change. This ‘Soviet Legacy,’ in part due to Stalin’s iron-fisted control and later to Brezhnev ‘being asleep at the wheel,’ was not breached until near complete failure occurred. Poland’s revolution was almost entirely about throwing off this ‘Soviet Legacy,’ and in doing so a ‘chain reaction’ occurred that eventually resulted in ‘Perestroika from below’ in the USSR.

bureaucracy’ heading all means of industrial production and a large segment of agricultural production.\(^4\) Per Paczkowski’s account, corroborated by first-hand interview data, this meant in everyday terms that virtually all of Poland’s economic leaders – from plant managers, to collective farm directors, to shop foremen on the factory floor, to spółdzielnia organizers (heads of local workers’ collectives) – obtained their positions by virtue of Party loyalty, not by virtue of their education, experience, or job performance. Once established, this system was generationally perpetuated until the 1989 transition.\(^5\) As one interviewee from Wałbrzych remarked, “…it was like a ‘dynasty of idiots.’ Fathers and sons ran our factories and mines. They had no education, just Party connections. They could care less if the operation was profitable, or efficient, or even safe - their main goal was making themselves rich. They did this by every corrupt idea you could imagine.”\(^6\)

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Red Army enforced the dominance of the Communist Party Of The Soviet Union in Poland in the months preceding the end of WWII. Once established, the General Party created a specific Polish branch in 1948, the PRP, Polish Worker’s Party, Polskiej Robotniczca Patria, first headed by Władysław Gomułka. The PRP faced strong resistance from PSL, Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe - the Polish Peasant Party and

\(^4\) Much of Polish agriculture was never collectivized. Chapter 6, Daily Life In Wałbrzych, explains why, and the ramifications thereof.

\(^5\) In many cases it continued after the transition as former Party members took the lead in obtaining private property from the State. As one interviewee commented, “It was the Party men who became responsible for privatization. Who do you think got the best deals in the new economy? Of, course – the Party men!”

\(^6\) Several of these ‘corrupt ideas’ are discussed in chapter 6, Daily Life in Wałbrzych. They often were quite ‘profitable’ – to the detriment of the industrial operations they exploited. No ‘official’ conception of the capitalist notion of profit existed in the socialist system, as all production was supposedly done ‘at cost’ with commodities sold ‘at cost.’ However, Mansfield (in Principles of Microeconomics, 402, previously cited) states that in Socialist economics a ‘turnover tax’ was added as the differential between the price of production and the price paid by consumers; this was the State’s ‘profit.’ Personal ‘profits’ made by corrupt managers took many forms, ranging from black market sales of finished items to direct theft of raw materials for ‘personal projects’ – such as building complete homes from stolen materials.
the WIN, *Wolność i Niezanisłość*, Liberty and Independence Party, both of which were outlawed by the Communists. In order to squelch political resistance from these democratic factions the PRP organized the Polish Security Service and the Ministry of Public Security. In effect, these two security services waged war against all resistance to the Communist Party in Poland. They became known colloquially as *bezpieka* (simply, ‘the guards’ or ‘the security men’) and conducted what can be considered a terror campaign aimed at total elimination of all political resistance to the PRP.⁷

According to Andrzej Paczkowski, the *bezpieka* consisted of some 20,000 political operatives backed by 30,000 armed security officers. From 1948 until the ‘Khrushchev Thaw’ (after Stalin’s death in 1953) the *bezpieka* deported around 140,000 Polish citizens, put 60,000 in prison, and executed 8700.⁸ The *bezpieka* were trained by KGB agents and used ‘approved practices’ of Soviet policing, including interrogations, beatings, detention, and torture. A network of some 75,000 ‘secret informants’ loyal to the PRP was established by the *bezpieka* with operatives strategically placed in all major Polish industries. These informants were instructed to maintain close supervision over the operations of their specific manufacturing plant, chemical factory, mine, collective farm, etc., keeping a watchful eye for sabotage, intentional slow-down of operations, stealing, or vandalism. In short, the informants became identifiers of scapegoats through which plant managers might justify failure to meet planned production quotas. As mentioned earlier, virtually all the managers of all the ‘means of production’ in the

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⁷ Tadeusz Drzewiecki, non-published manuscript on contemporary Polish history. This essay by the 82 year old retired school teacher, businessman, and translator discusses, among other things, the terror campaign of the *bezpieka*. The content of Mr. Drzewiecki’s essay is corroborated by similar data in Andrzej Paczkowski’s chapter, “Poland, The Enemy Nation,” in *The Blackbook Of Communism, ed.* Stephane Courtois, et al., 1999.

Soviet Bloc were loyal Party members, many of whom had little or no formal training in business management.\(^9\)

Thus, early on (1948 – 1953), during the initial set-up of Poland’s new, post-war Communist economy, this combination of inept managers justified by beszpieka-placed ‘secret informants,’ set in motion a ‘bureaucracy of industrial dysfunction’ (or ‘dynasty of idiots,’ as Wałbrzych locals like to call it), in which inefficiency, low quality, high production costs, poor supply chains, lack of planning, and duplication of administrative job titles, became part and parcel of normal operating procedures. Therefore, the later (1970s – 1980s) epic dysfunction of the Polish economy and the resulting material shortages of nearly all consumer goods, food, and services – which ultimately fueled the political dissent and created real and actual need for emergence of alternative economic strategies – may be traced, in part, to the initial PRP/beszpieka fiasco that ousted experienced Polish industrial managers and replaced them with nomenklatura bureaucrats.\(^{10}\)

Paczkowski goes on to discuss the creation of formal bureaucratic agencies, beyond the beszpieka-placed informants, charged with cracking down on ‘industrial subversion’ and the ‘shadow economy’ which quickly emerged as a response to very early stages of economic dysfunction. As early as 1949, a ‘Special Commission For The Fight Against Economic Abuses’

\(^9\) Andrzej Falkowski, interview by author, 3/16/2010. Those who did take business management classes in Soviet Bloc nations found that they were geared to the collective and focused on pre-set, unchangeable rules. Mr. Falkowski recalled, “We had classes in ‘State Economy.’ This was Marxist-Leninist style of business management. It was about the role of the State in economics and how we as managers had responsibility first to State. If anyone made a comment or asked a question that contradicted with ‘approved message’ of teacher, he was dismissed as being stupid! Some students had been to West Germany and asked why their economy looked so much brighter. Answer of teacher: It’s just a trick made by Western capitalists! It is not real – you were fooled by it! You must really be stupid!”

\(^{10}\) Many other factors that contributed to Polish economic dysfunction are discussed as this thesis proceeds; the concluding chapter summarizes these.
and the ‘Commission For Urban Economic Crimes’ were established by the PRP. These agencies enforced the ‘ideological purity’ of Polish Socialism, arresting any citizen involved in any form of private enterprise, black market trading, or unlawful subsistence production. Tens of thousands of ‘economic criminals’ were sent to forced labor camps in the early 1950s, some for ‘crimes’ as harmless as selling home-grown tomatoes. Additionally, in the same time period, full-time ‘Protection Squads’ were organized in factories to guard and inform, thus making formal and official the prior ‘secret informant’ scheme of the beszpieka.

In sum, the PRP was institutionalizing a system that set state-sanctioned managers against workers in a so-called ‘worker’s paradise state.’ Their actions turned citizen against citizen, fueled fear, suspicion, and paranoia, added unnecessary costs to production (paid ‘Protection Squad’ employees produced nothing – they just informed), and made criminal any attempt to produce food or provide services through all but state-sanctioned means. Later generations of political dissidents and ‘economic criminals’ (participants in the alternative economy) took action because of the economic dysfunction that became ‘built-in’ to the Polish economy – a clone of the Soviet economy. Ideological rigidity fully co-opted ‘proletarian common sense’ and in the process the resulting frustration and bitterness between worker and Party member made a mockery of the idea of a classless society, a worker’s utopia in which all could reach his or her fullest potential as a human being. Instead, early in the history of Poland’s Sovietization, the seeds were sown for rebellion and economic catastrophe.


12 Suny, The Soviet Experiment, 68. Suny calls this type of system an ideocracy, “…a state ruled by an ideology.” Ideological purity was so paramount in Soviet Bloc domestic policy that a position was created with the Orwellian title, ‘Supreme Guardian Of Ideological Orthodoxy.’ All proposed economic planning by COMECON nations (USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia) had to meet standards of ideological purity per the ‘Supreme Guardian’s’ interpretation of Marxist-Leninism. Thus, common sense often took a backseat to ‘religiously’ held notions of ‘ideological orthodoxy.’
‘Boris,’ an interviewee from the Wałbrzych area, told a story that aptly illustrated the enormous ramifications of industrial mismanagement. ‘Boris’ had retired from a steel mill and described the monumental inefficiency that was common in Soviet Bloc manufacturing:

… it was common in the mill where I worked that steel was made so poor in quality that it was just re-melted like scrap. The finished product - plates and rolls of new steel - was melted like scrap to try again to make a product that could be sold! That is an incredible amount of money, labor, energy and time put into a worthless product that must be melted and made again.13

Poland had been re-industrialized after WWII by Soviet investment and in Soviet scale and style - that is, gigantic interconnected industrial operations that dominated regional economies. The mill where ‘Boris’ had worked employed 30,000 people and was tied into a supply chain of other regional ‘mega-factories.’ This pattern was intended to maximize production through an economy of scale and by virtue of ‘planned proximity.’ (For example, strategically locating coal mine, coke plant, and steel mill side by side in order to reduce material handling costs to practically zero; this does not always happen naturally in a ‘non-planned’ Capitalist economy.)

Unfortunately, this system also afforded itself to exponential dysfunction, as in Boris’s description of re-melting newly made steel. With no real free-market competition, Polish plant managers answered solely to the bureaucratic chain that supervised the particular five-year plan of their economic segment. There was little incentive to increase efficiency or to improve product quality as the bureaucracy of plant managers – like the plants they managed – were linked in a gigantic, interconnected, cooperative system. All managers ‘played the game’ and ‘covered for each other,’ keeping expectations low and protecting their jobs by ‘not rocking the

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Likewise, there was little that could be done to improve performance even if a plant manager wanted to do so (given he actually had a business education and was capable of applying it). According to Boris, the main reason for this was a lack of capital for improvements and modernization; later on, as the system fell more and more into disarray, basic maintenance and repairs were neglected, further crippling industrial output.

Boris’s contentions are corroborated by a plethora of secondary data. For example, a 1989 *New York Times* article titled "Can Poland's Steel Dinosaur Evolve?" describes the condition of the Lenin Steelworks at Nowa Huta: "We need to modernize desperately," a union spokesman says, "We need $450 million to modernize, and we need foreign investment if we're going to obtain that type of money..." The article describes the plant, built in 1949, as "...a fossilized hulk of a burdensome Communist economy," where some 32,000 workers struggle to produce the same quantity of steel as would 7000 workers in a modernized, Western-designed plant.

However, the Lenin Works was still twice as productive as the Soviet plant at Magnitogorsk. Another 1989 *New York Times* article claims the Magnitogorsk steelworks required a staggering 60,000 workers to produce the same quantity of steel as would a modernized plant with 7,000 workers.

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14 Nearly all interviewees from both Gdańsk and Wałbrzych who had worked in heavy industry described management in this way – as an ‘old boys’ network’ of the nomenklatura covering for each other.

15 Allison Stenning, *Living In The Spaces of Post-Socialism: The Case Of Nowa Huta, Poland.* [http://www.nowahuta.info/html](http://www.nowahuta.info/html) (retrieved 9/8/2012). Per Stenning, the Lenin Works at Nowa Huta apparently defied the logic of ‘planned proximity,’ as its choice of location - just outside Kraków - was ideologically driven. It was meant to be a showcase of planned socialist society in contrast to the ‘old bourgeois cultural center’ of Kraków. Coal, coke, iron ore, and all other raw materials had to delivered to Nowa Huta by rail as none of these were produced locally. In this particular case, the desire to promote ideology trumped common sense.


Nowa Huta’s production dilemma was the rule rather than the exception across the Soviet Bloc. Stephen Kotkin explains that the Russian and Eastern European ‘mania for heavy industry’ was generated on the ideological predication of the ‘real and actual’ building of Socialism per the building of industrial works and industrial cities on a monumental scale. The industrial proletariat class - the supposed backbone of the Marxist-Leninist system - would naturally expand in proportion to the industrial base of a given society. The logic was simple: build more factories and you get more industrial proletariat; more industrial proletariat will ensure the success of communism. The success of communism in the Cold War era antagonized capitalist states and a military-industrial complex emerged (in both camps), thus exacerbating need for further expansion of heavy industry for defense.

In this regard the Soviet Bloc economic system was ideologically driven to the ultimate extreme. According to Kotkin, this philosophy resulted in creation of the world’s largest concentration of heavy industry, literally dwarfing all other nations’ industrial capacity. By the mid-1980s fully 70% of the Soviet Bloc economy consisted of heavy industry and mining. Conversely, all other sectors of the economy – production of consumer goods, agriculture, food processing, and all consumer services – were so condensed or abbreviated that they accounted only for the remaining 30%. No other region in the world ever had such a high percentage of its economy based on traditional heavy industry, especially not this late in the historical process of global industrialization when ‘third or fourth wave’ industrial enterprises (i.e., advanced

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18 However, production and wages were not related in the communist system in the same way they were in the capitalist system. Chapter 6 explains that Nowa Huta and many other Lower Silesian industries were considered ‘showcases of Socialism.’ Cities planned around industrial works, built after WWII, and thus very modern by traditional standards, were considered ‘worker’s paradises’ regardless of bottom-line production costs.


20 Ibid., 17.
chemical manufacturing, engineered materials, consumer electronics, computers, etc.) were taking the lead in most developed economies.\textsuperscript{21}

As in the United States, much of the heavy industrial infrastructure of the Soviet Bloc was built during or in the decade following WWII. Not necessarily ‘state of the art’ at the time of their original construction,\textsuperscript{22} by the early 1980s America’s post-war generation of ageing factories was rapidly being scrapped as a wave of deindustrialization created America’s ‘Rust Belt.’\textsuperscript{23} Much of the ageing industrial infrastructure from the WWII era had simply exceeded its useful lifespan. Rather than continue to maintain and repair antiquated factories with low profit margins, many US corporations chose to shut down operations and reinvest in newer, more profitable, ventures. In many cases, these new ventures were not industrial plants. Allied Chemical Corporation, for example, closed nearly all of its US-based chemical plants during the 1980s, changed its name to Allied Signal, and diversified its operations to include banking, insurance, medical technology, and materials engineering.\textsuperscript{24}

However, disinvestment, reinvestment, and diversification did not occur across the Soviet Bloc. Instead, locked in ideological rigidity, lacking market-based reinvestment strategies,

\textsuperscript{21} CIA World Factbook. \url{https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2012.html} For comparison, the 2012 US GDP per sector is as follows: Agriculture, 1.2%; Industry, 19.2%; Services, 79.6%. Russia and Poland still have disproportionately high industrial sectors with 2012 figures as follows: Russia – Ag., 4.5%; Ind., 37.9%; Ser., 58%, and Poland: Ag., 3.6%; Ind., 33.3%; Ser., 63%. US industrial output reached a plateau between 1957 and 1962, at 26.9% GDP, and has declined ever since, per figures given by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, \url{http://www.bea.gov/scb/pdf/2005/12December/1205_GDP-NAICS.pdf}.

\textsuperscript{22} Kotkin, \textit{Armageddon Averted}, 16 – 17. Kotkin explains that many US and Soviet plants built during or immediately after WWII were based on 1930s designs. He adds that all WWII era industries were ‘energy gluttons’ as fuel was cheap and plentiful.

\textsuperscript{23} Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, \textit{The Deindustrialization Of America} (New York: Basic Books, 1982). Bluestone and Harrison report that US disinvestment in heavy industry started as early as 1969. By September 30, 1977, ‘Black Friday,’ Americans ‘saw the writing on the wall’ as 10,000 steelworkers were laid off from the Bethlehem Pennsylvania Works.

\textsuperscript{24} Information from personal experience; the author of this paper is a former employee of Allied Chemical Corporation.
lacking capital in general, and oblivious to the economic modernization of the West, 1930s-style industrial operations lumbered on across Poland and Russia through the 20th Century until the reality of the 1989 – 1991 transition forced their closure. The Soviet Bloc industrial strategy, like its ideological directive, was very simple - expand existing production – and this single-minded goal was pursued for the life of the system. Missing in this formula were all the basic components of industrial modernization: reduction of labor and energy input, improved supply chain efficiency, attention to quality control, diversification of product lines per consumer demand, increasing financial sophistication in regard to capital accumulation for operations and infrastructure improvements, and most importantly, technological innovation.

Basically a continuation of WWII-era emergency measures, the system relegated production of consumer goods to the lowest priority. Thus, a massive overproduction of steel accompanied everyday shortages of socks and shoes; ocean-going cargo ships were produced by the millions while the workers who made the ships had their names on ten-year waiting lists to purchase a ‘Fiat Bambino.’ Chemical plants churned out nitrate fertilizer filling five-mile-long strings of railroad tank cars while housewives stood in line five hours to buy a loaf of bread.25 The vast majority of this heavy industrial production was geared to export. For example, interviewees at Stocznia Gdańska explained with great frustration how the ships they built were ‘traded’ to the USSR for oil and natural gas and to pay back Polish national debt. The USSR sold the ships world-wide but the Polish shipbuilders never saw an improvement in their quality of life.26

Likewise, Polish agricultural production was exported to the USSR while store shelves went

25 All of these ‘colorful scenarios’ were described to the author by various interviewees during the process of collecting data for this thesis. One interviewee commented that only Poles would buy a ‘Fiat Bambino’ as the quality of the little car was so poor; Poles bought them as they were the only car manufactured in Poland and many people actually waited 10 or more years to purchase one. A self-deprecating joke ran as follows: – “Polish ham was wanted everywhere but only a fool or a Pole would buy a Bambino.”

26 This will be elaborated on in detail in the next chapter.
empty in Gdańsk, Wałbrzych and across the nation. An interview excerpt aptly demonstrates the frustration and anger endured by Poles who labored long hours in factories but were unable to purchase basic necessities in local stores. Dr. Barbara Wejnert, remembering daily life in Gdańsk during the 1980s, commented as follows:

The people were starving in the cities. There was nothing on the shelves (in grocery stores) but tea and macaroni - that's all! Everything was gone - empty shelves!...even shoes, clothes, too - nothing for us!

Interviewer asks Dr. Wejnert if she thought that all the food and consumer goods were being expropriated by the Soviet Union:

_I don't think - I know! I know it was!_ In those days was discovered the trains full of Polish goods - meat, butter, potatoes, grain - going east, to Russia. It was put into the trains, on trains was put the label, ‘paint’!

Interviewer asks, ‘Paint?’ What do you mean?

Like paint for houses - house paint. They wanted people to think the train had in it paint. But some railroad workers stopped the train - for some reason - and one of the cars was opened up, and they realized it was full of food! It was heading to Moscow while we starved in Gdańsk. That lead to riots and strikes when the people started to know about this.27

With all private enterprise banned, again, strictly on an ideological basis, no legal alternatives to the mismanaged State economic apparatus existed; thus, out of necessity, alternative economic strategies and a shadow economy emerged. Throughout the 1950s, ‘60s, and ‘70s, Poles were assured that their economy would soon be improving – but year after year their quality of life declined. “With each new economic plan (five year plan) we got more promises and new slogans,” an interviewee commented. “We got: ‘Build A New Poland,’ and ‘Prosperity Through

27 Dr. Barbara Wejnert, interview by author, 1/23/2010.
Planning’ - slogans, yes, plenty! Results, none. We got lower pay, longer (working) hours, and higher prices – that’s all we got regardless of new slogans.”28

Thus, per the above discussion, we see outlined the general progression of Poland’s post WWII economy: Soviet annexation, Communist Party take-over of industry and agriculture, beszpieka terror, expropriation of production by the USSR, failure to modernize the economy, failure to satisfy basic consumer demands - and from these failures, growing social unrest. We see also how Poland’s economy came to be dominated by outdated heavy industry managed by a ‘dynasty of idiots.’ Stephen Kotkin lyrically sums up the same scenario with a quote from the Moldavian writer, Ion Druţă:

Then Leonid Ilich Brezhnev appeared…We lived fabulously, quietly stealing, quietly drinking. [A voice interjects: not quietly.] So be it.29

As COMECON figuratively burned, Brezhnev era bureaucrats ‘fiddled’ and drank, Nero-like in their unconcern, quietly waiting for the inevitable collapse. Yet, one of their own, Nikita Khrushchev, had accurately and perceptively assessed the problem shortly after the 1970 Baltic Coast riots; and, in a ‘round-about way,’ Khrushchev was partially responsible for the dilemma.30

Khrushchev’s famous de-Stalinization of the USSR and its satellites had brought an end to the worst abuses and human rights violations. Far from realizing the basic civil rights we take for

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28 ‘Leszek,’ interview by author, 6/26/2012.

29 Ion Druţă in Kotkin, Armageddon Averted, 10.

30 Suny, The Soviet Experiment, 444. Khrushchev commented on the 1970 Baltic Coast riots in his memoirs just two years before his death. He was ‘retired’ from office in 1964 by the Presidium headed by Brezhnev in a near coup. While Khrushchev was on vacation at the Black Sea, Brezhnev arranged for the ‘transition,’ himself replacing Khrushchev as First Secretary.
granted in modern Western democracies, the end of Stalin’s most overt terror tactics and the end of the Polish beszpieka allowed for a period of relaxation – relatively speaking. Purges and show trials ended and exile to Siberian work camps for minor ‘economic crimes’ was no longer likely. Daily life in Władysław Gomułka’s Poland had progressed beyond beszpieka terror and ‘witch hunts’ for industrial saboteurs, yet it was plagued by shortages of food and consumer goods, near total absence of consumer services (if you did manage to buy a Fiat Bambino no one was available to service or repair it), ten-year waiting lists for telephone service, desperate housing shortages, decline in genuine income, and frustration over shipments of Polish commodities to the Soviet Union. Emboldened by the ‘Khrushchev Thaw,’ pent up anger was vented in a series of protests, riots, strikes, and attempts at full-fledged revolution across Eastern Europe. Most famously, workers rioted in Poznań and Budapest in 1956 and students rioted in Warsaw, Belgrade, and Prague in 1968; the Soviet Union sent its military to squelch the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian revolutions, and the National Guard (ZOMA) contained the Polish riots. 31

On December 13, 1970 the Gomułka administration announced tremendous price hikes on all staple food items – up to 36% on most products. 32 The increase was justified by the State as a needed 'correction' in the planned economy. This 'correction,' as unreasonable as it was and

31 Barbara Wejnert, “The Contribution of Collective Protests to the Softening of Communist Regimes in East Central Europe,” in Transition To Democracy In Eastern Europe and Russia. (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2002), 66 – 90. Beyond these well known, large scale incidents, Wejnert provides statistical data on a plethora of small scale protests, strikes, marches, riots, etc., that plagued East Central Europe from 1948 to 1988. Thousands of such events chipped away at Communist Party power over the years in what Wejnert terms, “waves of mobilization for collective action.”

32 Ash, The Polish Revolution, 13. However, in June of 1976 food prices were again increased in an effort to reduce demand. Gregory Sucharczuk reports cheese and butter prices up 60%, meat prices up 69%, and sugar prices up 100%. Gregory Sucharczuk, "A Free Trade Union In A Totalitarian Society: Towards Understanding The Solidarity Movement In Poland, August 1980 - December 1981," PhD diss., McGill University, 1994: 31.
coming two weeks before Christmas, resulted in widespread protests across Poland and strikes and riots on the Baltic Coast. Interviewees from Gdańsk speculated that the price hike was simply a method to generate more revenue for the State, even though newspaper reports had suggested that the increase was an attempt to lower the Christmas season demand as a result of actual food shortages. Stocznia Gdańska (still Stocznia Lenin – the Lenin Shipyard at this time), with some 20,000 workers, went on strike to protest the price increases. About a week before Christmas, Gomułka responded by sending in a police and military contingent to break the strike at the shipyard and restore order. The crackdown resulted in a conflict at the gates of the shipyard in which an unspecified number of workers were killed by police gunfire. Ash reports ‘dozens’ of workers killed in the event and an online source (Gdansk-Life.com 2009) reports 80 killed; 33 M.K. Dziewanowski reports 45 killed and 1,165 wounded. 34

‘Pawel,’ a 67 year old interviewee who witnessed the 1970 events, said that the exact number is not known because the Polish government contacted the families of the slain workers and threatened them with more violence if they told anyone how their family members died. 35

Thus, when funerals were held for these workers no mention was made of them being shot by the militia. Pawel also claims that the bodies of some slain workers were removed from the site of the Gdańsk shooting and were ‘disposed of’ by the State Militia; Pawel estimates that close to 500 individuals were killed by police and militia forces in the Baltic Coast riots, as the Gdańsk incident sparked rioting that lasted five more days and spread to Gdynia, Sopot, and Szczecin.

33 Ibid.
35 ‘Pawel’ interview by author, 3/15/2010. ‘Pawel’ was a key source of first hand data concerning the Polish Revolution and Stocznia Gdańska. He went to work at the shipyard in 1963 at age 20 and was an eyewitness to the 1970 shootings and all the important events concerning Solidarność through the 1980s.
He claims that militia units in helicopters opened fire on protesters in Gdynia, literally spraying the crowd with bullets, killing nearly 100 people and wounding thousands. 36

Regardless of the exact number of deaths, the point here is threefold: (1) conditions of daily life across Poland had so deteriorated that tens of thousands of citizens were incited to take to the streets in protest, with hundreds paying for this action with their lives; (2) the minor liberalization (or perception of liberalization) of the Communist regime by Stalin’s death and Khrushchev’s attempt at normalization of relations with civil society had emboldened populations across Eastern Europe to demand changes and they expressed their demands through strikes, protests, and riots; (3) the brutal retaliation against these demands by the Polish government and by other Soviet Bloc governments radicalized a large population segment which set as their ultimate goal regime change, that is, the replacement of the monolithic Communist Party with national representative democracies.

In his memoirs, Nikita Khrushchev very aptly summarizes the cause of the Baltic Coast riots of 1970 and the potential outcomes of the Soviet system if major reforms were not enacted. Khrushchev's statements proved to be a very accurate summary and a historical prediction. Beyond that, he captured the ‘human element’ in the situation; he looked beyond ‘ideological orthodoxy’ and realized that material needs must be met regardless of political philosophy. Below, an excerpt from his comments, clarifies this notion:

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36 The author attended Konfrenca Solidarności: Grudzień ’70. Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, Gdańsk. 15 Grudnia, 2010 (15 December, 2010) led by Dr. Jerzy Eisler, Dr. Janusz Marszałek, Dr. Michał Paziewski, and Dr. Wojciech Polak. Among other topics, these prominent Polish historians offered evidence from eyewitness accounts and archival sources that place the total number of deaths in the 1970 Baltic Coast riots near 500 with as many as 2000 being injured. The historians had also gathered stories of brutal beatings and torture during police interrogations of arrested protesters. This topic is contentious as no ‘official record’ is available from the militia and police forces responsible. A large monument now stands outside the gates of the Gdansk Shipyard to mark this event. Along with my interviewee, ‘Pawel,’ Lech Wałęsa, the future leader of Solidarność, was also a witness to the December 1970 events.
I believe that we can compete successfully with capitalism only if we alter the priorities and organizational structure of our economy so as to supply our citizens with the food and consumer goods they want. A man labors and lives in order to satisfy his material and spiritual needs. If capitalism satisfies those requirements better than socialism, it will become increasingly difficult for us to propagate our point of view and consolidate our way of life. Eventually, we will run the danger of losing everything - of going bankrupt. The danger is political as well as economic. Just look what happened in Danzig [referring to Gdańsk as Danzig] during the 1970 riots there… What happened in Poland represents a lesson for us. The events on the Baltic Coast were a direct result of a food shortage and a consumer revolt against rising prices...The teachings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin cannot be hammered into people's heads only in the classroom and newspapers and at political rallies...Our people must be able to use their wages to buy high-quality products manufactured under socialism if they are to accept our system and reject capitalism.37

Dissidents widely ranging from Lech Wałęsa and Václav Havel to ‘stray dogs’ such as ‘Mrs. Danka’ in the opening vignette of this chapter were created in the backlash of radicalization that followed the Khrushchev Thaw. This political radicalization was accompanied by the desire and need to create an alternative economy alongside the existing State economy. The Solidarność creed of _ewolucja nie rewolucja_ (evolution not revolution) entailed the building of a parallel economy – a shadow economy that met the needs of Polish citizens neglected by their own state. To a great degree, this idea harked back to the notion of _praca organiczna_, literally, ‘organic work,’ when during the Partitions, Polish bankers, industrialists, farmers and entrepreneurs of all sorts worked quietly and cooperatively to build the Polish economy through expansion of the private sector. In effect, the alternative economic strategies employed by Polish citizens - the subject of the next chapter – were also the ultimate political weapon as they simultaneously expressed rejection of the State economy while they supported the Solidarity Movement and the individual citizens and activists involved in the movement.

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Chapter four concerns the daily life of Gdańsk shipyard workers, explaining why and how many were forced into the alternative strategy of ‘urban homesteading’ during the darkest years of Poland’s economic turmoil. This is the first of many informal economic activities mentioned, others to be discussed in chapters five and six. The chapter includes description of this scenario, derived from field notes, first-hand observation, and interviews with residents of Gdańsk. The chapter also defends the integrity of workers in a Socialist economy, refuting commonly held Western assumptions that portray such workers as lazy, unmotivated, and dependent on the State, and thus, by these faults, a primary cause of the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. Interview data confirms that just the opposite is true. Not only had most citizens of the People’s Republic Of Poland developed extensive ‘personal alternative economic strategies’ (by necessity, due to dysfunction of the formal economy), but also many were simultaneously dedicated to their formal jobs as well. The chapter discusses why this was so, elaborating on constructs such as pride in craftsmanship, generational dedication to workplace, political motivation - both toward the politics of Marxist-Leninism and towards Solidarność – condensed in the idea of transformation of the ‘Protestant Ethic’ into the ‘Proletarian Ethic,’ and captured in the slogan ‘Pride, Dignity, and Solidarity.’ Again, these ideas reflect the earlier mindset of *praca organiczna* (organic work, discussed in Chapter 1) during the Polish Partition era, in that, regardless of the political system (a system imposed from outside or otherwise) there exists a Polish cultural construct that rationalizes attempts to modernize, improve, and otherwise facilitate the growth of the national economy and to pursue progressive social trends; this distinct Polish cultural construct has clashed time and again with Prussian, German, Austrian, Russian, and Soviet occupiers. The chapter also points out that Solidarity’s aim in bringing about the transition to capitalism and democracy was creation of alternative or parallel choices for all citizens. These included facilitation of many parallel or alternative economic strategies, but also creation of a parallel labor union (Solidarność as opposed to State-operated unions), and
ultimately a parallel government that would replace the monopoly of the Communist Party. The creation and maintenance of parallel political, social, economic, religious, and linguistic alternatives in the face of foreign occupation has long been a survival strategy for Polish identity.

**The Proletarian Ethic And The Spirit of Socialism**

*When you visit a giant’s world you are made to feel very small. You pass through doors as tall as a five story building into a space as big as the Superdome. But this place was not built for the bourgeois pastime of professional sports fans; it is utility and function incarnate. It is living men and living machines in service to The People - the means of production for their fraternal proletarian dream of prosperity and equality. From inside this black skeleton, filled with smoke, fire, and noise, come the guts of supertankers.*

*The Syn Antares under construction at Stocznia Gdańska, December, 2010. For scale, note the man walking under the center of the crane base.*
Outside, near the banks of the Wisła, the separate parts are united by soaring cranes that are as much icons of the Gdańsk skyline as Bazylika Mariacka - the Basilica of Mary - the largest brick church in the world. It is startling to round a corner in this city of fabrication and see rising ominously the steel framework of a ship that dwarfs a blast furnace; your head tilts back and your eyes roll up slowly as if you were approaching God’s throne. It is rather frightening, I suppose, because the overwhelming size makes you feel very insignificant.

Welding sub-structures for the *Syn Antares*. The ship is a liquefied natural gas supertanker with a capacity of 9000 cbm.
Scaffolding rings the unfinished section of the giant ship and sparks rain down as Solidarność brothers grind, fit, and weld. They take pride in their craft – pride today for their free and democratic Poland, pride in the past for The People’s Republic Of Poland. Pawel tells me, “This shipyard is my family – like my mother, my children – I love it. I made a living here all my life and now my son works here. I am proud of the ships we built for Poland and for Russia too. The skills of shipbuilders are passed down through generations. Disguised as a commoner, Peter The Great worked for a time in this city as an apprentice, to take home to Russia, in his head, the art of shipbuilding. But he was a newcomer; they had been building ships here 1000 years before Peter came.”

Retirees visiting the shipyard. Many remain actively involved in Solidarność-sponsored civic organizations.
Stocznia Gdańska or the Gdańsk Shipyard (from 1952 to 1980 it was called Stocznia Lenina, the Lenin Shipyard), four other related shipyards, and several port-loading facilities are located in the province of Pomorskie (Pomerania) on the Baltic Sea. Here the Wisła forms a delta of three branches: the Leiwka Wisła, Śmiała Wisła and the Martwa Wisła. The city of Gdańsk dates back to the 7th Century and lies along the coastal estuary formed by the Wisła as it empties into Zatoka Gdańska (Bay of Gdańsk). The city is surrounded to the south by wooded hills, the highest being Góra Gradowa on which is erected the Millennium Cross, a monument to 1000 years of Christianity in Gdańsk. Shipyards and sea ports have been located on this protected coastal plain since the 1400s, first established by rich merchants of the Hanseatic League.¹

A German company owned by Ferdinand Schichau built the first modern-era shipyards at the current Stocznia Gdańska site in 1890, then called Schichau Seebeckwerft. In 1921 the Danziger Werft yards (referring to the German name for city, Danzig) were opened as additions to the Schichau yards. The shipyard complex and various port facilities expanded and prospered until WWII. During the war the shipyards and most of the city of Gdańsk sustained heavy damage. After the war the Gdańsk yards were restored and modernized through loans from the Soviet Union and became part of the state-owned enterprise of The Polish People’s Republic. In this way, a very profitable means of production was established in Gdańsk.²


² Ibid.
However, the wealth generated by the shipyards was not realized by the residents of Gdańsk - much of it was extracted by the USSR. According to interviewees at the shipyard, Stocznia Gdańska produced 30 - 40 large ocean-going ships per year during its prime (1960s and 1970s). Most of the ships were coal and ore carrying ships, oil and chemical tankers, and cargo ships. All of the ships were produced for the Soviet Union, which sold them around the world as a source of national income. The shipyard workers felt that they were producing these ships ‘for free,’ for the benefit of the USSR, as interviewee ‘Paweł’ explained:

We built all kinds of ships here - military ships, commercial ships, fishing ships. But we were building them for free for the Soviet Union...we built them in Gdańsk but the Russians put their name on them, and sold them to Greece, Libya, Brazil - all over the world. They made good money on our ships...and we couldn't even afford to buy basic food on a regular basis...  

Paweł was 67 years old at the time of this interview and had started working in the Lenin Shipyard at age 20 in 1963 (he is now retired). He was married in 1970, at which time, he commented, he had worked in the shipyard for seven years but still could not afford to buy a suit for the wedding. "I worked hard every day and was still poor," he said. Once he asked the shipyard manager why wages were so low:

I asked him where the money is going - you know how many ships we build - why can we not have a pay raise? He said the money is all going to Warsaw, to the government to pay for our benefits. We had some benefits, yes; If we got sick we had our own hospital right here in the shipyard...And we had a small retirement if we managed to survive 30 years of work here. But the production of this shipyard was tremendous – all the value of

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3 Marek Gąsecki, interviews by author, 12/15/2010. Mr. Gąsecki, employed by Stocznia Gdańska for 32 years, stated that the shipyard was geared to mass production of huge, simple cargo ships during the Soviet era. Greatly downsized today, Stocznia Gdańska is jointly owned by Ukrainian and Swedish investors who aim to make it the most advanced shipyard in Europe. In order to compete with Asian shipyards, Stocznia Gdańska is building specialized ships with onboard technology necessary for servicing offshore oil fields and offshore wind generators. They also build oil exploration ships, and ships to carry liquefied natural gas.

our ships was far more - *far more* – than the management would have us believe. We lived and worked in poverty while a few top men became rich. Yes, this was the way of our world, all knew it. And from this knowing came our anger.\(^5\)

Similarly, ‘Felix’ had worked in a port facility near the Lenin Shipyard. Coal, grain, and chemicals were shipped from the interior of Poland up the Vistula by barge and loaded onto ocean-going ships here. He commented on the low wages in proportion to living expenses and on the constant promises of ‘better days ahead.’

You could work here - we had policy of full employment - but you could not buy what you needed. Sometimes all the stores had was vinegar and tea! You had ration cards to buy everything with, like in war-time. Meat was hard to get - if you were a worker you could buy something like two kilos - if you worked in an office, half that amount. Now I see all kinds of meat in stores! Back then...no. It was a miserable time - no hope, no food, no future. I didn't even think there was a possibility for a different kind of life…They kept telling us things will get better - just keep working and life will be a paradise someday!\(^6\)

‘Pawel’ and ‘Felix’s’ comments were typical. When asked to discuss daily life during the 1970s and 1980s, nearly all interviewees from both Gdańsk and Wałbrzych recalled a very simple and very similar pattern: through the 1970s wages fell and prices increased; by the 1980s, wages became irrelevant – there was simply nothing to buy in local stores regardless of one’s income. All consumer items were rationed and standing in long lines to purchase scarce items became a fact of daily life for all Poles.\(^7\) All interviewees made explicit comments concerning empty store

\(^5\) Ibid.


\(^7\) Dr. Barbara Wejnert, interview by author, 1/21/2010. However, the ‘Nomenklatura’ faced no shortages. Along with Dr. Wejnert, numerous other interviewees voiced anger for the fact that special stores filled with high quality goods required a Communist Party membership card for admittance. The class distinction was more extreme in Russia. According to Dr. Wejnert, ‘When the change to democracy happened in Russia what we (Poles) discovered was they had worse system than ours. People were starving in many places - not just shortages - but near famine. And alongside this the leaders of Communist Party - they lived in palaces! They lived in districts off limits to all but them - behind barbwire with guards! In their districts (of Russian cities) was like homes of Hollywood
shelves and the realization that their money was worthless. As discussed in the previous chapter, the acute shortages were the primary cause of the riots, strikes, and demonstrations in the Baltic Coast cities of Gdańsk, Sopot, and Gdynia that led to the emergence of Solidarność at Stocznia Gdańska.

One would think that the bitterness of workers living on a daily bread of promises would be translated into every sort of retaliation imaginable against the immediate object of their dire economic situation – their workplace. This was the reasoning of the Polish Communist Party from its early postwar takeover and throughout the Stalin era. As described in the previous chapter, the hated beszpieka were charged with the job of closely monitoring every industrial workplace, always vigilant for sabotage, intentional slow-down of operations, stealing, or vandalism; and always ready to mete out interrogations, beatings, jail time, or deportation to the gulags for all ‘enemies of the people.’ Today’s well known meme titled ‘shootings will continue until morale improves’ would not have been lost on the beszpieka.

Yet, interview data, corroborated by secondary sources, refutes the notion that workers intentionally took out their frustrations in acts of vengeance against their places of employment. The findings also negate the condemning assumptions of Westerners that workers in a socialist state are unmotivated and unproductive. Quite like the beszpieka, founded by ‘office-dwelling’

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8 Generally speaking, this was true. Obviously, not all workers fell into this category. Primary and secondary data will shortly elaborate on this point. This statement begs the application of statistical analysis for elaboration and validation.

9 This is a common Western assumption. For example, in teaching introductory sociology sections at Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia, the author of this paper notes that in class discussions of comparative economies many students make sweeping assumptions that lump nearly all economic forms, past or present, other than ‘US capitalism,’ into some hazy realm of ‘Communism,’ assumed to be populated by lazy automatons.
bureaucrats with little experience in the hands-on world of trade unionism, Westerners often apply their own reasoning, based on their personal experiences in service or information sectors of modern economies, to ‘explain’ (through no first-hand research) why Soviet Bloc enterprises were ‘unsuccessful.’ Their first line of thought is usually to blame ‘socialist workers,’ as Westerners generally assume that ‘capitalist workers’ are somehow more highly motivated (hourly workers from both economic systems have little incentive beyond hourly pay – unless they have a profit sharing plan, stock options, or other similar investment in their company). Beyond this, the labels of ‘successful / unsuccessful’ in capitalist terms, became relevant to socialist enterprises only after 1989 when they began competing in a market economy. As Gdańsk interviewees observed, the Lenin Shipyard was judged highly successful in the eyes of both Polish and Soviet central planning committees, validated by the incidental data of the shipyard’s enormous export production and by the fact that a work strike of one hour was considered intolerable; thus the most effective tool of the Solidarity Movement was the ‘strajk’ and those that lasted days or weeks were often broken by the National Guard so as to maintain the State’s profitable industrial output.

The salient points of the above observations are several, and will be elaborated on as they help validate the core idea of this thesis, i.e., that workers in a non-capitalist system expressed, through their personal economic activities, a mindset congruent with attitudes usually associated with capitalist entrepreneurialism – the so-called ‘Protestant work ethic’ per Max Weber’s well

Likewise, ‘common knowledge’ in the US – from the barroom to the classroom to the analysis of ‘armchair historians and economists’ everywhere – generally contends that that the primary reason for failure of Soviet Communism was ‘lazy workers’ who somehow obtained a hefty paycheck while shirking work. Far right pundits attempt analogy here in regard to social welfare state political theories in western democracies. Of course, those truly steeped in Republican Mythology believe Ronald Reagan’s simple admonition to Mikhail Gorbachev to “tear down that wall” resulted in spontaneous collapse of the entire Soviet system!
known book.\textsuperscript{10} A plethora of personal alternative economic strategies and various entrepreneurial schemes employed by individuals during the years of the People’s Republic of Poland will be discussed in the remainder of this thesis. Yet, there often existed alongside these personal commitments to ‘work ethic attitudes’ a similar mindset in public works – despite the above mentioned frustrations of workers over low wages, high prices, and dire shortages (sometimes referred to as the ‘Proletarian Ethic’).\textsuperscript{11}

Obviously, this is not to make a sweeping assumption that all Soviet Bloc workers were highly motivated and deeply engaged in their occupations, nor is it to ignore the massive strikes that came to paralyze the Polish economy – at the height of Lech Wałęsa’s ‘power’ his call for a work stoppage could idle 10 million workers as rapidly as the word could be spread.\textsuperscript{12} This ‘power,’ and the workers’ understanding of their own power in solidarity, is precisely what

\textsuperscript{10} Max Weber, “The Protestant Ethic And The Spirit Of Capitalism” [1904] in Classical Sociological Theory, Craig Calhoun ed. (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2008), 228 – 246. Per Weber, this implies a conscious effort upon the part of individuals to cultivate work habits and lifestyle conducive to furthering material progress in a capitalist system. This norm becomes a part of the Weltanschauung – the society’s collective worldview. In short, this thesis contends that Solidarność actively encouraged similar cultivation of a work ethic among their members as a material validation of the ‘rightness’ or ‘righteousness’ of their movement. This construct was part of the ‘framing’ of the movement, per the entrepreneurial version of general social movement theory. Similarly, alignment of the movement with the Catholic Church also gave Solidarność a certain ‘moral authority.’ A ‘Catholic Work Ethic,’ nearly identical to Weber’s ‘Protestant Ethic’ and with a similar social agenda, was created, that agenda being outward, societal validation of itself in direct opposition to the ‘Soviet Legacy’ that hindered all sectors and all arenas of Polish society.


\textsuperscript{12} Jerzy Borowczak, interview by author, 12/18/2010. Jerzy Borowczak mentioned a unique form of strike communication. He said that after the signing of the Gdańsk Agreements (August, 31, 1980) until the enactment of martial law (December 13, 1981) - that is, during the first legalization of Solidarność, the union was so coordinated that city-wide strikes could be called by the ringing of church bells. A specific time and date for a strike was decided upon by Solidarność leaders, this was relayed to the various churches in the ‘tri-cities’ (Gdansk, Sopot, and Gdynia, which are located along the Baltic coast), church bells were rung at the decided time - and all industrial work came to a halt. This was no small work-stoppage; Borowczak estimated there were some 70,000 shipyard and industrial workers in the tri-city region at this time. This method was used in many other Polish cities as well, and according to Borowczak, Lech Wałęsa had once commented that Solidarność could literally shut Poland down at will, simply by the ringing of church bells.
fueled the unprecedented success of the Solidarity Movement. The ability to ‘turn on’ or ‘turn off’ the entire productive capacity of a state driven by a centrally planned economy - on the part of the workers, not the Central Planning Committee – was what finally convinced the Communist Party chiefs in Warsaw and the Politburo in Moscow that their ‘reign’ was over. Thus, a conscious effort was made by workers, as members of Solidarność, to aspire diligently to ‘work ethic principles’ while on the job, and likewise, to ‘pull the plug’ and bring the nation to a standstill when called upon by Wałęsa. This ‘bi-polar mentality’ was part and parcel of the entire Solidarity movement, expressed (as the continuation of this thesis will demonstrate) not only in personal alternative economic activities but in public workplace behaviors; the entire gist of the Solidarity Movement was creation of parallels – a parallel work routine (‘on’ or ‘off’ as needed per political expediency), a parallel economy (the many alternative forms to be discussed shortly), a parallel labor union (Solidarność alongside the official State-sponsored unions), and ultimately, a parallel government, social democracy alongside (and replacing) authoritarian autocracy.

Workers at Stocznia Gdańska, they being the center of the Solidarity Movement and thus the ‘guiding example’ for all other Polish enterprises, made it a principle to maintain productivity and pride in craftsmanship throughout the long course of their struggle against the Communist Party (nine years; 1980 – 1989). ‘Pride, Dignity, Solidarity’ (Duma, Godność, Solidarność) was the motto of the movement on both sides of the Iron Curtain and both sides of the Atlantic.13

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13 The motto ‘Pride, Dignity, Solidarity’ was used by Solidarność in Poland and by all labor unions in support of the movement in Western Europe and the US. The author of this thesis participated on a committee of support for Solidarity at Allied Chemical’s Semet Solvay Plant, Ashland, Kentucky, (OCAW Local 3 – 523) throughout the 1980s and recalls the ‘novelty’ of seeing hourly workers from Appalachia – some without high school diplomas – vigorously defending their union brothers in Poland. No doubt, very few (if any) had prior knowledge of Polish labor relations before the Solidarity Movement appeal was made to them; perhaps some could not even locate Poland on a map – yet, nearly all were ‘onboard’ with the project, a testimony to the effectiveness of the ‘marketing’ of this social movement. A Synthetic Analysis Of The Polish Solidarity Movement: Solidarność - Ewolucja nie
Interview excerpts from union officials and comments from both former and current employees of Stocznia Gdańska will help clarify this concept and solidify the connection between the Solidarity Movement’s agenda, and operationalization of this agenda, in everyday life. Comments from Jerzy Borowczak, current director of Fundacja Centrum Solidarności, provide a good overview:

It was the policy of our movement *not* to be violent, *not* to be destructive, *not* to be corrupt – we took the moral path, we were aligned closely with the Church. Quite honestly, this was for two reasons: first, we had all seen what happens here when we use aggressive tactics… the 1970 riots, in which workers set fire to the local Communist Party headquarters, was answered to us by bullets from the ZOMA [the national guard or civil militia]…and many innocent people were killed. Second, by behaving differently than the Communist Party – opposite of how they expected us to behave - we made legitimate our cause to Poland and to the world. We were moral, they were corrupt; we were workers, they were takers; we made peaceful protest, they used guns and tanks against their own people. It was slow process - step by step - evolution not revolution – but this was the only way. Without Wałęsa, who, like me, saw with his own eyes the massacres of 1970 – and too, without influence of our priests – influence of Pope John Paul II – well, it could have been violent, bloody revolution and probably Soviet Union would use tremendous force this time [in the 1981 strikes just before declaration of martial law] to wipe out all trace of our ambitions…

…we did not want to provoke attacks by the State or to make attacks on the State – no, not for any reason…We were creating an alternative to the State, an alternative to Communism, that is, the kind of communism that was forced on us [in the decade after WWII]… But let me be clear, we advocated socialism, not abrupt shift to capitalism. Our aim was to take what was good from our old system – care of families, medical care, maternal leave (for new mothers in the workplace), full employment, things like this - and eliminate the bad things – political repression, control of communication, one party system, monopoly of State on economy… So, of course, we could not do this in ‘official way’ … we had no political power… so we made for people of Poland many alternative ways, ‘unofficial ways,’ until Communist Party would - we hoped - cease to exist… As you know, finally it did! 14

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14 Jerzy Borowczak, interview by author, 12/18/2010. Jerzy Borowczak is currently the general director of the Solidarity Labor Union at its headquarters Ulica Wały Piastowskie 24, Gdańsk. He is a former employee of Stocznia Gdańska and was active alongside Lech Wałęsa throughout the Solidarity Movement.
This ‘moral high ground’ advocated by Solidarność in the process of pushing its public agenda translated into the afore mentioned ‘Protestant Work Ethic’- or perhaps ‘Proletarian Work Ethic’- in daily operations at Stocznia Gdańska. Interview data backs this notion as do secondary sources, for example, in descriptions of the appalling working conditions at Stocznia Gdańsk and the resolve of workers to rise above them, maintaining the ‘pride, dignity, and solidarity’ of their social movement. Lech Wałęsa’s autobiography provides a telling portrait of the Gdańsk Shipyard in the 1970s and 1980s along with the story of how Solidarność strove to ‘reform’ the workplace (at first, not in political terms but simply in terms of basic health and safety upgrades) within the constraints of its limited power. Wałęsa describes his first impressions of Stocznia Gdańska:

When I arrived our shipyard looked like a factory filled with men in filthy rags, unable to wash themselves or urinate in toilets. To get down to the ground floor where toilets were located took at least half an hour, so we just went anywhere. You can’t imagine how humiliating these working conditions were…Human dignity and the chance to be fully responsible for one’s own life were not available options…

…the climate of oppression at the shipyard was reinforced by an accident that claimed the lives of twenty-two workers. In order to step up productivity, arrangements had been made to mobilize almost two thousand men to install the final fittings and equipment on a ship…Some [of the men] had been working for thirty-six hours at a stretch on this vessel [the Konopnicka] which had already been filled with fuel, again, to save time…There was an explosion, and because the hatchways and hulls were sealed off, firefighting equipment was unavailable. Though workers attempted to cut through the metal with acetylene torches… [to rescue the trapped men] supplies of acetylene were inadequate. Thus, twenty-two men were burned alive in the hold of Konopnicka…

Wałęsa goes on to explain how, slowly, Solidarność was able to win demands against the management of Stocznia Gdańsk guaranteeing safer working conditions, basic sanitary

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16 Ibid., 52.
facilities, and improved ventilation in smoky welding shops and painting sheds of the shipyard. Throughout this process, the union admonished its men to retain - to the best of their ability in spite of appalling conditions - a work ethic and professional attitude above and beyond the pettiness and penny-pinching of management. Effort was made through samizdat newspapers to circulate the call among Polish enterprises nationwide, not only for worker solidarity but also for worker job loyalty. Only by taking the ‘high path’ in all areas – non-violence, adherence to moral principles (the Catholic Church saw to this), and maintenance of professionalism on even the most dehumanizing jobs – could the Polish Solidarity Movement frame its agenda in terms so progressive and so humane, that in contrast the Communist Party was made to look even more backward and barbaric than it indeed was. This is the essence of ‘social movement entrepreneurialism,’ framing one’s self and one’s opponent in such bi-polar terms that public opinion is unequivocally skewed to facilitate the movement’s agenda. Lech Wałęsa was a master at this game, so much so that in the 1980s there went around Poland the humorous saying that the nation’s capital had moved from Warsaw to Gdańsk – specifically, to the electrician’s shop in Stocznia Gdańska where Wałęsa was employed. Interview excerpts from current employees of Stocznia Gdańska further illuminate how the agendas of Solidarność paved the way for alternatives in other segments of Polish society. Marek Gąsecki, a production supervisor and 32 year employee of Stocznia Gdańska, commented as follows:

I came to work at Stocznia Gdańska just as Solidarność was beginning its campaign… Back then a man might work here 15 years and his health would be ruined for the rest of his life. He would die from lung disease early in life due to inhaling smoke and fumes from the welding of the ships, dust from grinding the welds, toxic chemicals used in cleaning the steel in preparation for painting, and the paint fumes themselves. There was

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17 Ibid., 115 – 204. Through contract negotiations forced on shipyard management by strikes, the demands of Solidarność were eventually met.

no ventilation and no health protection from these hazards. There were many accidents
that crippled workers - because no one cared about safety or health. All this is different
now - the work here - well, it was inhuman before. It was all a man could do to survive
this place until he retired. When the yard was operated by the State, no one cared about
health or safety - all they cared about was production. There were rules (health and safety
rules) but these were only words in a book - no one enforced them. All they enforced was
whatever increased production, not what was safe or even sane. Now we have proper
ventilation, protection from dust and paint fumes, and a much better safety record. All of
these changes are due to Solidarność…

These [health and safety regulations] were major changes - before, no worker dared say
anything to management and although we had a union, it was operated by the State so it
was really no union at all…

As Solidarność gained more power there seemed to come over the shipyard a new spirit.
Still conditions were terrible and our wages were low… but the union convinced us to
show our better side to shipyard management… to work hard and be professional
tradesmen. They even named streets in the shipyard, the ‘Street Of Welders,’ the ‘Street
Of Electricians,’ the ‘Street Of Painters,’ as a symbol, I think, to inspire our people to
think of themselves as more than some kind of ‘slave laborers’…

Mr. Gąsecki added a further layer to the notion of workplace loyalty as he elaborated on the
generationalism that accompanies union tradeswork in Poland (as it does the world over). He
said that many employees of Stocznia Gdańska are the 2\textsuperscript{nd} or 3\textsuperscript{rd} generation of their families to
be employed there as shipbuilders. Although the shipyard has been greatly reduced in size and
number of employees in recent years,\(^{20}\) its long-term success is a concern for current workers as
many of them hope their sons will continue the tradition. The various skilled trades required in
shipbuilding (the skills of welders, electricians, mechanics, instrumentation technicians, mill
wrights, painters, etc.) are learned in apprenticeship programs sponsored through a joint
partnership between Solidarność and Stocznia Gdańska. This ensures continuity of the skilled
labor force required there, which benefits both the shipyard and the tradesmen, while

\(^{19}\) Marek Gąsecki, interview by author, 12/15/2010.

\(^{20}\) Currently Stocznia Gdańska has around 2000 employees, down from near 20,000 at its peak in the mid 1970s.
simultaneously cultivating a reciprocal loyalty and dedication from both the workers and their company; this concept, generally unknown outside of the closed communities of skilled, unionized tradeswork, negates the commonly held assumptions that denigrate skilled workers and craftspersons by lumping all hourly workers into one social class. It is an absurd misrepresentation to group highly skilled industrial workers – from the tradesmen who build ships, to the operators of the steel mills and chemical plants – into the same ‘lumpenproletariat’ class as, for example, fast-food workers. Generationally transmitted concern for the success of highly capitalized heavy industries, operated by highly skilled employees, in highly responsible positions, does not have an analogy in regards to unskilled labor. The point here, as ascertained in the interview of Marek Gąsecki, is that the advent of the independent trade union, Solidarność, as opposed to the previous ‘pseudo-unions’ organized as extensions of the Communist Party (beszpieka-like in their police state mentality), eventually gave full voice to the ‘reciprocal loyalty concept’ described above; even before this, employees of Stocznia Gdańska had a high degree of workplace integrity – which guaranteed continuity between union and shipyard, even more so.

For other workers, such as ‘Pawel,’ whose comments along these lines are used in the opening vignette of this chapter, ‘pride, dignity, and solidarity’ – and the accompanying ‘work ethic’ - seemed to come naturally in conjunction with the process of shipbuilding itself. Pawel spoke openly of the personal fulfillment he felt in building huge oceangoing ships, “…for Poland and for the USSR,” as he put it. Few interviewees were as outspoken as Pawel concerning the brutal conditions of the shipyard and the injustice of Poland’s Communist system, while simultaneously expressing outright affection for their place of employment. Pawel said, “This

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21 That is, enterprises built on monumental investment; modern steel mills, for example, cost as much to build as nuclear power plants - billions of dollars – and the operating ‘lives’ of such facilities is multigenerational, in terms of human lifetimes.
shipyard is my family – like my mother, my children – I love it. I made a living here all my life and now my son works here.” Paweł, and many workers similar to him, epitomize the ‘dual nature’ of parallels that Solidarność sought to instill in the Polish population. Quite simply, Paweł loved his nation and his workplace, and despite his open contempt for the mismanagement of both by the Communist Party, he worked diligently to build ships and to build a new Poland. The misinformed condemnations and uninformed assumptions of Westerners toward common workers in former Soviet Bloc states could not be more misplaced in the case of Paweł and his union brothers at Stocznia Gdańsk. Again, this construct seems a throwback to the Polish Partition era, and the notion of praca organiczna, literally, ‘organic work,’ when Poles under Prussian, Russian, or Austria-Hungarian rule continued their patient progress to ‘build a new Poland,’ both literally and politically.

Still, shortages and deprivation were constants that had to be contended with on a daily basis until the ‘new Poland’ came into being. Many Gdańsk residents came to believe that the shortages were a retribution for the political activism centered in the shipyard. ‘Pitor,’ a retired mechanical engineer, was positive this was the case. Pitor held a very high-level position in the design office of Stocznia Gdańsk and made frequent trips to the steel manufacturing centers of Lower Silesia. His travels afforded a wider perspective than that of hourly workers, most of whom did not even own a car. Pitor remarked that he often bought canned goods and other non-perishable food items when traveling south. He reasoned that the shortages in Gdańsk were artificial and were deliberate attempts to weaken the population’s resolve and to literally weaken their bodies – an attempt to starve them into submission.22

While outright starvation was uncommon, malnutrition was prevalent. Those who did not have alternative economic strategies often lived on bread, potatoes, macaroni, and tea. Meat, 

milk, eggs, and vegetables were virtually non-existent in Gdańsk stores through much of the 1980s. Mothers worried that their children were lacking proper nutrition. ‘Anna,’ an interviewee from Gdańsk, reported that baby food and milk formula were strictly rationed and fights often erupted between desperate women seeking these scarce items. Like Pitor, ‘Anna’ believed the shortages were deliberate attempts to weaken the population, especially the protesting workers. Anna remembered that police and militia operatives seemed well-fed and healthy while protesting workers seemed gaunt and weak. She expressed bitter, virulent contempt toward the Communist Party whom she blamed for “…attempted starvation of a generation of Polish children.”

Anna’s anger was exacerbated by the denial of food shortages by local Party officials and higher level government inspectors. As with the mismanagement of industrial operations by ‘old boys’ networks’ of nomenklatura (described in the previous chapter), likewise, bureaucrats responsible for distribution of food and consumer items shifted blame for shortages to common citizens. Local Party officials claimed that striking railroad workers, cargo handlers and truck drivers were causing the shortages as their protests delayed delivery of perishable food items. Anna remembered seeing pictures in newspapers of truckloads of spoiled food, accompanied by reports blaming striking workers for the shortages. Yet, when transportation workers went back to work the shortages continued. She blamed the Party for artificially creating the acute shortages while simultaneously diverting blame to striking Solidarity union members.

According to Paczkowski et al., the shortages and protests in Gdańsk became so volatile in 1981 (just before Martial Law was declared on December 13), that the Brezhnev administration

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sent its own investigators to the Baltic Coast cities to assess the situation.  

They reported back to Moscow that no actual shortages existed, rather, the greater concern was that the government was being shortchanged in tax revenue due to black market trading. Paczkowski quotes from the inspectors’ report:

...the Poles have plenty; there is grain, meat products, vegetables, and so on. But they give nothing to the State and are adopting a wait-and-see attitude. In the private markets, a rather active trade is being conducted at very elevated prices. They buy what they need...the people are not going hungry.

In fact, per interview data, by 1981 a full-fledged alternative economy had emerged in Gdańsk, driven by necessity, but as previously discussed, encouraged also by Solidarność as a way to further operationalize ‘parallel systems.’ Yet, the reality was not nearly as ‘rosy’ as was reported back to Moscow by the investigators. Rather, driven to near starvation, the people of Gdańsk had resorted to ‘urban homesteading,’ literally producing their own food on every available foot of open space within the city. Physical evidence, still apparent today, in conjunction with oral histories, reveals the scope of the city’s desperation as citizens came to the realization that they were ‘on their own.’ Condemned by the Polish People’s Republic for the political activism centered in Stocznia Gdańska and ‘written off’ by Moscow as a thriving black

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24 Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne (editors). From Solidarity To Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980 - 1981: A Documentary History (Budapest: Central University Press, 2007), 242 – 244. This occurred only months before Brezhnev’s death. Yuri Andropov and a select Politburo committee made all decisions in the final months of Brezhnev’s tenure as he was debilitated by a stroke but refused to give up his office. Stanisław Kania lost his position as Poland’s Communist Party leader as a result of the Moscow inquiry. Kania was accused of incompetence and failure to control the Polish uprising. He was forced out of office by the Politburo and replaced by General Wojciech Witold Jaruzelski. General Jaruzelski created and headed ‘The Military Council Of National Salvation,’ Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego, abbreviated WRON. ‘Wrona’ means ‘crow’ in Polish, and Jaruzelski was often humorously portrayed as an old crow wearing his ever-present sunglasses.

25 Ibid., 447.
market town which robbed the State of tax revenue, Gdańsk had no alternative but to create its own ‘private means of production’ or else be ‘starved out’ by its own national government. Gdańsk in the early 1980s was a town under siege, with a population doubly burdened by ‘wage slavery’ to the State and the necessity to produce its daily bread in its own backyard. Personal observations made by the author in March and December 2010 validate this point; below, taken from field notes, these observations digress to first person format for clarity and lyricality:

Up the wooded hillsides surrounding the outskirts of Gdańsk I noticed what seemed to resemble the squatters' towns outside the city of Juarez, Mexico where live the maquiladoras, or in-migrating factory workers. The slopes were divided into small plots, each with a little lean-to shed or shack made of scrap wood, sheet metal, and assorted odds and ends. I saw this again in a city park; a little 'settlement' seemed to have once occupied the park's extremities, but I could see it was now abandoned. Later I noticed similar 'shanty towns' built on the property of a coal-fired power plant. The old plant, according to an interviewee, was said to be ‘a gift from Uncle Joe

26 Juarez is notoriously famous for its sprawling shantytowns built of discarded shipping pallets, tar paper, and cardboard.
Stalin,’ and apparently still used pollution control technology from Stalin's era; that is, it had none. I noticed fly ash in the air near the plant and the acrid smell from the burning of low-grade, high sulfur coal, reminiscent of childhood memories of coal and coke processing plants in Appalachia of the 1960s.

A local resident told me that these ‘shanty towns’ were actually tool storage sheds for little, private gardens. Some had large south-facing windows or clear sheet-plastic covers and had been used to start tender plants in early spring. These gardens were not at all 'picturesque European flower gardens,' but were ramshackled hillside conglomerations of recycled industrial materials, home-made, and protected by woven brush fences and sagging barbed wire. In some places the steep hillsides had even been terraced using everything from aluminum siding scraps to splintered utility poles, to hold back the soil and form small flat strips that contoured with the terrain. Some plots had long-neglected fruit trees and grape arbors. These private plots had fed the people of Gdansk during the worst years of Poland's economic crisis. All of my interviewees (those old enough to
remember) have described to me the hardships of those years, especially 1981 - 1983, during the time of martial law.27

In order to survive, people bought and sold garden produce, fruits, and berries grown on these little plots for the 'black market.' As everything produced in The People’s Republic of Poland during the Communist era was subject to a state tax, the operators of these little market gardens were, technically, committing tax evasion. However, my interviewees told me, the State generally ignored this 'crime.' The tradition continues and I saw several 'old-timers' selling jam, honey, and home-canned fruit on the sidewalks of Gdańsk (perhaps it is again necessary due to globalization of capital and deindustrialization). Most of the gardens are abandoned today but I was told that in the worst economic times the 'garden shacks' were also used as hen houses, rabbit hutches, and occasionally as a shed for a milk goat or two.

It is not unusual to see backyard gardens or community gardens within any city. Many residents do this as a hobby, for fun, or as a throwback to more traditional times. However, it is the economic and historic context of the Gdańsk gardens that make them so striking and so revealing. They extended up the hillsides and into city parks of a town that was the site of one of the largest industrial works ever built. Stocznia Gdańska was immense and once produced great wealth for the State. Jerzy Borowczak, the current director of the Gdańsk local of Solidarność, explained that at one time some 70,000 workers were employed in shipbuilding alone in the

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27 John Steinbeck, *A Russian Journal* (New York: Penguin Books, 1948), 33. Their stories seem much like Steinbeck’s description of decimated post-WWII Russian villages which had reverted to pre-industrial subsistence agriculture in an effort to survive. Steinbeck described “…ditches full of growing cabbages and the sides of the roads planted with potatoes, and the protection of these plots is ferocious.”
Gdańsk-Sopot-Gdynia region.\textsuperscript{28} Yet, this city was dependent on little hillside gardens and chicken houses as a supplemental food source.\textsuperscript{29}

The significance of this observation of a material cultural tradition (or perhaps the hillside gardens may be called folk culture relics) as an antidote or correction to the economic dysfunction of an ideological/political system cannot be understated. It is analogous to imagining New York City residents forced to take up gardening in Central Park to avert starvation, or Washington, D.C. residents grazing goats on the National Mall in order to earn extra money to buy shoes; this, however, \textit{not} by the unemployed - because full employment was guaranteed and required in Poland - but by people working 40 - 60 hour weeks in highly capitalized (i.e., capital investment by the State), heavy industrial facilities. It reflects not only a long-term dysfunction of the economic system, but a realization by Gdańsk residents that the system was beyond repair and that reform or relief was not coming; as one informant told me, "You can't make soup out of ideas." Resolved to materially fend for themselves by gardening and 'black market trading,' while their 'official' labor - the output of their industrial jobs - went to support, in effect, a colonizer, the people of Gdańsk understood the long-term nature of the struggle they were in.

Most Polish cities have a tradition of \textit{Ogródki działkowe} - allotment gardening - but the dire economic situation in Gdańsk had forced residents to extremes. \textit{Ogródki działkowe} were community gardens set up by local city governments. Residents paid a very small yearly fee to be granted a strip of land – their allotment – within the set boundaries of the garden. However, as described above, desperation drove the citizens of Gdańsk to cultivate any and all available land.

\textsuperscript{28} Jerzy Borowczak, interview by author, 12/18/2010.

\textsuperscript{29} Andrzej Falkowski and Marta Rutkawska, interviews by author, 12/18/2010. These interviewees in particular contributed information concerning gardening as an alternative to starvation in the 1980s. Several other interviewees, mentioned in Chapter 5, also contributed stories and information on this topic.
Excerpts from an interview with ‘Ola’ and ‘Henryk’ elaborate on this most basic economic alternative:

(Ola)

*Everyone* had a garden in those days (early 1980s) because it was only way to have food other than bread. People in apartments learned to grow tomatoes and onions and lettuce in buckets on balcony! They planted vegetables next to house in little strips this wide (Ola holds her hands about a foot apart). They planted also in edge of city park and over time they sort of ‘claimed’ these spots for their own. Rights to *Ogródki działkowe* was usually passed down through family, so all were taken long ago. People started to cut trees up hillside to make firewood, then plant garden in open spot. This was in city limits! Right across from shipyard in city park!

…I actually built a fence around a little piece of land no bigger than this room (approx. 12 x12). It was city property but was near my apartment so I ‘claimed’ it and considered it my own. Lots of people started doing this. I even carried to it manure for fertilizer from goats and chickens that my friends had. They had them on hillside, in city limits, behind their house! This sounds to you like primitives – yes? Like Middle Ages? But this was in city of Gdańsk in 1980!

…Of course this was all illegal, but police ignored it. I used to imagine police stopping me (during martial law) and asking, “What are you transporting in buckets?” I would answer, “Goat shit! Is this illegal trade?” hahahaah!

(Henryk)

Many factories would let their workers grow gardens on workplace property. Inside property of Stocznia Gdańska they had gardens. Some industries even arranged for workers to make collective gardens outside the city (on industrial property controlled by the factory). This was important for the people as there was no other way to get vegetables…only potatoes were available in stores. At the city power plant where run steam lines along the ground, people stripped insulation from steam pipes and planted garden next to hot pipes to extend growing season…

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30 ‘Ola’ and ‘Henryk,’ interview by author, 12/21/2010. ‘Henryk’ also explained that nearly all buildings in Gdańsk were heated by steam generated at a central power plant. This system is common in Eastern European cities and reflects the Soviet ideal of collectivism, centrality, and industrial efficiency. Most of the systems were built just after WWII during the era of ‘full Sovietization.’ Huge steam lines run above ground in many Gdańsk neighborhoods even today. One can imagine the tremendous waste of energy as residents bared the pipes of insulation in order to heat gardens!
In addition to gardening, some interviewees remembered picking berries and mushrooms to supplement their diet. Preserving food by home canning and making jam from wild fruit or from fruit picked in long abandoned orchards were also common alternatives. Some city residents had family or friends in rural areas and were able to purchase both vegetables and meat from them. One interviewee recalled visiting a bar in which the meat from a recently killed deer was being sold at a high price, and several individuals told stories of obtaining rabbit meat from hunting trips. Thus, life went on in Gdańsk, and across Poland, and across the entire Soviet Bloc in the

_Ogródki działkowe_ – allotment gardening – is a Polish cultural tradition. Nearly every town has a fenced, collective garden such as the ‘Kostecki II’ in Wałbrzych. The best individual plots are highly coveted and are passed down through generations. Some Poles also retreat to rural ‘daczy’ - as do Russians to their _dachas_. Like the Poles, the Russian ‘dachniks’ (дачники – dacha owners) covet their little ‘estates’ and take great pride in them.
1980s in this ‘make-do’ way of urban homesteading, foraging, and the occasional rabbit hunt. These innovative alternatives, and many more, sustained the lives of the proletariat, the urban-industrial working class, in the failing worker’s paradise, as they patiently endured a peaceful ‘evolution’ in lieu of the certainty of violence an open revolution would bring.

Polish daczy with fruit trees, garden space, and a very rustic little dacha house.
5. Competitive Queuing, Blackmarket Trading, And Other Necessary Consumer Sports

Daily Life In Gdańsk

Synopsis

Derived from oral histories, chapter five discusses the many alternative economic strategies developed by residents of Gdańsk during the 1980s. Discussed are black market trading and informal employment (czarny rynek handlowy and fucha czarna robota), the smuggling of foreign-made goods into Poland, the trading of skilled labor, bribing, stealing, and otherwise circumventing formal or official channels of economic exchange. Most citizens of the People’s Republic Of Poland, far from being submissive automatons beaten-down by authoritarianism and ideological indoctrination, were, by necessity, independent, informal ‘entrepreneurs,’ engaged in a plethora of economic activities far more ‘commercial’ in nature than most average Western citizens ever experienced in their daily lives. Simply obtaining the basic necessities of living entailed entrepreneurial skills and trading savvy that would intimidate most Americans. Communism as a lived system, in its final years in the Soviet Bloc, inadvertently prepared citizens for transition to market capitalism by virtue of necessitating entrepreneurial survival skills. Chapter five, Daily Life In Gdańsk, as well as chapter six, Daily Life In Walbrzych, relate valuable and unique oral histories of life in the People’s Republic Of Poland, and capture the sense of private desperation that ran parallel to a collective sense of ‘running out the clock’ – of waiting-out the historical evolution of the Soviet Legacy; evolution, not revolution, was hoped for. Throughout the 1980s few Westerners grasped the enormity of the events quietly transpiring in Eastern Europe; thus, the events of 1989 – 1991 came as a shock to the West. Poles, however, believed their ‘nightmare’ would eventually come to an end – either through violent Soviet intervention that would totally eradicate their State’s identity, or – as it did – in peaceful evolution of the entire Soviet Bloc system.
Competitive Queuing

Street Scene December 20, 1982, Gdańsk:

By 5:00 AM the line stretched two city blocks, and 5:00 AM was an hour before night curfew was up. It was rumored that canned ham had arrived overnight. This would be the last opportunity to buy meat for Christmas, unless one had ‘connections’ in some farm village and had a means to travel there. By the time Mrs. Skibińska got the children off for school the line was three-quarters of a mile long. But she had a plan; she would hold the family’s place in line until Zosia, the oldest daughter, was free from school. Zosia would hold the place till her father got off from work and ate supper. Mr. Skibiński would wait in line until the store closed or ran out of ham, whichever came first.

The line moved so slowly because only a dozen people at a time were allowed in the tiny store. They had to present coupons for what they wanted and wait at a counter until a dimwitted
boy brought the items from a windowless, concrete-block storage room in the back. Ham was like gold and the storeroom like Fort Knox. Then there was the inevitable time consuming argument with that bitch-of-a-store-clerk. It didn’t matter what store you went to or even if ham was involved or not – all the store clerks were evil, power-crazed bitches who went into a rage if you gave them a large bill to break, complained about the quality of the junk they sold, or asked for more items than you had coupons for. Seinfeld’s ‘Soup Nazi’ must have been dreamed-up by a former resident of Gdańsk who had daily encounters with ‘The People’s Store Clerks.’

Mrs. Skibińska’s back, legs and feet ached from standing on the cobblestone sidewalk all day. At least it wasn’t snowing. She hated to wait in line when it snowed, not because it was any colder, but because it was so depressing. There was an old, cobbled-up, coal-fired power plant nearby –

![Smokestack of Gdańsk’s downtown, coal-fired powerplant in the background. In the foreground, a collective garden and dacy accumulating sooty snow.](image)

a gift to the people of Gdańsk from Uncle Joe Stalin – and so much soot poured out of its smokestack that it turned the piles of cigarette-strewn snow black. Mrs. Skibińska said it made Gdańsk into a black and white world in the winter, and that was really depressing. The only
good thing about the power plant was that its steam lines ran above ground. People tore the insulation off the steam pipes and planted little garden plots beside them – the lost heat extended the growing season a little and the only way to be sure you had fresh vegetables was to grow them yourself. There was a joke about this: you knew you had crossed over into Eastern Europe when you saw rows of onions following the above-ground steam pipes that ran to your house.

Collective garden, ‘Lech Wałęsa,’ on a December day – Gdańsk.

Zosia relieved her mother around 3:00PM. She tried to read while standing in line but an old lady kept prodding her from behind each time she failed to inch forward at every immediate opportunity. Line-standing was a competitive sport for Gdańsk housewives and they took it very seriously. Rumors traveled down the line that the ham was nearly gone – but this was always the case (it was a form of homegrown psychological warfare), and such rumors had been spreading since early morning. These rumors were meant for novices like Zosia who might believe them.
and give up; but she was more experienced than the old babuczki (grandmas) gave her credit for. At 6:00 PM her father came and took the final watch to get the Christmas ham.

By 8:15 Mr. Skibiński was the fourth person from the door. Now he could see that bitch-of-a-store-clerk through the front window. Then, in the snap of a finger, a tragedy happened: the clerk leaned her fat, ugly head out the door and screamed, “Ham’s gone! Go home!” A collective curse rose at the head of the line and those still a block away knew exactly what had happened. Most people spat and swore or kicked the nearest garbage can – then headed for home, face down, muttering threats to store clerks. Since he was so near the door, Mr. Skibiński waited a few more minutes. Maybe there was something else inside he could buy and trade it for a canned ham – but what could be so valuable?
It was Mr. Skibiński’s lucky day. That bitch-of-a-store-clerk had held back several crates of toilet paper – she had hid them in the back room just for this occasion – to soothe the hearts of those who would be ham-less for Christmas. ‘Maybe store clerks aren’t so bad after all,’ thought Mr. Skibiński, as he slung an entire carton of toilet paper – 24 rolls – onto his back, like some kind of perverse Santa Claus. ‘I’ll ask around at work tomorrow,’ he thought, ‘Surely someone will have some kind of meat from the country they’ll want to trade for this – you can’t grow toilet paper on the farm.’ But Mr. Skibiński’s good luck had ran out. On his way home, a young man jumped from a railing, knocked Mr. Skibiński to the ground, and ran off with his treasure. Only his pride was injured, but he had neither ham nor toilet paper for Christmas, and nothing at all to show for the 12 hours his family had wasted standing in line.

A story told the author by ‘Anna,’ an interviewee from Gdańsk.
Apart from working in the ‘slave provisioning grounds,’ as one resident called the allotment gardens of Gdańsk (as described in the previous chapter), and standing in the above described ‘deficit commodity lines,’ two other activities typified life in the city during the 1980s: czarny rynek handlowy (black market trading), and fucha czarna robota (part-time ‘under the table’ work, or ‘black work’). Both were practical responses to everyday shortages, black market items being the usual currency of black market work, except when work was simply traded for work. Seaport access apparently made the Baltic Coast cities Meccas of activity in illegal trade which filtered down to individuals and dispersed throughout the country. This chapter relates the experiences of several interviewees whose ‘entrepreneurialism in a non-capitalist system’ consisted of black market trading and working, bartering and bribing, all common adaptations to Poland’s major economic dysfunction in the decade before transition to a market economy. Interview data suggests these ‘proto-capitalists’ (i.e., black market entrepreneurs) along with the nomenklatura class (Communist Party members, many of whom were simultaneously blackmarketeers) took the forefront in the post-1989 transition to capitalism (to be discussed in the final chapter). This chapter also begins to make the distinction between the Baltic Coast and Lower Silesia in terms of their different economic circumstances and adaptations as part of the

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1 ‘Czarek,’ interview by author, 6/19/2012. ‘Czarek,’ a history teacher, likened the plethora of legal and illegally placed gardens in Gdańsk during the Communist period to ‘slave provisioning grounds’ per an article he had read describing small garden allotments granted to negro slaves in the American South. In addition to daily plantation work for the master, some slaves had to grow much of their own food ‘in their spare time,’ similarly as many Gdańsk factory workers did.

2 ‘Non-market reciprocity exchange’ being the technical term used for informal trading of both goods and services in most anthropological literature. ‘Kinship and friendship reciprocity networks’ are usually the primary means of exchange in pre-modern societies, but they played increasingly important roles across the Soviet Bloc in the final years of Communism.
People’s Republic Of Poland, continuing into the proceeding comparative chapter titled, ‘Daily Life In Wałbrzych.’

How did the Polish black market operate and what sort of items did it deal in? Marta, an interviewee from Gdańsk, related a typical scenario that was repeated by several other Baltic Coast residents. Marta’s grandfather had been a merchant seaman and spent his working lifetime on freighters. “He always had for sale work gloves, canned meat, flashlights and batteries,” Marta said, “he bought big quantities of these on sea trips and sold them when he was in port for a little extra cash.”³ In discussing similar activities with other (more cynical? more realistic? more truthful?) interviewees it was suggested that more likely the old seaman had simply stolen these common items from his ship’s stores rather than had bought large quantities for resale. Buying for resale at a marked-up price was generally limited to luxury items such as jewelry, watches, cameras, and similar merchandise and was often carried out by the nomenklatura as they had access to such items in ‘Party-Members Only’ shops.

“Back in those days everyone had some kind of ‘trade stock’ they dealt in,” ‘Anna,’ a life-long Gdańsk resident, commented.⁴ “A lot of it was petty items taken from the workplace. I ‘specialized’ in typewriter ribbons because I worked in an office. Of course, this was illegal and dangerous, but it was very, very common.” Anna continued, explaining that everyone ‘had connections’ to which they looked as a secondary source of basic, everyday processed consumer items (canned meat, canned vegetables, coffee, tea, candy, etc.) as well as ‘special sources’ for harder to get items widely ranging from her typewriter ribbons, to spark plugs, hand tools, coal and even gasoline. These items were available from individuals who had pilfered small quantities

³ M. Skibinska, interview by author, 12/20/2010.

⁴ ‘Anna,’ interview by author, 12/21/2010.
from their workplace – food processing plant workers were especially notorious as reliable sources of canned meat. Miners and railroad workers were often paid, in part, with bags of coal which they generously helped themselves to – well beyond their quota – for resale to friends. Mine bosses turned the other way after receiving bottles of vodka (the vodka itself probably pilfered from a local distillery), and as Anna remarked, “…all ‘transactions’ were accompanied by vodka. Bribes and trades were expected from anyone with authority over, or access to consumer items (such as store clerks, truck drivers, plant managers, distribution officers, etc.), and as their pay was low too, this was considered their ‘supplemental income.’”

Gasoline was harder to get than coal in the People’s Republic Of Poland (it was rationed by coupons till the late 1980s) but any enterprise that had major access to gasoline became a black market source of fuel. Workers on highway crews, airport maintenance operations, and trucking firms offered bosses the customary bottle of vodka as they siphoned off a few gallons of fuel ‘for home use,’ and there was also a constant bartering of gas coupons.

“You could get anything you wanted in Poland if you knew the right person, had enough money, and could wait long enough,” Anna joked. “It was networks of friends…you didn’t call a

5 ‘Mrs. Danka,’ interview by author, 12/22/2010. Fresh meat was sometimes pilfered by butcher shop employees as well. This interviewee told a story of how her mother bought meat from a butcher shop worker who carried a piece or two of meat home each day in his coat pocket. ‘Mrs. Danka’s’ mother once bought a large bag of this stolen, frozen meat. On the way home her train was delayed for quite a while and the meat started thawing. Blood ran out of her shopping bag, giving away her unusually large ‘purchase.’ She was detained by police who questioned where and how she could have bought so much meat in time of shortage. She was threatened by the police, but not charged with any crime – because she gave the officers the bag of meat! The story demonstrates the prevalence of ‘informal arrangements,’ be they with a pilfering butcher or the local police department.

6 Walter L. Hixson, Witness To Disintegration: Provincial Life In The Last Years Of The USSR (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press Of New England, 1993), 39. Hixson claims that in the Soviet Bloc it was possible to spot anyone with workplace access to food - store clerks, truck drivers, and those who worked in processing plants – because most had “Santa Claus bellies” whereas the average citizen was rather thin. Such workers would pilfer small quantities of food daily, yet, Hixson explains, this was not considered stealing – merely taking advantage of their situation. In fact, some considered their actions a ‘service’ to their fellow citizens as they sold part of their take. Interestingly, such persons were not socially condemned but were said to have ‘blat,’ or ‘wpływ,’ that is, ‘pull’ or ‘influence,’ and were thus, informally, of a slightly higher social status.
stranger and say, ‘hey, I heard you have stolen ham for sale.’ Back then, people met at each other’s homes almost every night – they visited – neighbors just dropped in – no one had money for movies or restaurants – they entertained themselves by visiting, talking, cooking, eating together – *much* more often than today. This is where our ‘trading’ occurred…among trusted friends.” Anna also described how some Gdańsk housewives traded ‘line-waiting time.’ One woman would take the ration coupons of several of her friends, wait the required several hours in line (depending on the scarcity of the item), and thus be able to ‘buy in bulk’ for the entire shopping pool. Officially, this was ‘legal,’ but it often elicited howls of anger from other shoppers who feared scarce supplies would be exhausted by a ‘bulk buyer.’ Furious women would yell, “*What are you doing? Starting your own restaurant? Opening your own store? Leave something for us poor folks!*” It was also possible, according to Anna, to hire certain persons - “usually old men or drunks,” she said - to simply stand in a shopping line in your place, with your ration coupons. They would be paid with a very small, pre-agreed-upon ‘cut’ of the shopping list.

Beyond the small-scale pilfering of goods from local workplaces and distribution hubs, some interviewees believed that organized rings of illegal traders operated out of the Baltic Coast ports. They cited as evidence for this the occasional, highly publicized, breakup of criminal trading rings and news of harsh punishment for the operatives. However, some interviewees questioned the validity of these alleged ‘breakups.’ Anna, for example, flatly stated that she believed them to be police fabrications aimed at scaring the general public away from their ‘everyday informal trading.’ There were times when the ‘informal sources’ dried up, she

7 ‘Anna,’ interview by author, 12/21/2010. ‘Friendship and kinship networks’ were indispensible for securing items in short supply.
recalled, forcing everyone to rely on State-operated stores and thus creating the maddeningly frustrating waiting lines described in this chapter’s opening vignettes. 8 None-the-less, foreign goods poured into Baltic Coast cities (through shipping channels) and were legally sold in special shops reserved for Communist Party members only. Dr. Barbara Wejnert stated that this type of shop existed across Communist controlled Eastern Europe and the USSR and often stood as a focus of contention between common citizens facing dire shortages of everyday consumer goods and Party members who had access to luxury items. 9 According to Dr. Wejnert, these shops carried fine wine and chocolate, liquor, jewelry, cameras, the latest electronic items, and high quality clothing, shoes, and purses. All Party members could shop in these stores, and select Party members operated them – allegedly with high personal profit. According to ‘Rosa,’ a brisk illegal trade was also carried on between owners of these ‘Party-Only Shops’ and non-Party members in Baltic Coast cities – at greatly inflated prices. “This is where the few luxury items common people had came from – this is where nearly all wedding rings and engagement rings came from…from corrupt Party-only shop owners…well, I think all of them were corrupt!” 10 The transactions consisted of a simple mark-up and resale for profit of luxury items to non-Party members by Party members.

8 Hixson, Witness To Disintegration. Hixson’s book describes life in Kazan in the decade prior to the 1991 transition. It is replete with stories of daily life that echo the experiences of Poles during the same decade per interview data collected for this thesis: the frustration of long lines to purchase everyday items, hoarding of scarce items, bribing, the necessity of ‘informal connections,’ rationing of fuel, and at times even rationing of bread. Hixson says that Soviet citizens usually had to stand in line three times: once to see what was available, once to pay for it, and once to pick up the item. Ironically, the longest line he ever saw was at a newly opened McDonalds restaurant. It was “…the longest line I have ever seen in the Soviet Union or anywhere else. It stretched through streets, around buildings, up and down hills, to Vladivostok for all I knew, for I could not see the end of it…” (75). Hixson speculates that McDonalds, this most-basic American ‘institution,’ represented “the powerful allure of the West…” and the spectacular waiting lines revealed the desperation many Soviet citizens felt in regard to the dysfunction of their own economy.

9 Dr. Barbara Wejnert, interview by author, 1/23/2010.

10 ‘Rosa,’ interview by author, 6/16/2012. ‘Rosa’ believed that nearly all available jewelry for sale in Poland was secondhand or antique and had been manufactured before 1939!
Another source of hard-to-get items came through travelers, through the few who obtained travel visas to the West. Zofia Rudnicka and her father, Tadeusz Drzewiecki, both obtained travel visas to the West (travel visas into neighboring Soviet Bloc states were not difficult to obtain, but Western visas were relatively rare) and both recalled taking advantage of ’shopping opportunities’ while traveling. Mr. Drzewiecki worked as an interpreter during the 1970s and spent two years in Boston, Massachusetts with a State-owned Polish engineering firm. During his stay he sent many packages of American-made clothing to his family back home in Poland. Zofia recalled, “…my friends would gather around and say, ‘let me touch your jeans made in America!’” Western-made clothing was in high demand in Poland and was readily saleable at a quick profit – if one could access it through such circumstances as Zofia was afforded. She claimed to have made a good deal of money this way, as did other Poles who had family members on extended overseas trips or in permanent residence in the West. 11

In the early 1980s Zofia was granted a travel visa for study in West Germany. She recalled being overwhelmed by the wide selection of clothing available there, filling luggage with newly bought clothing before each trip back to Poland. “The first trip back I wore two or three layers of new clothes because I was afraid my luggage would be confiscated and I would lose all my purchases! Even though I had permission to travel, and had only simple purchase of jeans and shirts, I was so conditioned – I think – to fear what I was doing was wrong! I was afraid also that a good quality German-made bra was somehow ‘obscene’ and would be confiscated…cheap Polish-made bras were like ‘one-size-fits-all’ and were not much more than a cloth bag with

11 Zofia Rudnicka and Tadeusz Drzewiecki, interview by author, 6/6/2012.
straps…(much laughter).” These (German-made nylon bras) were ‘hot items’ in Poland and could be sold at high price.” 12

However, as Philip Nazlecki recalled, some Western items, other than clothing, were forbidden and possession could rate a jail sentence. 13 Mr. Nazlecki said that border guards often “tore cars apart” looking for Western books, newspapers, and records or tapes of Western music. Yet, these items, he recalled, seemed to be readily available in Poland through certain individuals who informally traded them. He was not sure how the contraband items made it into Poland, but he speculated that border guards – like nearly all Polish authorities – were paid off with bribes by travelers who regularly made trips to Western Europe or the US. He also speculated these ‘curriers’ were probably Party members who had long-standing arrangements with their counterparts in border inspection offices.

Throughout history, ports of entry have been conduits for the transfer of ideas as well as material goods, and the Baltic Coast was no exception – more accurately, Gdańsk, Sopot, and Gdynia became terminals for clandestine Western aid in the form of the material means to spread the alternative ideology of Solidarność. As mentioned in chapter three, US, French, Italian, and Swedish labor unions all participated in supplying Solidarity activists with printing equipment, printing supplies, radio transmitters, and financial aid for the support of the underground press. Many of the legendary samizdat or ‘bibula’ newspapers - the dissident political publications condemning the Communist Party and calling on Poles to unite in peaceful Solidarity to bring

12 Ibid.

about *ewolucja nie rewolucja* (evolution not revolution) - had their origins on presses smuggled into the Port Of Gdańsk.

Immediately after the 1981 outlawing of Solidarność and subsequent declaration of Martial Law, AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland set in motion the network primarily responsible for supplying Solidarity activists with Western-made communications equipment. Arch Puddington recalls,

…Kirkland relied on a small cadre of dedicated assistants who shared his passion for the Solidarity cause. Tom Kahn…former aide to civil rights leader Baynard Rustin coordinated the undertaking. Joining Kahn…was Adrian Karatnycky, an American of Ukrainian descent who was fluent in Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian…along with Irving Brown, the AFL-CIO’s director of international affairs based in Paris… Second to Brown was Miroslaw Dominczyk, a Solidarity activist from Kielce who had been forced into exile after a year of martial law interment… Although the AFL-CIO was not the only source of assistance [to Solidarity], it was by far the largest supplier of material aid.14

Puddington continues, stating that overall, the AFL-CIA channeled over $4 million of aid to Solidarity, the majority passing through Gdańsk. Similar to the above-mentioned ‘informal friends networks,’ as described by interviewee ‘Anna,’ networks of merchant seamen, dock workers, general laborers, and truck drivers combined forces with AFL-CIO operatives, mainly in Paris, Brussels, and London, smuggling in many tons of equipment between 1981 and 1985.15

This plethora of seemingly incredible stories of ‘friends networks’ and various other ‘informal networks’ through which Communist era Poles obtained items as varied as bags of coal

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15 Ibid., “Solidarity Forever,” 163 – 190. Kirkland’s interest in the Polish Solidarity Movement was spurred on by his Czech-born wife, Irena, and President Jimmy Carter’s National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brezezinski. Kirkland actively promoted this interest throughout American labor unions affiliated with AFL-CIO. Many local unions in the US set up small ‘committees of support for Solidarity’ to raise money for the cause. During the 1980s the author of this thesis served on one such committee at Allied Chemical Corporation’s Semet Solvay operation in Ashland, Kentucky.
from Oświęcim, to printing presses from Chicago, to bras from Munich, turns now from czarny rynek handlowy (black market trading), to fucha czarna robota (part-time ‘under the table’ work). Before doing so, an academic note on ‘really existing communism’ – communism as a lived system, as opposed to its theoretical operationalization – must be added to help validate the notion that so much ‘clandestine activity’ actually occurred in an alleged ‘police state.’ Karen Dawisha elaborates on this topic, opening a paper with a Russian anecdote that aptly sums up the scenario:

The Russian definition of the difference between dictatorship and freedom: When nothing is allowed, everything is possible. When everything is allowed, nothing is possible.16

Under the Soviet thumb for some forty years, the same adage apparently applied to Poles as well. The plethora of informal networks committed to black market trading, black market work, smuggling, bribing, concealing, manipulating, etc., was part and parcel of the normal, daily, routinized operation of communism as a long-term, lived system; material survival depended on access to ‘alternative modes of production and distribution.’ Poles, along with citizens of the USSR proper and all other Soviet-dominated territories, came to “embrace the irony,” as Dawisha puts it, of ‘really existing communism’ in that it simultaneously incorporated

… the idea of respect for centralized power, the idea of a large sphere for private interactions, and horizontal networks of mutual cooperation and informal connections…a unique mix of beliefs, practices, values, and institutions shared by members of the society…that make up a net of both formal and informal ideas…as they are lived by the ordinary people…17


17 Ibid., 468
Or more succinctly, when ‘nothing was allowed,’ all, by necessity, ‘became possible.’ The centralized economy was failing to meet the daily needs of Poles; thus, out of necessity, they turned to elaborate, informal, economic networks.\(^\text{18}\) Thus the explanation for myriads of ‘alternatives’ in former Soviet Bloc economies, not normally found in the open, democratic, market-driven, capitalist West.\(^\text{19}\)

As somewhat of a ‘psychological antidote’ to the inconvenience, frustration, and waste of time entailed in navigating Poland’s official bureaucratic systems – when no informal alternatives were available – a set of situation-appropriate jokes evolved. Several slight variations of the ‘line-standing joke’ were told by various interviewees, the basic form being as follows: “It was a typical day in Jaruzelski’s Poland and the people of Gdańsk spent much of it as usual: standing in line. There were lines to get permission to install a telephone, to buy a used car, to get on a ten-year waiting list to rent an apartment, to convert ‘pay-tokens’ to złotys (some factories still paid workers in ‘scrip’ which needed conversion – similar to the ‘company store’

\(^{18}\) Alena V. Ledeneva, How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics And Business (Ithaca, New York: The Cornell University Press, 2006). Ledeneva describes “an economy of favors” (18) that pervaded not only daily life in the Soviet Bloc but politics and business as well. Far more elaborate than the most complex bartering schemes described by my Polish interviewees, Ledeneva must several times resort to diagrams in order to explain the intricacies of Russian ‘informal bureaucracy.’ Still, the same reasons drove Gazprom executives to ‘wheel and deal under the table’ as drove Gdańsk housewives to seek ‘covert sources’ of ham and cheese: the reality of a hopelessly dysfunctional official system, the continued breakdown and corruption of the system, loss of faith in the system, the frustration of dealing with the official bureaucracy and/or system, and the positive incentive of – perhaps – personal profit from ‘playing’ the informal system. The ultimate form of this personal agenda came in the 1989 – 1991 transition across the Soviet Bloc when a new generation of capitalist millionaires emerged from the ranks of former Communist Party bosses as the entire system underwent privatization. Those who best knew how to play the ‘informal bureaucracy’ and the ‘economy of favors’ got rich.

\(^{19}\) Stefan Halper, The Beijing Consensus: How China’s Authoritarian Model Will Dominate The Twenty-First Century (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 144. Ideological rigidity was a primary problem in the Soviet Bloc version of Communism. Strict, legal adherence to ideological orthodoxy especially as it pertained to economic arrangements seems to have been the norm from the Stalin era forward. One factor in the current success story of Chinese Communism is what Halper calls ‘the bamboo policy,’ which allows for sensible economic flexibility (“bending in the wind rather than standing straight and eventually snapping”). Like Lenin’s 1921 NEP policy, modern China’s ‘commanding heights of the economy’ are controlled by the State and great variance is given to small-scale, private entrepreneurs who fill much needed gaps in the centrally planned economy. Lacking this official leeway, Polish citizens created informal, although technically illegal, versions of it.
setup in 19th Century Appalachian coal towns). To buy groceries required first standing in line to get commodities coupons; to get commodities coupons required first standing in line to see a local State functionary who distributed coupons according to family needs (the sick, elderly, handicapped, and infants had specific allotments). Then, some stores had three lines: one to see what was available, one to pay for it, and one to pick up your item. In the ‘potato line’ on Ulica Piękna (‘Beautiful Street’) one man had enough; he said, “Fuck this! I’m going to Warsaw to kill Jaruzelski!” Two days later he returned – same people, same line. They asked, “So, did you kill Jaruzelski?” The man replied, “No. Line was too long.”

Another joke concerns the unequal trade balance between Poland and Russia: “Did you hear about the new ‘two-lane pipeline’ from Moscow to Warsaw? One side uses a six-inch diameter pipe, the other a thirty-six-inch diameter pipe.” Why such a size difference? “The six-inch-pipe brings oil to Poland, the thirty-six-inch pipe is for driving live hogs back to Russia!”

And finally, concerning long waits for basic consumer services, there is this one: “A man saved his money for ten years to buy a new car - a Fiat Bambino. On January 1st, 1980 he went to the car dealership and proudly presented his savings in cash, purchased the new car, and asked when it will be delivered. The dealer told him, ‘Your new car will arrive precisely at 2 PM, on August 25th, 1995.’ The man was furious and said, “I can’t pick it up at that time – that’s when they’re coming to install my telephone!”

In 2011 a board game was created and marketed in Poland with the aim of demonstrating to a new generation the economic frustrations of times past. It is described as follows:

You won't get to build hotels or collect rent in a new Polish board game reminiscent of Monopoly. In fact, you may be lucky even to get a pair of shoes. Poland's state-run National Remembrance Institute has created the new game – called "Kolejka," which means queue or line – to help young Poles understand the hardships of life under
communism. In the game, players are tasked with buying a number of goods, but a lack of deliveries, shortages and the connections competitors have to communist authorities turn the task into a string of frustrations.

“We want to show young people and remind the older ones what hard times these were and what mechanisms were at play,” said Karol Madaj, the game's creator.

Players try to buy basic goods but food supplies run out before they reach the counter. If a bed is needed, they may be offered stools instead. Players needing the shop's last pair of shoes can get edged out by someone holding a "mother with small child" or "friend in government" card.

"We want to show how it was when you lost your chance because someone with high connections jumped the line," said Madaj, a 30-year-old who still remembers spending long hours with his mother in lines. We may laugh at it today, but it was not funny for them, when they were wasting their lives in lines." The game is best played by members of various generations because it evokes emotions in older players who start to talk about their experiences.20

As the board game recalls, ‘special connections’ were necessary to obtain ‘deficit items,’ and nearly every Pole had some specialized, informal ‘trade stock’ (from typewriter ribbons to bags of coal) to ply on the black market. Likewise, most had some specialized skill or service for trade

or sale by the hour – \textit{czarna robota}. Ironically, much ‘black work’ was performed by common citizens for Communist Party members (the nomenklatura), as they were usually the only segment of the population who could afford to pay for domestic services. This aptly illustrates, per Dawisha’s observation (above), a great irony of ‘real existing communism,’ that in practice a great respect for centralized power was accompanied by much leeway for ‘horizontal networks of mutual cooperation and informal connections.’ This observation apparently held true for both dedicated Party members and average citizens.

Interviewee ‘Zuzka’ explained \textit{czarna robata} and her own interaction with the nomenklatura as follows:

\textit{Czarna robata} was work ‘under the table,’ without registration, without taxation…for cash…off the record. Ordinary people worked again after their regular work for ‘government people’ [Party members] on their private properties. Men would work on building or repairs, paint houses, work on cars, move heavy furniture or appliances, maintain yard or garden. Women would do cleaning, cooking, hair dressing, care for children, care for old people. Remember, this was ‘traditional time’ – women did all the housework, cooking, cleaning at home – Polish men \textit{never} did any of these things! So women worked all the time! ‘Big government people,’ those employed by military, police, or State, paid well, and I worked both in the factory and for these ‘bosses’ in their home.\footnote{Zuzka,’ interview by author, 6/12/2012. ‘Zuzka’ also mentioned that ‘professional people’ did ‘professional versions’ of \textit{czarna robata}. For example, clerical workers, teachers, lawyers and even medical doctors offered private, off-the-record services for those who could afford it. Private photographers, dressmakers, clothing alteration specialists, music teaching and language lessons rounded out the ‘skilled services offered’ list compiled by ‘Zuzka.’}

Of course, this set-up between workers and nomenklatura was illegal – in theory, there were no private workers or private enterprises in the People’s Republic Of Poland – but it was a very common and accepted part of ‘the lived system of communism.’ ‘On paper’ the system did not allow for any small-scale, local, private enterprises or entrepreneurs, but in reality they existed as ‘\textit{czarna robata}.’ In the People’s Republic Of Poland, the official system of organizing workers...
for the plethora of small-scale enterprises that make up any modern economic system was called
*spółdzielnia* (worker's collectives).  

It must be remembered that *every legal enterprise* in the Soviet-style economic system was
state-operated; *private means of production*, except in very rare cases, were *forbidden on an
ideological basis* regardless of the impracticality (one reason for the system's demise). In other
words, the ‘crime’ of working for oneself was not simply the possibility of failure to pay taxes
(as happens with many ‘side jobs’ in the US under capitalism), rather it was considered
competition with the state monopoly. Thus, the smallest and most obscure businesses or services
that we take for granted in the capitalist system were operated by the state in the communist
system. For example, the many services considered 'one-man or two-man operations,' such as
locksmiths, barbers, hair dressers, tax preparers, plumbers, auto mechanics, house painters,
building maintenance, pest control, etc., etc., etc., and small scale retail shops - everything from
a corner coffee shop to a newsstand - were state operated. This was accomplished through the
worker's collective known as *Spółdzielnia*.

*Spółdzielnia* may also be described as local craft collectives; local groups of skilled or semi-
skilled workers organized together as 'work units.' They were organized around a specific
geographic area or neighborhood. For example, the local auto mechanic, barber, coffee shop
attendant, handy man, window washer, and nail salon operator might all be organized into a local
*Spółdzielnia* (although their crafts were not at all connected they were simply organized by
locale). Their work would be supervised, records kept, pay distributed, etc., through the
management of the *Spółdzielnia* to which they belonged, just as, for example, a single large-

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22 Zofia Rudnicka, interview by author, 6/6/2012. Ms. Rudnicka explained the operation and organization of the
*Spółdzielnia* from many years of first-hand experience, as both worker and manager in a *Spółdzielnia*. These small,
locally organized, worker governed, worker managed collectives were ‘soviets’ in the truest sense – functioning
workers’ councils at the grassroots level.
scale block of specific tradespersons - welders in a shipyard, assembly workers in an auto plant, laborers on a construction site - would be organized through a trade-specific union. Solidarność was an 'umbrella' type labor union; all occupations could join; the Spółdzielnia were state-operated unions; Solidarność was the first *independent* union in a communist country and was promoted as an alternative to state-operated unions.

The point here is that neither *czarna robata* or work done through Solidarność were legal or formally recognized alternatives in filling the economic gaps beyond ‘the commanding heights of the economy’ – only Spółdzielnia could legally do this. The idea of the Spółdzielnia evolved from the similar Russian version, кооператив (cooperative) which filled the small enterprise and service gap after the outlawing of the NEP in 1928. The prevalence and volume of work done as *czarna robata* (informal and technically illegal), evolved in response to the inadequacies and inefficiencies of the Spółdzielnia system. No statistical data is available to quantify this statement specifically, but interview data suggests that the majority of basic non-commercial services were *not* provided by the Spółdzielnia system, but through *czarna robata*. Party members with higher than average incomes paid common citizens for such services and common citizens simply ‘traded work.’

Andrzej Falkowski explained the importance of trading work in the People’s Republic Of Poland in relation to the tremendous housing shortage that plagued most cities from the end of WWII until the post-transition building boom of the 1990s. As recounted in Chapter 2, Andrzej waited some 20 years for a single family apartment. In addition to decades-long waiting lists in

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23 Stalin outlawed the NEP (New Economic Policy) after Lenin’s death, thereby making all private enterprise illegal. The Kooperatīvs systems took up the slack left in the economy in the USSR and a similar system, Spółdzielnia, was used in Poland after ‘full Sovietization.’ Both the Spółdzielnia and Kooperatīvs were ‘ideological baggage’ that made little economic sense, but were necessary after outlawing of small private enterprises and services. With the revival of Solidarność, after the liberalizing trend of 1985, the union actually facilitated ‘private means of production.’ It gave loans to individuals ‘blackballed’ by the State per their affiliation with Solidarność so that they could start small-scale private business.
the cities, he also described the near impossibility of obtaining a bank loan for new building, expanding, or remodeling in rural areas. Much of rural Poland was never collectivized (to be discussed in the next chapter) and many families in the countryside had land available for building room additions or new, separate houses for the younger generation, but they had no means of finance. Some were able to circumvent this by trading labor, but obtaining building supplies was more difficult, as Andrzej described:

In rural areas some people had land and when the son or daughter got married they wanted their own place to live... Let's say we wanted to build a house - OK - we help each other! When I'm finished with mine, I help you - then we help our neighbor build his. We didn't pay - didn't charge - it was labor traded for labor. And if someone knew a trade like electricity, plumbing - that guy helped with that kind of work. The guys who know bricks traded their work - you see, we traded what we knew - we helped each other...

But like everything else, you waited in line to buy things to build with. Maybe you can buy two bags of cement today - wait a month, buy two more bags...all materials were in very short supply. Lay some bricks - wait for cement - it was slow! And for roof - the tiles for roof - very hard to get! People used stone they found by the roadside, broken concrete block, used brick, chunks of concrete from old buildings [being torn down]... anything like that to fill-in walls, then plaster over them. In other words, during this time, Polish houses were built of junk held together by mortar. It was common to build a shed on the side of a house one year, maybe make a floor two years later, a wall in three years – you understand – after 15 years maybe, of building a little at a time, you had a room added to your home. Your son or daughter got married and the new family lived in this room addition.

24 Zofia Rudnicka, interview by author, 6/6/2012. This interviewee explained that workplaces, especially large factories, usually offered a sort of ‘credit union loan’ for items such as furniture and appliances, but ‘home loans’ or ‘home improvement loans’ were unheard of. Basically this was because almost no city dweller owned his or her own home (virtually all housing was State owned) and independent rural families were considered ‘second class citizens’ by State authorities. Ms. Rudnicka said she believed hardly any common Polish citizens had savings beyond a few hundred złotys. She said that party members were obligated to ‘State sponsored savings plans’ in which savings were taken out of each paycheck. The few non-Party members who did have substantial savings suffered massive currency devaluation in the 1989 transition. Many Party members were able to ‘convert’ their savings to property or other productive investments as discussed in chapter 7.

25 Andrzej Falkowski, interview by author, 3/16/2010. In addition to describing the trading of skilled and unskilled labor for constructing living spaces, Mr. Falkowski also described the trading of centrally located apartments. State-appointed housing did not always mesh well with individual’s work locations, thus apartments were sometimes unofficially traded by residents rather than endure the red-tape nightmare of obtaining legal permission for a relocation. Trades of very desirably located apartments were sometimes accompanied by informal cash payments between the traders – highly illegal, but just one more way in which Poles ‘worked the system’ to their mutual advantage.
In summary then, as the preceding examples have demonstrated, average citizens of Gdańsk developed an extensive network of alternative economic practices in order to offset the deficiencies in the ‘official’ system. The extensive ‘urban gardening’ as described earlier in chapter four, along with chapter five’s black market trading, illegal black work, direct trading of work, extended ‘friends’ networks,’ and outright bribing and stealing, were all common survival strategies in 1980s Poland. The next chapter turns to Wałbrzych, and emphasizes the differences in alternative economic strategies between the two cities.

Owner-built sheds with walls of masonry rubble in Gdańsk as pointed out by Mr. Falkowski. The further shed has been walled-in and converted to an ‘apartment’ for a young couple. This idea was ‘standard practice’ until the post-transition building boom. Separate housing for newly married couples was virtually nonexistent from the end of WWII until the 1990s. Young couples and their children lived with their parents until the older generation died or the 20+ year apartment waiting list offered a vacancy – whichever came first.
6. Memories of The Golden Age Of Socialism

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Daily Life In Wałbrzych

Synopsis

Chapter six discusses the lived experience of communism in the Sudaty town of Wałbrzych, during the 1980s, in comparison to the same decade in Gdańsk. The chapter notes the structural and ideological differences of the two regions, emphasizing Wałbrzych’s more ‘relaxed Communist orthodoxy,’ its ‘rural proletariat,’ and its prevalence of Panowie, caudillo-like local Party bosses who operated private enterprises while simultaneously maintaining dutiful loyalty to the Polish Communist Party. The chapter begins to explain the contradictory nature of regional versions of Polish Communism, as it proceeds from an opening narrative quite dissimilar from other accounts thus far given. Wałbrzych enjoyed the ‘golden age of socialism,’ through the 1960s and 1970s, while conflict simmered on the Baltic Coast. In the 1980s Solidarność brought to Wałbrzych ‘political awareness’ along with economic turmoil. Sudetenland had existed in relative isolation to the politically active Coastal cities, and Lower Silesia, in general, had been ‘pacified’ by the State, in part, by several post-WWII infrastructure developments – ‘socialist showcase’ industrial works and planned towns. In conjunction with the ‘relaxed orthodoxy’ of the region (i.e., many small private farms owned by common, local citizens and private enterprises owned by nomenklatura) and the abundance of relatively well-paying industrial jobs - under more modern working conditions than, for example, the old Coastal ‘rust-belt’ shipyards – communism worked for Wałbrzych, much better, and much longer than it had in the north. Nonetheless, Wałbrzych residents participated in informal economic activities as did their counterparts in the north. However, informal work in Wałbrzych was generally limited to off-the-record jobs provided by the Panowie. The plethora of informal, alternative economic arrangements found to have been undertaken in Gdańsk – some of which bordered rather on the bizarre – was unheard of in Wałbrzych. In Sudaty, it appears that major economic dysfunctions arrived rather late (in early the 1980s) and thereafter rapidly devastated the region’s economy; massive layoffs, and plant and mine shut-downs, were followed by mass out-migration as residents found few other alternatives. In this light, Solidarność and the entire
Solidarity Movement has a far greater tendency to be viewed as an object of blame, in Sudaty, as opposed to its being revered as a ‘savior’ in the north.

Memories of The Golden Age Of Socialism

Oksana remembers Wałbrzych…

I had a good life growing up here. We were not rich but certainly were not poor – there were no shortages or lines back then [in the 1960’s and 1970’s] – those started when General Jaruzelski took over [1980]. My grandfather called him [Jaruzelski] ‘the welder’ because he wore those big, ridiculous dark glasses, winter and summer, day and night! My friends called him ‘The Buddha,’ because he tried to appear so calm and dignified, but we all knew he was not in control of the country – no one was in control – we were spinning into disaster…
I lived in a small apartment in town with my mother – my mother and father divorced when I was very little... I spent every summer on Ulica Wilcza [Wolf Street] just outside of town where my [maternal] grandparents lived. They had a small farm and I loved it there! They were what you might say ‘rich’ for that time. My grandfather worked in town in a factory – some kind of metal foundry, I think – and he also had this small farm, so there was plenty of everything. He even had a motorbike, which was rare, so that made him ‘rich!’ They had TV also in the 1960s, which was rare for most people until the 1970s... In addition to pigs, which every small Polish farm had, my grandfather had honeybees - also quite rare - he had, perhaps, two dozen houses of bees, and he sold honey in the farmers’ market in town. He had a big garden too, and they always had potatoes and every kind of vegetable preserved for winter...
My grandparents received this house and farm on Ulica Wilcza – it was tiny, only a few hectares – when they were resettled here after WWII. They came from near Lwów [Ukraine]. The Red Army drove the Germans out of Wałbrzych and gave land to the Polish people. During the war my grandparents had been slaves for the Germans on a farm in Ukraine – they were very lucky to survive. In fact, my mother was born there [on the German-occupied farm] and I don’t know how they all lived through it because it was common for the Germans to work their prisoners to death. They never talked about those times – never. I knew nothing of this when I was a child. Only when I was older, I asked my mother about our ‘family history’ and she told me these things...and she never mentioned any of it again.

There was never a shortage of work in Wałbrzych. There were coal mines everywhere – in the countryside and even right in the middle of town. My mother worked in the office of a mine. There were many factories too – metal and chemical factories – and porcelain too. Wałbrzych is famous for fine porcelain – the clay is mined here, and this dates back to Medieval times...
The city was very crowded when I was growing up. Few people had cars and I remember nearly fighting my way onto the city buses – they were so crowded... My mother and I lived in a very old apartment building but there were many new blocks of apartments built in the 1970s. This helped with the crowding. A special block was built for mineworkers and their families on Piaskowa Góra [Sand Mountain]. These were very nice apartments – very plain, but very new and clean. They even had ogródki działkowe [allotment gardens] just across the street from each apartment. That way the residents could easily walk to their gardens. Most other allotment gardens were outside of town and people rode those crowded buses to and from their gardens...
Life was peaceful and predictable back then [1960s and 1970s]…and there was no thought of changing anything…At school we sang ‘happy birthday to Lenin’ and learned everything from ‘the Marxist perspective,’ but we [school children] did not take all this too seriously…

Khrushchev-style, five-story apartment blocs in Walbrzych. A coat of white paint and colorful street-level markets are vast improvements over the grey, raw concrete walls which characterized the Communist period. Note the wide cobblestone streets.

Most young people just planned to get a factory job or mine job – and to get married soon after school – mostly to get away from mom and dad and to make their own life… But things started to come apart just after I graduated from high school …[1979] and I’m not sure why. There were strikes at all the factories and mines and many of them were shut down – many people lost their jobs. This is when shortages of everything started to occur. Solidarność was very active at the mine where my mother worked…They tried to make for better pay and better conditions but some people blame Solidarność for the shutdown of mines and factories, for the shortages of food and clothing, for the entire economic disaster that hit Poland in the 1980s… Life was never the same [after the turmoil of the 1980s] …and I never had the stable, normal,
adult life my mother had… People had to sell their silverware and jewelry to buy food [referring to triple-digit inflation during the 1989 transition to capitalism] and many people moved away in search of work…some men went to West Germany to work and left their wives and children here…[sending home money for the family to live on]. And you know - do you know? - there were some people who just gave up and killed themselves – the changes were too great for them.

Rainy day in downtown Walbrzych.
During the height of the Cold War, Zbigniew Brzezinski shocked Western ‘specialists,’ when in his book, *Ideology And Power In Soviet Politics*, he explained that communism was not generic – not nearly as uniform in ideology or in practice as infamous ‘Red Scare Era’ pundits would have Americans believe.¹ Rational, comparative observations should have made this obvious. Capitalism on Wall Street does not operate exactly the same, nor is it perceived the same, as in an Ohio village with a population of 500 people; nor is ‘American Capitalism’ identical to ‘Italian Capitalism,’ ‘Bolivian Capitalism,’ or in today’s world, ‘Chinese Capitalism.’ Likewise, Gdańsk on the Baltic Coast, and Wałbrzych, near the Czech border (about 400 miles separate the two cities) both varied greatly per ‘the lived experience’ of ‘actually existing socialism.’ Nearly every line of ‘Oksana’s’ story (above) conflicts with typical ‘Gdańszczanin’ accounts (accounts by citizens of Gdańsk ) of life in the People’s Republic Of Poland. Most strikingly, for this researcher, the uniform and unquestioned support for Solidarity – nearly a sacred religious fervor in Gdańsk – was absent in Wałbrzych; some interviewees even expressed open hostility to Solidarność and to the Solidarity Movement in general. In describing daily life in Wałbrzych, this chapter will attempt to account for the differences in the lived

¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Ideology And Power In Soviet Politics* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962). Fluent in several languages and possessing thorough theoretical understanding of various political/economic systems, Mr. Brzezinski is uniquely qualified to elaborate on the many variations of communism, and its evolution, revisionism, and practical application from Bolshevik days to the present, worldwide. Most pertinent to this thesis, he discusses the circumstances of Poland, Hungary, and Romania, in which were evident “…the pangs of transition from a rural society to an industrial one lacking the indigenous support that both the Russian and Chinese Communists enjoyed” (121). In lieu of this support, these nations in particular “abandoned the simplifications of the Soviet ideological outlook” and by necessity – as much as was in their power in regard to ‘bending’ Moscow’s rules – created their own working versions of Marxist-Leninism. Communist systems varied as widely as Castro’s nationalist Cuba, to Tito’s ‘Brotherhood and Unity,’ to Mao’s inclusion of the ‘rural proletariat,’ to the police state of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Brzezinski discusses the ‘historical stages’ of communism as well, the changes in Soviet communism from Stalin through Khrushchev, and the political realities that Communist politicians had to deal with. No doubt this book was considered quite an ‘inconvenient complication’ to the over-simplifiers of Cold War days – yet, in US politics, the super-simplified, black and white paradigm dominated all the way through the Reagan era.
experience of communism in two Polish cities, 400 miles apart, that were officially under the identical political/economic system.

The main difference between Gdańsk and Wałbrzych is that communism worked in Wałbrzych – or at least it worked well enough to keep most citizens of Wałbrzych satisfied with daily life for several decades. Several factors account for this, but three general findings stand out: (1) the local economy of Wałbrzych (of Lower Silesia in general) seems to have been ‘less ideologically driven,’ that is, more relaxed per the restrictions on private production; (2) ironically, although ‘less politically orthodox,’ Lower Silesia seems to have received ‘preferential treatment’ from the State in terms of facilitating industrial growth and maintaining overall job satisfaction (as compared to the ‘uniform dissatisfaction’ that seems to have pervaded the Baltic Coast); (3) Wałbrzych and Lower Silesia in general seem to have been ‘pacified’ and ‘rewarded’ by the State, whereas the Baltic Coast seems to have been ‘provoked’ and ‘punished’ for its rebelliousness.

The cultural, political, and economic ramifications of these three contentions are immense; each could generate a thesis in itself and each involves complex interplays of historical processes over many decades. That broad disclaimer stated, this chapter now attempts to validate these three statements per the interview data and secondary sources obtained in the course of this project’s research. Again, it is realized that more lengthy and extensive social-historical research would be necessary to fully validate these claims; this particular research serves only as a framework for potential, future work.

Wałbrzych was not strictly a ‘communist utopia’ any more than Gdańsk was a bastion of ‘dark satanic mills’ within ‘The Evil Empire’ (colorful phraseology has emotionalized discussions of communist ideology from Marx to Reagan; part of its appeal and/or revulsion).
But the particular version of ‘communism as a lived system’ that evolved in Wałbrzych seems to have functioned better and lasted longer than that of Gdańsk. As a starting point, ‘Oksana’s’ reference to her grandparents’ economic situation – very typical of Lower Silesia, per other similar interviewees’ stories – is a clue to the success of communism in this particular region. Unlike Wielkopolska (greater Poland; the great central plains), the hilly Dolny Śląsk (Lower Silesia) and the mountainous Sudaty (Sudeten; the Czechoslovakian borderlands in which is located Wałbrzych), was never collectivized for agriculture.
According to Tadeusz Drzewiecki, this was due to the differences in topography and the general settlement pattern of the two regions. Mr. Drzewiecki explained that *Panstwowe*
*Gospodarstowe Rolne (State Collective Farms or PGR)* were established by the Polish Communist Party in Wielkopolska in the years immediately following WWII, in similar fashion as were the *Kolkhoz* and *Sovkhoz* of Russia. The Russian Kolkhoz (Kolchoz in Polish) was a communal or collective farm made by combining many existing smaller private farms. In theory, the Kolkhoz workers would share in the profits of their work after first supplying pre-arranged quotas to the State; however, the quotas were generally set so high that little was left for the communal workers. The Polish PGR operations were more like the Sovkhoz, true State Farms, in that the state owned all land, all machinery, all infrastructure, and paid PGR workers an hourly wage just like a factory worker. The logic of the PGR was mechanization, standardization, economy of scale, and maximum socialization of the main cost in modern farming – i.e., the acquisition, maintenance, and fueling of large-scale farm machinery.³

According to Mr. Drzewiecki, millions of small Polish land holdings in Wielkopolska, divided by fences, stone walls, and living hedgerows that had accumulated since the Middle Ages, were physically consolidated in the early 1950s so that huge, modern tractors and combine harvesters could be utilized to maximum efficiency. Obviously this made good economic sense on the open plains of Wielkopolska (notwithstanding the tremendous human cost of ‘dekulakization’), but it certainly was not feasible in the mountains of Sudaty where tiny patches of arable soil were widely interspaced among heavily wooded hillsides. Thus, the tiny hillside farms of southern Poland remained in private hands. This fact had several positive ramifications that facilitated the success of the local economy in Wałbrzych.

³ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky and Mark D. Steinberg, *A History Of Russia* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 572. ‘Maximum socialization of everyday life’ was a general theme across the Soviet Bloc from the collective farm to the household. Riasanovsky and Steinberg even mention ‘appliance pools’ in Russia, in which refrigerators, washing machines, or vacuum cleaners were shared among local collectives. However, in Poland, this researcher heard stories of housewives actually renting out scarce washing machines and vacuum cleaners by the hour in order to make a little extra cash!
Private ownership of a single-family home and small acreage, however modest they may have been, certainly was a ‘relief valve,’ so to speak, for many residents of Sudaty. It gave them some measure of personal independence, privacy, and security. Beyond this, it allowed for development of a ‘rural proletariat’ in the truest sense of the term.\(^4\) The description of ‘Oksana’s’ grandparents in the opening vignette of this chapter is case in point: Oksana’s grandfather had ‘the best of both worlds’ in that he had a secure industrial job in Wałbrzych with full state benefits\(^5\), while simultaneously he privately owned and operated a small farm just a few miles outside the city limits. He participated in ‘the commanding heights of the economy,’ to use Lenin’s famous term for the mainstay of state enterprises (heavy industry, transportation, energy, finance, etc.), while also participating in subsistence farming and private, market-oriented farming. Most importantly, unlike the ‘black markets’ and ‘black labor’ that characterized Gdańsk, all of this was legal and totally legitimate in Wałbrzych. Small, private farms fell under a special rubric in Sudetenland called artel, or ‘gang farming’ – similar to the American version of a farm co-op.\(^6\) Private farmers and market gardeners (badylarze) could legally market their

\(^4\) Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (New York: Anchor Books, 2006). Mao Zedong’s incorporation of rural peasants into the Chinese Communist system was the backbone of his success. Mao created self-sufficient, rural communes which included both agriculture and industrial operations carried on in non-centralized pattern. That is, agriculture and industry were intermixed in an economically-rational manner, not separated per ‘orthodox ideology.’ Chang and Halliday quote Anna Louise Strong (332): “Mao’s great work has been to change Marxism from a European to an Asiatic form…in ways which neither Marx or Lenin could have dreamed…” That ‘great work’ was recognition of the enormous potential of the ‘rural proletariat.’

\(^5\) Dr. Barbara Wejnert, interview by author, 1/23/2010. Dr. Wejnert explained that private farmers in The People’s Republic Of Poland did not receive any of the State benefits that other citizens had. Private farmers had no State retirement, no insurance of any kind, no worker’s comp, no subsidized housing, no help or support of any kind from the conventional State Social Security System (ZUS, *Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych*). Dr. Wejnert speculated that this was probably arranged as a negative incentive to force private farmers out of business. She said that the State was reluctant to buy anything produced on a private farm and did not share agricultural information or technological information with private farmers. She believed there was a limit to the size of private farm holdings in communist Poland but was not sure of the exact acreage; she speculated it was less than 25 acres.

\(^6\) Ibid. This was possible across Poland for a number of transitional years, as Kołchozi phased-out private ownership. However, in most regions State collective farm markets overtly discriminated against private sellers by denying them stall space, heavily taxing them, or by outright intimidation. Additionally, in many areas no private farms existed – they had all been collectivized. Just the opposite condition prevailed in Sudaty – no collective farms
commodities collectively – thus, Oksana’s recollection of her grandfather’s sale of honey and
garden produce ‘in town at the market’ was not a form of ‘black marketeering’ but rather a
legitimate private enterprise within a communist state.

The implication here is very significant: the many small, private, local farmers of Sudetenland
kept the townspeople of Wałbrzych, and other small towns, supplied with local food, bypassing
many of the supply chain bottlenecks that caused years of food shortages, long lines, and
rationing – the main causes of dissatisfaction in urban areas – that eventually led to rioting,
demonstrations, strikes, shootings, and major social upheaval on the Baltic Coast. Major
upheaval began as early as 1956 in Wielkopolska (the Poznan riots) and 1970 saw the infamous
massacres at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk – all this while sleepy Wałbrzych dozed contentedly
in its Marxist dreams.

Thus, one simple factor in the stability and satisfaction with the communist economy of
Sudetenland seems to have been the contribution of the ‘rural proletariat’ to local city food
chains, as well as a far better quality of life for the ‘rural proletariat’ themselves (as compared
with shipyard workers in Gdańsk, for example).7 Wałbrzych interviewees had never heard of the
‘urban homesteading’ that had taken place in Gdańsk (as described in the previous chapter of this
thesis); they seemed to think questions concerning the growing of tomatoes in the city park, for
example, or the keeping of goats and chickens on balconies or in basements (reality for 1980s

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7 Davies, Heart Of Europe, 49. Davies notes this unique social class as well, calling them chłopo-robotnicy (peasant-workers) and comments that they were “…perhaps the best-placed class…who contrived to keep the family plot whilst holding down a job in a factory. Many such families, living on the fringe of the great industrial regions, had the best of both worlds – a high cash income all the year round, a cheap supply of home-grown food, and an independent base. They were prosperous and relatively secure.” This scenario typified many families in Sudaty and explains why many of Walbrzych’s residents bemoan the demise of their particular variety of communism.
Gdańsk) were quite ridiculous! It became clear to this researcher that Wałbrzych had not suffered food shortages nearly as great as had Gdańsk at any time during the communist era. Wałbrzych’s problems came not during communism’s heyday, but during communism’s demise.\footnote{US State Department, FM AmeEmbBassy Warsaw, Doc. # 89warsaw08679, June, ‘89Subject: Without Economic Improvement Social Peace Will Be Impossible To Maintain and Doc. #08680, Concerning Possible Social Disorder. Referring specifically to conditions in Silesia at the time of the June, 1989 elections, US Ambassador to Poland John Keller, speculated on possibility of ‘social disorder’ unless rapid economic improvement was implemented.}

There is another implication to this story. It is \textit{not} to say that the tiny hillside farms of Sudaty were somehow ‘super productive’ because they were privately owned and therefore the ‘magic hand of free enterprise and self-interest’ somehow increased yields.\footnote{This notion is commonly perpetuated in Western-centric books and literature discussing Soviet Bloc farming practices. The peasant’s private kitchen garden is often made out to be far more productive than the giants fields of the collective farm – ‘magically,’ through self-interest. Allusions to this can be seen, for example, in Peter Molloy, \textit{The Lost World Of Communism: An Oral History Of Daily Life Behind The Iron Curtain} (London: BBC Books – Random House UK, 2009) or in Katherine B. Eaton, \textit{Daily Life In The Soviet Union} (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001).} The Panstwowe Gospodarstowe Rolne (State Collective Farms or PGR) were highly productive, due to their economy of scale (tracts ranged into tens of thousands of acres), high mechanization, heavy use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and hybrid crop varieties. The maddening problem for Poland was that the PGR were \textit{extractive industries} – store shelves lay empty while train cars of Polish grain traveled east to Russia.\footnote{Dr. Barbara Weinert, interview by author, 1/23/2010. This was common knowledge among nearly all Poles and was personally witnessed by several interviewees, most notably, by Dr. Barbara Weinert who confronted railroad workers as to the destination of a huge shipment of grain during a near famine-like winter of 1981-82; the Polish grain was on its way to Moscow. Solidarity activists promoted news of her find to help validate their agenda.}

Greater Poland’s food shortages were due to politics, not to poor agricultural practices. Sudetenland towns like Wałbrzych existed in oblivion to this fact due to their relative isolation and the benefits of ‘ideological flexibility’ allowing for a lively private agricultural economy to coexist alongside the State-operated heavy industrial complex. Analogous to this chapter’s...
opening story of Oksana’s grandparents, ‘the best of both worlds’ (communist and capitalist) was realized in Sudaty, making for a ‘lived system of communism’ that worked well.

Yet, it takes more than a steady supply of potatoes and cabbage from the farmer’s market to sustain a local economy and maintain the satisfaction of its citizens. Just as vast quantities of grain were exported from Wielkopolska, millions of tons of coal were exported from Sudaty. The town of Wałbrzych sits directly on one of Europe’s most productive coal seams. The aboveground superstructures of twenty-three mineshafts dot the city’s landscape, and house coal is still mined and made available directly at the source – from deep below a central city street. Unlike the export of badly needed Polish grain, export of coal made good economic sense for Poland in general and for Wałbrzych/Sudaty/Dolny Śląsk in particular.12


12 The workings of COMECON (Council For Mutual Economic Assistance; original members from 1949 were USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania; other nations joined later) seem far more political than economically rational. Interviewees with knowledge of COMECON beyond ‘everyday hearsay,’ such as Dr. Barbara Wejnert and ‘Yurik,’ a former high-level executive of the Lenin Shipyard, believed COMECON trading to have been nearly always to the advantage of the USSR. Both had personal knowledge of Moscow-trained, Moscow-loyal business executives employed in Polish enterprises who manipulated trades of commodities as they saw fit. By the same token, published accounts can state very conflicting data. For example Zubok, A Failed Empire, 269, states that the failing Polish economy of 1980 was infused with four billion dollars worth of aid from the USSR; a conflicting account for the same time period says that Moscow specifically sent investigators to Poland to ascertain economic need, saw the flourishing black market, and denied all aid to Poland, in Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, eds., From Solidarity To Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980 - 1981: A Documentary History (Budapest: Central University Press, 2007), 242 – 244. In light of these examples, it is safe to say that COMECON trading worked per Ledeneva’s descriptions of ‘the economy of favors’ (Ledeneva, How Russia Really Works, 18). It was so tangled with favors, personal and State politics, and even criminal activity, that the intended rationale of a centrally planned, mutually beneficial economic exchange was probably lost in most cases.
Beyond raw coal exports, the Lower Silesian industrial economy depended on metallurgical coke and chemicals made from Sudaty coal. The Lenin Steelworks at Nowa Huta and the Katowice Steelworks near Częstochowa, both considered ‘showplaces of socialist industry,’ were fueled by coke made at Koksownia Wictoria in Wałbrzych.\(^{13}\)

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\(^{13}\) Allison Stenning, “Post-Socialism And The Changing Geographies Of The Everyday In Poland,” in *Transactions Of The Institute Of British Geographers*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2005: 113 – 127. Per Stenning, the Lenin Works at Nowa Huta just outside Kraków was meant to be a showcase of planned socialist industrial society in contrast to the ‘old bourgeois cultural center’ of Kraków. Opened in 1949, the Lenin Works employed nearly 40,000 people at its height in the 1970s. The Katowice Works opened in 1972 and employed around 30,000.

\(^{14}\) Koksownia Wictoria or ‘Victoria Coke Works’ was a major industrial employer in Wałbrzych, producing high quality furnace and foundry metallurgical coke and a variety of hydrocarbon by-products from local coal. The enterprise was actually several different facilities spread out in various locations across Wałbrzych. Today, only a small remnant of the various operations survives. According to interviewees, Koksownia Wictoria attempted to make synthetic oil from local coal during WWII while under Nazi control.
Additionally, Wałbrzych coal fed several nearby coal-fired electrical generating plants. Thus, tens of thousands of workers had long-term, good-paying jobs in the interconnected coal/coke/chemical/steel industry of Lower Silesia.\(^\text{15}\)

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\(^{15}\) B. Dolata, *Wyzwolenie Dolnego Śląska w 1945* [Liberation of Lower Silesia in 1945], Wyd. Ossolineum, Wrocław, 1970: 160 – 164. It was the enormous industrial potential of Lower Silesia and Sudetenland that made the region coveted by Adolph Hitler. Along with major industrial works the region had abundant coal mines and produced copper, silver, sulfur, antimony, tin, and lead. In January and February, 1945, as Soviet forces liberated the region, Stalin ordered Marshall Ivan Konev to capture the mines and industrial plants intact, deeming them ‘as valuable as gold.’ Konev allowed German forces to ‘escape’ through a 3-mile wide corridor in order to avoid their destruction of the industrial infrastructure. Thus, Wałbrzych was saved from the carnage many other Eastern European cities saw. The loss of Lower Silesian coal and coke production drastically lowered Germany’s ability to make steel in the last year of the war. Allied bombing had destroyed much of the Ruhr industrial region and Lower Silesia was supplying 60% of Germany’s coal. When Minister of War Production Albert Speer heard of the loss of Silesia, he cabled Hitler, opening with the phrase, “The war is lost now.”
With access to plenty of good industrial jobs, coupled with the previously discussed local, private agriculture, and the apparent ‘ideological relaxation’ of the region, one can readily see how residents of Wałbrzych were generally more satisfied than were those living on the Baltic Coast. Interview data makes it obvious that Wałbrzych industrial workers, quite unlike their northern counterparts, found little reason to complain, protest, or go on strike – until ‘made politically aware’ by Solidarność activists.

Interview data from former employees of Koksownia Wictoria and related Wałbrzych industries helps explain the animosity some residents feel toward Solidarity. ‘Jan’ began working at Koksownia Wictoria in 1973, in the “golden age of Polish socialism.”16 Due to a major downsizing of the plant in 1991, Jan lost his job, as did many other residents of Wałbrzych whose livelihoods depended on production of coal and coke. Accompanying these job losses was the triple-digit inflation that arose from the ‘shock-therapy’ transition to capitalism, a new system of property taxation, and a general ‘feeling of abandonment’ by the State as all former social services were eliminated.17 As massive unemployment hit Wałbrzych, Jan found his only alternative was to leave the area in search of work. He left his wife and daughter in Wałbrzych and worked for a decade in Berlin. He did construction work and various other manual labor jobs in order to earn enough money to maintain the family home and pay property taxes. He returned to Wałbrzych only a few years ago. Jan recalls his experiences as follows:

16 Stenning, “Post-Socialism And The Changing Geographies Of The Everyday In Poland,” 123. Speaking about Nowa Huta, Stenning remarks, “The 1970s were (and are remembered as) a period of growing prosperity, opportunity, and security. The worst excesses of Stalinism had faded and post-1953 challenges to the regime had resulted in higher levels of investment in consumer goods production and housing. These, coupled with high growth rates in industry, caused much of the decade to be seen as the ‘golden age’ of Polish socialism. Poles repeatedly look back to this decade with positive assessments…In contrast, the 1980s were a period of turmoil, uncertainty and insecurity.”

17 Poland’s transition to capitalism will be addressed in the next chapter.
I thought I would retire from Koksownia Wictoria…I never thought I would have to search for work in middle-age years, move to Germany, live like a migrant… The work at Koksownia Wictoria was hard, hot, and dirty – of course, it was – it was a furnace coke plant and that’s how such work is…But the job paid well…and we [workers] were treated fairly…I could afford a home, short vacations with my family…we were happy in our life here…

Solidarity had good ideas but they wanted change too fast. Yes, Koksownia Wictoria needed better health and safety regulations…and better environmental control – I agreed with that. But Solidarity became militant…demonstrations, protests, strikes, became everyday things. First some local mines were shut down…then some chemical plants…Solidarity pushed so hard for changes in safety and environmental regulations but some of the operations were too old and not profitable enough to be worth upgrading…and I don’t think the State had any money to invest in upgrading these old operations and no one wanted to buy them [when privatization began] so they just closed them. Thousands of people lost their jobs as one mine or factory after another were closed…

Similarly, ‘Leon’ lost his job in a Wałbrzych coal mine. He was not as ‘philosophical’ about his fate in relation to Solidarity’s ‘crusade of good intentions’ as had been ‘Jan.’ Leon hated Solidarity and all it stood for. He believed the union to be “a trick of the West,” constructed to ruin the socialist economy. Leon believed that

…Solidarność did not accomplish any improvements in safety of the local mines…they only managed to cause so much trouble that the mines were closed to keep peace…There is enough coal still in the ground in Wałbrzych to last hundreds of years. But where do they get coal from now? From Czech Republic. Why? Because they did not have the long strikes we had here…the labor problems, the loss of production. They (the Czech miners) were more reasonable and so they still have jobs…

This notion of ‘provocation and punishment,’ expressed above, by ‘Leon,’ ran through interviewees comments in both Wałbrzych and Gdańsk. ‘Leon’ believed the Czechs to have

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18 ‘Jan,’ interview by author, 6/28/2012.

retained mining jobs due to their ‘more reasonable attitudes.’ Interviewees from Gdańsk believed that the Baltic Coast was ‘punished’ by the State for its fanatical devotion to the Solidarity Movement. They also believed Lower Silesia to have received ‘preferential treatment’ from the state in the form of modernized industrial infrastructure and thus more and better job opportunities. To some degree these notions of ‘reward and punishment’ per cooperation with the state system hold true, yet there is more at work here.\(^{20}\)

Stenning discusses how Lower Silesian towns were made ‘showcases of socialism’ in the early post-WWII years through massive state investments. Planned cities, such as Nowa Huta, were built around steel mills utilizing the latest technology.\(^{21}\) Likewise, Davies discusses how Lower Silesian industrial infrastructure continued to expand through the 1950s, ‘60s, and 70s, the Wrocław region’s finished manufacturing enterprises accounting for a disproportionately large share of Poland’s total GDP.\(^{22}\) The Elwro electronics factory, the Pafwag Locomotive Works, and the Domel generator manufacturing plant, all in Lower Silesia, were constructed in the 1960s, and the Katowice Steel Works opened as late as 1972. The Baltic Coast shipyards, on the other hand, were antiquated industrial relics that had ‘evolved naturally’ – as opposed to having been part of a planned city – and although they were partially modernized as late as the

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\(^{20}\) “Solidarity’s Message To The Working People Of Eastern Europe – and Soviet Response.” September 9, 1981. Original source: Radio Warsaw [radio transcript of this broadcast]. Seventeen Movements In Soviet History (Digital Archive Collection: http://www.soviethistory.org/ General Article ID, 1980-1981, English Translations.). The CPSU took every opportunity to inflame the situation and place blame on Solidarity, accusing the movement of a plethora of offenses including (per this transcript); contradicting the constitution of The Polish People’s Republic, yielding to ‘aristocratic forces,’ cultivating anti-Soviet attitudes, forgetting the liberation of Poland from fascism by the USSR during WWII, slandering the Communist Party, breaking the bonds of fraternal proletarian solidarity, circulating fierce and untrue propaganda about the USSR and the Communist Party, disrupting the economy, inciting revolt and violence…and many other small and sundry offenses.


\(^{22}\) Davies, Microcosm, 466 – 467.
1970s, they remained ‘industrial dinosaurs.’ Likewise, their tens of thousands of workers crammed into very limited housing, interspaced directly with heavy industrial operations, made for highly stressed living conditions in comparison with newer, planned cities.

The State’s investment in the south, especially in creation of entirely new, planned, industrial cities, was due in part to the relative openness of the region (compared to Gdańsk, for example, the 1000 year old city being hemmed in between steep hills on one side and the Baltic Sea on the other). Davies calls post-WWII Lower Silesia the ‘Wild West’ of Poland, in that it became the primary region for new investment and new opportunities; in reality, the long-established industrial cities of the Baltic Coast started slipping into ‘rustbelt status’ not long after their recovery from WWII damage.23

Thus, the disparity in new State industrial investment between north and south seems to have manifested itself in enmity between the two regions’ populations, the south becoming the ‘youngest and favorite child’ of the State; the older north was made out to be a pariah by its embrace of Solidarity and was then ‘punished’ for its rebelliousness. That punishment, first in benign neglect (avoidance of new investment by the State in the north), later became more active, with police and military crackdowns, deliberate creation of shortages of consumer goods (alleged by several interviewees), and finally in decree of Martial Law (December 13, 1981) that punished the entire nation – mostly for the ‘sins’ of the north.24

Recently declassified and translated Soviet documents confirm that the USSR not only blamed Solidarity for the shortages on the Baltic Coast but also withheld shipments of food and other

23 Ibid.

cargo - by necessity - due to the disruption of striking Polish dock workers. For example, a transcript from the CPSU, Central Committee, Politburo, dated Dec. 10, 1981 states that

…124 [Soviet] ships are riding at anchor [in the Port of Gdańsk] and 480,000 tons of bulk cargo is waiting to be unloaded. Reopening of the ports is an urgent matter…The economic consequences of the strike, the catastrophe threatening the economy, and the specter of hunger must not be underemphasized….get across to the population that if the strike drags on, we will be unable to ensure supplies because our stocks are running out.25

Documents such as this demonstrate the ‘no-win scenario’ that accompanied industrial and shipping strikes; not only was Polish domestic production curtailed but also trade with the USSR and other COMECON partners was held up. It is difficult to say if state authorities overtly acted to ‘punish’ Baltic Coast cities, but as the above noted document indicates, striking dock workers inadvertently contributed to shortages by delaying shipping. This notion of ‘good south/bad north’ and the punishment of the whole nation for the north’s rebellious obsession with Solidarity was expressed by several interviewees, and many citizens actually believed this to have been the case. Again, the very ‘circular nature’ of the Baltic Coast problem must be taken into consideration: shortages - protested against by strikes - which in turn, worsened the shortages – hence fueled more protest. No doubt, all parties involved laid the blame on their opposition.

Likewise, it is difficult to say for sure if Lower Silesia’s ‘favorable treatment’ by the State came because of its ‘more reasonable behavior’ or if this ‘behavior’ was a result of ‘more favorable treatment.’ Interviewees such as ‘Jan’ and ‘Leon’ believed that their region’s stability and prosperity came from cooperation with the State – in maintaining the socialist economy -

and they blamed Solidarity for destroying their way of life. Most Wałbrzych interviewees expressed some degree of longing for the ‘pre-Solidarity days,’ and some overtly expressed their belief that Solidarity had ruined their lives and had ruined the nation. This attitude was never observed in the Baltic Coast region in the course of three separate trips (2010, 2011, and 2012) and in the hundreds of conversations and interviews that resulted.

However, above and beyond the common mine and mill workers, the most virulent opponents of Solidarity seem to have been a certain type of (former) nomenklatura encountered only in Sudaty.\footnote{No doubt this ‘special class’ had existed in other regions of Poland as well, where a similar cluster of socioeconomic variables had arisen.} These colorful characters were known as Panowie, literally ‘gentleman,’ but in this context more was implied. Panowie were simultaneously Communist Party ‘bosses,’ managers of State-owned enterprises, local private business owners (both legal and illegal operations), Polish patriots, patrons of the Church, and pillars of the local community. The closest Western analogy seems to be the Latin American Caudillo; elaboration on the parallels between the Panowie and the Caudillo, and on the Panowie’s contribution to daily life in Wałbrzych (per alternative economic strategies) will help to illuminate the complex and often contradictory nature of ‘communism as a lived system’ in its last decade in The People’s Republic Of Poland. E. Bradford Burns describes the Latin American Caudillo as

…a folk leader. The caudillo recognized and understood the distinctive way of life of the folk and acted in harmony with it. In the eyes of the people, he inculcated the local, regional or national values – traditional values – with which most of the people felt comfortable. He exuded a natural, a charismatic, leadership of the majority, who found in him an advisor, a guide, a leader, a protector, a patriarch, in whom they entrusted their interests. They surrendered power to him; he exercised it for their benefit. He embodied the collective will; he incarnated authority. The fusion of leader and people had to be nearly perfect (that is, perceived by those involved as nearly perfect) and when this
interplay existed, both people and leader sensed, valued, and honored their interdependency.  

Burns’ description of the Caudillo is also a perfect description of the Panowie, the local szef (chief), the glowa (headman), or the szlagon (rural squire), energized with włądza (power and authority) from the State, the Church, and the People. These charismatic and contradictory local strongmen walked a precarious line between communism and free-enterprise, between state-sanctioned atheism and ancient, sacred religious traditions, between serving the Party and serving the People. Yet, the main interest of the Panowie seems to have been self-interest, and many of these characters became rich in the transition from communism to capitalism.

The story of ‘The Bishop,’ as this researcher nicknamed one prominent Panowie from Szczawno-Zdrój, will illustrate the concept. The Bishop hated Solidarność, Lech Wałęsa and all things connected to the Solidarity Movement because, in his opinion, they had caused the collapse of the mining and industrial economy of Sudaty. The Bishop had been a manager of several local Wałbrzych coal mines (State-owned) for nearly 30 years. He felt he had treated his employees fairly and had worked tirelessly to promote workplace safety; there had never been a fatal mine accident under The Bishop’s watch.

Yet, after 1980, he claimed, every sort of the most minuscule safety violation, potential health hazard, and environmental issue was ‘blown out of proportion’ by Solidarity activists. Strikes and demonstrations so wracked Wałbrzych mines and mills, and so disrupted production, that enterprise-to-enterprise contracts could not be fulfilled (State enterprises were interconnected by supply chains under binding contracts just as in the private business world). The uncertainty of

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28 ‘The Bishop,’ interview by author, 6/25-27/2012. The author stayed three days at ‘The Bishop’s’ pensjonat in Szczawno-Zdrój, visited his home, and was shown much of the Wałbrzych region by ‘The Bishop.’
coal and coke deliveries from Wałbrzych caused by labor disputes provoked by Solidarity caused major industrial centers such as Nowa Huta and Katowice to seek more dependable sources of fuel – according to The Bishop, from Czechoslovakia (the same scenario was described by interviewees ‘Jan’ and ‘Leon’). The Bishop and many other like-minded residents of Wałbrzych reasoned that the shortages of consumer goods, hyper-inflation, deindustrialization, and general socioeconomic upheaval of the 1980s all stemmed from the Solidarity Movement (these disruptions had not affected Lower Silesia and Sudaty, to any great degree, in the ‘golden age’ prior to emergence of Solidarność).

Like all other residents of Wałbrzych, The Bishop was forced to make the transition from communism to capitalism amid the upheaval of ‘katastroika’ (a dark-humored term playing on Mikhail Gorbachev’s ‘perestroika;’ katastroika meant catastrophic restructuring). Yet, as the mines and mills closed, as average citizens faced unemployment for the first time in their lives (employment had been guaranteed by the State prior to 1989), and as families were torn apart by loss of income, relocation in search of work, by divorce and suicide brought about by the stress of katastroika, The Bishop found his own position in the community strengthening.

Having had the foresight of the traditional Panowie, The Bishop was prepared for katastroika – in fact, he had been preparing during his entire 30 year career as a mine manager and member of the nomenklatura. In the contradictory world of ‘real and existing socialism,’ The Bishop had dutifully operated both State-owned coal mines and his own private pensjonati (retreats, spas, or tourist homes). He owned one in the spa-town of Szczawno - Zdrój (Wałbrzych and Szczawno-Zdrój have grown to be interconnected municipalities) where the mineral rich water of the Intra-Sudetic Basin had traditionally drawn upper-class tourists for over a century, and another
across the Czech border at Jáchymov, where radon-enriched hot springs were said to cure arthritis and rheumatism.29

During the Communist era, Party members, their spouses and families, would visit the pensjonati of Sudaty, as privileged guests of certain Panowie such as The Bishop. For the nomenklatura’s convenience, ‘special stores’ for shopping only by Party members were located near the pensjonati; The Bishop owned and operated several such stores. Beyond these nomenklatura-only enterprises The Bishop also owned several ordinary apartment houses. In order to maintain his real estate, his pensjonati, nomenklatura-only stores, and apartment buildings, The Bishop had established a building, remodeling, and maintenance enterprise. Thus, in a Communist State, where all means of production were - in theory - collectively owned and operated for the general welfare of the People, the Bishop had carved out a small private kingdom, enriching himself as he catered to the personal needs of fellow nomenklatura. Per Norman Davies’ discussion of the origin of the term ‘nomenklatura,’ we see quite readily how its application fits The Bishop:

It is a Latin term, referring to the lists of named properties of the great feudal magnates, and by extension to the tenants who possessed these properties. Here one can see the true cultural ancestry of Communist society. Anything further removed from socialism, as the rest of the world imagined it, would be hard to conceive. The Party bosses treated the state as their property, in the manner of medieval barons, and treated the common citizens as the chattels of their fief. The gulf between the ruling elite and the masses was wide. The existence of the ‘two nations’ was a reality.30

29 Davies, *Microcosm*, 460 – 461. In 1946 Stalin’s NKVD established uranium mines at Miedzianka, just north of Wałbrzych, and Jáchymov. Uranium was little more than a novelty prior to WWII, commonly used for coloring pottery glazes; its atomic potential made it more valuable than gold in the postwar years. Davies reports that the mines were abandoned and sealed with concrete by 1953. ‘The Bishop’ said these mines operated clandestinely until the early 1970s; perhaps ‘informal production of uranium’ could be added to the many off-the-record enterprises of Lower Silesia!

30 Davies, *Heart Of Europe*, 46.
Communist ‘barons’ such as The Bishop acquired their kingdoms through what is known as załatwić, “…which is a softer way of saying ‘they stole it.’ Rather, it refers to ‘public property.’ They [the nomenklatura] made use of public property – they received it – they utilized it.”\textsuperscript{31} Likewise, the personal employees of the nomenklatura (\textit{not} those under their supervision in State-owned enterprises), those who cleaned, cooked, and maintained the pensjonat, for example, were dependent on the goodwill and favor of their master, the \textit{Panowie}. Like a benevolent Caudillo and his grateful cliente or patrons, these ‘Polish-Communist-Barons’ attempted to preserve the local established order and protect ‘their people’ from the disintegrating forces of the outside world (Solidarity being a prime example of a ‘disrupting force’).

And to demonstrate their spiritual kinship to their cliente, these Polish Caudillos – these Party members who swore allegiance only to ‘scientific socialism,’ Marxist-Leninism, and by extension, to ‘official atheism’ – were also great Patróns of the Catholic Church. ‘The Bishop’ earned his nickname by his devotion to The Black Madonna Of Częstochowa, most sacred icon of Polish Catholicism; Her image adorned the walls of The Bishop’s home and his pensjonat, and Her sacred icon swayed from the rearview mirror of his shining, new Ford Escalade. Ironically, The Bishop’s archenemy, Lech Wałęsa – that destroyer of worlds and betrayer of Polish Socialism, per the Bishop’s opinion – also wore an image of The Black Madonna Of Częstochowa on his lapel, constantly. These two Polish Caudillos, one from the North, one from the South, shared the same deep cultural knowledge of their cliente and used it accordingly.

\textsuperscript{31} Zofia Rudnicka, interview by author, 6/25/2012. The notion of załatwić, in this context, extends from purchase of State property at drastically reduced prices to outright theft. Several Wałbrzych interviewees told stories of houses and pensjonat, owned by nomenklatura, that had been built entirely from materials obtained from State-owned building projects. Construction bosses would ‘double-order’ brick, for example, for a State building project, which would obviously result in half-as-many brick left over at completion of the project; these left overs went into private projects. As the ‘bosses’ were Party members, no locals questioned this practice. On the contrary, many applauded it, as these private building projects undertaken by nomenklatura with materials stolen from the State provided many ‘black work’ jobs. Often these private jobs paid better wages than did ‘formal work.’
Apparently it was this ‘feudal system’ of direct, full-time employment of common citizens by the Panowie (the ‘Polish Caudillos’) that constituted the primary source of ‘alternative income’ in Wałbrzych, and probably in all of Sudaty. As mentioned, The Bishop’s personal enterprises, for example, went beyond the officially State-sanctioned pensjonati and ‘nomenklatura-only stores’ to include work crews that built, operated, maintained, and further expanded his ‘kingdom.’ Church charity was also a prime source of relief during the economic and political chaos of the 1980s – again, ironically, the Panowie saw to this. The Bishop had directed Church-based relief projects in the ‘dark decade’ brought on by Solidarność – relief projects funded by American, French, and Italian labor unions in conjunction with the Catholic Church. Patriarch of ‘communist feudalism,’ szlagon of Szczawno-Zdrój, The Bishop and those like him operated from a perspective that pre-dated Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and all the ‘little Stalins’ installed across Eastern Europe after 1945. The Bishop was Europe condensed and distilled to its most vital essence, to its ‘basic programming’ – that is, social hierarchy derived from economic power. Communism could no more break this most European cultural legacy than Poles and Russians could deny their common ancestral heritage.

In summary, it seems that very few common citizens of Wałbrzych, unlike their counterparts in Gdańsk, had experience with ‘proto-capitalism’ prior to 1989, in the form of their own private, informal enterprises (with the exception of the ‘rural proletariat,’ already discussed). Capitalism in Sudetenland, it seems, was the reserved domain of Communist Party members. As Zbigniew Brzezinski observed (recalled in the anecdote that opened this chapter), communism may take many, many forms and its ‘praxis’ (the Marxist term for practical application in the real world) may be quite contradictory. The communist system worked in Wałbrzych much better and much longer than it did in Gdańsk because the specific version of
communism that evolved in Wałbrzych was, in fact, a ‘hybrid system’ in which the ‘commanding heights of the economy’ were operated under centralized State direction while simultaneously the ‘rural proletariat’ and the ‘Polish Caudillos’ filled in gaps in employment and production otherwise neglected by the State. Money incomes were not the sole determinant of material well-being or quality of life in and around Wałbrzych, as many citizens owned small parcels of property which provided some degree of a ‘means of private production’ or simply the psychological or emotional satisfaction of independence and self-reliance. The invasion of Sudaty by Solidarity was the beginning of the end for the local, lived system of communism, but it also turned out to be a new opportunity for many ‘Polish Caudillos’ – although few will admit it.
7. Pasta Katastroika

Transition To Capitalism And Democracy

Synopsis

Chapter seven presents a formal history of the actual 1989 transition to capitalism, as well as eight personal sketches derived from interview data. The formal history, gleaned from published sources, mentions the major political and legal precedents entailed in the transition, such as the Magdalenka Talks and the Round Table Talks, takeover of the Sejm (Polish Senate) by Solodarność, creation of the Agency For Ownership Transformation, enactment of the Privatization Initiatives, the workings of the Balcerowicz Plan, and the outcome and ramifications of all such acts and events. This rather ‘sterile’ formal history is humanized by the opening vignette and by conclusion of the chapter with eight personal sketches. Each sketch is a brief oral history, each individual’s story representative of particular segments of Polish society. The sketches demonstrate how social variables such as age, gender, occupation, education level – as well as life experiences and particular circumstances – resulted in a wide range of outcomes for all individuals living through the transition. This chapter relates to the previous one in its recognition that as ‘communism’ was not at all a standardized or generic system (worldwide nor within the borders of Poland), so neither was the transition from communism to capitalism a ‘standardized historical event’ as often presented per formal, document histories, which recount only official political acts and economic decrees. Likewise, using interview data from individuals directly involved in the ‘nuts and bolts’ of small-scale, state-to-private transitions, the chapter gives specific details of several varieties of economic transition usually omitted in macro-level, formal histories. These include, direct, small scale spółdzielnia transitions, sale of larger spółdzielnia enterprises and/or properties, joint ventures, known as spolka, and voucher transitions, called akcja. The aim of privatization was for three possible outcomes. First, the smallest State-owned enterprises (i.e., the spółdzielnia, or workers’ co-ops) would be directly taken over by one or more individuals (former spółdzielnia members) who world ‘reinvent them,’ that is, downsize, modernize, make them more efficient. Secondly, it was hoped that foreign investors would acquire existing Polish enterprises in joint partnerships with Polish
entrepreneurs and/or open up new enterprises. Finally, effort was made such that ‘an entrepreneurial spirit’ (in combination with financial backing and government incentives) would sweep Poland, resulting in the opening of a plethora of new small businesses. In the long-run, all these scenarios materialized, again, with varying degrees of success and different social ramifications.

**Pasta Katastroika**

Tomasz tells his story…

*In the early ‘80s all media was completely controlled by the State. It was bad before Martial Law, but afterwards it became worse. During Martial Law [December 13, 1981 – July 22, 1983] there were no entertainment programs on TV – just communications from the authorities; regular programming was liquidated; it was State propaganda all day, every day. The only free communication was bibula [samizdat- underground publishing]. One day, Solidarność obtained a portable TV transmitter from their friends in the West – it was smuggled in somehow. It was very weak, but it could produce ‘ghost broadcasts’ over State TV [weak, superimposed transmissions, simultaneously broadcast over State TV channels]. You would be watching General Jaruzelski very seriously explaining economics and politics and all of a sudden here comes a ‘ghost’ of Solidarity flags waving, protesters cheering, happy music playing, and Lech Wałęsa making one of his crazy speeches! Hahahah! The police went fucking nuts! They said they would find that transmitter and kill everyone involved! But they never found it!*

*They called the transmissions ‘BIPS’ [Biura Informacji Prasowej Solidarnosci; Solidarity Press Information Bureau] and eventually this became the first free, non-State operated TV station in Poland. I had experience with photography and video cameras, and so Solidarność hired me as a cameraman for BIPS. I filmed protests and speeches, police violence, strikes - all things connected to the Solidarity Movement - and BIPS used my work on their broadcasts. There were five or six guys besides me doing this work. One day the police saw me filming and they arrested me. I was convicted of ‘agitation’ and ‘spreading propaganda,’ and was sentenced to three years in jail. They published my name in the newspapers and said when I get out of jail I should never be hired for any job because I was ‘dangerous’ and ‘crazy’ and could never be*
trusted! So they call that ‘blackballing’ – you are marked and will never again get a job, rent an apartment, borrow money – you become a ‘criminal.’ People actually become afraid of you.

Fortunately, Solidarność helped me after I got out of jail. They loaned me a little money, helped me get an apartment, and helped me start a small enterprise. This was in 1988 and by that time things were ‘relaxing’ and some people had legal businesses. I opened a little bar – sold beer and snacks – and tried to survive that way. Later I opened a small shop selling household items – cheap plastic dishes, table cloths, fly swatters, salt and pepper shakers – cheap stuff from China. ‘Perestroika’ was the word of the day, said Mr. Gorbachev in Moscow, but for us it was ‘katastroika’ – catastrophic restructuring. General Jaruzelski, we joked, would reduce us to survival on macaroni – ‘Pasta Katastroika!’

I tried to get back into the photography business but only my close friends and family would hire me to take pictures. So...I have survived like this, as a ‘businessman,’ for 20 years now. It is survival, that’s all. I have no retirement fund, no pension, no savings, no insurance, no plans for my old age. I did not make enough money on my own to pay into ZUS [Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych; State Social Security System] so I will get no benefits from them.

My son was born just before I was arrested and put in jail [1983]. Solidarność helped my wife and son while I was in jail; we are lucky – there were 1000s of people like me jailed in those times. Otherwise my family would have starved. My son does not remember Martial Law, police violence, ‘propaganda TV,’ Solidarity protests, or standing in lines all day to buy potatoes! He grew up in a different age. He did well in school and learned English and Swedish. He went to Sweden for a few years, worked as a waiter in a fancy restaurant, and saved his money. He returned home and started a photography business in Warsaw – I gave him all my old equipment. He also started making advertising videos for other local businesses. His work is going very well. He took to free enterprise like a fish to water! That is all he knows; he does not remember those dark days of our past. I keep kidding him, telling him to give me a job!
There is a certain ‘formal history’ of the 1989 – 1991 Soviet Bloc transition - the kind found in the last chapter of most contemporary world history textbooks published in the US. The standard story, the one that is quickly becoming historicized, generally begins a decade earlier in Poland, with Lech Wałęsa and the creation of Solidarność. It mentions Pope John Paul II, Václav Havel, The Roundtable Talks, and then quickly moves on to the ‘Fall of the Berlin Wall.’ It glorifies Ronald Reagan at the expense of Mikhail Gorbachev, then proceeds to a discussion of the ‘inevitable demise and collapse’ of the Soviet Union, that Evil Empire which enslaved Eastern Europe until the United States finally won the Cold War. Capitalism - a specific brand of capitalism, lately known as the Washington Consensus 1 - comes to dominate the global economy at last, and everyone lives happily ever after. Printed in enough books and taught to enough students, any mythology becomes ‘history.’ This realization makes one question how true and accurate are the other ‘standard histories’ of major world events.

This thesis begs to differ with the ‘standard history’ and contends that there were as many versions of ‘the transition’ as there were individuals that experienced it (similarly, the previous chapter pointed out that communism was not a generic system, worldwide, nor within the boundaries of Poland itself). The transition is not a uniform story, not a straight forward story, not a happy story for many people, not a finished story, and it certainly is not an Americentric story. Many of the assumed ‘losers,’ i.e., the ‘bosses’ of the Communist Party, quickly became financial magnates and many of those who fought the hardest against communism eventually came to despise capitalism. Some young people “took to free-enterprise like a fish to water,” as

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1 Halper, *The Beijing Consensus*, 57. Halper describes the Washington Consensus as the current, Western economic model, a deregulated, market-democracy with global reach.
‘Tomasz’ put it (in the opening vignette, above), but some faltered, becoming part of Europe’s new ‘lost generation.’

Some people were forced to become migrant workers midway through their lives; their educational level and language skills determined their fate abroad. The migrants’ children would grow up very differently – as minorities in a host nation, with all the challenges such a status entails. Some middle aged migrants brought their elderly parents with them, rather than see them suffer the confusion of navigating through the upheaval of total social, economic, and political transition in what should have been their ‘golden years.’ Some individuals (like ‘Tomasz’) who had been ‘blackballed’ years ago by their association with Solidarność, and who had been forced by necessity to become small-scale entrepreneurs, and who had thus existed on the margins of society for much of their adult lifetimes - at least, now their work-status was considered legal. Others, who had dutifully ‘served the State’ for several decades in factories, mills, or mines, found themselves unemployed in their 50s or 60s, their retirement funds diminished by 50% or by 75%, or eliminated altogether. Thus, the lived experience of the transition was determined by many variables – age, gender, occupation, educational level, geographic location, political affiliation, and to a great degree by luck, or the lack thereof.

With the above observations in mind, this chapter will first present a very short ‘formal history’ (that is, one gleaned from published sources), of Poland’s economic transition, in conjunction with interview data from individuals who experienced the transition directly. It includes also a brief description of the four basic mechanisms of transfer of State assets to private hands. Finally, a series of brief ‘personal sketches’ will be given, these representing a cross section of Eastern European social history in the last decade of communism. The final chapter will include a discussion concerning ‘why’ the transition occurred.
After a decade of activism, Solidarność succeeded in negotiating the first legal, competitive, free elections in the Soviet Bloc; between 1945 and 1989 the only legal political candidates had been from the Communist Party. In the June 4th, 1989 elections, Solidarność candidates overwhelmingly displaced their communist rivals, taking 99 of 100 seats in the Polish Sejm (Senate). This victory started a 'chain reaction' of peaceful democratic transitions across Eastern Europe.²

The 'Magdalenka Talks' and the 'Round Table Talks,' had prepared the way for the June 4th elections. The Magdalenka Talks were informal and unofficial meetings between Solidarność and the government of the People’s Republic Of Poland, starting in spring of 1988. The right to hold free elections was granted in the official ‘Round Table Talks,’ spring, 1989, in Warsaw. Solidarność had gained so much momentum that it virtually controlled the nation's workforce. With the economy spiraling out of control, hyperinflation, mass food shortages, mass social unrest, and a general breakdown of the normal social order, the Communist Party was willing to negotiate with Solidarność, hoping to avert ‘katastroika.’³

The 30-month span from the June 4th, 1989 Polish elections until Christmas Day, 1991, when Mikhail Gorbachev formally dissolved the Soviet Union, set in motion the largest economic transition in world history. All land, buildings, civil infrastructure, industry, and services owned by the State in the various People’s Republics of the Soviet Bloc began transfer to private ownership. This ranged from gigantic manufacturing complexes employing 50,000


³ Ibid; ‘katastroika’ was the darkly humorous play on perestroika; it meant ‘catastrophic restructuring,’ that is, revolution, collapse of the State, anarchy, and unknown consequences thereafter.
workers to hair salons with two employees, from collective farms as large as the state of Rhode Island to two-family apartment houses. The significance of this event cannot be overemphasized; it entailed a transfer of ownership of perhaps one-third of the world’s wealth. This shift also made possible the first true globalization of capital, in that it (the political/economic revolution) coincided with a technological revolution, ushering in a fully integrated global economy.

Banking, stock trading, currency exchange, and real-time international business operations, unrestricted by the former ideological differences of East and West, soon became commonplace via the World Wide Web. 4

The official transition point from a socialized economy to a privatized economy began January 1st, 1990 in Warsaw with the enactment of the Balcerowicz Plan by the Polish Sejm. 5 In September 1989 the new Solidarity-led government had appointed a commission of economic experts, led by Leszek Balcerowicz, to design a comprehensive plan for the conversion of the Polish socialist economy to ‘normal capitalism.’ Below, an excerpt from a New York Times article describes the monumental significance of the Balcerowicz Plan, which quickly became known as ‘economic shock therapy’:

The Solidarity-led Government introduced a far-reaching legislative program today to transform the centrally run economy by breaking monopolies, cutting subsidies and turning industries over to the private sector…

4 Thomas Friedman, The Lexus and the Olive Tree (New York, Anchor Books, 2000) and Thomas Friedman, The World Is Flat: A Brief History Of The Twenty-First Century (New York: Picador, 2007). These constructs are the thesis of both of Friedman’s books. He contends that a historic convergence, unlike any other before, occurred through 1989 – 1991. The transition of the Soviet Bloc and end of the Cold War coincided with what Friedman terms “the democratization of technology, of finance, and of information” on a worldwide scale (The Lexus and The Olive Tree, 44 – 72.) Although partial forms of globalization had been operating in the unfolding of world history for a thousand years, the 1989 – ’91 convergence of unprecedented political and technological modernizations ushered in, for the first time, the means for complete, real-time, globalization. Friedman’s obvious ‘pro-capitalist hegemony stance,’ however, detracts somewhat from his overall historical conclusions.

5 Ash, The Polish Revolution, 376 - 377. The bill passed December 31, 1989 and went into effect the next day.
The Government, in the biggest test of its public support to date, introduced a dozen bills for a radical overhaul of the ailing economy...

With Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the East Bloc's first non-Communist head of government, somberly looking on, Mr. Balcerowicz outlined a virtual dismantling of 45 years of Marxist-Leninist economic policy.

"This is a landmark change that we are making," he told an extraordinary session of Parliament. "It is unique in history. It falls to us to be pioneers. Any delay in the economic changes could be an unforgivable mistake...

"Poland must leave behind a system based on 19th century doctrines and embrace one based on market mechanisms where skills, knowledge, able hands, talent and willingness to work all count" said Mr. Balcerowicz...

He said the program should be carried out swiftly because Poland's economy was in a "catastrophic state"...

The plan dissolved the monopoly of the State over all enterprises and created a free-market system. It opened doors for international trade and investment, eliminated preferential treatment of State-owned enterprises during the transition phase, provided assistance for unemployed workers, and attempted a general stabilization of the economy. In theory, all State-owned enterprises were to be privatized over an unspecified period of time. The Balcerowicz Plan was a prerequisite step prior to the ‘full unleashing of capitalism,’ per a series of state-to-private initiatives set to begin on July 13, 1990. The six-month interim period allowed, among other things, some preparation time for creation of an unemployment insurance system. Massive unemployment was expected as many outdated, Soviet-built heavy industrial plants, incapable of competition in a free-market system, were phased out. The major points of the Balcerowicz Plan are outlined below:

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The State monopoly on internal and international trade has ended - private citizens, private companies, and foreign investors may invest in Poland and conduct business under a fair and unified system of rules

State subsidies to political parties (i.e. the Communist Party and all other parties) has ended

State subsidies that have kept inefficient or unprofitable enterprises afloat have ended - all enterprises must immediately become self-supporting

State-owned businesses may declare bankruptcy and be dissolved

All government price controls are ended - supply and demand will set prices

Wage increases will be limited to prevent a 'leapfrogging' process in which wage increases are followed by price increases, ad infinitum.\(^\text{7}\)

An unemployment insurance system will be established paying 70% of the unemployed worker's regular wages for three months, then 50% for the next six months, and 40% after nine months

State pensions will be adjusted in response to inflation

A common tax code will be established for all companies, private or public (previously a few privately owned businesses were tolerated but they paid very high taxes)

The banking system will be overhauled - the National Central Bank cannot finance state budget deficits - State owned enterprises will no longer receive preferential treatment from banks - no new currency will be issued - the Zloty (the Polish 'dollar') will become a convertible currency (exchangeable on international markets - the first such currency to do so from a former Communist State).\(^\text{8}\)

\(^{7}\) Jan Kulig, "Which Way To The Market Economy: Through Stabilization Or Growth Resumption?" (Paper presented to Institute Of Economic Science, Polish Academy Of Sciences) *European Journal Of Development Research*. Vol. 2, No. 2 (1991):147 - 162. A permissible wage growth index was set at 30 % of overall price levels in January, 1990, followed by gradual reduction each month over the next five months. Any wage increases over the specified percentages would be taxed at 200%. This was intended to contain the wage/price spiral and bring inflation under control.

\(^{8}\) Ibid.
Polish economist Jan Kulig described the Balcerowicz Plan as ‘shock stabilization.’ It was an attempt to arrest hyperinflation - 700% and climbing as of May 1990 - to bring prices under control, and to avoid total government default on debts. Kulig reported the overall price index rose 130% in the first three months of 1990; energy prices rose nearly 600%. Kulig said some economists feared inflation rising to 1000%, massive layoffs (800,000 + workers), possible social unrest and "virtual chaos." Still, he praised the plan, citing its potential to stabilize the upward wage/price spiral, open up international trade and investment, and "...pave the way to a true market system." The second phase of the plan, once some semblance of stability was realized, would be an attempt to stimulate new economic growth through “…wholesale privatization of all State assets.”

According to Raphael Shen, the legal mechanisms for wholesale privatization of Poland’s economy began in a group of institutions that was created in Warsaw in the first half of 1990. These new governmental groups would be responsible for creating...

...the legal foundations for transferring ownership of enterprise assets from the state to the workers... The two main agents of ownership transformation are the Ministry Of Finance and The National Treasury. In addition, the Bureau of the Plenipotentiary for Ownership Transformation was created to implement the laws. The chief executor is the Agency For Ownership Transformation. Also, the council of National Property was created for the National Treasury, and the chief functions of the council are to preside over the agency's initiatives in privatizing, to approve or disprove the agency's selection of state enterprises to be privatized, to safeguard the public interest in the process, and to arbitrate differences that many arise between an enterprise and the agency.

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10 Shen, *The Polish Economy*, 150.
In light of the precarious nature of the Polish economy in the summer of 1990, that is, precariously teetering on the verge of catastrophic failure, the decision to begin all-out privatization after only a six-month preparation period seems to have been an act of desperation - a 'sink-or-swim' effort on the part of the new Solidarność government. New financial concepts and terms, entirely foreign to a population that had grown up under Communism, entered everyday conversation through news broadcasts and special TV addresses from government officials. Not only was the new capitalist terminology confusing to Poles, the transition process itself was complex and varied per enterprise and per situation. Some essential services (utilities and transportation services, especially) could not be put at risk of shutdowns due to economic reorganization. There was debate as to whether health, education, and communication services should be privatized at all. State-owned agriculture and related enterprises - growing, processing, packaging, transportation and marketing - all aspects of food production from farm field to table were to undergo transition in an era when food shortages had been an everyday occurrence and a source of major social unrest. Additionally, there was no clear plan (other than short-term unemployment benefits) for the multitude of workers that would lose their jobs as an entire sector of inefficient heavy industrial plants went offline.¹¹

The aim of privatization was for three possible outcomes. First, the smallest State-owned enterprises (that is, the spółdzielnia, or worker’s co-ops, discussed in chapter five) would be directly taken over by one or more individuals (former spółdzielnia members) who would 'reinvent them,' that is, downsize, modernize, make them more efficient. Secondly, it was hoped that foreign investors would acquire existing Polish enterprises and/or open up new enterprises. Finally, effort was made such that ‘an entrepreneurial spirit' (in combination with financial

¹¹ Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, 117. Kotkin mentions here the massive industrial shutdowns in the transition of the Soviet Bloc which was the beginning of a ‘ten-time-zone rustbelt.’
backing and government incentives) would sweep Poland, resulting in the opening of a plethora of new small businesses. In the long-run, all these scenarios materialized, generally speaking, through four separate mechanisms: 1) direct, small scale spółdzielnia transitions; 2) sale of larger spółdzielnia enterprises and/or properties; 3) joint ventures, known as spolka; 4) and voucher transitions, called akcja. Unlike in Russia, in Poland, the spolka and akcja transactions were generally one and the same.\textsuperscript{12}

Small scale spółdzielnia enterprises were, perhaps, the easiest to reorganize. They involved a simple liquidation of assets and either a direct transfer of land parcels or a lease arrangement between the State and the new, private owner. In many cases, small enterprises were given outright by the State to one or a few workers. In some cases, State-owned enterprises (both large and small scale) literally could not be given away, mainly because no hope for profitability existed in the minds of even the most optimistic 'new-wave capitalists.' \textsuperscript{13}

Of course, the opposite was true with highly profitable enterprises. A new class of 'oligarchs' has arisen across the former Soviet Bloc territories, former Communist Party elites who took advantage of their position during the early months of the transition, gobbling up huge percentages of stock in the most profitable business at 'dirt cheap' prices. This was not the case

\textsuperscript{12} Zofia Rudnicka and Tadeusz Drzewiecki, interview by author, 6/6/2012. As former spółdzielnia members and later recipients of small-scale State enterprises and property through the Agency For Ownership Transformation, these two interviewees provided specific details of the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the transition process per first-hand experience. In Poland ‘vouchers’ – (akcja) generally did not take the form of the Russian ордер (‘order’- referring to stock order or corporate share, акция, in the form of a ‘stock voucher’). All Russian citizens received such ‘stock vouchers,’ mostly worthless, as the nomenklatura, with ‘inside information,’ usually took control of valuable stock prior to its public release. Polish akcja were generally sold to legitimate investors – foreign and domestic – not distributed to the general public as in the Russian transition. Thus, the spolka (joint ventures) entailed sale of akcja (stock in formerly State owned enterprises, now privatized) to investment groups made up of Polish and Western investors. A great many of these deals, according to Mr. Drzewiecki, were between Polish and Swedish or Polish and German groups. Mandatory inclusion of experienced Western investors was intended to guide and instruct new Polish capitalists in the standard and approved practices of Western, free-market enterprise. No doubt the exclusion of Russian investors, these by definition ‘not Western,’ had political overtones as well.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
for most small enterprises; in fact, former communist managers were sometimes rewarded for getting rid of small operations. It was hoped the new, private owner would somehow be able to turn a profit through sheer will, determination, and 'austerity.'

Another transition strategy involved the outright sale of property and/or existing enterprises to those with either hard cash or the ability to obtain bank financing. Generally speaking, this applied to nomenklatura only, as the average Polish citizen had neither savings nor a credit history. Many former Party members obtained valuable, small-scale investment property for practically nothing in this manner. The ‘panowie’ (discussed in chapter six), those regional ‘Polish Caudillos,’ enriched themselves this way, buying up property at a small fraction of its market value. The panowie used their ‘inside connections’ to ascertain if a property or enterprise held profit potential or if it was a losing venture; this was easy to determine per past performance of the investment in question under operation of their fellow nomenklatura. In some cases the panowie ‘swapped’ enterprises with their fellows, centralizing their property holdings into their preferred regional district. Sometimes, in the case of ‘marginal properties,’ the panowie might offer it for sale – for practically nothing – to a trusted friend who was not a Party member. In this way, some non-Party members were able to purchase individual homes or apartments.

Divestment of spółdzielnia-operated enterprises and of small property holdings was the first and most complete stage of the public-to-private transition. As described above, these simple transfers of ownership and/or management from state to citizen were directed by local governments (mostly by city councils) under authority of the Agency For Ownership and/or management from state to citizen were directed by local governments (mostly by city councils) under authority of the Agency For Ownership and/or management from state to citizen were directed by local governments (mostly by city councils) under authority of the Agency For Ownership

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14 Ibid. The term 'oligarch' (олигарх) was used in the USSR proper and generally was reserved for very rich investors or newly-made millionaires. The Polish ‘panowie’ (gentlemen) were oligarchów of a much lesser scale than the Russian ‘oligarchs.’ These were the regional ‘Polish Caudillos’ as described in chapter six; they were well-off, but most were far from being millionaires.

15 Ibid.
Transformation, created as part of The Privatization Initiatives, 13 July 1990.\textsuperscript{16} Basically these were 'give-aways' of small-scale enterprises outside of the manufacturing sector. As pointed out by Poznanski, privatization of this sector of the Polish economy was (in many cases) quite bluntly, a 'dumping' of long-standing financial burdens on the State.\textsuperscript{17} The spółdzielnia had been much more an ideologically driven necessity than practical economic unit. In order to remain in line with 'Marxist Orthodoxy,' all private enterprise had been banned in Soviet-styled economies, without regard to practicality.\textsuperscript{18} Getting rid of these inefficient 'public burdens' was as much a step toward dismantling the enormous government bureaucracy as it was privatizing the nation's means of production. However, larger industrial enterprises - true 'means of production' - required a more complex transition strategy.

The true industrial sector can be roughly divided into two classifications - traditional heavy industries (steel mills, coke/coal processing plants, chemical plants, shipyards, etc.) and light manufacturing/assembly/processing plants (assembly line operations of all types, textile industries, food processing, etc). In the People’s Republic Of Poland, three more distinctions could be made within both of the above categories: (1) profitable enterprises; (2) those with "...perennial inefficiency... on the verge of bankruptcy; " and (3)

\textsuperscript{16} Raphael Shen, \textit{The Polish Economy}, 168.

\textsuperscript{17} Kazimierz. Z. Poznanski, \textit{Poland's Protracted Transition} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 213.

\textsuperscript{18} Kotkin, \textit{Armageddon Averted}, 67. Here Kotkin calls this "ideological self-destruction." Also Moshe Lewin, in \textit{The Soviet Century} (London, Verso, 2005) : 297 - 299, discusses Lenin's temporary relaxation on small-scale enterprises early in 1921 (the NEP, New Economic Plan of the 10th Party Congress). It was a rational choice to allow limited private enterprise and alleviate bottlenecks in the Russian economy. This type of pragmatic thinking disappeared with Stalin. Ideological rigidity translated into economic policy was strangling the Soviet Bloc economies by the late 1970s.
...those not capable of functioning smoothly in a market system because they were dependent on central planning for all major decisions concerning investment, production, and distribution. In a market system these firms are not capable of competing unless they adapt to market rules...[this entails] drastic organizational changes...in operations...in responsibility, accountability, incentives, research and development, competitive purchasing of resources for production, organization of production processes...and choice of products produced.\textsuperscript{19}

The general consensus was that enterprises in the first category - those known to be capable of 'holding their own' in a free market system - were liquidated by converting their capital worth into common stocks, with preference of sale of shares (that is, reduced prices on shares) going first to managers and secondly to hourly workers within the particular enterprise.\textsuperscript{20} As these enterprises were considered economically viable - and thus their stock of some relative value in the new market system - the remaining shares were to be offered on an open capital market. A conventional stock market was established in Poland in 1991 as part of the restructuring plan. Newly formed corporate shares (akcja) were sold as in Western markets; as previously mentioned, this was unlike the Russian version, акули or 'stock order' (ордер; simply 'order'), the relatively worthless 'stock vouchers' which were distributed by the State to the general public.\textsuperscript{21}

Those in the second category - 'perennial losers,' still afloat simply because the Communist State apparatus funded them - were to be allowed to declare bankruptcy with no chance for

\textsuperscript{19} Shen, \textit{The Polish Economy}, 151

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., and Poznanski, \textit{Poland's Protracted Transition}, 211 - 245. Also, see Anders Aslund, \textit{Economic Transformation In Russia}. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

\textsuperscript{21} The Polish transition, some analysts insist, was an 'economic experiment' for the Russian transition. This notion, along with good accounts of how the 'new oligarchs' came to be, can be found in the following books which were consulted as comparatives to the Polish transition: David E. Hoffman, \textit{The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power In The New Russia} (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2002): 194. Thane Gustafson, \textit{Capitalism Russian Style} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Nikolai Popov, \textit{The Russian People Speak: Democracy At The Crossroads} (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995).
reorganization. The land, machinery, buildings, equipment, etc., associated with these enterprises were liquidated through public sale.

The final category (also the largest category in terms of relative value) were the multitude of Soviet-era industries, some built on a monumental scale, that had been operated for decades through standard central planning procedures. In other words, the majority of large-scale enterprises in the Soviet Bloc were interconnected, non-competing, plan-driven (not market-driven) operations, bearing little resemblance to Western industrial operations which survived only in terms of 'market rules;' i.e., efficiency, productivity, quality control, and competition with other producers. In reality, this group was for the most part 'untested' in a true market economy. Plan-driven operations gave little concern to financial accountability, efficiency, or - for that matter - the rationale of their existence altogether. The Soviet-era industrial infrastructure had been 'willed into existence' by Warsaw and Moscow bureaucrats with no concern for profitability (there was no such concept in Marxist-Leninist economics). Later, managers with no understanding of market economics would be called upon to profitably operate the newly privatized enterprises.22

It was for this reason, the inexperience of most communist-era managers, that the decision was made by economists in the Agency For Ownership Transformation to offer shares of former State enterprises to foreign (Western) investors. These joint ventures (known as 'spolka'), between Polish and foreign investors would succeed, it was believed, because "...the more resourceful and experienced foreign companies...taking advantage of low sales prices...would

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22 Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union In The Cold War From Stalin To Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University Of North Carolina Press, 2009): 132 - 133. For example, here Zubok discusses entire industrial cities built by the USSR for defense purposes - money was no object - profit was not the objective. However, in the capitalist system, money and profit became the central focus.
acquire a controlling stake in state enterprises in which they have an interest.” Their free-market expertise would guide the fledgling capitalist enterprises to profitability through conventional Western management techniques, while simultaneously retraining the Polish workforce (both managers and hourly workers). Foreign investors would bring the needed capitalist management techniques to Soviet-Bloc industries, forcing them into profitability through downsizing, streamlining, raising efficiency and quality standards, cutting costs, or totally restructuring product lines.

The Agency For Ownership Transformation intended an infusion of foreign capital and simultaneously (and most importantly) a diffusion of Western management and operation techniques into the outdated, 'plan-driven,' Soviet-styled system. However, this entailed downsizing on a grand scale. The bloated communist economy assured jobs for all - a very noble aspiration - however, in purely pragmatic terms, this had been accomplished by over staffing and by the sheer institutionalized inefficiency inherent in 'mega-industries.' Mass industrialization projects were efficient to a point - but eventually a point of dimensioning returns was reached - and in a modern, globally competitive economy, driven by instantaneously available information and a constantly shifting market (in terms of demand, quality, quantity, and variety), the 'old Soviet-era dinosaurs' (predicated on producing of planned mass quantities) had to be reduced in scale, modernized, and in some cases, completely abandoned. In human terms, this meant a loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs as the old industries were brought into

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24 Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, 16. Kotkin describes the mega-mania of Soviet industrialization - bigger always equated to better. He also notes that "Soviet factories consumed energy in horribly glutinous quantities, as if it were free;" this excessive energy use was obviously another factor in the industrial inefficiency of the Soviet Bloc.
'Western rationality' (competitive economic efficiency), a devastating blow to many workers entirely unprepared to ‘reinvent themselves’ in middle or old age.

Finally, another scenario that negatively affected many Polish workers during the transition was the overt dismantling of traditional 'means of production' by foreign investors and their replacement with non-industrial sector enterprises. The dismantling of sections of Stocznia Gdańska, for example, by Swedish investors, intent on replacing it with high-end, ocean front apartments exacerbated Polish discontent (among working class people) with the new Solidarność government's handling of the transition.25 Rules established by the Agency For Ownership Transformation called for a minimum of five year continuity in workplace turnover (to ensure stability during the transition) or a monetary settlement (a lump-sum termination payment) to displaced workers. In the case of Stocznia Gdańska, as the gigantic facility was 'parted-out' to various foreign investors, many chose to pay the one-time settlement, abandon industrial operations (and thus the jobs they entailed) as long-term property investments seemed more profitable than attempts at reorganizing antiquated industries (the result: massive job losses). This was an 'unintended consequence' of the 1990 Privatization Initiatives; it was legal, but probably not anticipated (the lump-sum transition payment clause was meant as a disincentive to keep foreign investors from doing just this - buying Polish industrial infrastructure and converting it to investment property). Again, in a mass transition of this scope (the biggest in world history), the 'best laid plans' have a way of going astray.

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25 In March 2010, the author interviewed shipyard workers at what remains of the old Kolkum's site in Malmö, Sweden. As in Gdańsk, much of the oceanfront property formerly occupied by shipyards is now high-end residential apartment buildings. Malmö University has expanded onto former shipyard property as well. In the case of the university, nearly as many jobs are created by it as had the shipyard - a much better alternative (for working people) than substitution with high-end housing.
As stated in the opening of this chapter, interview data adds a ‘human dimension’ to the Polish transition entirely neglected in standard ‘document histories’ of the era. Per the contention made in the opening, the transition was not at all uniform and was experienced in drastically different ways according to a variety of variables – among these, age, gender, occupation, educational level, political affiliation, and geographic location. Below, eight different ‘personal sketches,’ derived from interview data, aptly illustrate the ‘lived experience’ of the transition representative of several different social classes. Along with several of the stories already told in previous chapter’s opening vignettes (‘Tomasz,’ Chapter 7, ‘Oksana,’ Chapter 6, and ‘Mrs. Danka,’ Chapter 3), these sketches demonstrate the variety of circumstantial outcomes experienced by individuals caught up in Poland’s transition to capitalism and democracy. To avoid redundant footnoting, it is stated here that the following interviews were all conducted by the author, and, per IRB protocol, anonymous names were used:

‘Anna and Mierik,’ mid 50s, from a small village north of Wałbrzych –

Anna is a high school biology teacher and Mierik is a salesman for a well known international chemical corporation. Neither were active supporters of the Solidarity Movement, nor were they connected in any way to the nomenklatura class; they remained apolitical, concentrating on their education and careers. They have achieved a Polish version of the ‘American Dream,’ having three children, two cars, and a spacious, newly built home in a rural setting. Mierik attributes his career success to his language skills. He learned Russian in public school, as it was required curriculum before the mid 1980s. He also acquired a functional knowledge of English and German in school and through his own private studies. Later, Mierik’s employer paid for advanced classes in English and German. He proudly represents his corporation in Warsaw, Moscow, Munich, and London. In five years Anna will be eligible for teachers’ retirement which
will come from the conventional *ZUS* (Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych; State Social Security System). The State teachers’ retirement system was virtually untouched by the 1989 transition. Their main goal is seeing their three children earn advanced college degrees. For this couple, the transition further facilitated successful careers by the internationalization of the Polish economy and by the general expansion of consumer culture/economy.

‘*Adam and Natalie,* mid 20s, from Kraków –

Adam and Natalie are young, successful, urban professionals. Adam works for an advertising agency and Natalie is a medical technician. They admit that their ‘memories’ of life before the transition are more likely the effects of stories repeated time and again by their parents. They don’t actually remember “standing in line, on the stone sidewalk, in the snow, for eight hours just to buy potatoes,” but having heard so many stories like this, they ‘know’ what it was like ‘back then.’ Natalie actually does remember her first trip to Pizza Hut, a thrill afforded by the transition, as Western commercial culture began its invasion. Adam knows that his mom “still hoards canned ham like it was gold,” even though ten different varieties of ham are now available at the local chain-store supermarket – old habits die hard. The ideological battles between communism and capitalism, between authoritarianism and democracy, fought by their parents’ generation are as far removed from Adam and Natalie’s life as are the Great Depression and WWII from the lives of twenty-something Americans.

‘*The Bishop,* mid 60s, from Szczawno- Zdrój –

Discussed in the previous chapter, ‘The Bishop’ is revisited here as he best represents his particular class. In the image of General Wojciech Jaruzelski, ‘The Bishop’ claims to be a Polish patriot, a devout and traditional Catholic, and a true believer in Communism. He fought against the Polish Solidarity Movement and warned his fellow citizens of the coming economic apocalypse that would accompany transition to capitalism and democracy – now, many people see his ‘prophecies’ being fulfilled. He still rails against the transition while simultaneously expanding his little economic empire. ‘The Bishop’ has never known poverty; as a Party member and mine manager he earned a good living; now as an independent businessman he does even
better. However, unlike the class of ‘new oligarchs’\textsuperscript{26} in large cities of the former Soviet Bloc, many of whom became rich instantly through corrupt manipulation of State wealth during the chaos of transition, ‘The Bishop’ accumulated his little empire over many years, and through diligent personal effort. We might say he personifies the ‘proletarian work ethic,’ a theoretical derivative of Max Weber’s Protestant Ethic. The proletarian ethic is a “class derived value code” which includes a certain “elective affinity” similar to those linked to Calvinist doctrines. Dedication to Marxist-Leninism replaces Calvinism as the driving force, and ‘election’ to the nomenklatura class is likened to being one of ‘God’s elect’ as per Calvinism’s notion of ‘predestination.’ \textsuperscript{27}

\textit{‘Józef,’ early 80s, from Gdańsk –}

No one could have been more dedicated to the cause of Solidarność and more active in its support than Józef. He was an eyewitness to history: a life-time employee of the Lenin Shipyard, present at the 1970 massacre of workers, present at the 1980 formation of Solidarność, survivor of Martial Law, veteran of many strikes, participant in the first free elections, friend of Lech Wałęsa, foe of Polish Communism. But these things are ‘current events’ for Józef. He was a boy during WWII and remembers being forced to work in a cement plant operated by the Nazis. He remembers reconstruction after the war, the Communist takeover, collectivization, the \textit{bezpieka} terror (\textit{bezpieka} security forces enforced collectivization and monitored industrial production), Stalinism, paranoid fear, police brutality, Martial Law, and violence by the ZOMA (National Guard). Today Józef lives on a much-reduced pension from the shipyard; much-reduced due to the economic turmoil brought on by the transition to capitalism. By American standards he lives in abject poverty. But it is very hard to engage Józef in ‘economic stories.’ “Yes,” he grumbles, “of course I remember food shortages, lines, strikes. Yes – we grew gardens to survive – Yes,

\textsuperscript{26} David E. Hoffman, \textit{The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power In The New Russia} (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2002). The ‘new oligarchs’ constitute a class in themselves. In economic terms they benefited more from the transition than any other class. Hoffman’s book describes their origins during Russia’s transition. Poland’s transition generated very few ‘oligarchs’ as privatization there was more focused on international joint ventures.

Yes, Yes, to all your silly questions about ‘hard times’ in Poland during the Solidarity Movement.” The transition that Józef fought for affected him negatively, in economic terms, but he seldom thinks of that. He was not fighting about money – he did not care about material things, beyond what was necessary, ‘back then,’ or now. His fight was against the authoritarian form of government that accompanied Soviet-style communism. He did not worry about ‘economic things’ in the past and certainly does not worry about them now. He has other concerns, more pressing concerns; he relives, in his mind, everyday, Stalinism, collectivization, bezpieka terror, police brutality, censorship, the ZOMA, paranoia, fear….

‘Vera,’ late 50s, Warsaw –

Vera was born in Vladivostok to a Russian military officer and a Polish mother. As she was growing up, her father was stationed in various locations across the Soviet Bloc, thus affording her a perspective much broader than that of most other interviewees. She eventually settled in Warsaw and earned a law degree. During the 1980s Vera was part of the KOR (Komitet Samoobrony Społecznej; Citizens Self-Defense Committee), a group of lawyers who volunteered their services to defend Solidarność activists accused of crimes against the State. She represents the true inteligencja class, highly educated, financially secure, usually with some family connections to the Party or the military – often with international connections. Two other interviewees, both college professors, also fall into this category. As with ‘Józef’ (above), this group seems to have visualized the transition mainly in ideological and political terms rather than strictly concentrating on economic issues (however, unlike those in ‘Józef’s’ situation, the inteligencja were usually financially secure already). The partnership of the inteligencja with common workers (specifically, the KOR working with the labor union Solidarność) is a well-known factor commonly attributed to the ultimate success of the Solidarity Movement. Many of the inteligencja who became involved in Solidarity activism were forced to immigrate to the West due to threats against their lives by the opposition; those who remained in Poland, like Vera, generally had ‘connections’ who protected them. Two ironic points are evidenced here: Firstly, the transition caused a large, inadvertent, out-migration of both the highest and lowest economic classes from Poland (Vera represents the highest and ‘Zosia,’ below, represents the lowest). Secondly, those of the highest class who defied the State, yet were able to remain in
Poland, were usually ‘protected’ by family or friends who were the State, that is, the nomenklatura.

‘Zosia,’ mid 50s, from Gdańsk –

Zosia worked as a hairdresser through a spółdzielnia collective. She has one son, now grown and living in Warsaw. She was divorced when the boy was five years old and never remarried. She was an active supporter of the Solidarity movement and joined the Solidarność union in the first year of its existence (1980). She participated in many demonstrations and marches in support of Solidarity and led her collective in several city-wide and nation-wide strikes in the early 1980s. In 1990, when all spółdzielnia collectives were dissolved by the State, the local Agency For Ownership Transformation offered Zosia the hair salon operation – the building and all equipment – for the equivalent of a few hundred dollars. She had no savings at all but was able to borrow this small sum from her father, along with a little extra for general improvements to the operation (cleanup, paint, a new sign, some new furniture). She was excited to open her own business, be her own boss, and she had great hopes for the future. However, in the turmoil of the economic transition, Zosia’s new salon failed. Having struggled for three years, selling all her possessions, and further borrowing small sums of money from family and friends, she was finally forced to liquidate the operation. Lacking vocational skills beyond hairdressing, no education past high school, and with unemployment near 35%, Zosia became part of the Polish chain migration to Ireland. She found work in a hotel in Dublin, cleaning and doing laundry. She is part of a Eastern European ‘underclass’ similar to many Mexican migrants in the US, lacking language skills beyond their native language and having an ‘outdated education’ at best. Her job at the hotel provides her with ‘survival level’ pay. She shares a tiny apartment with another Polish woman and lives ‘paycheck to paycheck.’

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28 The National Archives Of Ireland - Office For National Statistics, “Foreign Nationals In The Republic Of Ireland.” http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/. As of 2011, around 450,000 Polish-born people were living in The Republic Of Ireland.
‘Joanna,’ late 40s, ‘Kasha,’ early 70s, and ‘Marja,’ 14, all living in Bangor, Northern Ireland, originally from Wroclaw –

This mother, daughter, and grandmother migrated together to the UK out of economic necessity. Joanna’s husband lost his job at a coal processing plant in 1991 as much of the Lower Silesian coal industry was phased out. He was never able to find another job of equivalent pay in the new economy; that is, in relation to the much higher cost of living in the post-transition era. Joanna attributes their divorce, to a great degree, to economic problems. With equally poor job prospects as her former husband, in Poland, Joanna made the decision to move to Bangor. She had friends who had already moved there and offered to help in the relocation. Unwilling to leave her elderly mother alone in Wroclaw, Joanna finally persuaded her to accompany herself and daughter Marja – then only eight years old – in the move to Bangor. Joanna had very basic English speaking skills, learned mostly from an aunt who had taught English at a private school. This basic English helped Joanna get a job at what she calls “the home for old Presbyterians,” in Bangor (a rest home operated by the Presbyterian Church). The rest home offered Joanna free advanced English classes and pays her a ‘living wage,’ subsidized through a government program that aids fellow European Union citizens who migrate to the UK in search of work. The UK also pays for ‘specialized skills upgrade classes,’ in Joanna’s chosen field of elder care; she takes all the classes they offer. This is an opportunity she would have never had in Poland. Her elderly mother, Kasha, does not speak one word of English, but has found a few friends in the growing Polish migrant community. Kasha contributes to the household by caring for Marja (although as years pass by, this role is rapidly reversing). Marja has adjusted well to school and life in the UK and speaks English as fluently as her native language. This family is typical of the hundreds of thousands of Polish economic migrants created as an unintentional by-product of the nation’s transition to capitalism and democratic government. It should be noted that families like Joanna’s are quite a bit better off than individuals in ‘Zosia’s’ class. This can be attributed, to a great degree, in differences of treatment to migrants by the UK and Ireland (the UK has many social programs to aid and educate migrant workers), and to Joanna’s English language skills. The multi-generational family and the growing immigrant community, no doubt, also have helped make Joanna’s move more successful than Zosia’s. Joanna and her daughter are
successfully integrating into the new European Union economy; migrants like Zosia have little chance for successful integration. 29

‘Tolek,’ early 40s, Gdańsk –

Tolek had not been a very serious student. Tolek assumed he would get a job in the agricultural chemical plant where his father worked after he graduated from high school. Every spring ‘X number’ of employees retired from the plant and every spring an equal ‘X number’ of local high school graduates were hired to fill their place; this was how it was done all over Poland ‘back in the day.’ In the Communist era, no one had ever heard of labor intensification, reduction in force, downsizing, outsourcing, off-shoring, layoffs, or permanent shutdowns. All citizens were guaranteed a job and most jobs were guaranteed for life. However, Tolek graduated from high school in 1988 as ‘katastroika’ was just gearing up. That spring, at Tolek’s father’s plant, rather than hiring the appropriate ‘X number’ to keep the status quo, no one was hired. By spring 1990 over half of the 800 employees were laid off. Needles to say, Tolek never saw the inside of any industrial plant. He represents an ‘in between generation’ that missed out on the security and stability of the late Communist period, but who also were not educationally prepared for the post-transition economy. Tolek had only a ‘general education’ in a new, market-driven nation with 35% unemployment. Yet, through personal initiative and fortunate contacts, he managed to find an economic niche. With no job prospects in sight, he started his own ‘taxi service’ – “one old car that ran most of the time, when I could afford gasoline,” he said. Most of his fares were between the local airport and train station – many were German and Swedish businessmen interested in making joint ventures with newly privatized Polish enterprises. Through one such investor, Tolek got his ‘big break.’ Gdańsk underwent a ‘building boom’ in the late 1990s, as Western corporations began marketization of many former Soviet Bloc nations – in other words, Pizza Huts and MacDonald’s were springing up on every corner like mushrooms in the forests of Sudaty. Recommended by one of his recurring taxi customers, Tolek was hired as a truck driver

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http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171780_229910.pdf Poland and seven other Central and Eastern European nation joined the European Union in 2003. “Between the year ending December 2003 and the year ending December 2010 the Polish-born population of the UK increased from 75,000 to 532,000” (p.1).
for a local land development company, hauling sand, gravel, cement, and stone to the many new construction sites. With this stable income, he was able to buy his own used dump truck – similar to how his taxi business began, he now became an independent truck operator. He eventually got several small business loans and expanded his operation. Today, his trucking business is doing well and he makes a middle class income. Tolek believes that he is an exception rather than the norm for his generation, and he is quick to attribute his success to ‘luck and friends’ rather than to any exceptional skills. He says that many of his graduating high school class never ‘found their niche’ in the new Polish economy. Some migrated to the UK or Ireland. Most are stuck in ‘dead end jobs’ – low pay, no benefits, no prospects for the future; rather than helping to build new MacDonald’s buildings, as Tolek did as a construction truck driver, many of his cohorts are flipping burgers there as they enter middle age. Quite a few others, he recalls, became involved in petty crime or were consumed by alcoholism and drug abuse. Few of his age cohort, he believes, live as well under the new market economy as did their parents – Poland’s last Communist generation.
Conclusion

This thesis began by giving a brief background history of the close cultural link between Poland and Russia. This cultural link was noted in contrast to the gulf between the two nations in terms of economic and political modernity at the beginning of the 20th Century. The thesis then proceeded to discuss the origins of the People’s Republic Of Poland near the end of WWII, the source of the Communist Party’s power, and the means by which the Party assumed and maintained that power during the Stalin era. A short description of the Soviet version of planned economy was given, followed by a discussion of the application of this system to Poland. It then described how the progressively dysfunctional Polish economy led to social unrest that manifested itself in protests, riots, strikes, and finally in creation of the labor union Solidarność.

Next, oral histories in the form of extensive interview data were interwoven with published, formal accounts of the ‘Solidarity Decade,’ the 1980s. These oral histories illuminate the ‘lived experience’ of Solidarity’s struggle, of the transition to capitalism and democracy, and of daily life in Gdańsk and Wałbrzych – two cities that experienced the Solidarity Decade rather differently.

In the process of relating this story several contentions are made throughout. Generally speaking, they are based on anecdotal evidence per interview data. None of the contentions are derived from individual outliers – all are corroborated by multiple accounts, both per interview data specific to this thesis project and/or in conjunction with similar published accounts. It is recognized that quantitative research is needed to wholly validate these contentions in terms of their strength, distribution, and efficacy. This disclaimer made, three main contentions are generalized below:
1) Despite the collective effort and enthusiasm of some 10 million official members of Solidarność (roughly 1/3 of the entire population of Poland), alongside millions more who informally supported the Solidarity Movement, the ultimate transition to capitalism and democracy was not at all a uniform experience; for many Poles the transition turned from a dream into a nightmare. Interview data has been used to describe a few of the various outcomes of the transition per individuals representing different segments of Polish society. A perspective heard more than once in discussions concerning the transition can be generalized as follows: ‘Poles sick of the ugly face of communism very soon tired of the ugly face of capitalism.’ As in the USSR, political change seems to have outpaced economic reform, and for many Poles ‘bitter capitalist realities’ replaced dreams of a moderate social democracy.

2) Likewise, there seems to have been a ‘north-south split’ in general public perception and experience concerning the Solidarity Movement’s drive toward national transformation through a shift to capitalism and democratic government. Much of the economic infrastructure of Lower Silesia was built in the post-WWII era, some well-planned as ‘showcases of socialism,’ and thus stood in contrast to the aging rust-belt coastal cities. Some interviewees believed that the south received preferential treatment from the State (more industrial development, more and better housing, more leniency in ideological matters, less interference from police and State militias), and that the north was constantly ‘punished’ for its rebelliousness and fanatical devotion to Solidarność (although it should be noted that many of Lower Silesia’s mines and factories were also strongholds of Solidarność). Some interviewees believed that the State intentionally exacerbated antagonism between different regions in an effort to portray the Solidarity Movement as the prime reason for Poland’s economic troubles. Some believed that the State intentionally caused artificial shortages and economic bottlenecks in order to lay the blame on
Solidarity. These regional differences in public perception and actual differences in economic conditions were responsible for the different ‘informal economic strategies’ (or lack thereof) which emerged in response to growing economic dysfunction. Some of these differences and variations are revealed in discussion of daily life in Gdańsk and Wałbrzych, northern and southern cities respectively.

3) Generally speaking, those individuals with some previous ‘entrepreneurial experience’ fared better in the post-transition economy. In this context, ‘entrepreneurial experience’ has a very broad definition. It includes individuals who engaged in fucha czarna robota (part-time ‘black work’ or ‘under-the-table’ work), czarny rynek handlowy (black market trading), and in all forms of informal - technically illegal - private trading of work, services, or material goods. It also includes the nomenklatura class, who by virtue of their political orientation (i.e., Party membership) were given the authority and privilege to manage and operate state enterprises, and in some cases, both legal and technically-illegal private enterprises. For most of the nomenklatura class across the Soviet Bloc their privileged status was automatically transferred in the shift from communism to capitalism. Many of the nomenklatura had managerial experience, and were more likely than average citizens to have savings and a credit history, thus making them eligible for financing in the new capitalist system. Most importantly, the nomenklatura had ‘inside information’ concerning all aspects of the economic transition, ranging from the ‘nuts and bolts’ of legalities and paperwork to speculative knowledge of the potential profitability of state-owned enterprises under liquidation. This does not necessarily mean that such individuals ‘pre-adapted’ to a market economy by virtue of their participation in formal or informal entrepreneurial activities - legal or illegal - became prosperous or rich in the post-1989 economy; most did not. It simply means that those with such experience were more likely to survive the
transition and remain in Poland as opposed to the million-plus ‘economic refugees’ or ‘labor migrants’ created by the transition - a new 21st Century Polish diaspora, mainly to the UK and Republic of Ireland. It is also very apparent, per interview data, that those individuals with advanced educations and/or foreign language skills prior to the transition fared better in the post-transition economy. Again, it should be noted that further quantitative and demographic research could help elaborate on and clarify these general observations now based solely on interview data.

Beyond these three contentions, this thesis provides a holistic picture of the last decade of communism in Poland, both as ‘formal history’ and as ‘lived experience,’ per oral histories obtained from interviewees and through several ‘lyrical narratives’ on various pertinent topics. In a previously published sociology thesis the author has also discussed how the Polish Solidarity Movement originated, what factors contributed to the movement’s success, and how the movement contributed to the process of transition.\(^1\) Yet, one final, pressing question remains: why did the transition to capitalism and democracy occur? Short of another full-scale research project and complete review of published transitology literature, this final chapter now turns to a very brief discussion of the topic, and includes observations made by interviewees and by the researcher himself which may contribute new insights to understanding why the transition took place.

The standard Western explanation – and the oversimplified one - goes as follows: Economic dysfunctions resulted in shortages of food and consumer goods which caused frustration and dissatisfaction in the general public. The negative energy of dissatisfaction was eventually

channeled into positive action; that is, violent riots and protests gave way to peaceful, organized political action, coalescing in the Solidarity Movement, in general, and in the labor union, Solidarność in particular. This movement grew in numbers and support to such a degree that its collective pressure caused the existing, authoritarian, single-party-only government to concede to open, multiparty elections. These elections ushered in a vast majority of Solidarność candidates who enacted major, unprecedented reforms (the labor union had also become a political party). These reforms reversed 45 years of Polish history and paved the way for a general reversal of 70 years of Soviet history – that is, the majority of property and means of production across the Soviet Bloc was privatized, the state-planned economy was replaced by a market economy, and multi-party politics replaced the Communist Party monopoly throughout.

This scenario is true, but it is also partial and oversimplified; as such, it easily becomes a vehicle for implications not based in historical or social reality. The underlying political and economic order of the former Soviet Bloc was complex and contradictory. Its political system fulfilled universal goals of social justice for millions of citizens, while simultaneously – in some cases, in some eras – its antidemocratic tendencies denied basic civil rights to millions of citizens. Likewise, its economic system modernized a continent, in effect, taking multitudes from serfdom to the space age in a single generation, while simultaneously ‘stagnating’ as the 21st Century drew near. A simplistic, Western-centric explanation of why the transition happened will not do, and a distorted explanation aimed at justifying the ‘victory’ of predatory global capitalism cannot be tolerated.

The simple explanation is sometimes made very self-serving to advocates of politically conservative agendas, to Western-biased academics, or to proponents of Neoliberal free-marketism who aspire to privatize and commodify all dimensions of all societies. It becomes a
justification for a Neoliberal backlash against Stalin-era notions of ‘maximum socialization of everyday life,’ and ‘war communism’ (falsely presumed to have been continuous from Lenin to Yeltsin across the entire Soviet Bloc), the antithesis thus becoming ‘maximum privatization of everyday life.’ The phrase ‘all power to the Soviets’ is replaced with ‘all power to Capital,’ a victory cry of supposed bourgeoisie triumph over working class solidarity. For Neoliberals, the sacralized workings of unregulated world capitalism are posited to magically bring about peace, liberty, and prosperity for all. ‘The End Of History’ arrived, per prophets like Francis Fukuyama, some twenty years ago with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the accompanying ‘death of Marx,’ and the advent of global American Neoliberal hegemony. In reality, the process of building such a system relies on domination, not democracy, on severe inequalities, not broad prosperity, on powerful exploitation, not humane development, and on conflict, not peace. These constructs were operationalized in Cold War ‘grand area planning,’ the antithesis of the ‘domino theory,’ and were nothing less than an attempt to capture any economic development outside of capitalist control. When the Soviet Bloc politically disintegrated, Neoliberals pounced on the event, distorting it (or perhaps not fully understanding it) as the ultimate triumph of capitalism over socialism, and by extension of their ideology, as good over evil. In fact, the primary goal of the Solidarity Movement was simply to bring about a social democracy free from interference by Moscow, not to unleash ‘Wild East Capitalism.’

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2 Jerzy Borowczak, interview by author, 12/18/2010. Mr. Borowczak is current director of Fundacja Centrum Solidarności and was a leading political advisor to Lech Wałęsa throughout the Solidarity Movement. He clearly explained that the Movement’s goals progressed from establishment of free, self-governing trade unions to full political liberation from Moscow’s ‘paternal hand.’ This implied an end to Communist Party political monopoly, open multiparty elections, and full civil rights for all Polish citizens (freedom of the press, freedom of speech, right to assemble, etc.). He was also adamant in explaining that Solidarity advocated basic social welfare programs per the old Soviet system be continued in the new democratic Poland, and that a mixed economy (i.e., a mixture of State and private ownership) would replace State monopoly on all enterprise. In short, the aim was to create a Social Democracy along the lines of Scandinavian models. The notion that any former Communist nation in Eastern
The distorted Neoliberal argument becomes falsely predicated on the assumption that any planned, rational, State intervention in a nation’s economic system for the purpose of developing natural and human resources for the benefit of the general population, for ensuring a more egalitarian distribution of these resources, or for guaranteeing more democratic management of the ‘commanding heights’ of the economy, is inherently flawed and guaranteed to fail. Deconstruction of the Welfare State and labeling of all social services as ‘entitlements’ (negatively implying these as some sort of state ‘handout,’ when they are in fact investments of worker’s personal incomes) becomes a Neoliberal policy priority. Profits from state-owned enterprises in the Soviet Bloc - from Gdańsk to Vladivostok - were able to provide workers with full employment, unemployment insurance between jobs, old-age retirements, free medical care, free education, free child care, paid vacations, paid maternity leave, and affordable food, housing, energy, transportation, and consumer goods; denial of all these socially responsible ideas becomes a ‘cause croisade’ for Neoliberal privateers. A desperate labor surplus and maximization of profit is the aim, along with the building of a ‘false consciousness’ in workers’ minds which justifies their own (the working class’s) degradation based on capital’s projected conservative mythology. This mythology was created to serve the global capitalist system and to justify its exploitation of a new class structure. The ‘service class’ becomes the most numerous, followed by the (traditional) working class, with a new ‘creative class’ at the apex, all of which are at the service of capital.

Furthermore, a ‘moral reversal’ is attempted by the false Neoliberal argument, which insists that the events of 1989 – 1991 can be summed up as a plea by Eastern Europeans for social and

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Europe opted for ‘free-market anarchism,’ ‘predatory capitalism,’ ‘Wild East Capitalism,’ or any other entirely deregulated system as a backlash-rejection of Socialism is purely a fantasy of American Neoliberals.
economic justice through total dismantlement of all the above-mentioned social programs and investments by the State – nothing could be further from the truth. The 1989 – 1991 transition did entail profoundly moral issues, namely, revitalization of the traditional European Welfare State through principles of universalism, egalitarianism, worker solidarity, increased efficiency, and technocratic management – not abandonment of civil society by its own government. Rather, for Poland, it meant a ‘reset,’ a reform, and a liberation from conservative communist orthodoxy which hindered economic modernization (potential ‘hybridization’ between capitalism and socialism) by clinging to the dogmas of the Party Line-dominated past.

This is a prime example of the ‘fallacy of the single cause’ (i.e., causal oversimplification) in conjunction with faulty cause and effect and/or confusion of cause and effect. Neoliberal political/economic arguments and Western-centric academic arguments based on this type of faulty logic and utter lack of comprehensive historical understanding are often used in descriptions of ‘The Collapse of Communism,’ followed by an inference that attempts to justify unbounded capitalism as the answer to all economic problems and as the only system capable of producing material wellbeing. If this is the case, how can the tremendous economic growth of the Soviet Five Year Plans be accounted for, or the rapid reconstruction of nearly 70% of Soviet Bloc infrastructure destroyed in WWII? How can massive post-WWII revitalization of Poland’s industries, shipyards, and farms with infusions of capital from the USSR be explained? How could a system labeled by its opponents as entirely unworkable have produced continued rising standards of living throughout the Cold War years, when, as the well-worn cliché goes, the US and Soviet Bloc were competing in ‘the space race, the arms race, and the peace race?’ Beyond the Soviet Bloc examples, if a managed economy is guaranteed to end in failure, how can a century of economic growth and social stability under the management of the Social Democratic
Labor Party of Sweden be accounted for? For that matter, the success of the British Empire came about, to a great degree, through its tightly controlled, highly interconnected network of scientifically managed colonial administrative offices. More recently, Vietnam’s vibrant economic rebirth after a decade of destruction courtesy of the US Military, or China’s current unprecedented economic growth under Communist Party leadership offer prime examples of success through a planned economy.

Both the ‘wrecking’ of Perestroika (by West and East) and the ‘co-opting’ of the transition’s meaning by opportunists have been noted by Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev remained convinced of the superiority of the socialist system throughout the Perestroika Era, the 1991 transition, and into his retirement. In his book On my Country And The World (2000), he clarifies this point:

One of today’s most fashionable clichés both in Russia and the West is to speak of the total collapse of the socialist idea. Socialism has been anathematized. All the misfortunes suffered by the Soviet people…are attributed to socialism. This is a false conclusion. The socialism about which the great minds in the history of humanity have written and about which millions of people have dreamed never did exist – neither in the Soviet Union nor in Eastern Europe, Asia or Cuba…[Thus]…it simply flies in the face of history as well as logic to assert that socialism was defeated… My own opinion is quite definite: The socialist idea has not lost its significance or its historical relevance. This is so not only because the very idea of socialism, which includes such concepts as social justice, equality, freedom, and democracy, is one that can never be exhausted but also because the entire development of the world community confirms, with new urgency every day, that we need justice, equality, freedom, democracy, and solidarity.

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3 Brett M. Bennett and Joseph M. Hodge (editors), Science And Empire: Knowledge And Networks Of Science Across The British Empire, 1800 – 1970 (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). The book argues that Britain’s scientifically managed bureaucratic capacities helped develop natural and human resources around the globe. The analogy per this thesis is that ‘scientific socialism’ did the same.

It is appropriate then, in summary, and as a clarification to the ‘faulty cause and effect fallacy’ often used in both political rhetoric and in biased academic discourse, to briefly list and categorize the reasons why Poland’s economic crisis occurred and why the closely related economic and political transition of the entire Soviet Bloc came about.

To note the above-mentioned examples of success by socialist nations is not to deny that the last decade of Polish communism was fraught with economic dysfunction; the range of alternative economic strategies undertaken by average citizens, as described in this thesis, is clear evidence of this. However, most of these problems did not originate directly from common policies or practices associated with socialized management of an economy, nor was competition with the West a prime factor. COMECON was a closed system; ships made in Gdańsk, for example, did not serve the same market as ships made in Baltimore. Likewise, steel made at Katowice and Częstochowa was under no more imperative of competition than was steel made in Pittsburgh and Cleveland – before the rapid globalization of markets that came as a result of the 1989–1991 transitions. In other words, competition with the West was irrelevant until both East and West entered the global market in the post-transition years. When this happened, both American and Soviet Bloc industrial belts became rust belts – Communist China displaced the industrial dominance of the US, as well as that of Western and Eastern Europe.

As encapsulated in previous chapters, Poland’s economic problems came, firstly, from ‘internal colonization,’ as the USSR expropriated Poland’s agricultural production in lieu of COMECON-sanctioned trades for oil, natural gas, and the iron ore needed for Poland’s steel industry (Poland had no domestic source of iron ore and no sources of fuel except for coal). Simultaneously, Soviet oil revenues from sales outside the COMECON community helped maintain the system and delayed real economic reform. Shortages of food and consumer goods
resulted from these trade imbalances. Food shortages were especially frustrating to Poles as much of the nation’s agricultural production was earmarked for shipment east. Shortages of consumer goods in Poland and across the Soviet Bloc were also exacerbated decades after Stalin-era economic planning, as its emphasis on heavy industry created a lopsided national defense economy. Despite attempts at trade balance Poland, and Eastern Europe as a whole, were considered ‘drains’ on the economy of the USSR proper, thus making their ‘economic liberation’ a priority of Mikhail Gorbachev’s efforts to balance the Soviet budget.

Secondly, again as previously discussed, Solidarity-led strikes as protest against shortages actually exacerbated shortages, by decreasing production and by hindering shipping; in turn, the State ‘punished’ strike-prone regions by allowing bottlenecks in production and distribution to go unresolved. This ‘negative feedback loop’ spiraled out of control in the 1980s, with both the State and Solidarność blaming each other for the economic catastrophe. As this thesis has pointed out, evidenced by interview data, regional economic differences were exploited by both the Polish State and by Solidarność (per the ideologies ‘sold’ by both). Individual citizens’ economic strategies, as well as their political stance, often reflected these differences. As previously stated, Poland was the only Soviet Bloc state to retain a vibrant ‘civil society’ even under Communist Party domination, economic subjugation, and Martial Law. This is a ‘cultural tradition’ stemming from the Partitions, reinforced by the ‘Polish Enlightenment,’ and operationalized by such institutions as the Polish Catholic Church, ‘Flying Universities’ (informal itinerant schools), samizdat writers (bibula), and a strong, defiant, inteligencja tradition stretching back to Copernicus and beyond. By the same token, this rebelliousness was also a constant threat to the political integrity of the Soviet Bloc, and in 1985, when Gorbachev’s Perestroika was
unleashed and Solidarność was re-legalized, the decades-old clamoring for independence by Poland’s civil society spread across Eastern Europe like wildfire.

Thirdly, in the broader economic arena, the Soviet system struggled with the ‘catch-up legacy’ from WWII infrastructure devastation, with costly Cold War military competition (estimates range from 1/3 to 1/2 of the national budget), with ‘imperial overreach’ (from Africa to South East Asia, to Afghanistan; Vietnam cost the USSR over $1.5 billion), with a corrupt and exploitive nomenklatura class, with an overgrown ‘red tape laden bureaucracy,’ with a resource-based economy, and with the hindrance of ‘ideological orthodoxy’ – the worst case scenario being that not only the ‘commanding heights’ of the economy be operated by the State but all enterprise had to be operated by the State (resulting in creation of spółdzielnia, previously discussed). The People’s Republic Of Poland, as the third most populous state of the Soviet Bloc (only Russia and Ukraine had larger populations than Poland) and one of the most economically

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5 Mikhail Gorbachev [translated by Georges Peronansky and Tatjana Varsavsky], Memoirs (New York and London: Doubleday, 1995), 120 – 126. Here Gorbachev explains the incredible fact that no accurate or reliable figures on defense spending and the consumption of the military-industrial complex were available – not even to himself or other Politburo members. Separate branches of the government used incompatible calculation methods and many accounts were kept ‘top secret’ from office to office, making a total calculation impossible.

6 William Tompson, Seminar Studies In History: The Soviet Union Under Brezhnev (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2003), 32 – 40. However, Soviet expense on Vietnam was negligible compared to the nation’s final ‘megaproject,’ BAM (Baikal–Amur Mainline), a spur off the Trans-Siberian Rail Road which cost $15 billion and returned only a fraction of that amount.

7 Daniel Yergin, “Russia Returns,” in The Quest: Energy, Security, And The Remaking Of The Modern World (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 21 – 42. The USSR was resource-based as opposed to the rapidly diversifying Western economies of the late 1980s. Daniel Yergin explains that oil and gas exports ‘propped up’ the faltering Soviet Bloc economy in its final decades: “The economic system that Joseph Stalin had imposed on the Soviet Union was grounded in central planning, five-year plans, and self-sufficiency – what Stalin called ‘socialism in one country.’ The USSR was largely shut off from the world economy. It was only in the 1960s that the Soviet Union reemerged on the world market as a significant exporter of oil and then, in the 1970s, of natural gas. “Crude oil along with other natural resources were,” as one Russian oil leader later said, “nearly the single existing link of the Soviet Union to the world” for “earning the hard currency so desperately needed by this largely isolated country” (23). [Quoted by Yergin from Vagit Alekperov, introduction to Dabycha, the first Russian edition of The Prize.] Ironically, Vladimir Putin’s current aim is not to make Russia a leader in technological innovation or information-age entrepreneurialism, but rather a “natural-resources super power,” this according to Michael Hirsh, “Is Putin Stuck In The Cold War Era?” in, The Atlantic, Aug. 8, 2013. Hirsh calls Putin’s aims “…an antiquated notion of global influence.” http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/is-putin-stuck-in-the-cold-war-era/278502/.
productive, found itself inextricably woven into the system’s domestic and foreign problems. Poland and Russia were ‘forever linked in fraternal proletarian solidarity,’ to use Nikita Khrushchev’s favorite phrase, well before Polish Solidarity added another layer of problems to the system; for that matter, as the first chapter of this thesis pointed out, their cultural linkages extend into the distant past along with the accompanying animosities.

Fourthly, a series of ‘legitimacy problems’ plagued the Polish and Soviet governments, and as with the economic problems mentioned above, these too were closely intertwined. Large dissident movements existed in Poland and the USSR, early on, aimed against ‘Gulag justice’ and ‘police-state mentality,’ and later on, aimed at censorship and state control of information. Solidarity’s underground publishing networks linked with those of Czechoslovakia and other Eastern Bloc nations in protest of deteriorating economic conditions, and all were further informed by samizdat flowing out of the USSR. Bloc-wide conclusions from dissidents and samizdat writers lay a major share of the blame on ageing Communist Party chiefs, a ‘gerentocracy’ too out of touch with the masses to understand their complaints and too entrenched in Party Line orthodoxy to imagine creative solutions. This gradual but steady de-legitimation of leaders and the systems they controlled led to what Padraic Kenney called “the carnival of revolutions” across the Soviet Bloc and the creation of alternate, local, parallel economies which undermined State-sanctioned economies.⁸ Erosion of belief in the ageing Party leadership’s right to rule was justified by economic decline – regardless as to the degree to which this was true.

Fifthly, in regard to the ultimate breakup of the Soviet Union, the system was plagued with unresolved ‘nationality issues’ dating back to the early years of its creation. Citizens of distant ethnic republics had few cultural ties to the leaders of the central government in Moscow. Even those with closer ethnic ties – in the Slavic and Baltic regions – often held outright contempt for Russian political domination. Mikhail Gorbachev’s political liberation of the entire Soviet Bloc was meant to help address economic problems, yet when Perestroika’s full political momentum was released secession occurred rapidly. Glasnost opened the way for new political competition, new political parties, and new leaders – Boris Yeltsin’s rise to power being a prime example. Thus, old Party leaders within nations lost legitimacy as nations within the system itself declared their independence. Gorbachev had replaced the Brezhnev Doctrine (i.e., when Socialism is threatened in any nation, it becomes the concern of all Socialist nations) with the ‘Sinatra Doctrine’ - People of the Soviet Bloc, I give you permission to “do it your way” - and the people did just that. Perestroika from below finally met with Perestroika from above and this

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9 Richard Pipes, “The National Problem In Russia,” in The Formation Of The Soviet Union (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), 1997, 1 – 49. Including ‘the small peoples,’ as Stalin called ethnic minorities, nearly 200 distinct nationalities were recognized by the USSR. Many disputes were never resolved among some of these groups and the Soviet Union. Technically, per the USSR’s constitution, the various Republics, as part of a federation, had the right of self-determination, which they eventually exercised after December, 25, 1991. This came in response to the August, 1991 proposal drafted by Mikhail Gorbachev loosing the ties of the separate republics to the central state apparatus altogether. Article VI of the constitution, which gave the Communist Party supreme power and total political monopoly, was also rescinded.

10 Ronald G. Suny, The Structure Of Soviet History (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 471 – 472. With democratic elections having already taken place in Eastern Europe and Communist Party monopoly broken throughout the USSR, the Baltic States called for secession from the union in March 1991. Gorbachev then proposed a voluntary association of states and a vote was taken among the republics on this issue. Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Central Asian Republics (the ‘stans’) voted to maintain the voluntary union; the Baltic States and the states of the Caucus region opted for separation. By Christmas day of 1991, the system was publically dissolved by Gorbachev, a result of the Belavezha Accords, finalized at the Białowieża Forest, near Minsk, Belarus, on December 8th. Boris Yeltsin, of the Russian Federation, Stanislaw Shushkevich of Belarus, and Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine signed the Belavezha Accords, dissolving the Soviet Union and creating the Commonwealth Of Independent States.
ignited the transition, although Gorbachev had wanted reform only, not total transition.\textsuperscript{11} Although Polish head of state General Wojciech Jaruzelski had activated over a million Warsaw Pact troops in 1981, placing Poland under Martial Law, the ‘Gorbachev Effect’ had gained so much momentum by the late 1980s that fear of violent State repression seemed remote. Indeed, the ‘old Communist lions’ seemed to have lost their teeth earlier in the USSR proper than in the satellite nations; Ronald G. Suny reports that by the mid-1970s “…the bulk of the middleclass [in the USSR] had no fear of political repression.”\textsuperscript{12} Legitimacy issues, political ambitions, and the centrifugal pull of nationalism were the final blows which broke the Soviet Union and its hold on Eastern Europe. ‘Economic dysfunction,’ as so often incorrectly cited by Western proponents of unbridled capitalism as the sole reason for the ‘collapse’ (more accurately, secession of states from a union), was but one of \textit{many} factors in the transition, and to a great degree, an \textit{effect} of political disintegration rather than a \textit{cause}; in fact, economic revitalization would have probably been facilitated by maintaining the union.

In a similar vein, the Neoliberal argument that the breakup of the Soviet Union and transition of Eastern Europe were somehow due to their citizens’ ineptitude for work, avoidance of competition of any sort, and utter lack of self-initiative is likewise grossly incorrect. As this thesis has demonstrated, the day-to-day survival of average citizens was highly dependent on innovation and self-initiative in lieu of overcoming a plethora of shortages and economic

\textsuperscript{11} Several interviewees suggested that some nomenklatura wanted transition to capitalism as they (the nomenklatura) realized this was an opportunity to enrich themselves, as many nomenklatura actually did by assuming State property and means of production (discussed in previous chapter). In such circumstances, desire for ‘perestroika from above’ was not a selfless cause for the betterment of society, but further personal greed on the part of the nomenklatura. Also, Mikhail Gorbachev has called this attitude “…the thoughtless and adventurist dissolving of the Soviet Union,” and he blames it for many of the problems experienced today in former Soviet Bloc states today. Mikhail Gorbachev in, \textit{Russia Today}, ‘Gorbachev Urges Mutually Acceptable Solution In Ukraine Crisis To Prevent New Cold War,’ 3/14/2014, \url{http://rt.com/politics/gorbachev-ukraine-cold-war-crisis-802}.

\textsuperscript{12} Suny, \textit{The Structure Of Soviet History}, 419.
dysfunctions forced upon them by structural flaws in the system. Contention in all aspects of life – from obtaining the basic ingredients for an evening meal to obtaining entrance to a university – were highly competitive endeavors. ‘Socialist competition’ in the factory, the farm, the school, and the neighborhood was both a source of positive social incentive and personal pride. For the writer of this thesis, having visited, observed, studied, and communicated with many working class people from Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia over the past five years, and having had minor connections to Solidarność since the early 1980s (through participation in the AFL-CIO), assumptions or implications of an ‘inferior socialist work ethic’ made by academics, political pundits, or ‘armchair economists’ demonstrate only a reified echoing of Westerncentric assumed superiority far removed from historical reality.

Finally, in assessing why the transition occurred, a group of related factors perhaps best categorized as ‘emotional’ or ‘psychological’ constructs must be mentioned. Generally speaking, the systems that were so effective in building modern socialized economies out of backward agricultural states inadvertently created much later dissatisfaction with the paternalistic political arrangements these economies functioned within. ‘Stalinist civilization,’ as described by Stephen Kotkin, entailed goals no less than the education and modernization of a continent spanning a dozen time zones – and this feat was to be accomplished within a decade! The incredible destruction of World War II obliterated much of the progress, but through the 1950s, ‘60s, and 70s, the USSR and its Eastern European satellites rebuilt and recovered from the war and ‘second and third wave’ industrialization and technology became more and more widespread. In the process, a large educated, urban, industrial, technological, and managerial class emerged, far removed from the predominantly illiterate peasant mindsets of their parents’ and

grandparents’ generation. As overall educational levels rose, so did living standards and material expectations – along with awareness of ‘relative deprivation’ in relation to mythical or real Western standards. The Soviet Bloc had some of the best educated citizens in the world, yet many of the brightest and most creative were reduced to discussing new ideas with a handful of trusted friends around the kitchen table. In short, a modern, educated, middle class arose, not unlike the middle class of the US or Western Europe, except that it was governed by an authoritarian and paternalistic political elite, steeped in values and attitudes better suited to the era of the emergence and early creation of an industrial proletariat – not at all to that of a sophisticated citizenry, many of which had talent and energy in search of an outlet. Awareness of the East-West divide, in material terms and in terms of the openness of civil society, became ever-more widespread as Soviet Bloc citizens traveled more frequently and as Western culture filtered in through mass media as diverse as Radio Free Europe to black market books, records, and videotapes.

Thus, there seems to have emerged in Poland and across the Soviet Bloc a ‘creeping awareness’ that something was missing from daily life, something much less concrete than consumer goods and reliable stores of bread and potatoes, but far more important to the dignity of the individual and to the overall satisfaction of living. No doubt, this awareness was manifest in different ways per different personal experiences, and no doubt some individuals did not experience it at all. Rather than long elaboration on these abstract and highly variable concepts, below, discussion of three final sets of very novel interview data will help clarify:
While a college student in the late 1970s, ‘Anna’ received a travel visa through her “good connections” and made a Christmastime visit to West Germany. Her story of that trip reveals what many Soviet Bloc citizens found when they went West:

I was amazed by the things these people could buy in their shops – literally anything one wanted! But when I returned to Wałbrzych, I kept thinking: what is so different here? I mean, apart from the shopping, or lack of shopping! Finally it dawned on me. It was colors. Was there a shortage of paint in Poland? Were all old Polish buildings made of gray stone or worn brick? Were all new Polish buildings made of unpainted, gray concrete? The colors in Berlin and Munich, I realized, were not just different building materials, not just Christmastime decorations either. They were *advertising* – commercial advertising - big, bold, colorful, lighted, decorated - nothing like that existed in Poland!  

But there was more to Anna’s story than just the observation of a lack of Westernized commercial culture in Poland. The ‘colors’ were an outward manifestation of a different outlook on life (although, in a very literal sense, another interviewee had complained of Polish cities being ‘a black and white world’ in winter; i.e., nothing but coal dust and snow). There was a culture of openness and individualism, or perhaps of individual personal identity, lacking, or at least repressed, under the State-imposed, authoritarian system. This realization made her aware of the ‘paternalism’ in the Polish system and the control it had over her life:

…so one night we went to a disco. I had never saw anything like this in Wałbrzych! They were playing records by the Swedish pop group ABBA and everyone was dancing and drinking! We had this music in Poland too – I had heard it before and I loved it! You could buy Western pop records in Poland at little markets or from certain people who sold them. But we never heard them played in public. I would not think of playing such a record loudly or openly, not because I thought it was a ‘crime’ – because most everyone [young people] had these records… [by the late 1970s]. I mean, I would be afraid and ashamed of what my parents or neighbors thought of such music. They would think this very ‘decadent,’ very ‘trashy.’ Filled with Western affluence and maybe ‘criminal’ influence – wild and out of control! Years later, my husband and I were talking about

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14 ‘Anna,’ interview by author, 6/18/2012.
this. We laughed, and said, if we must discover what the French call joie de vivre in a German industrial town, what does that say about our own town? 15

Anna came to feel that she was being robbed of some part of life that was being experienced in the rest of the world. Even though she was never active in the Solidarity Movement, and never played Western pop records ‘loud and in public’ back home in Wałbrzych, she became acutely aware that “something was missing” and that it was not to be found in the People’s Republic Of Poland. 16 Yet, she had no hope for a different future. She commented, “I didn’t think things would ever change. I could have never imagined the openness we have now back in my youth. My own kids and my students explore the world on the Internet. Of course, there was no Internet when I was their age, but even so, we only received bits and pieces of the bigger world back then.” 17

Similarly, ‘Vera’ mentioned a disturbing awareness of patterns of behavior - a ‘cultural paternalism’ of sorts - that she believed stemmed from rigid ideological orthodoxy ‘prescribed’ by the Party. This was especially true, she believed, for professional women. Vera, herself a lawyer, described the concept using an interesting example to illustrate:

Older Polish women, especially professional women, don’t walk, they ‘march.’ Have you ever seen them on the street? Look carefully and you will see. They stare forward, serious expression on their face, stomp their heels in stiff, rapid march! They make a lot of noise! (laughter)…This is to signal to all, their diligence, their duty being fulfilled…they are in

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15 ‘Anna,’ interview by author, 6/18/2012.

16 Alexei Yurchak, “Imaginary West,” in Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), 158 – 206, the affinity for all things Western by Eastern Bloc citizens – as described above by ‘Anna’ - was known as ‘Western Idolatry.’ Ironically, the more that access to this ‘imaginary West’ was restricted, the greater became its appeal. Some interviewees suggested that the West ‘sold’ its glittering image as a propaganda technique to help undermine Soviet Bloc stability by creating desire for Western culture; that is, it promoted ‘Western Idolatry.’

17 ‘Anna,’ interview by author, 6/18/2012.
a hurry, and have not one second to waste on frivolous things. Profession comes first, then husband, children, and parents. They are making known by their rigid behavior that they are ‘good Communist women.’ I don’t think our grandmothers acted this way. No, I don’t think they ‘marched’ to the market with the look of a professional soldier! …It went farther than this…how one dressed, what one ate, who one associated with, how one’s home was kept, what books one read – how one acted and thought and spoke – was always under scrutiny if you held a professional job.  

Of course, similar observations concerning peer judgments among professionals might have been made in the West as well (less the ‘marching’). However, Vera added that a fearful dread, or a paranoia, often accompanied professional life in Soviet Bloc nations. Dr. Barbara Wejnert expressed very similar feelings about the hyper-stressed lives of professionals under the authoritarian government of the People’s Republic Of Poland. Beyond the ‘cultural paternalism’ expressed by ‘Anna’ and ‘Vera,’ Dr. Wejnert explained the ‘intellectual paternalism’ endured by all individuals involved in research, teaching, journalism, or any communications field. For example, she recalled, in universities across the Soviet Bloc, all social or historical research had to be theoretically based on approved Marxist-Leninist doctrines. To do otherwise was, at best, to have one’s research rejected, ignored, overlooked, filed away, or otherwise dismissed; at worst, it could mean a jail sentence. Dr. Wejnert explained that ‘ideological indoctrination’ started in elementary school and pervaded all areas of study:

The ideology of Marx and Lenin was presented to you in your school from young years on. Everything taught had to be right with the Party ideology. History books were written and approved in Moscow and told history from the Soviet perspective. All students learned Russian language and studied Russian literature from second-grade on. Even if your major was biology or medicine or engineering, you must have classes from childhood to university graduation in Marxist-Leninism – socialist economics, Russian literature, political philosophy. This took up a lot of students’ time and I argued against it on the grounds that it detracted from their studies in their own specific professional courses….

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18 ‘Vera,’ interview by author, 6/18/2012.
...the Soviet Union was ‘colonizing’ us – there is no doubt in my mind! The Party wanted to re-shape culture in Eastern Europe exactly as they were shaping culture in Russia. This was no different than the ‘Russification’ during the Partitions – that has always been their goal, to make Poland part of their empire. In the years after WWII, when the Communist Party took control, they killed Polish leaders and intellectuals who defied them, or they sent them to some work camp in Siberia. This went on for twenty years, until that entire [WWII] generation was either silenced or dead....Without [independent] intellectual leadership, new generations [in Poland and across the USSR and its satellites] were educated and indoctrinated just as the leaders in Moscow prescribed. 19

Thus, per the above interview statement, we come full circle, returning to the opening chapter of this thesis and the notion that ‘you cannot understand Poland without understanding Russia.’ The thoughts expressed by the three interviewees, above, capture the deeper reasons for the transition. Beyond economic dysfunction, which is the cause most often stated for the transition, many people of Eastern Europe, of Central Asia, the Baltic States, the Caucuses – across the Soviet Bloc – felt the ‘cultural paternalism’ described by ‘Anna’ and ‘Vera.’ Others felt the ‘intellectual paternalism’ and all-out ‘colonization’ as described by Dr. Wejnert. This helps explain the powerful urge for ‘perestroika from below,’ that is, the desire for restructuring the system as held by average citizens.

But perestroika from below is nothing new. It is the age-old reaction to the Russian drive to create a ‘Pan-Slavic Super State,’ as mentioned in this thesis’s opening paragraphs. After the chaos of WWII, that ‘Super-State’ reached its zenith. It was not all that different from the ancient Roman Empire, the British Empire, or Britain’s successor, the United States – except that it was predicated on the singular, exclusive, and messianic doctrine of Marxist-Leninism. Similar to Britain’s obsession with ‘the white man’s burden,’ this empire’s social mission was creation of

19 Dr. Barbara Wejnert, interview by author, 1/23/2010.
‘New Soviet Man’ throughout its realm. Resistance to this idea was nothing new either; it took forms as varied as individual dissident publishing (‘samizdat,’ as described by ‘Mrs. Danka’ in chapter three), to creation of the ten million-member labor union, Solidarność, to ‘Anna’s’ ‘Western idolatry,’ to ‘Vera’s’ condemnation of ‘Polish women marching.’ The thing that was new – the thing that ultimately made the Polish transition and transition of the entire ‘Super State’ possible – was that, for the first time, from 1985 onward, the desire for perestroika ‘from below’ began meshing with the desire for perestroika ‘from above.’ What drove the many different versions of these ‘desires’ was as varied as the individual lives of those who experienced them.

But the transition is not finished. A new generation is coming of age in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, a generation without the heavy historical burdens and ideological constraints of their parents. The ultimate triumph of the transition will be to unleash the energy and creativity of this generation, so that they may reclaim what worked in the former system and discard what failed, making possible a synthesis of old and new, of East and West. In broadest philosophical terms, this means a synthesis and refinement of Marx and Jefferson; it means a merger of the collectivist and individualist branches of Enlightenment thought in creation of a new world system that will facilitate the attainment of the full potential of all human beings.
Literature Review

There is an enormous amount of published material relevant to this thesis and this review is by no means complete. It covers a variety of historical, sociological, and economic treatments of the Polish People’s Republic in its last decade, the Solidarity Movement, and the broader context of political and economic transition in Eastern Europe and Russia which characterized this period. In general, most works can be classified under one of six themes: 1) historical accounts, 2) journalistic accounts, 3) participant accounts, 4) accounts that focus on one or a few main factors that facilitated the transitions of the era, 5) accounts that focus on specific individuals or groups that influenced the Solidarity Movement, and 6) macroeconomics studies.

A good source of general background history for Dolny Śląsk (Lower Silesia) is Microcosm: Portrait Of A Central European City, by Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse. Known over time by a dozen different names by the shifting dominance of the capital city’s populations, Wrocław (Breslau, Vraclav, Бреслау, Вртслав, ורוצלב etc.) is the ancient hub of a multiethnic, multicultural region deep in the heartland of Europe. A major principality in the Hapsburg era, Wrocław has been shaped by a profusion of languages, religions, cultural constructs, and political ideologies. Poles, Jews, Russian, Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, and Italians have contributed to the cultural landscape of this most cosmopolitan microcosm of East Central Europe. By extension, the small mining town of nearby Wałbrzych (along with Gdańsk, Wałbrzych being the focal points of this thesis), even more so typifies Davies and Moorhouse’s ‘microcosm of Europe’ construct; in addition to the main ethnic groups of Wrocław, the town of Wałbrzych became a refuge for Greek Communists, and through chain migrations, became

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linked to Belgium and France. Davies and Moorhouse’s *Microcosm* provides a major portion of the documented history into which the lived history of contemporary Poles interviewed for this research project is couched.

*The Polish Revolution: Solidarity,* written by Timothy Garton Ash, was first published in 1983 and updated in 1991, 1999, and 2002. Ash, a British historian, gives a first-hand journalistic account of the Solidarity Movement from its beginnings in the summer of 1980 to the declaration of martial law in December 1981. The book also includes an historical background and the later editions bring the reader up to date with events that occurred after Ash's initial account. The book focuses on the main events that occurred at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk: the strikes, negotiations, agreements, formation of the labor union *Solodarność,* and its eventual demise under martial law. Much of it is written in the first person as Ash was an observer at the shipyard strike and was a witness to the signing of the Gdańsk Agreements. The book includes a chronology, appendix of Polish abbreviations (for the many political, labor, and government groups involved), and is extensively documented as to the sources of its data. This book may be considered the ‘definitive story’ of Solidarity, as many other publications cite it in the retelling of the general history. Ash's account emphasizes the Polish peoples' dissatisfaction with the dysfunctional and hypocritical Soviet system that emerged in Poland after WWII, and cites this as the primary cause for the revolution of the 1980s.

Padraic Kenney's *A Carnival Of Revolutions: Central Europe 1989,* was published in 2002 and gives an historical view of the diversity of opposition groups and resistance styles swirling

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around Central Europe in the late 1980s. Kenney is an American historian and made extensive use of Polish, Czech, and Ukrainian samizdat literature, citing nearly 100 different samizdat publications, as well as extensive interviews with Polish, Czech, Ukrainian, Hungarian, German, Slovenian, and Western European informants. Most of the interviews were conducted in the late 1990s.

Whereas Ash focused on the mainstream events specifically in Poland, such as the Gdańsk shipyard strikes and the official meetings between Solodarność and the Polish government, Kenney's main focus is on detailing the more eclectic opposition groups throughout Central Europe. He describes the workings of artists, musicians, grassroots groups, students, and environmental activists in the late 1980s. His thesis is that ‘a carnival of revolutions’ occurred across a wide geographic area, which in their totality caused the democratization of Central Europe. Kenney prefers the term ‘Central Europe’ over ‘Eastern Europe,’ as his term includes the former western republics of the USSR. Most other authors simply use the term ‘Eastern Europe.’

Lech Walesa's book, *A Way Of Hope*, provides a first-hand account of events in Poland from the 1970 massacre of shipyard workers at the gates of the Lenin Shipyard, to the Gdańsk Agreements of 1980, through the years of martial law. It is written out of the experiences of the main leader of Solodarność, and provides a wealth of detailed information about conditions that lead to the strikes on the Baltic Coast, the birth of the Solidarity Movement, details of the

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negotiation of the Gdańsk Agreements, life under martial law, and details of Walesa's private life.

Whereas the above-mentioned accounts of the Solidarity Movement credit a wide array of participant groups in facilitating its success, Roman Laba's book, *The Roots of Solidarity*, is steadfast in its ‘anti-intellectual thesis,’ and seeks to credit only ‘the working-class’ with the movement's success.  

Ash credits a combined effort on the part of workers, the Church, and intellectual groups, Walesa credits the same, and Kenney credits an even more eclectic assortment of influences. In agreement with the findings of most researchers, all individuals interviewed in this thesis project, four of whom had been high-level participants in the daily workings of the movement, attributed many diverse groups with Solidarity's success. Laba's research, however, seems to be intent on denying this reality and concerned mainly with polarization.

Shana Penn's book, *Solidarity's Secret*, details the contribution of women and the production of samizdat as prime facilitators in Solidarity's success. Penn conducted many interviews in Poland with former and current Solodarność members, most of them women. Thus, Penn also gains a unique perspective on the ‘forced emancipation’ of women in Sovietized countries. Polish women, according to Penn, identify feminism with certain policies and goals of the Communist Party which were exploitive and humiliating. For example, due to post-WWII labor shortages many women had little choice but to take dirty and demeaning jobs in heavy industrial

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works, but the ideologically correct notion of equality with men - when it came to wages and hours spent on the job - amounted to little more than lip service.

Thus, Penn found that Polish women had a cynical conception of the Western term ‘feminism,’ as in their reality it had been a negative thing. However, the dedicated and courageous work of women, especially in the work of maintaining the Solidarity movement through samizdat publishing, was as progressive and liberating as any Westernized feminist undertaking. As most of the vocal leaders of Solidarność were men, the outlawing of the group under martial law meant that many of these men were sent to jail. This left many women activists to maintain the movement underground by clandestine publishing. These were ‘liberated’ women, in Western terms, independently pursuing societal goals of their own accord. Gender equality was evident in the important role these women played, but ‘official’ feminist discourse was not trusted by them as it was identified with Soviet intentions to ‘use’ women. This unique and insightful perspective makes Penn's book a valuable resource in terms of understanding gender roles under Communism in Poland, and by extension, gender roles of the interviewees in this research project.

Maryjane Osa's book, *Solidarity And Contention* (2003), also gives a unique focus on the movement by showing how prior attempts at organizing opposition against the government in Poland left an ‘organizational residue’ that cumulatively facilitated the ultimate success. In each failure at resistance, over a long period of time (from the 1950s onward), according to Osa, dissenters learned valuable lessons and formed networks of opposition that eventually facilitated the final victory.

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Another unique perspective on the Solidarity Movement is found in Kubik's *The Power Of Symbols Against The Symbols Of Power.* Kubik analyzes the movement from an anthropological perspective, concentrating on the role of symbols in the building of political power and legitimacy. The book is an elaboration on Kubik's doctoral thesis, "The Role of Symbols In The Legitimation Of Power: Poland, 1976 - 1981." He argues that the Solidarity Movement was much too complex to be categorized into a single genre such as a trade union movement, a social movement, or a political movement. As an eyewitness to the 1980 events in Gdańsk, Kubik was taken by what he describes as "...a gigantic pageant of images and symbolic performances,” which he eventually condensed into the construct of "Solidarity Culture." According to Kubik, by considering holistically this construct - supported through, expressed in, and legitimated by symbolism - one can best understand the complexities of social, political, economic, and cultural arenas that constituted late Communist-era Poland and the central theme that dominated it – The Solidarity Movement.

Kubik used a vast amount of data in producing his study. The bibliography section, for example, is twenty-two pages long, but he also includes interview data, his own direct experiences in Gdańsk, public accounts of events in Poland connected to the movement, samizdat accounts, and a review of an archive of photographs taken during the movement. The result is a very complex and detailed study, invaluable to any researcher of the Solidarity Movement and/or Poland in the 1970s and 1980s.

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9 Ibid., 2.
Neal Ascherson’s book, *The Book Of Lech Wałęsa*, does not attempt an holistic analysis of the movement as does Kubik. Instead, Ascherson uses memoirs, letters, interviews, and manuscripts of Polish authors to describe the charismatic leadership of Lech Wałęsa. Through these personal, first-hand accounts, he creates a biography of the Polish leader, revealing, for example, how Wałęsa’s simple and sometimes chaotic speeches appealed to the crowds, or how personal acquaintances of Wałęsa perceived him and his self-appointed leadership role in Solidarność. The basic thesis of the book is that Solidarity was greatly facilitated by the charismatic appeal of Lech Wałęsa.

Two books by Gale Stokes were often referred to in writing the background history for this thesis: *From Stalinism To Pluralism: A Documentary History Of Eastern Europe Since 1945* (1996), and *The Walls Came Tumbling Down* (1993).

The first provides copies of historic documents covering events ranging from the 1945 Yalta Conference to the 1991 resignation of Mikhail Gorbachev. Stokes also includes memoirs and essays written by first-hand observers and participants in the course of events affecting Eastern Europe stretching from the end of WWII to the collapse of the Soviet Union. It includes many documents directly pertaining to Solidarność in Poland, such as a letter written in a Gdańsk prison by Adam Michnik, a reprint of the Gdansk Agreement, a transcript of General Wojciech Jaruzelski’s declaration of martial law, and a speech given by Pope John Paul II in Warsaw. It

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also includes items from Hungary and Czechoslovakia which capture the essence of these nations' involvement in the Solidarity Movement.

The second book by Stokes takes a detailed look at the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe from political and ideological perspectives. It begins with the 1968 Prague Spring events and carries on through the early 1990s and the turmoil in Yugoslavia that resulted from democratization. Both of Stokes’ books provide comprehensive histories of the regions and the era in which the transformation to democracy in Eastern Europe emerged. They thoroughly discuss the role of Solidarność in facilitating the transformation as well as the later role of the Solidarity Movement in shaping Eastern European politics.

_The Polish August_, edited by Oliver MacDonald, similar to Stokes' comprehensive documentary history, is a compilation of documents specific only to Poland. Many were taken from the British journal _Labor Focus_. MacDonald also includes transcripts of interviews with Gdańsk Shipyard workers, samizdat newspaper articles, shipyard bulletins, and copies of specific factory and shipyard agreements made between Solidarność and the government representatives of these facilities. This book provides very specific details on the contracts themselves and also provides background material on the events and circumstances leading up to the agreements, mostly through other documents, letters, and reports from negotiators. MacDonald offered this compilation as a first-hand account of Polish/English translated material which documents, as he puts it, "…one of the greatest events of the Twentieth Century... in

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which the people of Poland are attempting nothing less than to take full control of their modern industrial society... that they built but do not control."\(^{14}\)

Barbara Wejnert's book, *Transition To Democracy In Eastern Europe And Russia*, likewise, is a compilation, not of historical documents, but of academic articles on the subject.\(^{15}\) This book moves past the events of the 1980s in Eastern Europe and focuses on the overall societal shift to democracy in this region. It includes sections concerning the shift in terms of political, economic, and cultural change, and in terms of social problems and policy issues. In many cases dysfunction and eventually disillusionment came out of the hopeful expectations that Solidarity, and the Solidarity movement in general, had promised. The democratic shift in governments, while restoring many human rights and the ability of individuals to attempt to make their own destinies in life, also left many people without the social safety net of Communism. Thus, greater economic inequality, joblessness, homelessness, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, and other societal problems have increased in some parts of the former Communist world. The articles in this book detail the problems encountered in the rapid changes that followed Communism's downfall.

Václav Havel's lyrical book, *The Power Of The Powerless*, gives a philosophical and ideological argument against the Communist system in Eastern Europe, and a critique of the dysfunctional political systems that maintained it.\(^{16}\) In his book, Havel was speaking not only to Czechoslovakia but to all activists in Eastern Europe and to all who believed in the human rights

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 169.


agenda of the Solidarity Movement. His message was for all who imagined a better future to unite in solidarity and to maintain that solidarity until the Leninist/Stalinist ideological era was finally put aside. He begins with a reference to Marx, saying that, "a spectre is haunting Eastern Europe...", not of communism but of dissent against communism. His observations proved historically accurate.

Raphael Shen's *The Polish Economy: Legacies From The Past, Prospects For The Future*, concentrates on the role of specific governmental policies in facilitating the Polish transition.\(^{17}\) Shen describes the various agencies established by the new Solidarność government and how specific legislation targeted potential pitfalls. Shen's conclusion is that foreign investment, regulated by domestic legislation, was the key factor in Poland's successful transition.

Kazimierz Z. Poznanski's *Poland's Protracted Transition* is a macroeconomic analysis which concentrates on the liquidity crisis, inflationary spiral, productivity and efficiency problems, and indebtedness as major obstacles which economic planners had to first overcome in order to 'jump start' the new economy.\(^{18}\) This book provides a thorough explanation (in purely economic terms) as to how Poland's economy failed and how it was reconstructed.

Stephen Kotkin discusses the collapse of Soviet Bloc in general and does so from a structural perspective in his book titled *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse*.\(^{19}\) His analysis spans the 30 years between 1970 and 2000, as this period encompasses the peak, decline, and early regeneration of Soviet Bloc economies. In summary, Kotkin likens the system's problems to those of the US Rustbelt (aging infrastructure, inefficient operations, over investment on 'mega-


sized' heavy industrial facilities, and creeping competition from Asian producers). Yet, the Soviet system was even more hindered than the US system by ideological rigidity and a highly entrenched bureaucracy. Failure was as much a result of socialist political conservatism as regeneration was a result of capitalistic liberalism. In classical Marxist-Weberian terminology, the 'ideological superstructure built on the material base' did a reversal; acceptance of new ideological culture allowed for creation of new material culture (whereas prior to the collapse of Communism there existed an ideological strangulation of the economy).

Two books written about the Russian transition provide easily generalizable accounts, in that all Soviet Bloc economies were basically 'clones' of the Russian system. Anders Aslund gives a very instructive overview of Russian privatization, quite similar in content to the personal interview data collected by the author of this paper in Gdańsk.\textsuperscript{20} Aslund’s \textit{Economic Transformation In Russia} also includes a chapter titled “The Conditions Of Life,” which gives some details of the transition's effect on individuals’ daily lives. Although this chapter is also highly quantitative it is one of the rare English language accounts that consider the transition beyond purely economic terms.

Finally, Steven Rosefielde gives a long-term historical perspective on the Soviet transition, again generalizable as much of Eastern Europe was incorporated into the unified system at the end of WWII.\textsuperscript{21} \textit{The Russian Economy From Lenin To Putin} traces the interaction between historical processes and economic outcomes throughout the 20th century. Rosefielde sees both the collapse and the regeneration of Socialist economies in terms of macro level systems. He

\textsuperscript{20} Anders Aslund, \textit{Economic Transformation In Russia} (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.)

\textsuperscript{21} Steven Rosenfield, \textit{The Russian Economy From Lenin To Putin} (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).
offers interpretation of the causes of the system’s failures and recommendations for its rebuilding.
Sources

Individuals wishing to remain anonymous are identified by fictitious first names only. All interviews were conducted by the author. Marta Skibinska and Aleksandra Kristiansen of Wydział Filologiczny, Uniwersytet Gdańsk, Bałtycki Kampus, Oliwa were the primary interpreters for the interviews conducted in the Gdańsk-Sopot-Gdynia tri-cities region. Andrzej Falkowski and Marta Rutkowska also assisted. Tadeusz Drzewiecki and Zofia Rudnicka were the primary interpreters for Lower Silesia, including Wałbrzych, Wrocław, and Szczawno-Zdrój. Only interviewees who are directly quoted in the thesis are listed below. Some individuals were interviewed more than once or were contacted again later.

Baltic Coast Interviews – Gdańsk, Sopot, Gdynia


‘Czarek,’ Gdańsk, 6/19/2012.


‘Leszek,’ Gdynia, 6/26/2012.


‘Ola’ and Henryk,’ Gdańsk, 12/21/2010.


‘Rosa,’ Gdynia, 6/16/2012.


‘Zuzka,’ Gdynia, 6/12/2012.

Lower Silesia Interviews - Walbrzych, Kraków, Wrocław, Szczawno-Zdrój

‘Adam and Natalie,’ Kraków, 6/6/2012.


‘Boris,’ Walbrzych, 6/20/2011.

‘Jan,’ Walbrzych, 6/28/2012.

‘Leon,’ Walbrzych, 6/28/2012.

‘Mr. and Mrs. Motyka,’ Walbrzych, 6/22/2012.

Oksana, Walbrzych, 6/8/2012.


Other Interviews


‘Vera,’ Warsaw, 6/18/2012.

‘Joanna, Kasha, and Marja,’ Bangor, Northern Ireland, all originally from Wrocław, 12/21/2012.
Personal Communications and Consultations

The individuals listed below were contacted numerous times via phone, email, Facebook, Skype, or face-to-face during the course of researching and writing this thesis. They provided historical data, translation assistance, and general clarifications based on their knowledge of and experiences in Eastern Europe and/or the USSR.

‘Anna’ from Gdańsk
Dr. Jeffra Flaitz
Marta Skibinska
Tadeusz Drzewiecki
Zofia Rudnicka

Non-published Sources

Tadeusz Drzewiecki, non-published personal memoirs and essays on contemporary Polish history. Wrocław, Poland, translated by Zofia Rudnicka, June, 2012.

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Roads To Freedom: Europe Via Solidarność, publication of Fundacaja Centrum Solidarności, Wały Piastowskie 24, Gdańsk
US State Department, FM AmeEmbBassy Warsaw, Doc. # 89warsaw07401, June ’89. Subject: Election ’89: Solidarity’s Coming.

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US State Department, FM AmeEmbBassy Warsaw, Doc. # 89warsaw08680, June, ‘89 Subject: Concerning Possible Social Disorder.


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The Underground Economy. Essay by James Von Geldern.


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Appendices

Note On Methods

This project began in 2009 with a series of formal, closed-ended interviews specifically designed for a sociology thesis. However, during the next four years, what started as a sociology project evolved into an oral history project as well, with trips to Poland each year and collection of data in towns and villages on the Baltic Coast and in Lower Silesia. Every personal history contributed to better understanding of Polish history and the course of Soviet Bloc history in general. It soon became clear that many interviewees were thinking well beyond the simple, formal questions of the interview schedule; they were relating elaborate oral histories of the entire Solidarity decade (the 1980s) and previous decades. In addition to their experiences of political activism through Solidarność, they included detailed accounts of daily life — of work in the Lenin Shipyard, and of alternative means of economic survival in an increasingly dysfunctional economy. They told stories of how the Solidarity Movement was outlawed, of how activists were imprisoned, how Martial Law was declared, and how the Movement was maintained through underground publishing and clandestine operations. In some cases, the stories extended decades into the past, to the 1970 massacre of shipyard workers, to the paranoia of Stalinism in the 1950s, to collectivization in the late 1940s. A few interviewees remembered WWII, the Nazi occupation, the liberation of Poland by the Red Army, and the establishment of the People’s Republic.

The interviews followed the protocol set by Marshall University Office of Research Integrity for the original Gdańsk project in 2009, and were updated and modified for continued use in through 2012 in both Gdańsk and Wałbrzych (IRBNet ID # 146051 – 6). A copy of the consent form and general interview schedule are included below. The questions served as an outline only and as a prompt for eliciting open-ended oral histories from interviewees. In many cases, interviewees’ responses ranged far beyond the artificial limits of a formal questionnaire — again, access to this wealth of historical data and realization of its value, is what suggested the extension of the original project.
December 11, 2009

Richard Garnett, PhD
Sociology/Anthropology Department

RE: IRBNet ID# 146051-3
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Garnett:

Protocol Title: [146051-3] A Synthetic Analysis of the Polish Solidarity Movement
Expiration Date: December 10, 2010
Site Location: MU
Type of Change: New Project APPROVED
Review Type: Expedited Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.110(a)(7), the above study and informed consent were granted Expedited approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Chair for the period of 12 months. The approval will expire December 10, 2010. A continuing review request for this study must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Steve Mays.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, CIPI at (304) 896-4303 or dav50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.
November 10, 2010

Richard Garnett, PhD
Sociology/Anthropology Department

RE: IRBNet ID# 146051-5
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Garnett:

Protocol Title: [146051-5] A Synthetic Analysis of the Polish Solidarity Movement

Expiration Date: November 10, 2011
Site Location: MU
Type of Change: Continuing Review/Progress APPROVED Report
Review Type: Expedited Review

The above study and informed consent were approved for an additional 12 months by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Chair. Approval was also granted for the addition of the survey and consent translated into Polish. The approval will expire November 10, 2011. Continuing review materials should be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Steve Mays.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, CIP at (304) 696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.
Introduction

You are invited to be in a research study. Research studies are designed to gain scientific knowledge that may help other people in the future. You may or may not receive any benefit from being part of the study. Your participation is voluntary. Please take your time to make your decision, and ask your research investigator or research staff to explain any words or information that you do not understand.

Why Is This Study Being Done?

It is being done to learn more about the Polish Solidarity Movement.

How Many People Will Take Part In The Study?

About 30 people will take part in this study. A total of 50 people are the most that would be able to enter the study.

What Is Involved In This Research Study?

You will be answering some questions about your participation in the Polish Solidarity Movement and/or about your life in Poland prior to 1989. If you are an American you will be
answering some questions about your participation in a labor union and about your experiences at your place of work. These questions will allow the researcher to compare and contrast the experiences of workers in American and Polish labor unions. If your answers are recorded on tape or digital recorder all of the recordings will be erased or destroyed at the end of the study.

**How Long Will You Be In The Study?**

You will be in the study for about one year. There may be a follow-up interview that you can participate in if you wish.

You can decide to stop participating at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study we encourage you to talk to the study investigator or study staff as soon as possible.

The study investigator may stop you from taking part in this study at any time if he/she believes it is in your best interest; if you do not follow the study rules; or if the study is stopped.

**What Are The Risks Of The Study?**

There are no known risks to those who take part in this study.

**Are There Benefits To Taking Part In The Study?**

If you agree to take part in this study, there may or may not be direct benefit to you. We hope the information learned from this study will benefit other people in the future. The benefits of participating in this study may be that the information you are contributing will help us better understand social movements.

**What About Confidentiality?**

We will do our best to make sure that your personal information is kept confidential. However, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Federal law says we must keep your study records private. Nevertheless, under unforeseen and rare circumstances, we may be required by law to allow certain agencies to view your records. Those agencies would include the Marshall University IRB, Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and the federal Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP). This is to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety. If we publish the information we learn from this study, you will not be identified by name or in any other way.

If audio recordings of your interview are made they will be erased as soon as the researcher reviews them and records any pertinent data from them in the form of a written transcript. Any written transcript of your interview will be kept in a locked file cabinet accessible only by the researcher. If any of the information you give us is used in writing up a research report your
name will not be used, nor will any details be used that would allow any reader of the report to identify you.

**What Are The Costs Of Taking Part In This Study?**

There are no costs to you for taking part in this study. All the study costs, including any study tests, supplies and procedures related directly to the study, will be paid for by the study.

**Will You Be Paid For Participating?**

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

**What Are Your Rights As A Research Study Participant?**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or you may leave the study at any time. Refusing to participate or leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide to stop participating in the study we encourage you to talk to the investigators or study staff first.

**Whom Do You Call If You Have Questions Or Problems?**

For questions about the study or in the event of a research-related injury, contact the study investigator, at (304) 696-2800 or (304) 696-6700. You should also call the investigator if you have a concern or complaint about the research.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Marshall University IRB#2 Chairman Dr. Stephen Cooper or ORI at (304) 696-4303. You may also call this number if:

- You have concerns or complaints about the research.
- The research staff cannot be reached.
- You want to talk to someone other than the research staff.

You will be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

**SIGNATURES**
You agree to take part in this study and confirm that you are 18 years of age or older. You have had a chance to ask questions about being in this study and have had those questions answered. By signing this consent form you are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled.

__________________________
Subject Name (Printed)

__________________________
Subject Signature  Date

__________________________
Person Obtaining Consent (Printed)

__________________________
Person Obtaining Consent Signature  Date
Wstęp

Zapraszam do udziału w badaniu naukowym. Celem badań klinicznych jest zgromadzenie wiedzy naukowej, która w przyszłości może pomóc ludziom. Uczestnictwo w badaniu może Panu(i) przynieść korzyści lub nie. Uczestnictwo w badaniu jest całkowicie dobrowolne. Proszę spokojnie przemyślić swoją decyzję i poprosić badacza naukowego lub personel prowadzący badanie o wyjaśnienie wszystkich słów bądź informacji, których Pan(i) nie rozumie.

Dlaczego prowadzimy to badanie?

Badanie jest prowadzone w celu uzyskania większej wiedzy o polskim ruchu Solidarność.

Ile osób weźmie udział w tym badaniu naukowym?

W tym badaniu weźmie udział co najmniej 30 osób. W badaniu będzie mogło wziąć udział wyłącznie włącznie 50 osób.
Co obejmuje to badanie?

Odpowie Pan(i) na kilka pytań dotyczących Pana(i) udziału w polskim ruchu Solidarność i/lub swoim życiu w Polsce, przed 1989 rokiem. Jeśli jest Pan(i) Amerykaninem/Amerykanką odpowie Pan(i) na kilka pytań dotyczących swojego udziału w związakach zawodowych i o doświadczeniach w miejscu pracy. Pytania te umożliwią naukowcowi porównanie i przeciwstawienie doświadczeń pracowników w amerykańskich i polskich związkach zawodowych. Po zakończeniu tego badania, odpowiedzi nagrywane na taśmie lub w nagrywarce cyfrowej zostaną zniszczone.

Jak długo będę uczestniczyć w badaniu?

Pana(i) uczestnictwo w badaniu potrwa około jednego roku. Może też być przeprowadzony wywiad uzupełniający, w którym może Pan(i) wziąć udział, jeśli wyrazi Pan(i) taką wolę.

W każdej chwili można się wycofać z badania. Jeśli postanowi Pan(i) wycofać się z badania, prosimy jak najszybciej porozmawiać z badaczem naukowym lub z personelem prowadzącym badanie.

Badacz naukowy może w każdej chwili przerwać Pana(i) udział w tym badaniu, jeśli uważa, że będzie to w Pana(i) najlepszym interesie; jeśli nie będzie Pan(i) przestrzegać regulaminu badania; lub jeśli badanie zostanie przerwane.

Jakie ryzyko jest związane z badaniem?

Brak znanego ryzyka dla osób uczestniczących w tym badaniu.

Czy udział w badaniu wiąże się z jakimiś korzyściami?

Jeśli wyrazi Pan(i) zgodę na uczestnictwo w tym badaniu, może Pan(i) na tym skorzystać lub nie. Jednakże, wiedza uzyskana z uczestnictwa może w przyszłości pomóc innym ludziom. Korzyści płynące z uczestnictwa w badaniu mogą być tego rodzaju, że przekazana wiedza pomoże lepiej zrozumieć ruchy społeczne.

A co z poufnością?

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Jeśli wywiad będzie nagrywany, takie nagranie zostanie skasowane po zapoznaniu się z nim przez badacza i po zapisaniu wszystkich danych związanych z badaniem w formie transkrypcji. Wszelkie transkrypcje z wywiadów będą przechowywane w zamkniętej szafie na akta, do której dostęp będzie mieć wyłącznie badacz. Jeśli jakakolwiek podana przez Pana(ią) informacja zostanie wykorzystana podczas pisania sprawozdania, Pana(i) dane nie zostaną użyte, tak samo jak i nie zostaną użyte żadne dane, które umożliwiłyby odbiorcy sprawozdania w zidentyfikowaniu uczestników badania.

**Jakie są koszty związane z uczestniczeniem w tym badaniu?**

Uczestnicy badania nie ponoszą żadnych kosztów. Wszystkie koszty badania, w tym za wszelkie testy wykonane w badaniu, materiały i procedury bezpośrednio związane z tym badaniem poniesie to badanie.

**Czy otrzyma Pan(i) wynagrodzenie za uczestnictwo?**

Nie otrzyma Pan(i) wynagrodzenia ani innej rekompenatzy za udział w tym badaniu.

**Jakie prawa ma uczestnik badania?**

Udział w niniejszym badaniu jest dobrowolny. Może Pan(i) zdecydować nie wziąć udziału lub każdej chwili zrezygnować z uczestnictwa. W wypadku odmowy lub rezygnacji z udziału w badaniu nie poniesie Pan(i) żadnej kary ani nie utraci przysługujących świadczeń. Jeśli postanowi Pan(i) wycofać się z badania, prosimy najpierw porozmawiać z badaczem lub z personelem prowadzącym badanie.
Do kogo należy zadzwonić w przypadku pytań lub problemów?

Pytania na temat badania lub w wypadku odniesienia obrażeń w związku z badaniem, należy się kontaktować z badaczem pod numerem telefonu (304) 696-2800 lub (304) 696-6700. Do badacza należy również dzwonić w przypadku problemów lub skarg w związku z tym badaniem naukowym.

Pytania dotyczące praw uczestników badania naukowego należy kierować do Przewodniczącego IRB nr 2, doktora Stephena Coopera w Marshall University lub do ORI pod numer telefonu (304) 696-4303. Pod ten numer można też dzwonić, jeśli:

- ma Pan(i) obawy lub skargi w związku z tym badaniem naukowym;
- nie może się Pan(i) skontaktować z personelem uczestniczącym w badaniu;
- chce Pan(i) porozmawiać z kimś innym niż personel uczestniczący w badaniu naukowym.

Otrzyma Pan(i) podpisany i datowany egzemplarz niniejszego formularza świadomej zgody.

**PODPISY**

Zgadza się Pan(i) na wzięcie udziału w tym badaniu naukowym i potwierdza, że ukończył/a Pan(i) 18 rok życia. Miał/a Pan(i) możliwość zadawania pytań na temat uczestniczenia w tym badaniu i uzyskał/a Pan(i) na nie odpowiedzi. Podpisując ten formularz świadomej zgody, nie ceduje Pan(i) przysługujących Panu(i) żadnych praw.

________________________________________________
Imię i nazwisko (drukowanymi literami)

________________________________________________      _________________
Podpis                 Data

________________________________________________
Imię i nazwisko osoby pobierającej zgodę (drukowanymi literami)

________________________________________________
Podpis osoby pobierającej zgodę                 Data
Questionnaire in English

General Topics:

1. Solidarnosc

2. Daily life in Gdansk or Wałbrzych during Solidarity Movement
   - Martial Law
   - Work
   - Economy (alternatives?)
   - Communication (alternatives?)
   - Education
   - Religion

3. Comments about: Lech Walesa, Pope John Paul, Mikhail Gorbachev, General Jaruzelski,
   - General comments about any other person or topic
   - General comments comparing pre-1989 to current times
   - General comments about future of Solidarnosc, of Gdansk, of Wałbrzych, of Poland

**Solidarnosc:**

Were you a member of the union?

Were you an activist?

Did you participate in strikes, marches, protests? Any other activities? What were these experiences like?

What do you remember most about those days?

How was Solidarnosc funded? Were resources scarce? Did members pay dues?

Were people encouraged to join or participate in Solidarnosc? Were some people opposed to the movement?
Were there other unions...State sponsored unions? What were these like?

Why did you join or participate?

Did you receive any education or training from Solidarnosc?

How did Solidarnosc get its message or agenda out to the public?

What was the main message or agenda?

Why was the movement so successful?

What has the movement accomplished?

Is the union still active?

What are the most important lessons the world can learn from this historic era?

**Daily Life In Gdansk During The Solidarity Movement: Martial Law, Work, Economy**

What was life like in Gdansk during the movement? What memories stand out most clearly?

What was life like during Martial Law?

Were their shortages? What kind? How severe?

Was housing in short supply? Did you have a house or apartment? Was it affordable?

Did you own a car? Were there restrictions on travel?

How does the pre-1989 economy compare with today's economy?

Were there alternatives to the regular economy? Did people, for instance, raise a garden or raise any livestock to supplement their income? Were items available on the "black market?"

Did people help each other by trading work or trading services or skills?

Were there any other innovative ways of supplementing income?

Where did you work during this time? What was your job like? Can you describe your place of work and your particular job?

Did you feel a sense of loyalty or obligation to your place of work...to your union (union before Solidarnosc)...to your co-workers...to your craft, or profession?

Were you paid well?

Were you ever unemployed?

**Communication:**

To what extent were TV, radio, newspapers, journalism, etc. controlled by the State before 1989? Did this change under martial Law?

Was there access to news from external sources...Radio Free Europe, BBC, or any other source outside Poland?

Were personal communications censored? For example, were letters censored? Phone calls monitored? Did people freely communicate?

Was news about Solidarnosc censored? How was Solidarnosc portrayed by the news?

What was the most important method of communication for Solidarnosc?

Did Solidarnosc publish its own newspapers?

Were samizdat or bibula papers common? Did you read them? What were they about? Did they help to organize and spread the movement? Did they help hold the movement together while it was outlawed?

Were you ever involved in writing, printing, or distributing samizdat papers? Did you know anyone who was involved?

What kind of personal communications and printing devices were available in Poland during the 1980s...regular telephone service? Copy machines? Word processors? Typewriters? How was samizdat publishing done? How was it distributed?

What were "Uniwersytet Latajacy?" ("Flying Universities?") Were these important to the Solidarity Movement?

After 1989, did free and open communication begin immediately?

**Education:**

What was education like in Poland before 1989?

Do you believe that you got a good education?
Did the Soviet Union and Communist Party influence education? In what ways?

Were the ideas of Marx, Lenin, or Stalin presented in school? Were alternatives to these ideas presented?

Was Russian language mandatory?

Did you learn about the capitalist economy or democratic government in school?

Were there business management classes in schools? Were these based on State Economics or private enterprise?

How were Western nations - The USA, United Kingdom, Western Europe, portrayed in school?

How was Poland and Polish history presented?

Was general education free? Could everyone get college education? Was it expensive?

Did college students have considerable academic freedom? Were there ideological standards to meet?

In what ways has education changed since 1989?

Was Solidarnosc discussed in colleges and schools? Did many students support the movement?

Religion:

Did you regularly attend church during the Solidarity Movement? Still attend?

Was the Solidarity movement ever discussed in church?

Did the Church, in general, support Solidarnosc? In what ways?

Do you believe the goals of Solidarity were in-line with the teachings of Catholicism - with the general message and teachings of Pope John Paul II?

Do you believe that Pope John Paul had a supernatural or divine mission in supporting or promoting Solidarnosc? Did many people believe this?

Did Solidarnosc connect itself with the Church...that is, was the Church mentioned in publications or messages of any kind produced by Solidarnosc?

Did you ever see sacred images of the Church, such as The Black Madonna (Our Lady of Czestochowa) or Our Lady of Fatima, connected to Solidarnosc in any way?
Comments about famous people of the Solidarity era:

Lech Walesa, Pope John Paul, Mikhail Gorbachev...how important were these people to the success of the movement?

Would the Solidarity Movement have succeeded without these people?

Other important individuals?

Comments about General Jaruzelski? Any other influential people?

General comments about any other person or topic?

General comments comparing pre-1989 to current times?

General comments about future of Solidarnosc, of Gdansk, of Poland in general?

General interview schedule for individuals who had previously (or still are) worked industrial jobs (this section used only in US interviews.)

Were you (or are you) a member of an independent labor union?

In what kind of trade or industry did you work while in the union?

What was your job like? Can you describe your place of work and your particular job?

What were your relations with your co-workers like?

Did you feel a sense of loyalty or obligation to your co-workers...to your union...to the company you worked for?

Do you believe that your fellow workers would stand up for you or come to your aid in a time of trouble...let's say, if you had a grievance against the company, or if you had an injury or lay-off and could not work.

Are you working now? Is your new job unionized? How do you feel about your fellow-employees, your union (if unionized) and the company you now work for in terms of loyalty or obligation?

Were you ever involved in a strike while unionized? What was that like? Was the strike successful in terms of achieving its goals? Why or why not?

Why, do you believe, did your plant or industry shut down? Why, in general, do you think that so many plants are closing?
**Questionnaire in Polish**

**Uwagi na temat edukacji w Polsce przed rokiem 1980**

Gdzie uczęszczałeś do szkoły podstawowej lub średniej? W jakich latach chodziłeś do szkoły?
Jakie miałeś przedmioty?
Czy, ogólnie, ideologia Maksa, Lenina lub Stalina bądź komunistyczna była przedstawiana w szkole?
W jakim zakresie były te ideologia przerabiane?
Czy możesz podać konkretne przypadki?
Czy te ideologie były w programie nauki lub lekcji?
Czy możesz opisać, jak te informacje były przedstawiane – przez kogo? Jak? Na lekcjach, w książkach, na obrazach, w symbolach, muzyczce?
Czy uważasz, że twoje doświadczenie było typowe w twoim pokoleniu? Jak to było u innych osób? Jak to było u innych pokoleń?
Jaką miałeś o tym opinię? Krytyczną?
Gdzie chodziłeś do college’ W jakich latach chodziłeś?
Jak można opisać zakres wolności naukowej w college’u?
Czy istniały normy ideologiczne, które musiały być spełnione w twoim programie nauki?

**Uwagi na temat organizacji Solidarności**

Gdzie mieszkałeś i pracowałeś w 1980 i 1981 roku?
W jaki sposób byłeś zaangażowany w działalność Solidarności? Jaką miałeś rolę?
Jak zostałeś pozyskany? W jaki sposób przystąpiłeś?
Dlaczego przystąpiłeś?
Czy zachęcano ludzi do przystąpienia?
Czy ludzie wszystkich, różnych klas lub zawodów byli zainteresowani Solidarnością?
Czy różne klasy ludzi przystępowały z różnych powodów?
Czy konieczne było płacenie składek miesięcznych?
Jak dobrze była Solidarność finansowana? Czy wydawało się, że środki były niewielkie?

Czy wiesz, jakie skąd się braly główne środki finansowe Solidarności?

W jakiego rodzaju działalność w Solidarności byłeś zaangażowany?

Czy możesz podać konkretnie przypadki? Jakie masz inne doświadczenia? Inne role?

Czy otrzymałeś w Solidarności jakieś przeszkolenie? Jakie? Kto cię szkolił?

Czy było to szkolenie ideologiczne? Jaka była jego treść? Czy możesz je opisać?

Czy szkoliłeś lub nauczałeś innych ludzi z tematu Solidarności? Jaka była jego treść?

Czy dotyczyło ideologii? Czy była to próba rekrutowania ludzi?

Uwagi na temat informacji w Polsce przed rokiem 1980

W jakim stopniu w Polsce do 1980 roku były kontrolowane przez państwo środki masowej informacji – tzn. TV, radio, dzienniki, czasopisma? Czy to się zmieniło w stanie wojennym?

Czy wiadomości na temat Solidarności były cenzurowane? W jaki sposób była Solidarność przedstawiana w wiadomościach?

W jaki sposób przekazywała Solidarność swoje komunikaty społeczeństwu?

Czy był dostęp do wiadomości ze źródeł zewnętrznych – wiadomości z Radia Wolna Europa lub BBC, na przykład, lub ze źródeł niekontrolowanych przez państwo?

Czy Solidarność publikowała własny dziennik? Czy było to zgodne z prawem?

Czy publikacje podziemne były powszechne? Czy je czytałeś? Jaka była ich treść?

Czy publikacje państwowe były powszechne? Czy je czytałeś? Jaka była ich treść?

Czy byłesz zaangażowany w pisanie, drukowanie lub dystrybucję wydawnictw podziemnych? Czy znałeś kogoś, kto był?

Czy uważasz, że publikacje podziemne odgrywały ważną rolę w utrzymaniu zainteresowania Solidarnością w czasie stanu wojennego?

Czy uważasz, że publikacje podziemne były najważniejszym środkiem przekazywania informacji o Solidarności w stanie wojennym?
Uwagi na temat roli Kościoła w Solidarności

Czy w czasie istnienia ruchu Solidarności regularnie chodziłeś do kościoła?

Do którego Kościoła chodziłeś?

Czy w Kościele rozmawiano o ruchu Solidarności?

Czy twój Kościół, albo inny znany ci kościół, angażował się we wspieranie Solidarności? W jaki sposób Kościół to robił?

Czy uważasz, że cele Solidarności były zgodne z nauką Katolicyzmu – powiedzmy, w zgodzie ze słowem papieża Jana Pawła II?

Czy uważasz, że papież Jan Paweł II miał „nadnaturalną” lub „boską” misję w związku z jego współpracą z Solidarnością? Czy wiesz, czy wielu ludzi tak uważa? Czy Solidarność kiedykolwiek wspomniała o tym związku w swoich publikacjach lub innych informacjach?

Czy kiedykolwiek widziałeś obrazy świętych Kościoła, jak na przykład Czarnej Madonny lub Najświętszej Maryi Panny Fatimskiej bądź Najświętszej Maryi Panny Częstochowskiej w jakikolwiek związane z Solidarnością?

Pytania ogólne

Dlaczego według ciebie Solidarność odniosła taki sukces?

Dlaczego przystąpiło do niej tak wielu ludzi?

Jakie wpływy miał Lech Wałęsa, papież Jan Paweł II i Michaił Gorbaczow na ostateczny rezultaty działalności ruchu Solidarności?

Czy uważasz, że wynik byłby inny, jeśli jedna lub więcej z tych osób nie zajmowałaaby swojego stanowiska?

Co postrzegasz jako największe osiągnięcie Solidarności?

Wymień najważniejsze rzeczy, jakie tamta epoka historyczna niesie światu jako lekcję?

Ogólny harmonogram wywiadów z osobami, które poprzednio (lub w dalszym ciągu) pracowały na stanowiskach w przemyśle.

Czy byłeś (lub jesteś) członkiem niezależnego związku zawodowego?
W jakiej branży lub w jakim przemyśle pracowałeś, gdy byłeś członkiem związku zawodowego?

Jaką miałeś pracę? Czy możesz opisać swoje miejsce pracy i pracę jaką wykonywałeś?

Jakie miałeś relacje ze współpracownikami?

Czy miałeś poczucie lojalności lub zobowiązania wobec współpracowników...związku zawodowego...firmy, w której pracowałeś?

Czy uważasz, że koledzy z pracy stanęliby w twojej obronie lub czy mogliby ci w trudnych czasach...powiedzmy, gdybyś miał skargę przeciwko firmie lub gdybyś odniósł obrażenia lub zostałbyś zwolniony i nie mógł pracować.

Czy obecnie pracujesz? Czy w nowej pracy istnieją związki zawodowe? Jakie masz obecnie uczucia, jeśli chodzi o lojalność i zobowiązania, wobec swoich kolegów z pracy, związku zawodowego (jeśli w zakładzie istnieje związek zawodowy) i wobec firmy, w której obecnie pracujesz?

Czy będąc członkiem związku zawodowego brałeś kiedykolwiek udział w strajku? Jak to wyglądało? Czy strajk wywołał zrealizowanie jego celów? Dlaczego tak lub nie?

Dlaczego według ciebie twój zakład został zamknięty lub przestała istnieć twoja branża? Ogólnie mówiąc, dlaczego według ciebie, tak wiele zakładów jest zamykanych?

Czy uważasz, że na twoim, lokalnym, obszarze dojdzie kiedyś do ożywienia gospodarczego? Dlaczego tak lub nie? Co według ciebie można zrobić, aby ożywić lokalną gospodarkę?
Map of Central Europe

Gdańsk is located on Poland's Baltic Coast
Walbrzych is approximately 50 miles southwest of Wrocław and 5 miles from the Czech border.
Poland’s Major Cities

https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/cia-maps-publications/Poland.html
One final Polish alternative economic strategy must be mentioned. Unlike the strategies discussed in this thesis which sustained Poles during times of economic dysfunction under the socialist system, this alternative has evolved in response to deindustrialization and unemployment in the new post-1989 capitalist economy.

On March 29, 2014, the small town of Wałbrzych made the New York Times in an article titled *The Mines Have Shut Down – The Miners Haven’t.* The article was accompanied by a video about Poland’s Rathole Miners. What are rathole miners? They are individuals who illegally mine small quantities of coal from abandoned or otherwise non-operating mines. According to the article, some 3000 individuals are estimated to be involved in rathole mining in Lower Silesia. The town of Wałbrzych, which literally sits on rich seams of coal, is ‘rathole mining central.’ With a 15% unemployment rate, sale of illegally mined bags of house coal supplements incomes for the producers and offers a cheap heating alternative for cash-strapped buyers. The 1989 transition to market economy forced most Lower Silesian mines out of business as cheaper coal from the Czech Republic took over commercial markets.

The main reason for the Czech’s competitive advantage is their ability to utilize large-scale mechanized mining equipment, as their coal seams are large and run in level bands. Wałbrzych’s coal seams are smaller, irregular, and run at steep angles, making underground mechanized equipment difficult or impossible to operate. Thousands of Polish miners lost their jobs in the economic transition but there is still plenty of good quality coal under Wałbrzych, and a few dedicated and desperate miners aim on cashing in on it. Rathole mining is done with makeshift equipment: car batteries power portable lights, picks and shovels are used in lieu of any other mechanization, and the coal is hoisted to ground level in buckets tied to ropes. Cars or pickup trucks arrive at night - often with their lights off to avoid being spotted by police - to haul away bagged coal. If caught, rathole miners are fined 550 zlotys (around $180), about what they make in a week of mining. However, this seldom stops them from returning to the ratholes, as

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there are few local employment alternatives for unskilled laborers and no legal opportunities for experienced miners. Obviously, rathole mining is dangerous, and there are many injuries and a few deaths each year among the miners.
Walbrzych’s Jewish population. They are the sons, daughters, and grandchildren of the survivors of the Gross-Rosen concentration camps, forced labor in the Sudetenland during WWII.

Before The Multilingual Hum Quietened: The Birth Of Polish Walbrzych

By Marek Malinowski and Paul Wieczorek


"The city, at the time it was taken over by the Polish authorities, had a population of over 46,000, Germans employed mainly in the coal industry and several hundred Poles, mostly Jews, survivors from local and regional concentration camps. In addition, about 15,000 Soviet troops were stationed here. Walbrzych was spared the consequences of war, leaving it without any major signs of damage and, so, life continued here at a normal tempo."

This was the description of the balance by the Polish Government's Plenipotentiary and its first President, Eugene Szewczyk, at the beginning of Polish activity in Walbrzych in his "Report of Annual Activity in the City of Walbrzych." For this part of Europe and for this time, it was a unique and paradoxical situation.

Prior to May 28th 1945, when Szewczyk, with a team of a dozen staff, took control of the city and issued Order No 1 in which, on one sheet of paper and a few sentences, the city was given a Polish name, a valid currency and an official language were decreed, as well as fixing exchange rates and taking care of several other issues of equal importance, hundreds of Polish Jews were already in Walbrzych, not of their own volition - working in local mines and factories during the final phase of the War. There were also many Jews from other European countries and, of course, as many Poles, who were in many branches of the Gross-Rosen concentration camp as forced labor in the Sudetenland. People, who have somewhere to return to immediately they were liberated, scattered themselves throughout Europe. But those "several hundred Poles, mostly Jews", who knew that there was nowhere and no one to return to, stayed in Walbrzych - the capital of the Sudeten Industrial District, which, after their years of past experience, seemed a paradise on earth to these survivors.

At the time, Dr. Frederic Liberman described it as being "born again". As he says, in a city where one could freely walk the streets, green and white dominated the Walbrzych landscape, silence and stillness prevailed broken only by birds and the bells of empty trams. Witnesses from that time are unanimous: The Germans were very polite, everything operated like clockwork. Despite the fact that the entire old world had collapsed, the coking plant was not extinguished for one moment. Crews also worked the mines, which had only experienced a day or two of interruption. The sulfuric acid plants, porcelain, glass, iron foundries - everything functioned. Telephones operated, there water in the taps and order on the streets were patrolled by German police. Order had to be, naturally, maintained. In the empty Szczawno spa park, the orchestra regularly played, and the spa baths awaited patients.
Only, in Wałbrzych and other cities and on farms, there no longer were tens of thousands of slaves transported from across Europe (although, mostly, from Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia and the Czech Republic). While estimated numbers vary, it is known that in Lower Silesia, several thousand Jews emerged from the camps.

Whatever their nationality, all of these slaves were mostly young, had some skills and a huge motivation to live. French, Hungarians, Belgians, Danes, without any regret, chose to leave the beautiful and rich Sudetenland. Those who had nowhere to return to, remained and explain why statistics, compiled on 30th June 1945, reported that 879 Poles lived in Wałbrzych, together with 57,691 Germans (then written in small letters) and hundreds of people of other nationalities. Among those of other nationalities, Jews were not mentioned and that is the way it has remained until today. Both the statistics and in various official documents, no minority ethnic group was designated. In the late 1950’s, municipal authorities comprehensively and regularly dealt with the situation of the national minorities: Germans, Czechs, Gypsies (in those years, the word "Roma" was not yet in usage), and later the Greeks. Within official records, analyses and evaluations of the Jewish population did not exist.

As a result, identifying actual data pertaining to the Jewish community is difficult. In any event, according to S.Bronsztejn, in 1946 the Jewish population of Poland was approximately 100,000, half of whom lived in Lower Silesia. In December 1946, 10,200 Jews lived in Wałbrzych, comprising 17.9% of the population (the largest population of Jewish people lived in Dzierzoniow - 16,000, comprising 28.1% of the population of that city).

From the outset, Jews actively involved themselves in the public life of Wałbrzych. The rapid establishment of functioning Jewish social, cultural, political organizations or cooperatives was generally regarded by the Polish settlers as an expression of unity and solidarity. The existence of three Jewish schools, two semi-boarding schools, dormitories for young people, a common room, library, kitchen, folk, canteens, Health Care Society, the "Renaissance" theatre, numerous readings, concerts, literary meetings and other cultural events, including economic activity evoked, in outside observers, the gradual impression of Jewish omnipresence. This resulted in a little jealousy. As seen from the outside, the Jews exhibited a conformity and unity of views - something which was so lacking in Polish society.

Some Jews actively participated in the postwar political life of Wałbrzych. All Jewish political parties were operating: the Union of Democratic Zionists in Poland, "Ichud", Jewish Socialist Workers' Party "Poale-Zion" (later the United Jewish Workers' Party "Poale-Zion"), Polish Workers' Party Jewish Circle (unique nationally), Socialist Labour Party "Hitachdut", Socialist Workers' Party "Bund" and many others. This does not mean that the number of organisations, the number of their members or their level of activity testified to the actual role and impact they had on politics in the city.

Supporters of the changes taking place in the Polish state tried, in many ways, to involve the rest of the Jews. For example, before the referendum, the slogan: "Democracy is ours and we must vote for 3 x YES" was propagated throughout the Jewish community. The same was true in the pre-election period: "18th January 1947 - the Jewish Committee has taken an active part in public demonstrations in honor Marshall M. Rola-Zymierski in Wałbrzych; Jews appeared with various banners in the Polish and Jewish; the march provoked a very positive impression. "There were plenty of Jews on election day", organised in all districts of the "troika" election. Agitators were active in all 400 districts. Jewish participation in the elections was 100%.

The number and the activity of Jewish organizations influenced public opinion within the Jewish community for widespread support of change taking place in Poland, of the participation of Jews in the creation of this new reality. However, several incidents within the Jewish community do not fit this view, providing an illusory image. According to the Heroes of the Ghetto academy (in 1948), "policy changed such that every party representative
sought to present his party's program" or the May 1st parade during which "in opposition to a resolution of the Jewish Committee which stated said that every Jew should participate as part of his workplace group, the Poale-Zion attracted a number of workers from their jobs and, instead, marched within the ranks of the party; and Hashomer Hatzair youth marched under their blue and white banner."

In fact, contrary to popular opinion of the role, significance and views of the Jews in those days, usually viewed through the prism of leftist unity, they were internally divided politically. Often there were incidents contradictory to solidarity. In 1948, one of the Wałbrzych Jewish Committee activists said: "The current period is characterised by a tendency towards organisational unity among Polish workers. This is not the same as between the Jewish and Polish workers. The Jewish worker must first go through an internal consolidation, in order to later show organisational unity." As life in the new reality displayed, the combination of events on the international stage and their acceleration, does not allow time for this "organisational consolidation". It was not really just about the workers themselves, but about all Jews living in Wałbrzych, and unity was dictated by the growing strength of the Communist Party. In this context, one can get the impression that politicians lived in a totally different reality to that of ordinary Jews. The words of Fischbein, Chairman of the Wałbrzych Jewish Committee and also a member of the Workers' Party, must have sounded ominous to the Jews when he said, in December 1948, that "the PPR must have an impact on everything that happens on the Jewish street, nor can there be any workplace not influenced by the PPR". Another Jewish Committee activist, Gluza, supported Fischbein saying: "The work of Comrade Fischbein is the work of the PPR and everything he does is in the PPR's interests. So far, the representative of the Jewish PPR was the representative of the Jewish community. Today, Fischbein man, thus the PPR is what counts!"

The resultant situation Wałbrzych was reflected in the numerous memoirs. Albert Mrozowski, poet, hero of "Common Peace" and then a Wałbrzych journalist, described the situation in the first months after the war: "One encounters (in Wałbrzych) many Jews. Most of them are survivors of concentration camps - mainly fromy Gross-Rosen. They are wretched, but very well dressed. They occupied a good flats with all their belongings. It's a just revenge for their ordeal of occupation."

This generalization, however, concerns only a part of the Jewish community. Wałbrzych, probably like many other Sudeten towns it was overcrowded even before the end of the war. However, this was not due to these tens of thousands of slaves, but to German refugees from the Russian front and the manpower transferred to Sudetenland defense establishments from industrial centres of the Third Reich which were exposed to bombing by the Western allies.

As a result, the housing situation in Wałbrzych was exceptionally difficult at first and was then aggravated by the tens of thousands strong Soviet garrison for whom there were simply no barracks in Wałbrzych. By the 1950's, Jews who remained in Wałbrzych had normalised their housing conditions. Not without reason was the poorest district, located by the Sobięciński slag heaps (today known as "Palestine"), inhabited mainly by Jews.

Poles and Jews coming to Wałbrzych did not have pre-arranged flats and they could not occupy them themselves. Mostly, they were billeted with German families. An exception to this, to some degree, was the housing prepared for returnees from France and Belgium which was negotiated with the housing authority by the Presidents of PKWN - in France, miner Tomasz Piętke and Belgium, miner Edward Gierek. They managed to arrange a few thousand flats, but implementation of these arrangements was varied.

Polish and foreign journalists, who at that time often came to Wałbrzych, emphasised with pleasure that, in Wałbrzych trams one could hear many languages spoken. Today, the city no longer has trams and, even in the markets, one can no longer hear foreign languages because the Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Vietnamese, Mongolians and Russians, according to the laws of the market, try to speak Polish.
In those days everyone was amazed and surprised by the great social dynamics of the residents of Wałbrzych - speaking different languages, emanating from different cultures, coming not only from different parts of the world, but also from different parts of the old country. It was a real melting pot in which people sought for themselves a new place on earth, a possibility of realising their big and small ambitions. They tried to achieve the difficult things but, if it didn't work out, they carried on.

These early returnees (Poles, Germans, Jews, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians) and those repatriated from France, Germany, Belgium, Yugoslavia and China - regardless of how they're called today, started all over again. Today, it is variously estimated that, just like the Jews for whom Lower Silesia was just a stop on the road to the Promised Land, the Poles also sought something similar in this region. These pioneers usually ended up in places different from those which they intended. After all, they were all removed from their environments, their customs and their traditional culture.

They adapted to their new conditions or tried to adapt these conditions to fit their requirements and customs. This was true of people from different socio-professional backgrounds and social classes. Landowners and workers, office-workers and peasants had to start functioning in completely new conditions. Humble communal officials before the war, such as E. Szewczyk, now had to quickly deal with issues that were previously the domain of the great leaders and reformers. Count Ignacy Potocki (a geologist) and Count Wojciech Dzieduszycki (a miller), two officials of Jewish origin, created and organised the Duszniki Chopin Festival in Szczawno which, today, is the oldest Polish event of its kind and, this year, took place for the 56th time. Fryderyka Liberman, who also participated in this venture, held a doctorate in Germanic Studies from the Jagiellonian University and, before the war, was active in the artistic and intellectual circles of Kraków. Starting a new life as director of a cultural organisation, she was extremely active and effective. One can say that many of today's cultural institutions and significant artistic events began from nothing at that time. One needs a strong will to live and a vivid imagination, within a month of being liberated from a Nazi concentration camp and having survived by sheer chance, to establish the first Polish newspaper in Lower Silesia ("The Polish Weekly"), which was first published when there were less than 1,000 Poles in Wałbrzych. (she was helped in this by a Dutch Jew, a fellow prisoner, who later became her husband and the first non-German doctor to treat Poles in Wałbrzych - he treated them despite not knowing the Polish language). Despite having only 13 books in Polish left by the first Polish inhabitants of the city, they established the first public library, headed by the outstanding poet Marian Jachimowicz, a friend of Bruno Schulz from Drohobyćz.

One needs good relationships with artists to, together with Prof. Eugeniusz Geppert, organise the first exhibition of Polish paintings in Wałbrzych and to instantly attract performances by Ludwik Solski. She founded a music school. On behalf of the Polish and Soviet authorities, she held discussions with Gerhardt Hauptmann whom she knew from before the war and about whom she wrote a book. She co-founded a literary centre and a base for the weekly "Walbrzych". With the doyen of Polish photographers, Jan Bulhak, she established a Wałbrzych photography program. She was the first Polish author who, after the war, wrote about Książ castle (before it was named as such). She rapidly moved on to Wrocław where she co-organised the Congress of Intellectuals. After that, she quite unexpectedly left for the newly-established State of Israel. It was not until fifty years later that, for her contribution to the life of the city, she was made an Honorary Citizen of Wałbrzych.

In the late 1940's, a section of the Jews registered themselves and decided to stay. This was still treated as a "transitory" affair by the Jewish Committee as evidenced from its own records. Jewish Committees sought to extend their coverage to embrace activities of the entire Jewish population. Very often, however, they were regarded only as an agency though which to find employment and housing, and to locate relatives or friends. The Wałbrzych Committee Chairman stated that the Jews came to them "for chairs, Committee orders and work permits. And for
whatever troubles the Jews have, they hold the Committee to be responsible too." There were isolated cases where, when Jews found it difficult to settle down, they moved on in search of better conditions. Quite often, being constantly on the road, they registered themselves with several Jewish Committees. A separate category were those Jews who were professionals, intellectuals and personnel in the militia, the army and Security Service (UB), and who did not admit to their Jewish roots. It is widely believed that the number of persons be registered is too low. Jewish Committees activists, based on knowledge of the environment of the time, thought that at least 10% of the total number of Jews were unregistered.

In the period 1945-1948, most Jews worked in key areas of industry. It is not, in fact, surprising that few were among the miners which were outnumbered by those among the artisans, merchants and office workers (and, of course, professionals, many of whom probably have not been included in these reports). Intensive activity from the Communist authorities to pressure Jews to contribute to workers' state and to popularise the image of the Jewish-worker failed to produce the expected results. In most cases, within these key industries, young people or those without qualifications in other professions were employed - or also those who had no option. The rest of the Jews continued to adhere to the traditional occupations and the problems, to some extent exaggerated by the Productivity Program (in particular, the rebuilding of Jewish economic life in Poland) led by the government and by, almost without exception, all Jewish organizations, brought fairly good results, even though, as reported in autumn 1948 by J. Bein: "The economic reconstruction of the Jews in Poland has only been superficial."

Changes in occupational structure of Jews occurred only as far as were dictated by the circumstances in which they found themselves. The Jews did not easily adapt to the new conditions. Many of them did not wish to live any longer in the land where their families were exterminated, in the shadow of the concentration camps and ghettos and in close proximity to the German nation and among some of their anti-Semitic Polish neighbours. In reality, the majority chose to leave Poland. Those who stayed, after suffering further humiliation over a period of time, followed in the footsteps of their compatriots and also left. Jewish participation in economic life lasted only as long as there was no real chance of starting life anew in their own country. Many also left Wałbrzych for larger cities - Wrocław, Łódz, Upper Silesia or Warsaw.

A letter dated 19th April 1947 sounded quite odd. A Jewish couple, returning from Palestine, found themselves in Wałbrzych, in a city where Jews were moving in the opposite direction, wrote: "We, re-emigrants after several years in Palestinian, appeal to the Commission to arrange productive work for us. We also ask that adequate housing be allocated to us. We believe that the Commission will fully understand our request and that, as idealists and working people, we will find suitable work."

Jews made a great contribution, in all areas, to the development of Lower Silesia. Among them were many intellectuals, lawyers, economists and artists. Jews such as F.Liberman, who compensated for her lost year through her great activity. Her contribution was not just in culture. She could write, knew languages (not only Hebrew and Yiddish) and people from all walks of life. Not surprisingly, she was the "right hand" of President Szewczyk and solved the most difficult problems.

As with other Polish regions, successive waves of Jewish emigrants also left Wałbrzych. As a precedent, one can use the situation that prevailed after the Kielce pogrom. At that time, during the course of only a few days, a great many people of Jewish origin left Lower Silesia, including Wałbrzych. And, surprisingly, at the same time, Jews drifted to this region from eastern and central Poland Europe, regarding it as safe. From that moment, when the situation had settled down and around 5,000-6,000 Jews lived in Wałbrzych, there were no further population shifts until 1956. The upheaval in Poland in 1968 led to mass legal and illegal departures from the city which left only about 100-200 Jews remaining in Wałbrzych to this day.
It must be admitted that the Jews did not take bad memories with them. For that reason, they gladly return here.

Louis Hofman is one of the oldest senior citizens of Wałbrzych (from the Plaszów camp, he was taken to Gross-Rosen in 1944 and began his career in Wałbrzych at a in the sulphuric acid plant). Now retired, he is leader of the small Jewish community in Wałbrzych. When asked by a journalist of examples of anti-Semitism (on the occasion of a visit to Wałbrzych by 37 American rabbis) replied with a verse, when plied with questions by researchers looking for signs of Polish anti-Semitism:

"Dear Madam, the whole
Issue of anti-Semitism
To me is rubbish..
And that American grant
Is for me
One big con."

Of course, not all Jews think so but, in Wałbrzych, there actually were instances of anti-Semitism, but much less than elsewhere even though there were more Jews here than in most others places. The number of Jews here were such that, after the war, one of the leaders of the Lower Silesian Jewish Committee accepted with great caution an idea, little-known today, of Jewish autonomy in Lower Silesia.

How is this to equate with the claim by Jewish historian E. Mendelsohn that "Jews are almost always ready to support the existing system of power, especially if that power treats them well"? 34 / How does it to equate to the opinion of J.Lasockiego, Editor of the weekly "Wałbrzych", who wrote, in 1948, that there exists a "general situation of political stability in the country, thanks to the victory of the democratic camp" in which "the Jewish population continues to work, intensively and with enthusiasm, in the fields of productivity and employment and Wałbrzych Jews, on a par with Jews from across Poland, will follow the path of constructive work according to the Three Year Plan for the good of the Polish state "? In retrospect, it is known that such programmatic statements, regardless of who made them or by whom they were written, did not come to fruition in Poland.

Jews, like other ethnic minorities, added colour to post-war Wałbrzych. They played a specific role. Their activity proved that they still remained a people and , despite previous tragedies and current troubles, they were capable of not only surviving, but also building a state. Except not a Polish one, but one of their own - a Jewish state - Israel. Their time in Wałbrzych for the Jews remains treated as a "temporary stop" on the road to themselves ...

Did the Jews leave anything behind other than just memories and names of places where they once lived (for example, "Palestine" in the Sobiecin District), membership of the Jewish Social-Cultural Society in Poland (TSKŻ) and synagogue visited by a handful of Jews? One of the first of these visits to Wałbrzych was by Prof.Szewach Weiss, who looked for traces of a Jewish presence here from the 1940's and who found friends from Borysław who helped him survive. Louis Hofman, in order to pray, must now travel to Wrocław because, in Wałbrzych, it is not possible to gather together ten Jewish men.

In April of this year, the Polish-Israeli Friendship Society was founded which has a constant influx of new members - of course, for obvious reasons, the vast majority are Poles. Regular meetings take place, devoted to Jewish culture, literature and music. When celebrating anniversaries Wałbrzych schools play host to their past graduates - among them, Jews. And yet, Wałbrzych, though not visible to the naked eye, to this day, is regarded as a place which brings together many nationalities. It's not complaining about it origins.

It should be noted here that Wałbrzych of the 1940's forties with all the negative phenomena arising from massive migrations, however, was a city of advancement for of its inhabitants who had come from all backgrounds. Even
though it was a city primarily settled by ordinary workers, as well as people from the countryside, this clash of cultures proved extremely fruitful. The numerous examples of brilliant careers in all areas of life confirm the high communal dynamic and the prevailing climate of development. This applies not only to political careers, but also to scientific, artistic and all professions. It created the raw material for a new Wałbrzych Polish society which, from the outset, provided higher-level personnel to a diverse range of institutions. This also applied to Jewish members of this society.

Since the beginning of its Polish history, Walbrzych was a city with great problems. In this melting pot, a dangerous mixture boiled which forced the creation of various "release valves". Today, the city is in a difficult recouperation period, recovering from serious operations connected with restructuring. Many functional bodies have been "amputated". Major change has proved that the city can live without the coal industry, without the tradition of "Red Wałbrzych" and even without its once sizeable Jewish community. The city has changed much and new books need to be written about it. The Jewish part of its history is slowly closing.”

Vita
Stephen Mays holds a BA in anthropology from Ohio University, Athens, Ohio and MA degrees in both sociology and history from Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia. He is currently pursuing a PhD in Modern European History at West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia. During the 1980s, as a member of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers International Union, he served on a committee of support for the Polish Solidarity Movement through Allied Chemical Corporation.