

Class Struggles in Poland: 1945-1956

by J. Kremenski

The article presented here has been edited from a much longer effort by the author.

Necessity dictated the writing of this article due to several factors, one of which has to do with a particular predisposition on the part of sections of the US left toward distortions of historical materialism, both out of ignorance and out of a political need to make history conform to a present orientation to the USSR. I am of course referring to the Communist Party USA, and its diminutive side-kick, Line of March.

Unable to make the distinction between Marxism and Revisionism, these 'forces' insist that proletarian dictatorship existed in Poland after the fall of Wladyslaw Gomulka in 1948, when a transition took place at the behest of Comintern leadership, from a Peoples Democracy to the consolidation of socialism during an interim period (1948-1956), when Khrushchev's secret speech at the 20th Soviet Congress in 1956 denounced Stalin's "personality cult" giving birth to revisionism.

These underlying assumptions will be disproven, and shown as having little or nothing to do with Polish history during this period. The other motive behind the article (which really holds more importance than contending with groups like Line of March) is simply that little has been published expressly for Marxist-Leninists on this period of Polish communist and workingclass history. Paul Costello's article "Class Struggles in Poland," (*Theoretical Review*, Nov.-Dec. 1980) for example, only refers to the era of Boleslaw Bierut with passing comments on the Six-Year Plan, the purges and the erosion of the Party's proletarian base.

Therefore the largest part of the article will address itself to questions of historical materialism during the aforementioned period. The following sections will be broken down into an historical introduction of Polish communism during World War II and the rising factional conflict within the Communist Party, subsequent purges of and fusion with the Socialist Party and specific political economic conditions during reconstruction at the War's end. There will also be an exploration of the situation which brought about the fall of Gomulka and the rise of Bierut, in keeping with the key role of the Soviet Union during the Cominform period. I have taken up an evaluation concerning the conditions imposed on the working class and peasantry by the Party and State's implementation of the planned economy during the Six-Year Plan in the areas of industrialization, collectivization, the housing crisis, shock work brigades, and the low level of the social wage.

Following the Soviet model the Party and State apparatus exalted the workingclass to raise productivity to arrive at

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communism. During the period of reconstruction this general line of the Party held a certain temporary mass popularity for reasons which will become obvious. Although after years of growing disparity between intellectual and manual labor, city and countryside, and between a bloated State and Party bureaucracy which lived off of, rather than for, the workingclass movement. The workers demanded their dominant position and received the repression of the Poznan events in 1956.

Polish Communism During the War

... [Lenin] warned that the labor movement must analyse and understand its past, not out of love of historical study but for political reasons related to the present itself: so that it will not be fighting in the dark. You must go to the root of things, analyse the reasons for an error in order to understand it properly and thus really be able to rectify it; if you do not, then even in the most favorable of cases you will only put it right in part, and a superficial part at that. Lenin had a quite different idea of putting things right from this notion of a circumstantial 'rectification'. In pleading for the primacy of analysis, in arguing the need for the labor movement to understand its own history, what it had done, where it had succeeded and where it had failed, he was pleading for the primacy of Marxist politics.

—Louis Althusser

The Polish Communist Party, dissolved by the Comintern in 1938, was recreated in January 1942 under the name Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*) or PPR, with Marcell Nowotko as its secretary-general. During the spring, the Party formed its own armed organization, known as the People's Guard, and began its campaign against the German fascist occupation of Poland which had begun in 1939.

Nowotko was shot in November 1942 and his successor, Pawel Finder, was captured by the Gestapo a year later. At this point Wladyslaw Gomulka became Party secretary-general. Gomulka was born in 1905 in southern Poland, the son of a oilfield worker. Between the Wars he was active in the left-wing of the Polish trade union movement and in the Communist Party, on two occasions condemned to long prison terms. When he became secretary-general in November 1943, he had already made his name as Party secretary in Warsaw. In contrast to Nowotko and Finder, who were both Soviet-trained, he had never been to the Soviet Union. According to eye-witness accounts, Gomulka supported a grouping of communists who in 1939 had sent a memorandum to Moscow

from the Soviet-occupied area of Poland, asking whether they might be allowed to join the Polish national resistance, at a time when the Comintern gave the impression that such an action would constitute the defence of the Polish ruling class, and that the Polish people's struggle against Nazi invasion was unjust. This memorandum was clearly "premature," and Gomulka and the whole grouping were ignored in the USSR. At the time of his appointment, communications between the Party Central Committee and Moscow appear to have broken down. Gomulka's Polish colleagues were therefore free to choose him as their secretary-general without having to accept Moscow's nominee.¹

The situation made clear that collaboration of other left-wing groups would be necessary to bring about united action for national liberation. In this struggle, Gomulka was prepared for an alliance on an even broader basis. In 1943, he offered, on behalf of the PPR Central Committee to incorporate the People's Guard in the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) or AK, the main resistance movement linked with the bourgeois London Government, in return for its repudiation of Pilsudski's pre-War constitution of 1935 and its decision to start an armed rising.

Almost from the beginning of the War against Germany the USSR decided that it would need a well-trained party of pro-Moscow orientation to help it assert its influence in Poland after the War. When Hitler's armies overran Poland many of the surviving Polish communists had fled to the Soviet zone, and towards the end of 1941 a conference of pro-Soviet political figures was called by the Soviet authorities. This was followed in March 1943 by the formation in Moscow of the Union of Polish Patriots with the Polish writer, Wanda Wasilewska, as chairman. Three months later the Union held a congress in Moscow, the object of which, according to the Soviet radio, 'was to mark the unity of the Poles with the Soviet Union and to strengthen relations between the two nations'. It called for a program of reform in Poland at the War's end, acknowledging the territorial claims of the USSR in eastern Poland.

The Russians began training Polish fighting units to cooperate with the Soviet armed forces. They were recruited without difficulty from the Poles who had been deported to the Soviet Union during the first months of the War and were led either by Soviet officers or by carefully picked pro-Soviet Poles. They were known as the 'Berling Army' after General Zygmunt Berling, their commander. However, the first formation which went into action was given a name which would appeal to Polish national sentiment: the Kosciuszko Division, named for the hero of the 1794 Polish national rising.

Among the Poles who associated with the Union of Polish Patriots and the Berling Army were many of who would play a key part in the post-War Polish Communist Party: Jakub Berman, Hilary Minc, Stanislaw Radkiewicz and Stefan Jedrychowski. The two first secretaries-general of the PPR, Nowotko and Finder, who were parachuted into Poland to work for the Party, were Moscow trained, as was Boleslaw Bierut who in 1943, was sent to supervise the pro-Soviet organizations in Poland and were schooled in the Soviet model, looked toward Moscow for orders, and therefore came to be known as 'Muscovites'. Basically they restricted their movements and activities within the Soviet occupied area of Eastern Poland, until the Soviet Armed forces liberated the country.

Gomulka and his groupings spent the whole War in Poland and never traveled to the USSR. His best known comrades were Zenon Kliszko, Marian Spychalski and Wladyslaw Bienkowski. Gomulka and Spychalski had both spent the first two years of the War in Lwow (Lemberg), within the Soviet zone of occupation. On the outbreak Soviet-German conflict they had chosen to return to Nazi occupied Poland to join the resistance underground forces.

On 4 January 1944, the Soviet army crossed the pre-War Polish Soviet frontier. Four days beforehand, members of the PPR, together with a few other left-wing sympathizers, had met in Warsaw setting up a National Council (Krajowa Rada Narodowa) or KRN, with Bierut as Chairman of its Presidium. Their objective was to establish a pro-Soviet 'representative' body which could claim political authority in the country, as the German forces were generally driven back. It was provided also that subsidiary councils should be formed at the provincial, local, and factory levels, which the National Council was supposed to represent.

The KRN provided for the organization of a People's Army which was to absorb the People's Guard. It was placed under the command of General Zymierski, an officer of the pre-War Polish army who had been cashiered for bribery.

Gomulka's forces in the first half of 1944 along with the 'Muscovites' tried to broaden the basis of KRN support. They succeeded in winning over the left-wing of the old Polish Socialist Party under Osobka-Morawski, which since 1943 had come to be known as the Workers' Party of Polish Socialists (Robotnicza Partia Polskich Socjalistow) or RPPS. Gomulka himself tried to go further. He began at this time to show signs of favoring a 'Polish road to socialism', which was to be made practicable by a united front of progressive parties.²

In July 1944, the Soviet forces crossed the 'Curzon line', which the USSR recognized as the eastern boundary of Poland. That at once raised the question of political authority of the liberated part of the country, and the Polish Communists wasted no time in providing their own answer to it.

On 21 July, at Chelm in the province of Lublin, a decree of the KRN set up a new executive body called the Polish Committee of National Liberation. A few days later it moved to the city of Lublin and was known thereafter as the Lublin Committee. It comprised members of the Union of Polish Patriots, of the National Council, and other left groupings which were prepared to work with the Communists.

The Lublin Committee was a provisional cabinet assuming the task of managing the nations affairs until Poland could re-establish itself. The socialist, Osobka-Morawski became chairman, while Andrzej Witos, nephew of the peasant leader, Wincenty Witos, became vice-chairman in charge of agriculture. The PPR, with Stanislaw Radkiewicz heading public security, were in effective control.

The 'July Manifesto' issued by the Committee called upon the Polish people to recognize the Committee's authority and to rise against the Nazis in collaboration with the Soviet army. The Polish border was not mentioned: Poland's eastern frontier was to be settled by mutual agreement with the Soviet Union. But the Manifesto spoke of the return to Poland of Pomerania, Silesia, and East Prussia; of access to the sea and a boundary on the Oder. Appeals to almost every social class were included, and there was no reference at all to the question of socialism. The intelligentsia, among those the Nazis set out to exterminate, were to be given special protection. The peasants were taken into consideration by a broad agrarian reform including expropriation of large estates without compensation.

Boleslaw Bierut was declared acting Head of State in September. Osobka-Morawski went to Moscow to sign an agreement with the Soviets by which the USSR recognized the Lublin Committee and the Soviet Commander-in-Chief was given wide powers on Polish territory so long as military operations continued; Marshal Bulganin was appointed official Soviet representative with the Committee.

The Gomulka Period 1945-48

Gomulka held three offices between 1945 and 1948: the Deputy Premiership, apart from carrying with it a certain amount of prestige, was the least important. But the other two

posts, the Ministry for the Recovered Territories and the secretary-generalship of the PPR, each in its different way, provided key leverage.

The recovered territories occupied a third of the total area of Poland, and they were the object of special interest for all politically active Poles. Gomulka was responsible for them during the vital period of reconstruction and resettlement. He was able to carry out the work of rehabilitation in such a way as to further the hold of the PPR over the area, and many large formerly German-owned estates were turned into State farms.

Gomulka held the post of secretary-general since 1943 when the PPR was operating illegally, and played a major role in building up its organization. PPR membership grew from 20,000 in the summer of 1944, to 235,296 at the end of 1945, 555,888 a year later, and 820,786 at the end of 1947.³ The PPR had representatives in the government ministries and in all branches of the state administration. However, even with Gomulka's wide support, the 'Muscovites' remained a distinct group, and there were also numerous Soviet officers, officials, and agents in key if not leading positions, whose influence at this point in history cannot be gauged precisely.

The leader of the Moscow-trained forces was Bierut. As Chairman of the Presidium of the National Council in 1944 and President of the Republic in 1947 he set out to play a paternal role in the new regime. Under the Constitution of 1921, which was still recognized as the basic constitutional document until 1952, the head of the State had in practice no party affiliations, and Bierut therefore was not officially a member of the PPR until he succeeded Gomulka as its secretary-general in 1948. From 1945-1948 Gomulka and Bierut were rivals for the leadership of the PPR.

Associated with Bierut were Berman and Hilary Minc, both adherents of Stalinian socialism. Berman played a leading role in ideological matters and had special influence over problems of foreign policy and the organs of State security. Hilary Minc exercised increasing control over the economy. A third figure, Radkiewicz, as Minister of Public Security had particular importance during the period when confiscation and nationalization was being established and consolidated.

There is no doubt that after the War influential Soviet officials remained on in Poland and held key positions both in the security police and in the army. General Zymierski, who by 1945 had become Commander of the Polish Army and a Marshal, was titular Minister of Defense from 1945-1949, and the new Polish Army was built under Soviet supervision.⁴

When the first issue of *Nowe Drogi* (New Roads), the theoretical organ of the PPR's Central Committee, appeared in January 1947, the first article in it was by the Party's secretary general. This article, entitled "Strong in Unity," is one of the most revealing statements that Gomulka ever made. His main theme was the rejection of ideological dogmatism. Poland, he maintained, must take its own road to socialism. He argued that in Poland the pre-War reactionary regime had been discredited by the out-break of the War and Poland's defeat. By 1945 the landowners and capitalists had little influence left. In the world as a whole fascism had been defeated and the forces of democracy were ascendant. In Poland there was no need for the dictatorship of the proletariat; Polish democratic forces had been able to gain power 'under the slogan of liberating the country from the yoke of German occupation'. Poland had the advantage of Soviet help, and the productive potential of Polish industry had been much higher than that of the Soviet Union before the Five-Year Plans. Poland was able, therefore, by democratic means to proceed along its own evolutionary road to socialism.

To describe the Polish system he was content to use the phrase 'People's Democracy', which probably originated with Tito.⁵ At this time Bierut and the other 'Muscovites' expressed themselves in very similar terms.

Gomulka's argument for strong unity between the PPS, which had broad support among the industrial workingclass and the PPR, appealed to the socialists who had suffered a long period of repression under Pilsudski and later under the Nazis. It was reinforced by the suggestion that any serious threat to the PPR's position might lead to armed Soviet intervention and another occupation.⁶ In addition, since the formation of the Lublin Committee the PPR, with the aid of the Soviet Army, had established itself in a strong position in the factory councils. It had also systematically implanted itself in traditionally socialist organizations such as the trade unions and co-operatives.

After the 1947 elections friction between the PPR and PPS revived. In May Gomulka responded by calling for the fusion of the two parties as a step forward 'on the road to complete unity of the Polish workingclass', although actual unification was not realized until 1949.

This situation required new tactics on the part of the PPR. During May and June, two-hundred right-wing members of the PPS were arrested, and a series of political trials were staged. Between the end of 1946 and mid-1947 on the basis of the unity pact between the two parties, PPS membership fell to 800,000, less than that of the PPR as a result of the exclusion of 150,000 "undesirables."⁷ In some instances, the charges against these individuals were proven, but largely they were purged on the weight of accusations or simply guilt by association.

Post-War Poland

Poland had suffered more severely from the war than any other Allied country. Apart from the destruction of life, Poland's material losses were higher than those of any other country occupied by Germany except for the western territories of the Soviet Union. 38% of the country's wealth had been destroyed: 85% of Warsaw, about 50% of the total port installations of Gdynia and Gdansk, and so great a proportion of the railways, roads, and other means of communication that in 1946 over 40% of Poland's central investments had to be devoted to their replacement.⁸

The territorial changes created tremendous problems. The great majority of the population of the recovered territories had either fled or been transferred to forced labor camps in Germany. It was estimated that over 90% of the area's livestock, 60% of its industrial capacity, and 45% of its urban dwellings had been destroyed. The territories, therefore, had to be resettled, restocked, and redeveloped.

Although Poland had considerable industrial potential before the second World War it still had a backward and underdeveloped economy. Between the Wars the restored Polish State had been faced with too many problems and had too little time to solve them. The economic achievement had scarcely been sufficient to keep pace with an average increase in population of about 430,000 a year, and the standard of living just before the second World War was much the same as it had been before 1914. Exploitation of the workingclass by an emerging capitalist class created brutal conditions in mills, mines, factories, shipyards, etc., and deadening situations for the commercial proletariat. The question of racism also struck at the heart of Polish civil society and the State. In a largely Catholic country and especially under the reactionary Pilsudski government the Jewish population were cut off from their most fundamental rights, compelled as they were to live in walled off sections of major cities and occupationally restricted, in short segregated and oppressed.

The Polish peasants did not do much better. "The Polish peasant," stated the Polish newspaper *Czas*, "employs methods and means which were used perhaps only in the Middle Ages; he nurses the fire in his stove and lends it to his neighbor; he splits matches into several parts; he lends dirty soapwater to

others; he boils herring barrels in order to obtain salt water. This is not a fable, but the actual state of affairs in the countryside, of the truth of which anybody may convince himself."⁹

In 1938 over 40% of the total capital invested in Polish industry was in foreign hands.¹⁰ (In 1982 the Polish foreign debt is exceeding the 27 billion dollar mark and 87% of its Gross National Product (GNP), the result of its productive forces, goes toward paying the interest on that debt.)

It is impossible, in a short space, to give an adequate impression of the results of German Imperialism in occupied Poland. But a few statistics and examples may convey some idea of it. Poland lost between 6 and 7 million people as a result of the War or over 20% of its total population. Of these only about 650,000 died in the course of actual armed conflict. More than 3.5 million, most of them Jews, were murdered by the Nazis in concentration camps and mass executions. Well over a million more perished in prisons or camps from undernourishment, hardship, and sickness. Participation in the resistance movement was punished by torture and death, while wholesale executions were often carried out on a completely arbitrary basis. Jews were shot for sport on the streets by SS men. Others were packed liked sardines into railway cars, strewn with quick-lime and left on sidings until they died of suffocation and exhaustion. As the Poles were intended to become a subject people, special hostility was shown to the intelligentsia and teachers. Over 40% of university professors and lecturers and between one fourth and one third of the school teachers lost their lives.

Inheriting this particular set of conditions it was necessary to devise a program best suited for Poland. The majority of Polish people with the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact fresh in their memory and the Russian occupation of eastern Poland were skeptical of a government where the Communists played a leading role, yet it was essential that the government should have their full support in its reconstruction program.

The PPR, in the emergency conditions of post-War Poland paid attention to national sentiment and adopted a compromise between capitalism and socialism.

In January 1945 the Polish National Bank was created with the exclusive right of issuing currency. The exchange of the existing Occupation zlotys for the Bank's new notes at par was limited to 500 per adult. All bank deposits in excess of this amount were blocked and, as for as bourgeois individuals with holdings at or above this amount, were virtually confiscated. For they could only be released by special permission of the Ministry of Finance, and in the case of private accounts, this was rarely granted. The owners of house property were only allowed to occupy what was considered necessary for their personal use by the severe standards which war damage made necessary and due to the general level of the housing crisis. In addition there was the land reform of September 1944, and the nationalization law of January 1946. The total effect of all these measures was that the middle bourgeois and capitalist class was virtually wiped out.

In the first issue of *Ekonomista*, the Polish economic journal which was revived early in 1947, Oskar Lange, Poland's leading Marxist economist, and at the time ambassador to the United States, wrote that although the Soviet Union used central planning as its basic method of economic co-ordination, 'other socialist countries might differ from one another as to the character of the producing units, the degree of their centralization, and the relative importance of planning and of the market'.

The post-War land reform was popular with the majority of the rural population, but its scope was relatively limited. During the inter-War years two Land Reform Acts led to a further 2,654,000 hectares being distributed to them,¹¹ so that by 1939 only one seventh of the arable land was in the hands of big landowners. As a result of the 1944 land reform,

9,795,600 hectares in all were confiscated, of which 3,800,800 were retained by the government and mostly became State farms, while more than two-thirds of nearly 6 million hectares that were distributed were in the recovered territories.¹² Here the situation was exceptional: most of the land had previously belonged to Germans and the majority of those to whom it was distributed, having lost holdings of their own elsewhere, had no reason to feel grateful to any government. The new and politically significant aspect of the post Second World War land reform was that no compensation was given to the dispossessed landowners.

Gomulka reconciled his opposition to compulsory collectivization with his socialist convictions by taking his stand in the writings of Engels and Lenin. Engels argued that the small peasants must be persuaded to co-operate, not be compelled to do so.¹³ Lenin, while accepting large-scale communal cultivation as the objective, maintained that it could not be achieved hastily or by the use of force and violence.¹⁴ In Gomulka's second regime (1956-1970) he was to abandon collectivization altogether.

By the autumn of 1946 a good deal of progress had been made with the recovery program. For example, much had been done on communications and large areas of devastated farmland had been brought back into cultivation. It was therefore decided at a meeting of the National Council in September that the time for first-aid measures and improvisation was passing, and that a long-term economic plan should be drawn up. The result was the Three-Year Plan of Reconstruction covering the period 1947-1949.

On the whole, the economic recovery of Poland during the period 1945-49 was remarkable. The work of reconstruction was carried out much more rapidly than after the first World War, when the damage and destruction were considerably less.

The main objectives of the Three-Year Plan were achieved and in some cases, surpassed. By the end of 1949 total industrial production substantially exceeded that of the pre-War Polish State, though it was not until the following year that it reached the pre-War production level of the present Polish territories. Total agricultural production was somewhat lower than before the War, though, taking account of the smaller post-War population, per capita production was higher. The standard of living rose considerably between 1945-49 and by 1949 was probably higher than before the War for a larger part of the population, especially the peasants.¹⁵

During the early stages of the recovery program, especially during the first half of 1946, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) assistance played a major part. Altogether UNRRA provided Poland with 2.2 million tons of supplies valued at \$476 million, excluding administrative and shipping costs which amounted to another \$134 million.¹⁶ It gave help in many fields, but its main contributions were food, transport, tractors, fertilizers, seeds, livestock, and medical and welfare supplies. They had a decisive influence at a vital period, and their total value was equivalent to 22% of Poland's national income in 1946.

During the immediate post-War years, the Soviet Union had supplied Poland with small quantities of food which, together with the UNRRA deliveries, had made up the daily food ration to a precarious 1,686 calories. The USSR also gave Poland a ten-year loan of \$450 million at 3% and undertook to provide equipment and technical assistance for the construction of a vast new iron and steel works at Nowa Huta near Cracow. At Potsdam it had agreed that the Soviet government should collect all reparations due to the USSR and Poland and give 15% of the total collected to Poland. It has been seen that arrangement was loosely interpreted and abused by the Soviet troops in the recovered territories. Under an 'agreement' of August 1945, imposed by Molotov, Poland was required to deliver to the Soviet Union, at a 'special price' of \$1.25 a ton, 8 million tons of coal in 1946, 13 million per annum during the

next four years, and 12 million thereafter. Denmark and Sweden were offering \$12 a ton at the same time and, a little later, \$16 a ton. In 1947 the amount to be delivered annually was halved to 6.5 million tons. But, apart from this so-called 'reparation coal' the USSR in 1948 paid, on the average, \$14 a ton for Polish coal, whereas the market price in Western Europe was 18 to 19 dollars. In 1946 as well, Polish sugar was being bought by the Soviet Union for less than half the price Poland was then paying to import sugar from Czechoslovakia, while the USSR paid only one dollar a kilogram for Polish yarn, when Sweden had already offered \$2.87 for it.¹⁷

The Fall of Gomulka and the Rise of Bierut

The export of revolution is nonsense. Every country will make its own revolution if it wants to, and if it does not want to there will be no revolution.

—Joseph Stalin, to an American Journalist (1936)

From 1945, Poland became a clear example of the 'exported revolution', carried out from above by a power deriving from a liberator/occupier.

The growth of PPR influence and organization cannot be explained simply by the presence of Soviet armed forces, but was also due to the central role played against Nazi occupation by the Party section that took an active part in the underground resistance movement under the leadership of Gomulka.

It must be remembered that the pro-Moscow faction was led by an individual who was, in fact, never an open party member. Bierut was chosen not for connections with movements of the workingclass and peasantry, or any serious role in the anti-fascist struggle for national liberation. Bierut's involvement by corroborating written accounts, seems to hold little historical importance. Stalin thought him to be the most willing in implementing Soviet interests in Poland at the end of the Second World War.

Unfortunately, Gomulka did not learn his lesson from the previous Soviet intervention in the Polish communist movement. The results of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact and the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Pact, along with the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland however, were still alive in the minds of the Polish people. Gomulka nonetheless failed to take the necessary precautionary measures to insure the implementation of a more definitive Marxist perspective for an 'independent road to socialism'.

Unlike Tito in Yugoslavia, the resistance in Nazi occupied Poland never built up an armed force capable of backing up any move toward 'independent socialism'. Gomulka also greatly weakened his position during the period of fusion with the left-Socialists (1947) in purging 150,000 dissident socialists from any form of political activity. These forces were his only potential allies.

The Soviets might have protected those who fought for genuine socialism against any imperialist intervention and made it easier for them to act. Even though 'socialism' was brought to Poland in the wake of Soviet troops and not by a revolutionary process of the working classes themselves, the resolution to class contradictions could have been resolved entirely in their favor. The Stalinian system made this road impossible.

Instead, Poland and the other Eastern European countries were basically viewed as a buffer zone to protect the Soviet Union, in accordance with the subordinate role assigned to the international communist movement since the mid-to-late 1920s. In Eastern Europe at the close of World War II this policy was simply taken to its logical conclusion.

The resulting situation, however, was the inauguration of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) at a conference called for that purpose in south-western Poland. The Communist movement found itself with a new center of leadership without having the slightest part in its creation. Nine parties sent representatives which, on the Soviet leadership decision, were to form the new body. This included the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, France and Italy. Not even the central organs of these parties had discussed in advance the subjects dealt with at this meeting—the new international situation, the policy to be followed by the Communist movement in this new situation, the setting up of the Cominform, etc.

Gomulka opposed the Cominform's creation. Gomulka's attitude was judged not only by his inevitably reserved speech to the conference, but by his article in *Nowe Drogi* the previous January and by more explicit remarks he made to the PPR Central Committee a month after the conference.

In 1948 the controversy started between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union which culminated during June in the expulsion of Tito from the Cominform. The attitude of Gomulka towards this dispute was determined by his belief in the right of nations to follow their own road to socialism. At a meeting of the PPR Central Committee on the 3rd of June, when the dispute was coming to a head, he suggested a policy of conciliation towards Yugoslavia, criticized the PPR's Luxemburgist attitude on the national issue, and praised the PPS for its traditional support of Polish independence. At the same time he advocated the union of the PPR and the PPS without waiting for further purges. His remarks had a mixed reception, and for the first time there were demands for his resignation.

Gomulka refused resignation, taking a sick leave instead. Berman and Zawadzki went without him to the meeting of the Cominform.

Between February and December 1948 the Socialist Parties were absorbed into the Communist Parties in Rumania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Poland. In January 1949 these five countries and the USSR set up the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). During 1949 Stalin's stronger hand in Eastern Europe was revealed by purges in the Communist parties of the area and by the trial for 'treason' of a number of leading Communists, including Rajk in Hungary and Kostov in Bulgaria. Gomulka's case can best be understood in the light of these developments. His sympathy for the recalcitrant Tito, however, could not be tolerated, and his removal became inevitable. The 'Polish road to socialism' had become 'nationalist deviation'.¹⁸

Gomulka returned to the Politbureau in mid-August 1948 and was told that a full recantation was expected of him. The main purpose of the Committee's meeting was to deal with his case and to induce him to make the strongest possible disavowal of his 'misdeeds'. The chief item on the agenda was a resolution concerning 'the rightist and national deviation in Party leadership, its sources, and the ways to overcome it'. Bierut led the attack. Gomulka found himself in a position of almost complete isolation. He was deserted by his friends and the Party he had done so much to create. Marian Spychalski, one of his closest associates, made a fierce attack on him. Under pressure and threats he pleaded guilty to 'rightist-nationalist' deviation; agreed that he had been wrong on many issues, including collectivization and Yugoslavia; and finally admitted to distrust of the Soviet Union during the War and willingness to compromise with reaction.

During the meeting Gomulka ceased to be secretary-general of the PPR and was succeeded by Bierut, who was given the new position of Party Chairman, which he combined with his non-Party appointment as President of the Republic. Four of Gomulka's followers including Kliszko were reduced from full to alternate members of the Central Committee, while Bienkowski was expelled from it altogether.

Gomulka, however, had considerable influence and popularity, especially with those who had worked with him since the days in the underground, and leading members of the PPR had shared in varying degrees his 'deviationist' tendencies. Even Berman was restrained and 'almost cordial' in his references to Gomulka personally. Hilary Minc, whose changed attitude to the agrarian problem reflected Soviet and Cominform influence, still spoke with studied moderation at the beginning of September, insisted that collectivization must be voluntary, and maintained that the looser types of co-operative farm were preferable.

The Unification Congress met during the third week in December. The PPR and the PPS were merged in a new party called the Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza) or PZPR. Bierut became Chairman, and Cyrankiewicz, secretary-general, but the secretary-general was to be assisted by two secretaries, the Moscow-trained Zawadzki and Zambrowski. The Party's Politbureau consisted of eleven members, and of these eight came from the PPR, including Bierut, Berman, Minc, Radkiewicz, Zawadzki, and Zambrowski and only three from the PPS, two of whom were Cyrankiewicz and Adam Rapacki. Symbolic of what had really been happening was the presence at the Congress of the two guests of honor, who represented the traditional links between Polish and Russian 'communism', Zofia Dzierzynska, the widow of Feliks Dzierzynski, the first president of Cheka, and Wanda Wasilewska who had been made chairman of the Union of Polish Patriots in 1943. A telegram was sent to Stalin, 'the leader of genius', and when this was read to the delegation, it was greeted with an ovation.

During the autumn of 1949 changes took place in the organization and command of the Polish armed forces through which the Soviet part in the whole proceedings was made evident. Spychalski was replaced by Ochab as Vice-Minister of Defence. Then in November, ostensibly at the request of Bierut, Stalin 'made available' to Poland one of his senior military commanders, Marshal Rokossovsky, who was of Polish origin but was un-popular in Poland owing to his passive role during the Warsaw uprising and owing to his subsequent appointment as commander of the Soviet forces in Poland. Rososovsky became Minister of Defence and Commander-in-Chief of the Polish army in place of General Zymierski, who went into retirement. He was accepted almost at once into the Central Committee of the PZPR and joined its Politbureau the following year. Spychalski, in spite of his attack on Gomulka the previous year, found himself accused of deviationism. He was charged, amongst other things, with permitting enemies of the Party and the USSR to penetrate into the armed forces and with letting 'valuable Soviet specialists to depart prematurely'; a reference no doubt to the natural process, which had gone on under his and Zymierski's regime, of replacing Soviet officers in the Polish army by Polish officers as they became available. But his main fault no doubt was having been too closely associated with Gomulka since their days in the underground.

In November 1949, there was a renewed attack on Gomulka. The Unification Congress surprisingly elected him to the Central Committee of the new party, but a month later he had been dismissed from his posts as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Recovered Territories.

Gomulka was now being accused of 'lack of vigilance' in tolerating 'Trotskyists' among his subordinates and of using 'Polish patriotism' as a standard in making appointments. It was also insinuated that he had been responsible for the deaths of Nowotko and Finder, his two predecessors in the post of secretary-general to the PPR.

He hit back this time at his prosecutors, and repudiated the worst of the charges, asking why he was being chosen as a scapegoat and humiliated after a life of devotion to Communism and the Party, and claimed that, if he had erred

ideologically, so had almost all of his colleagues, who had once supported his views. Gomulka, Spychalski, and Kliszko were expelled from the Central Committee and were forbidden to participate in the future in any form of Party work. None of them were brought to trial, but later all three were arrested and imprisoned.

This brought to an end anything which may have seemed like an independent 'Polish road to socialism'. Politically, economically, and ideologically it was a period of almost complete subservience to the Soviet Union. The whole tone of Polish official journals altered: they echoed the prevailing Stalinian doctrines and acted as vehicles for exaggerated adulation of Stalin himself. For example, in September 1950, the Cultural weekly *Nowa Kultura* published a poem by Adam Wazyk which referred to Stalin's mind as a 'river of wisdom and reason' and attributed to him the power to 'demolish mountains'. On the occasion of Stalin's seventieth birthday, *Nowe Drogi* included a special message from the Central Committee of the United Worker's Party, which stated that 'the name of Stalin is indissolubly linked with the hearts and minds of the Polish working class'.

In May 1951 the constituent Sejm took up the task of appointing a special commission to draw up a draft constitution. The constitutional commission finished its work in April 1952. The Polish Constitution of 1952 was largely based on the Soviet Constitution of 1936. (the so-called Stalin Constitution). Of its 91 articles '50 contained clauses similar, if not identical, to those of the Stalin Constitution'.¹⁹ In speaking about the new constitution before the Polish parliament, Bierut echoed the words of Stalin when he introduced the Soviet constitution of 1936. 'A constitution should be the sum and balance of already realized social, political and economic changes'. What Stalin referred to at the time was basically the rise in the productive forces reached the level at which proletarian dictatorship was obviated historically and communism was being achieved (the forerunner of the State of the whole People line of modern revisionism).

Bierut further ensured his power by controlling the State security forces, whose actual control was ultimately wielded by Soviet advisers and agents. The whole security apparatus was controlled by the chief Soviet adviser to Radkiewicz, General Lalin.

In October, following the approval of the Constitution, elections took place. Of the 425 deputies returned, 273 belonged to the United Workers' Party, 90 to the Peasant Party, 25 to the Democratic Party and 37 were 'independents', including 3 Progressive Catholics. Bierut, no longer President of the Republic, combined the Premiership with his position as Party Chairman. Cyrankiewicz became one of the Deputy Premiers, and Zawadzki was elected Chairman of the Council of State. Two years later, following the Soviet example, Bierut resigned the Premiership in favor of Cyrankiewicz, for the position of First-Secretary of the Party.

The new Party bureaucrats soon established themselves as a kind of privileged elite, who lived in conditions of comfort and luxury, which were all the more scandalous owing to the hardships and low living standard which the working masses had to endure at this time. Some of the leaders had luxurious apartments in the capital and several country villas as well. Special stores were surreptitiously provided for Party officials where choice goods, unobtainable by workers, were available at low prices. The allegiance of security officials was strengthened by a salary rate 25 to 30% higher than that of other civil servants.

No aspect of Polish life reflected more clearly the new conditions and the nature of the relationship between Poland and the USSR than the situation in the armed forces under Marshal Rokossovsky. His influence and prestige were emphasized when he was made one of the Deputy Premiers in Bierut's Cabinet of 1952.

Under Rokossovsky, for example, officers had to swear allegiance to the Soviet Union as well as to their own country. Nearly all the key commands and staff appointments were held by Soviet professional officers, while for Polish officers promotion to senior ranks was only possible if they had a knowledge of the Russian language and had training in a Soviet military academy. A new conscription law in 1950 increased the length of military service.

Economically, State planners pursued certain long-term aims for Poland, within the framework of a largely Soviet-directed program, but with little regard for the wishes, interests or material needs of the Polish people at the time. Minc had referred to certain features of the Three-Year Plan as forming 'a sort of gangway' to the draft of a Six-Year Plan covering the years 1950-55, submitted to the PZPR Congress at the end of 1948. Under Soviet influence and pressure it was subjected to at least two revisions during the following eighteen months and was finally approved by the Central Committee of the Party in July 1950.

The revisions had the effect of raising the targets and adjusting the plan in various respects to Soviet requirements. In his speech to the Central Committee in July 1950, Minc stated that "Soviet planners played an important part in drawing up the whole program, and Soviet technicians and specialists came to Poland in large numbers to take part in the planning and development of the different industries." After Stalin's death the Polish economy was co-ordinated increasingly with the economies of other socialist countries within the framework of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon).

Within the industrial field the greatest attention was given to the nationalized producer-goods industries. Special encouragement was given to machine-making owing to its key role in the technical development of all branches of the economy. Of total investments 46% were devoted to industry, and of this amount no less than 75% were allotted to producer-goods industries, though the allocation was actually exceeded and in 1953 reached 87.3%.²⁰

The Six-Year Plan was altered again after July 1950 to meet the implications of the Korean War, by increasing arms production. Poland's limited productive capacity was placed under a severe strain and its consumer-goods industries and popular consumption were further restricted. From 1951-1955 defense production took up 11% of the total industrial investment or more than all light industries put together.²¹

Poland during this period was confronted with a highly centralized administrative machine with which to implement their programs. In 1949 the Central Planning Board was replaced by the State Commission of Economic Planning, which was given extensive powers of financial and economic planning supervision, and co-ordination. At the same time the Ministry of Industry and Commerce was divided up into six independent economic ministries, and the process of proliferation continued so that by the end of 1953 the number of economic ministries was no less than twenty-six.

Minc was able to carry out measures, many of which were highly unpopular with the great majority of the Polish people. The unions, for example, became the instruments of the Party and State for achieving production targets and enforcing factory discipline. Union officials were purged and replaced in the search for obedience and docility.²² During this period also was developed a form of extra labor which quickly merged with other forms of 'work improvement' and rationalization. This was the so-called Socialist Output Competition movement.

Again, as in the USSR and in all the 'planned economies' apparently, this movement started in Poland and Czechoslovakia as a production-and-quality race between individuals who challenged one another for a certain period of time. Then it was taken up on a team, plant, and in certain instances industry-wide basis, at which point the movement was given specific direction by the Party and State. Trade union

centrals and the government proceeded to reward and encourage the contestants most substantially, and the trade unions provided an organizational framework to carry the movement further. Much of the supervision went on under the watchful eye of secret State Security Police agents, to 'spot wreckers and imperialist agents' who might undermine 'heroic socialist production'. What the movement accomplished was a form of social coercion and 'popular' support for the Party's general line of advancing productive forces.

The resentment of the workingclass which built up over time was due not only to overwork and sacrifice, but to the growing disproportion and distance between it as the advanced class (which should have been its role politically) and Party and State functionaries who were accruing privilege to themselves at the expense of their labor-power. Political power was in the hands of the Party and State; the proletariat as a class was unable to enforce its dictatorship and exercise democratic control within civil society because the Party was not allowed ideologically to comprehend its role in transforming the proletariat politically from a class in itself to a class for itself, by the historical domination of revisionist Stalinian socialism.

In the Countryside

Agriculture under the Six-Year Plan was seriously neglected. Politically this policy was facilitated by the fusion, completed towards the end of 1948. Only 10% of total investments were allocated to agriculture, and partly as a result of this neglect, at the end of 1953 there were still about 400,000 hectares of uncultivated arable land. According to official statistics, in 1955 industrial production reached a level four and a half times that of 1938, while the pre-War level in agriculture was only exceeded by 8.7% in 1955.²³

According to the Six-Year Plan, 20 to 25% of the total cultivated area was to be collectivized by the end of 1955, and this, together with the State farms, would amount to about a third of all agricultural land in Poland. The peasants, however, were most reluctant to join collective farms and by the end of 1955 the collectives formed only 9.2% of the total cultivated area, while the State farms made up another 13.5%. Nevertheless the State farms received on the average 35% to 40% of the investments allocated to agriculture, while they and the collectives were greatly favored in the provision of credit, machinery and fertilizers. In the Kielce area of Central Poland only 40% of the farmers, who were Party members, were said in 1951 to have enrolled in collectives.

Gomulka pointed out that owing to a lack of capital and building materials the state of housing in the countryside was much worse in 1955 than it had been in 1950. In addition the individual peasants were subjected to heavy additional taxation through the system of compulsory deliveries by which they were forced to supply the government with large quantities of grain, meat, potatoes, and milk at low prices. On top of all these disadvantages there was the severe shortage of attractive industrial products; so the peasant, unable to spend his money either on investment-goods or producer-goods, tended to consume an increasing amount of his produce and had a minimum incentive to raise production.²⁴

The Six-Year Plan

Many mistakes were made during this period, and the cost of the achievements were high. Oskar Lange, a Professor and Marxist economist who, in addition to his academic distinction, played a leading role in economic planning, described the Six-Year Plan in the following terms:

This was the plan for constructing the foundations of socialism. Bold and ambitious in its goals . . . it

envisaged great tasks straining the efforts and possibilities of the nation. Implemented under the conditions of the specific international or internal circumstances of that period, changed in the course of its implementation and with insufficient experience in planning and managing the economy, it gave rise to considerable disproportions and difficulties.²⁵

Professor Kazimierz Secomski, another leading economist and a Vice-President of the Planning Commission, referred to the Six-Year Plan as having been accompanied by the 'appearance of a number of economic disproportions and unsatisfactory progress in raising the living standards'.

In the case of almost of almost every item the achievement fell short of the targets laid down in July 1950. For example, the target for cement, which was so urgently needed for construction and reconstruction, was 5 million tons, while the actual output only amounted to 3.8 million. Experts have criticized the plan for laying too much emphasis on steel and too little on coal; for expecting too much of the peasants and doing too little for them; for starting up industries when an adequate supply of the required raw materials was not available; and for embarking on too many kinds of manufacture, instead of concentrating on a selected number. The bureaucratic machine was so huge, and the rules and regulations were so numerous that the system became self-frustrating. The directives usually had some rational purpose, but there were so many of them that they cancelled one another out, and managers were often left to make vital decisions themselves. There were so many appointments to be filled that they were frequently given to candidates who were 'politically reliable' but had no technical qualifications whatever. One of the worst features of the system was a method of granting bonuses to managerial staff, which was based on the excess of output over the planned amount, without any regard to production costs and efficiency. This also led to fallacious figures drawn up by the managers to satisfy leadership and receive their bonuses.

The provision of housing fell far short of what was needed even to keep pace with the rapid increase in population and with the influx of workers into towns and cities. The standard of accommodation in 1956 was much lower than in 1949,²⁶ when War damage had not yet been made good.

Official statistics gave the increase in real wages between 1949-1955 as 27.5% but Gomulka in October 1956, referred to the 'juggling with figures' which had produced this result. The Secretariat of the Economics Commission for Europe estimated that real wages in Poland were 12% lower in 1953 than in 1949 and in 1956 only exceeded the 1949 level by 19%, although there had been a rise in social benefits of all kinds during this period. But when even this is examined from the vantage point of the Marxist labor theory of value, this only amounts to expended labor-power allocated to State revenue, and was more or less a means of political appeasement.

It was these conditions of the workingclasses in Poland which generally led up to the Poznan events in 1956, which are dealt with in Paul Costello's "Class Struggles in Poland" (Nov.-Dec. 1980, *Theoretical Review*) summed up by the First Secretary of the Party committee at the Stalin Locomotive works in Poznan:

. . . instead of politically directing, the party organization had . . . in practice sought to administer the factory, transforming the party organization into . . . aides of the directors and managers. . . The voice of the workers was not heard or needed nor were the workers taken seriously. . . This state of affairs was nothing else than the expression of a lack of faith in the workers' ability to reason politically.²⁷

In 1956 the shallow critique of the Stalin personality cult was

held out to the masses of demonstrating workers in Poland, instead of redressing more profound questions of proletarian hegemony. This was the particularity of a much larger crisis in the international communist movement (as manifested politically in Poland) which was the historical antecedent to the 20th Soviet Congress in 1956.

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namely the bond of the state apparatus with the working class (HP:105).

Hirsch's analysis shows by example the direction in which the state derivation debate must move if it is to develop an adequate historical materialist theory of the capitalist state. Two related problems must be avoided. The first is economic reductionism and the functionalist analysis that follows from it. The value of the state derivation approach is its insistence on the fact that the proper object of analysis is the state as a capitalist state and that its form is ultimately limited by its relation to capitalist social relations of production. The basic form of the state apparatus and the broad limits set on the exercise of state power can and should be derived from the form of economic relations (though not from their fetishized form) dominant in a social formation. However, a complete understanding of the state cannot be based on knowledge of economic relations alone. A complete derivation of the form of the state must include the way the dominant economic forms are mediated by the ideological and political levels and how all of these are articulated in civil society and developed through class struggle. The failure to do this results in a hollow, economistic analysis of the state as it functions for capital.

The second recurrent problem in the state derivation debate, closely related to the first, has been the tendency to base the analysis of the state solely on the abstract logic of capital. The consequence of this is an ahistorical analysis that fails to explain the historical development of the capitalist state or the important role of class struggle in that process. For analysis cannot be rigidly separated from historical analysis. The latter cannot be simply tacked on to the former as a specific example of a general (ahistorical) law. Just as form cannot be separated from historical content, the logic of capital cannot be separated from the historical development of class conflict. Hirsch's work indicates that there is a basis for their unity within the state derivation debate. These mistakes need not be repeated by theorists working within this problematic.

However, there is one problem inherent in this approach. Working only with the categories of 'capital', 'class', and the 'state', its proponents have no conceptual tools to adequately theorize popular democratic struggles. For this it is necessary to develop the concepts of 'civil society' and/or the 'ideological instance'. A good example of the conceptual development of the former is found in John Urry's *The Anatomy of Capitalist Society*, (Humanities Press, 1982) and of the latter in Goran Therborn's *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, (Verso, 1980). Popular democratic struggles are becoming increasingly important for understanding the role of the state in advanced capitalist social formations. The state mediates not only struggles based on class but struggles based on sex, and race and ethnicity as well. For both theoretical and practical political reasons these cannot be ignored. It is the value of the state derivation debate that it makes central the determinant and dominant role of the economic instance in capitalist social formations, it is its major shortcoming that the complexity and relative autonomy of other instances is often ignored.

by Edgar Kiser

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- ¹ M. K. Dziewanowski: *The Communist Party of Poland* (Hoover 1978), o.p. cit. p. 167.
- ² Dziewanowski, pp. 171 and 173.
- ³ Z. K. Brzezinski: *The Soviet Bloc*, p. 10.
- ⁴ *International Affairs*, January 1951; Bedrich Bruegel article, *Soviet Methods*.
- ⁵ Z. K. Brzezinski: *The Soviet Bloc*, p. 25.
- ⁶ *Foreign Affairs*: October 1949, *The Fate of Polish Socialism*.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 134, Dziewanowski.
- ⁸ K. Secomski: *Premises of the Five-Year Plan in Poland 1956-1960*.
- ⁹ G. Dimitroff: *The United Front*, p. 16.
- ¹⁰ *Osteuropa-Handbuch: Polen (Poland)*, pp. 73 and 101-102.
- ¹¹ F. Zweig: *Poland Between Two Wars*, p. 133.
- ¹² O. Halecki: *Poland*, pp. 293-94.
- ¹³ F. Engels: *The Peasant Question in France and Germany*; Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, vol II, pp. 420 and 440.
- ¹⁴ V. I. Lenin: *Work in the Rural Districts*, *Selected Works Vol. II*, pp. 463-4.
- ¹⁵ J. M. Montias: *Central Planning in Poland*, p. 53.
- ¹⁶ UNRRA operational analysis paper No. 45, *The Impact of UNRRA on the Polish Economy*.
- ¹⁷ Jean Malara and Lucienne Rey: *Poland: Occupation and Struggle*, 158-60.
- ¹⁸ M. K. Dziewanowski: op. cit. p. 213.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 230.
- ²⁰ J. M. Montias: *Central Planning in Poland*, pp. 61-62.
- ²¹ S. Jedrychowski: *Fundamental Principles of Economic Policy in Polish Industry*, p. 26.
- ²² W. J. Stankiewicz and J. M. Montias: *Institutional Change in the Postwar Economy of Poland*, p. 20.
- ²³ K. Secomski: *Premise of the Six-Year Plan in Poland*, pp. 16-17.
- ²⁴ K. Secomski: op. cit. pp. 37-38.
- ²⁵ O. Lange: *Fundamental Principles of the Six-Year Plan in Poland*, *Economic Bulletin for Europe*, 19 February 1967.
- ²⁶ *The Polish Economy since 1950: Economic Bulletin for Europe*, 1950, Vol. 9 No. 3, p. 15.
- ²⁷ P. Costello, quoted in *Theoretical Review*, Nov.-Dec. 1980.



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repressive tendencies of the regime. On the other hand, if done successfully, this could prevent the regime from becoming more repressive and could promote a further democratization of Mexican society.

The next few years will probably see an increasing loss of popular support for the regime. There will be rising popular demands for social equality and democracy. Moreover, there will probably be increasing demands for greater state control over the country's resources and productive process, and for the protection of Mexico's national sovereignty in the face of its increasing financial dependence on international capital and the United States. Unless these demands are translated into an effective mass movement capable of imposing major changes on the system, they will not be realized. The unity and commitment of the progressive forces in the country will be a decisive factor in determining whether this happens or not.