

**Legitimation and Instability:  
The Fatal Link**

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This paper explains the unparalleled record of political instability in Communist-ruled Poland by exploring the failure of successive regimes to legitimate their domination. It argues that the Polish Stalinists, Gomulka and Gierek, as well as General Jaruzelski, were only successful in putting obedience to their rule on a highly contingent, results-oriented (i.e., non-legitimate) basis and thus were particularly prone to societal challenges from below. The paper concludes with the successful negotiation of the Roundtable Agreement in spring 1989, which radically changed the nature of the Polish political system.



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# LEGITIMATION AND INSTABILITY: THE FATAL LINK

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Repeated honeymoon trips will not save a bad marriage by improving what is wrong with it, but may lead to its continuing without purpose and in growing discomfort.

-- Bruno Bettelheim/1/

## I. INTRODUCTION.

The political system that existed in Poland prior to 1989 was a modified version of the Soviet system of economic, political, and social institutions forged by Stalin's revolution from above. The institutional pattern was the product of certain currents in Russian political culture and the process of a particular consolidation of the 1917 revolution. At least until the late 1980s it had a strong measure of acceptance in Russian society (Zaslavsky, 1982; Bialer, 1980), and had a rather impressive record of domestic political stability in the Soviet Union.

A modified version of this system did not produce similar results in Poland. Stalinist institutions were forcibly imposed upon Poland during the period 1944-49 and

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/1/Bruno Bettelheim, The Informed Heart, (London: Peregrine Books, 1986), pp. 47-8.

was clearly alien to mainstream currents of political culture there. Had Poland been afforded an opportunity for self-determination after World War II, it would have, no doubt, opted for a parliamentary political system in which the parties of the London Government-in-Exile would have contended for power and for a mixed economy.

In retrospect it is no exaggeration to say that many Poles viewed that system as alien long before the Soviets "discovered" problems with their own system or other East Central Europeans mounted coherent challenges to own local regimes. Nowhere in Communist East Central Europe did any regime have to contend with sustained and dogged popular unrest as in Poland. Four party general secretaries were prematurely retired in response to popular unrest (Ochab, 1956; Gomułka, 1970; Gierek, 1980; Kania, 1981). Events before the departures both Gierek (strikes in 1976) and Gomułka (student and intellectual unrest in 1968) from the political scene also presented profound challenges to their authority which weakened the ability of each to rule effectively. In 1988, two strike waves helped persuade First Secretary Jaruzelski to negotiate directly with the outlawed trade union Solidarity in 1989. In Poland there were well developed opposition movements since 1976. In short, the entire period from the strikes of 1976 until the disintegration of Communist power was one of profound

instability. Poland thus, in this sense, was a unique case in Communist-ruled Europe.

In general when we talk about the question of instability, we directly address the ability of a country's leaders to rule effectively. Thus stability is the ability of a ruling elite to maintain its system of domination (Max Weber's (1978) Herrschaft or some concept derivative of it) and to see to its unimpeded operation. Herrschaft has also been rendered in English as "authority" or as even as "imperative coordination." For the purposes of this study I will use the notion of domination coined by Mueller (1973) -- "...the control of a limited number of individuals over the material resources of society and over the access to positions of political power." Those powerful individuals I shall refer to as the "elite" and those over whom they rule "subordinates." Thus systems of domination imply concrete political and economic structural arrangements in which elites command the obedience of subordinates and control the uses of socially produced resources. When such arrangements are profoundly challenged, as they were in Poland, there is instability.

A further distinction about instability is warranted in order to fully understand the predicament of the Polish elite. One kind of instability is an impediment to the maintenance and operation of the system of domination of a particular leader of the elite. This can be described as "regime instability." This has existed in Poland as

challenges to the rule of individual party general secretaries. However, when such challenges are sustained and persistent, as they have been in Poland, we can talk of a problem on a different order -- "system instability."

In contrast to Poland, the stability in the Soviet Union was attributable to the fact that it had established bases for its legitimacy (Bialer, 1980). The Russian people accepted it in some way as their own system. The record of instability in Poland suggests that successive regimes there were not successful in legitimating their domination. Before turning to Poland per se, however, a discussion of legitimacy is in order.

Legitimate domination is a subset of the forms of domination. There can be systems of domination in which subordinate members of society are obedient for reasons of feared or actual coercion or pure material gain (Weber, 1978). Weber talks about such a situation in his essay on "The City" (subtitled "Non-legitimate Domination") in which the logic of the market rules. Such a logic of obedience can also be illustrated by the ethos of the mercenary. Obedience in such military formations is based on monetary gain, not commitment to a cause or fealty to a commander for whom the soldier fights.

Legitimate domination implies some greater commitment to obedience than the two reasons discussed above. It requires that obedience to the dominants be internalized as a binding norm of routine action by the subordinates.



Legitimate domination is based on voluntary obedience, obedience viewed in some sense by those dominated as the way in which they ought to act. That is to say that the dominated conceive of their obedience as morally justified -- e.g. as "good," "right," "natural," or some other attribute. Perhaps Lipset (1981) summarized this relationship with respect to the polity most succinctly -- "Legitimacy involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for society." /my emphasis/

In past eras in which legitimate domination closely corresponded to the Weberian ideal-type of traditional legitimate domination, it was common to conceive of "legitimacy" once conferred on a form of rule, as something immutable. With the superseding of these forms of legitimate domination, it has become necessary to rebuild legitimate domination by a process of constantly ongoing legitimation. Thus, in modern mass polities, legitimate domination should not be conceptualized as a static condition. Strictly speaking, it is more accurate to speak of domination undergoing a process of legitimation. Thus, legitimate domination has come to be something that must be reproduced.

It is impossible to say whether legitimate domination is more moral than non-legitimate or illegitimate forms of domination without reference to a particular set of ethics.

Subordinates prefer legitimate domination to other forms of domination precisely because it coincides with their notions of how social and political life is properly structured. This means that legitimate domination is a more effective form of domination, because the dominated have internalized obedience as a norm, thus making it effectively automatic. Hence dominants who have legitimated their domination do not have to commit as extensive resources to monitoring and enforcing obedience as they would under different forms of domination. In the long run we would expect legitimate domination to be more stable and thus preferred by the dominant elite.

For purposes of this study such the arguments that elites make to justify obedience to their rule will be termed as ideologies. When subordinates accept the validity of these arguments domination is legitimated. This use of the term ideology is distinct from its use in ranking parties, belief systems, elites or other political phenomena along a pragmatic-ideological continuum. Similarly, its use here is distinct from Marx's (1977) use of the term. Marx's notion of ideology -- class interest presented as universal interest -- is too narrow in that class domination is not the only form of domination and that presentation of class interest as general interest is only one conceivable form that ideology could take.

Ideologies can originate as novel arguments or rationales posed by the dominants to justify their

domination, can come from existing elements in political culture, or can combine both of these (Rigby, 1982). In cases where a revolutionary elite seizes power, as the Polish Communists did, ideology plays a special role, for it must justify both the seizure of power and policies to transform society. In such cases, the new elite usually tries to inculcate new beliefs in society in support of revolutionary change.

However, since revolutionary elites are more prone than established ones to use violence to achieve their aims, mass acceptance of their rule, and hence, internalization of revolutionary ideology by the subordinates on a mass scale is not crucial in the short run. For a time, mass obedience can be secured by coercion and terror, i.e. in a non-legitimate fashion. However, support from certain sectors of society is necessary in order to recruit new members into the echelons of the elite and sub-elites. Moreover, in the case of the sub-elites who are called upon to play crucial roles in the process of rapidly transforming the existing order, an exceptionally high degree of ideological faith is required in motivating them to obey commands that will undoubtedly involve a host of unpleasant coercive acts.

As Kolakowski (1982) has pointed out, upon the successful establishment and the consolidation of the new regime, the elite often seeks to incorporate socially resonant elements of prerevolutionary political culture into

its ideological appeals for obedience. This has important ramifications with respect to the legitimation strategies of such regimes. Markus (1982) speaks of the distinction between "overt" and "covert modes of legitimation" in this regard. In Poland, the ideology employed in the overt mode of legitimation has been Marxism-Leninism in its official canonical Soviet form. As we shall see in the following sections, in the immediate postwar period when the present system of domination was first established it served as the primary ideology that the regime employed in its legitimation attempts. However, with de-Stalinization the fashion in which the regime tried to secure legitimation, particularly with respect to society, changed. At this juncture official Marxism-Leninism's role in legitimation changed to that of a ritualized form, primarily serving the elite's "self-legitimation."

With de-Stalinization a covert mode of legitimation began to supplement official Marxism-Leninism in the way that the regime attempted to secure societal legitimation. After the defeat of revisionism in 1968, official Marxism-Leninism, as such, ceased to have any strong resonance within Polish society. Since that time the covert mode of legitimation has assumed an even greater role for the regime in Poland. Markus describes the general change in ideology that results from this switch to the covert mode:

Its role is not merely an auxiliary one, for it is believed to be more effective, appealing as it usually does to more popular, sometimes traditional, sometimes "external," so-called "petty bourgeois" values. Thus internationalist references in overt legitimation are replaced by nationalist ones; the principle of collectivism is replaced by a competitive individualism, by the ideology and practice of "bettering one's own lot" and emphasis on familial values; the aim of humanisation of social relations is replaced by an orientation towards "modernisation," primarily in the sense of economic growth. Generally speaking, the system of covert legitimation is far from being, or even attempting to be coherent. In this sense it "adapts" itself to "commonsense" which is never a systematic worldview./2/

In the sections which follow this shift from the use of an almost pure overt mode of legitimation under Stalinism to increasing reliance on covert modes starting with Gomułka, will be evident in the discussion of the ideologies that post-Stalinist regimes in Poland used in their legitimation strategies.

Finally, as Markus indicates while Marxism-Leninism was a codified system of thought, the shift to covert modes of legitimation has meant that ideology in the particular sense discussed here, ceased to be as unified or as coherent as it previously had been. With this change, the regime tried to inculcated different norms of obedience based on different rationales in different social groups, strata or classes

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/2/Maria Markus, "Overt and Covert Modes of Legitimation in East European Societies," in Political Legitimation in Communist States, T.H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher, eds. (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 88-9.

within the consolidated system. The elite even tried to secure the obedience of different groups (e.g. sub-elites versus mass constituencies) on the basis of different sub-ideologies./3/

The historical record of instability in postwar Poland indicates that the party-state elite there was far from successful in legitimating its domination. In order to understand why among all the Communist regimes in East Central Europe the Polish regime was the least successful in establishing stable bases for its domination, it is essential to explain how the Polish elite tried to inculcate norms of obedience in the society over which it has ruled for over forty years and why it has failed. Jaruzelski's failure to normalize Poland in the 1980s did not arise in a vacuum. Rather, the problems he faced had plagued the Polish party-state from its inception. In order to understand why Jaruzelski was compelled to accede to the dismantling of the Communist system of power, one must understand the failures of his predecessors to establish a

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/3/For example, one could imagine that an elite which presented itself to the population as technocratic might stress different components of a technocratic approach to workers and technical specialists. To workers it might present the idea that greater efficiency and productivity would bring more and better paying jobs, whereas to technical specialists they might stress greater efficiency and productivity as values in themselves, as well as the opportunity for a more important role in economic processes.

legitimate basis on which the system of domination in Poland could rest.

In the following sections I will examine how the party-state elite in Poland sought to justify its domination, and to evaluate the reasons why Polish society failed to internalize this ideology. All three regimes that ruled Poland before the birth of Solidarity -- those of the Polish Stalinists, Gomułka, and Gierek -- were literally chased from power by the wrath of their subjects. This was a legacy Jaruzelski was unable to overcome. It is a record unparalleled in East Central Europe, where leadership turnover in response to mass discontent, prior to 1989, had generally been rare.

## II. POLISH STALINISM.

After World War II, the Communist Polish Workers' Party (PPR) managed to seize power in Poland with Soviet support. Those who would come to hold the highest leadership positions within the party would be Stalin's most obedient Polish followers. Generally, the members of this group had spent much of the interwar period and the war in the Soviet Union and thus have been dubbed the "Muscovites." They had begun to make plans for taking power as early as 1943./4/

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/4/Krystyna Kersten, Narodziny Systemu Władzy, Polska 1943-1948, (Paris: Libella, 1986), p. 19.

They were not without other competitors for power in the immediate postwar period, however. In London, there was a Polish Government-in-Exile, composed of the parties that had opposed the dictatorship established by Piłsudski in 1926. The London government organized Polish divisions which fought on the Western front, and claimed the allegiance of the vast underground partisan Home Army and the structures of the Polish underground state. There were also rightwing and phalangist political organizations, which maintained partisans in the field in Poland. Finally, there were divisions among the Communists. In the immediate postwar period, the PPR was originally led by Władysław Gomułka, who had spent the latter stages of the war as the leader of the Communist underground in Poland. Such "home Communists" were not fully trusted by Stalin.

By 1948, the Muscovite faction of the Polish Workers' Party had managed to consolidate its hold on power. Soviet power and diplomacy had prevented the London government from fully participating in the government of postwar Poland. The large partisan forces of the Home Army and the Polish underground state had been dismantled by a combination of wartime attrition,<sup>/5/</sup> demobilization, and Red Army force.

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<sup>/5/</sup>In particular, the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, took a very heavy toll, not only in terms of casualties among the underground's supporters. The physical destruction of Warsaw totally disrupted the work of the underground state's  
(Footnote Continued)



The partisan bands that had continued to operate after the Red Army took control in Poland were effectively destroyed by 1948. The other political parties, most notably the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) and the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), were neutralized both by the suppression of their independent activity and by being brought under the control of the Communists or their supporters. The PSL leader, Mikołajczyk, was forced to flee the country and his party's organizations were forced into submission by their incorporation into the new Communist controlled United Peasant Party (ZSL). In 1948, the PPS was likewise compelled to merge with the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) to form the present ruling party, the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). Leaders and cadres who deviated from the Communist line were removed from political life. The PZPR itself came under the control of the Muscovite faction. The victory was symbolized by the replacement of Gomułka, who had shown a modicum of independence from Moscow in his tenure as party leader, with Bolesław Bierut and by the subsequent imprisonment of Gomułka and his followers.

It was at this time that the PZPR embarked upon the policy of radical social transformation in accordance with the Stalinist model. The regime sought to justify itself on

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(Footnote Continued)  
 administrative apparatus and communication network.  
 Kersten, p. 95.

the basis of Soviet Marxism-Leninism in its Stalinist form. Marxist-Leninist canon as an ideology contained elements drawn from both science and religion. However, it was both more and less than a religion and more pseudoscience than science proper. Whereas religious belief is based on the experience of faith in a divine authority that requires no empirical verification, Marxism-Leninism in its Stalinist form demanded belief in things empirically unverified as empirical truth. Believers had an "inability to distinguish truth in the usual sense from political expediency." /6/

The Stalinist mode of legitimation and its ideology were strongly tied to the institution of a leadership cult. In certain ways, this cult approached Weber's ideal-type of charismatic legitimacy, in that the followers of the party leadership believed the leader to possess extraordinary qualities that demanded obedience. This in itself goes a long way to explain the intensity of the beliefs of Stalin's Polish followers and the radical steps they were willing to take in pursuit of the movement's aims. Obedience was tied to the leader as the ultimate source of Marxism-Leninism, a role which would allow him to lead his followers "from the

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/6/Leszek Kolakowski, "Ideology in Eastern Europe," in Eastern Europe, Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow, Milorad M. Drachkovitch, ed. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), p. 48.

misery of exploitation into the socialist millennium."/7/

In the case of Poland and the other People's Democracies the leadership cult was based on the local Communist leader's claim to be Stalin's leading disciple in the country.

The Stalinist mode of legitimation also combined modern and premodern elements. In premodern traditionally legitimated systems of domination, the ruler is seen as the repository of authority, independent of the will of the ruled. The compliance of subordinates to the ruler's commands is based on a "teachable knowledge of an ordered world" specific to the culture of that particular society. Modern societies, on the other hand, have come to incorporate an element of the "reflective consent" of the ruled in their legitimation strategies. Institutionalized Marxism-Leninism functioned as a comprehensive world view that justified obedience to the hierarchical commands of the party leadership. Under Stalinism the use of Marxism-Leninism in this fashion resembled traditional premodern modes of legitimation. However, at the same time these premodern elements were justified "in the name of real popular sovereignty," which was claimed to be a form of

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/7/Graeme Gill, "Personal Dominance and the Collective Principle: Individual Legitimacy in Marxist-Leninist Systems," in Political Legitimation in Communist States, T.H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher, eds. (London: Macmillian Press, 1982), pp. 100-101.

democracy superior to mere "formal" systems for producing reflective consent, such as "bourgeois" democracy./8/

Large segments of Polish society obeyed the Polish party-state and its directives during the Stalinist period of social transformation. Many complied out of fear. Some did so because of the tangible benefits that the regime supplied in terms of upward mobility. A significant number were willing to follow the party obediently out of a fanatical sense of commitment./9/

Many members of the intelligentsia enthusiastically threw their support behind the new regime. There were at least several common rationalizations for this. The interwar Polish regime had been strongly discredited by its failure both to solve nagging social problems and to defend the country at the beginning of World War II. The need for social reform was something upon which almost all significant Polish political actors agreed,/10/ and the

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/8/Maria Markus, "Overt and Covert Modes of Legitimation in East European Societies," in Political Legitimation in Communist States, T.H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher, eds. (London: Macmillian Press, 1982), pp. 82-4.

/9/For a series of interviews with some of the leading Polish Stalinists see Teresa Toranska; Oni, London: Aneks, 1985.

/10/The declaration of Poland's underground parliament, the Council of National Unity (RZN) on March 15, 1944, entitled "O co walczy naród polski," called for thoroughgoing industrial and agricultural reform, local self-government, and parliamentary democracy. It was  
(Footnote Continued)

Communists to recruit a number of intellectuals to their banner by playing on these sentiments. Others were strongly attracted by the role the Soviet Union played in defeating Nazi Germany and saw the Soviet Union and its system as a guarantee against the resurgence of fascism. Others were impressed with the practical emphasis of Marxism-Leninism, as opposed to abstract intellectualizing, and put their knowledge at the service of the regime. Still others, dissatisfied with the limitations of intellectual life, felt a need to establish contact with the real life of the peasant and worker masses.

Polish peasants and workers also supported the regime. Many benefitted from the upward mobility created by the regime's policies of social transformation. Peasants were encouraged to leave the countryside and settle in the cities, where they were given jobs in industry and first experienced modern urban life. Workers with skill and initiative were co-opted into lower-level leadership positions, the party, and positions of greater authority and status in the factories. Many truly believed that the regime was dedicated to bettering the lot of the masses or

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considerably more radical than the proposals which the Polish Communists were making at that time. See Kersten, pp. 49-50.

to a notion of social justice,/11/ and some threw their support behind the regime in the hope of returning to a normal life and rebuilding the war-torn country.

While the Stalinist regime in Poland commanded sufficient obedience to maintain itself in power and to carry out its policies of social transformation, it did not in subsequent years manage to convince the mass of Poles of the true efficacy of Marxism-Leninism. Obedience out of belief in the ideology did not take root. One reason, of course, is that many merely complied out of fear of coercion. Others obeyed in order to improve their standard of living or social status. Others saw their original enthusiasm for the stated aims of the regime betrayed by the failure of the regime to live up to its promises and by the means with which it sought to implement those aims.

When terror was relaxed in the period 1953-56, large components of the elite and the population sought to change the system in various ways. Working class disappointment with a low standard of living, disgust for the terror, and disillusionment over the failure of the regime to live up to the ethical aims of socialism manifested themselves most

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/11/For instance, Anna Walentynowicz, an important worker activist in the 1970s opposition and in Solidarity, wrote in the early 1950s she was taken by the regime's rhetoric of "justice" and "equality" for the working class. See Anna Walentynowicz, "Życiorys," Tygodnik Solidarność 9 (May 29, 1981), p. 8.

dramatically in the demonstrations and street battles in Poznań in June of 1956. In October of 1956 the peasants decisively rejected the regime's program in the countryside by spontaneously disbanding the collective farms. The number of collective farms fell from 10,150 on September 31, 1956, to 1,534 on December 31./12/

Many Polish intellectuals also came to reject Stalinism. Having subserviently propounded and perpetuated the myths of the regime, they felt complicity in the wrongs the regime had perpetrated. It was as if the intelligentsia had awoken from a terrible dream and found itself "with a hand in a chamber pot."/13/ Many enthusiastically threw themselves into the growing reform movement to correct the wrongs of the past. The party elite itself split into the the Natolin and Puławy factions. This allowed Gomułka and his followers to stage a political comeback and for Gomułka to once again assume the mantle of Party leadership in October of 1956.

Polish Stalinism had established itself forcibly against the wishes of Polish society which had largely supported the democratically oriented parties of the

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/12/Jan Tomasz Gross, "Poland: Society and the State," in East Central Europe, Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow, Milorad M. Drachkovitch, ed. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), p. 305.

/13/Stanisław Barańczak, "The Polish Intellectual," Salmagundi 70-71 (Spring-Summer 1986), pp. 224-5.

Government-in-Exile throughout the war. The events in Poland from Stalin's death until Gomułka's return to power in 1956 showed just how much Polish Stalinism had relied on the coercion of many, the self-delusion of some, and the support of those who gained materially from the new regime. Continued obedience was contingent on the perpetuation of coercion and the continued ability of the regime to provide material gain. Only a very small proportion of the support upon which the Polish Stalinist regime relied was based on the belief that the system was the most appropriate one for the society.

The six year plan (1950-55) failed to live up to its goals in the areas of gross national product, real wages, and agricultural production. Even more significantly, in the period 1950 to 1953 real wages fell at a rate of 3.7 percent per annum.<sup>/14/</sup> The protesting workers of Poznań carried signs emblazoned with slogans such as "We want bread for our children," "We demand the lowering of prices; we want to live," and "We want to eat" alongside calls for "Freedom."<sup>/15/</sup> It is thus not surprising that in the period

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<sup>/14/</sup>Jakub Karpinski, Countdown, (New York: Karz-Cohl, 1982), p. 75, and Zbigniew Fallenbuchl, "The Strategy of Development and Gierek's Economic Manoeuvre," in Gierek's Poland, Adam Bromke and John W. Strong, eds. (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 57.

<sup>/15/</sup>See the photographs in Jarosław Maciejewski and Zofia Trojanowicz, eds. Poznański Czerwiec 1956, (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1981).



1955-56, when terror was sharply curtailed and revelations about the conduct of both the Polish and Soviet regimes emerged, Polish Stalinism collapsed.

Obedience had been based largely on coercion and economic improvements. When the regime stopped using terror and failed to deliver economically, Poles stopped obeying. This was because Marxism-Leninism had not been internalized as an ideology. Domination had not been legitimated. Support had been of a contingent nature on a non-legitimate basis. The absence of any greater reason to obey the elite explains why the Polish Stalinist system, which had once seemed so unassailably powerful, collapsed so rapidly.

Both society and significant groups within the party elite rejected Stalinism and hoped for its replacement by a model of socialism that would be more Polish in character. When Gomułka came to power, he had significant elite and widespread popular support. He had triumphed over Khrushchev in a face to face battle of wills and thus averted a Soviet invasion in October. Because Gomułka was popularly perceived as a victim of Stalinism, he came to symbolize the hopes of the vast majority of Poles for a new Polish model of socialism./16/

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/16/Gomułka had disagreed with Stalin over collectivization of agriculture, the formation of the Cominform, and the expulsion of Tito from it (See Paul Lewis, "Legitimacy and the Polish Communist State," in  
(Footnote Continued)

## III. GOMUŁKA'S REGIME.

No First Secretary in the history of the Polish Communist movement enjoyed as much genuine popularity as Władysław Gomułka did upon his return to power in 1956./17/ He had a clear mandate from both the Party and society. However, the nature of these mandates was different. The party expected Gomułka to restore order and carry out reforms both to mitigate the excesses of Stalinism and to restore the smooth operation of the mechanisms of elite power. From society, Gomułka had something of a more far-reaching mandate -- the expectation that he would replace Stalinism with a truly Polish form of socialism that would be more democratic, more independent from the Soviet Union in foreign policy, more attentive to consumer needs,

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States and Societies, David Held, et al. eds. (New York: New York University Press, 1983), p. 441). In one of the sweet ironies of history, the security official who arrested Gomułka in 1951, Józef Światło, made the greatest contribution to his reputation as a victim of Stalinism. After defecting in 1953, Światło broadcast radio reports to Poland about Security Office (UB) abuses (Zbigniew A. Pełczyński, "The Downfall of Gomułka," in Gierek's Poland, Adam Bromke and John W. Strong, eds. (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 22).

/17/Gomułka's unauthorized biographer, Nicholas Bethell, argues that the sort of popularity enjoyed by Gomułka occurs but rarely, usually when a nation unites behind a figure as a symbol in a time of acute crisis. Alongside with Gomułka he would list only Churchill (England 1940), Nagy (Hungary 1956), and Dubcek (Czechoslovakia 1968) as having this level of popularity in the twentieth century. See Nicholas Bethell, Gomułka, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 229.

and willing to replace Soviet inspired institutions with Polish ones.

At no point in Polish postwar history were the chances for establishing legitimate domination as great as when Gomułka came to power in 1956. He managed to rule for over fourteen years, the longest of any of the communist leaders of Poland. However, Gomułka did not live up to his great promise. When he was removed from power in 1970, virtually nothing remained of his once broad support. The man who had inspired so much hope in 1956 left office a wrathful, isolated old man, hated by many.

The reason for this radical change was that Gomułka's actions in power had fallen quite short of the expectations of society in 1956. Rather, his policies roughly followed the course implied by his mandate from the party: he restored order and carried out a series of limited reforms of the Stalinist institutions he had inherited. Those who supported him out of a commitment to nationalism or democracy were soundly disappointed, and those who expected him to increase the national standard of living found that what he was prepared to provide did not live up to their expectations.

There was a brief honeymoon period./18/ Gomułka accepted the decollectivization of agriculture and allowed the workers' councils that had been formed in 1956 to continue to operate. He eliminated some of the more degrading aspects of Soviet-Polish relations, such as overwhelmingly unfair terms of trade/19/ and the staffing of the Polish Army with Red Army officers./20/ Other popular

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/18/The elections of January 1957 demonstrate just how popular Gomułka's early policies were. Poles voted overwhelmingly in favor of the official slate for the Sejm. Gomułka's personal appeal just before the election is credited with stopping a campaign to cross Communist candidates off the ballots. There are supposedly even cases where Catholic priests led their congregations to the polling stations (Bethell, pp. 232-3 and Pełczyński, p. 9).

/19/After World War II the Soviets treated the German territory incorporated into Poland (including areas which the Nazi Reich annexed in 1939) as part of the zone from which it was entitled to collect reparations. It is estimated that some 25 to 30 percent of the industry in these areas was appropriated by the USSR. Particularly hard hit were the textile factories of Łódź and Białystok. Additionally, the exploitation of Polish coal resources by the Soviets was extensive. Large amounts of coal were delivered at prices roughly equal to transport costs. After the Polish October of 1956, the amount of coal which Poland delivered to the Soviet Union dropped by half and prices were put on a more equitable basis. See Nicholas Spulber, The Economics of Communist Eastern Europe, (New York: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press and John Wiley and Sons, 1957, pp. 176-8, and Chris Harman, Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe, (London: Pluto Press, 1974), pp. 50-2.

/20/The Soviet military officers were dismissed in November 1956 after being thanked and decorated. The ranking Soviet officer in the Polish Army, Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky, had served as Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Minister of Defense, and was a member of the Politburo of the PZPR (Bethell, p. 230, and Karpinski, p. 73).

policy changes included the adoption of more tolerant attitude toward small craftsmen and retailers/<sup>21/</sup> and a more liberal passport and entry-visa policy.<sup>22/</sup> A Polish delegation led by Gomułka visited the Soviet Union on November 14, 1956, and returned with a Soviet pledge to respect Polish internal sovereignty and with financial compensation for past economic exploitation (1400 metric tons of grain on credit and 700 million rubles in long term credits). Upon his return Gomułka, stressed that only a Polish Communist government was capable of coming to such agreements with the Soviets.<sup>23/</sup>

Gomułka also presided over the Polish version of the post-Stalinist institutional readjustment that occurred in most of the countries of the Soviet bloc. The first such set of changes affected the mechanisms of rule within the political system. The First Party Secretary ceased to be a dictator in the classical Stalinist sense. While Gomułka's power was comparable to Bierut's, it was not based as exclusively on the power of the secret police or Moscow's anointment. Rather, it was a product of his original popularity as well as his ability to fill the ranks of the party elite with those whose loyalty he commanded. Gomułka

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<sup>21/</sup>Bethell, p. 233.

<sup>22/</sup>Ibid, p. 236.

<sup>23/</sup>Bethell, pp 230-1, and Karpinski, p. 73.

also curtailed the autonomy and power of the secret police and subjected them to party control, thus eliminating terror as a central instrument of rule. This reestablished the leading role of the party and guaranteed the elite's security. Important bureaucracies and elite formations received quasi-formal representation inside the highest decision-making bodies, and the decision-making process itself became subject to bargaining and compromise between such groups. Experts also came to play an important advisory role in the policy-making process. Finally, the role of the regional elites expanded, and they were granted a greater degree of autonomy from the center./24/

Certain changes were also introduced in the economy. Collectivization of agriculture was postponed as a goal to be realized at some indefinite point in the future. Increased operational and administrative independence was granted to factory management by reducing the number of centrally allocated goods./25/ More attention was paid to

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/24/The decision to delegate more authority to the regional elite was taken at the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee in October 1956 where Gomułka came to power. See Ray Taras, Ideology in a Socialist State, Poland 1956-1983, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 48.

/25/The reduction of the number of centrally allocated goods has continued until the present. In the early 1950s, the heyday of Stalinism, some 2000 goods were centrally allocated. By the late 1970s the number had been reduced to about 200. See John P. Farrell, "Growth, Reform and Inflation," in Background to Crisis: Policy and Politics in  
(Footnote Continued)

consumer satisfaction. Finally, in the cultural sphere, a less doctrinally rigid policy was instituted. Artists were allowed to experiment with forms other than socialist realism. Intellectual life became less subject to ideological canon, although the degree of relaxation was higher in the natural sciences than in the social sciences or humanities. It is important to note however, that these reforms did not fundamentally change the institutional structure of the system in Poland. In fact, they consolidated it, routinized its operation to a greater degree than under Stalinism, and probably improved its overall operation.

Once Gomułka managed to reassert firm control over the party, his policies began to diverge from the popular spirit of the Polish October. Rather than expanding democracy, he began cracking down on independent social initiatives, and as a result, his popularity began to wane. The first signs of a change came when Gomułka fired the entire editorial committee of the party daily Trybuna Ludu early in 1957 for being too outspoken. Then, at the Tenth Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR in October 1957, he declared the revisionists (those who wanted to expand upon the democratic gains of October 1956) to be a greater threat to

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Gierek's Poland, Maurice D. Simon and Roger E. Kanet, eds. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), p. 314.

the party than dogmatists. That same month, the reform-oriented newspaper Po Prostu was closed, and a campaign to verify party membership, which ultimately resulted in the dismissal of 200,000 members and decimated the ranks of the revisionists, was begun./26/ In 1958, legislation passed which stripped the workers' councils of any real power./27/

Gomułka's offensive against the revisionists continued at the Third Congress of the PZPR in March 1959, where he again stressed that revisionism was the "greatest threat" to the party./28/ During 1959, hardliners who had "retired" in 1956 were brought back into the government and the Central Committee. Simultaneously, more liberal members of the government and Politburo were shuffled out of the centers of power./29/ The "Club of the Crooked Circle," a critical

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/26/Bethell, p. 240-1. The speech at the Tenth Plenum was the famous "influenza-tuberculosis" speech -- "Influenza, even in its most serious form, cannot be cured by contracting tuberculosis. Dogmatism cannot be cured by revisionism. Revisionist tuberculosis can only strengthen the dogmatist influenza...The revisionist wing must be cut out of the party...We shall destroy with equal firmness all organized or individual forms of anti-party activity launched from a position of dogmatism."

/27/On the fate of the councils, see January Kostrewski, "Na śmierć rad robotniczych," Biuletyn Informacyjny 26 (1978), pp. 16-20.

/28/Taras, p. 53.

/29/Gomułka's Minister of Culture and early supporter, Władysław Bieńkowski, was transferred to the Parks and  
(Footnote Continued)



discussion society of the Warsaw intelligentsia, managed to last until 1962,/30/ but other independent discussion societies, with the exception of the Clubs of Catholic Intelligentsia (KIK), were not so lucky.

In the economic sphere, Gomułka was only marginally successful. Although he had been imprisoned by the Stalinists, he proved very cautious about changing any of the institutions they had created, including those of the planned economy. While there was an initial improvement in real wage levels in the immediate post-crisis period, the rate of growth in real wages slowed considerably after 1958./31/ Gomułka's personal limitations no doubt played a role in the growth of economic dissatisfaction. Abstemious by nature, he (unlike successor Gierek and his coterie) led a spartan life and seemed incapable of grasping the fact that many Poles wanted a higher standard of living than the system was providing. His frame of reference was simply outdated. While it is true that the Poland over which he

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(Footnote Continued)

Forests portfolio because he supported further democratization and Jerzy Morawski was removed from the Politburo and made Ambassador to England (Bethell, p. 242).

/30/Karpinski, p. 106.

/31/The average growth per annum in the period 1959-65 was only 1.5 percent. Between 1966 and 1970, this figure rose to 1.9 percent, but most of the growth was concentrated in the early part of the period. (Jadwiga Staniszkis, Poland's Self-limiting Revolution, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 257, and Fallenbuchl, p. 57).

presided was prosperous in comparison to the misery it had known in his youth, a whole generation of Poles, for whom the prewar period and even the World War II were not formative experiences, had grown up./32/ The younger generation had been shaped by life in an industrializing, urban Poland, and thus their expectations about the standard of living were much higher than Gomułka's.

Late in Gomułka's tenure (1969-70) the economy entered a period of contraction marked by a decline in national income, investment, and consumption./33/ His earlier economic successes seemed undone as a prolonged period of slow growth was succeeded by an economic crisis that left many Poles deeply dissatisfied.

After some initial steps to alleviate a few of the more distasteful aspects of the Soviet-Polish relationship and taking an independent stand on the question of Soviet intervention in Hungary,/34/ Gomułka settled into the role of faithful ally to Khrushchev and then Brezhnev./35/ This

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/32/In 1970 a majority of the Polish population was under 30 years old. See Mieczysław F. Rakowski, "December 1970: The Turning Point," in Gierek's Poland, Adam Bromke and John W. Strong, eds. (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 28.

/33/Staniszkis, pp. 254, 256.

/34/On November 21, 1956, the Polish delegation to the United Nations abstained on a motion to admit UN observers into Hungary (Bethell, p. 231)

/35/Perhaps the best example of this is Gomułka's  
(Footnote Continued)

disappointed many who had hoped for greater national independence from the Soviet Union. The factor that has most strongly shaped Polish nationalism has been the country's unfortunate geographic location between Germany and Russia. On more than one occasion German and Russian states have wiped Poland from the map of Europe and have even attempted to liquidate Polish culture and identity.

Gomułka was constrained in just how far he could use the anti-Russian side of Polish nationalism. Before Gorbachev, leaders in the Soviet sphere of influence were quite aware they ruled, in the final analysis, at the behest of the Soviet Union. The USSR served as the final guarantor of power. The extent to which local popular support was achievable by independent national policies was limited by the extent of Soviet tolerance of diversity within the bloc at any given movement. Leaders of bloc countries had to be

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wholehearted support of the Warsaw Pact's intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968. For a man who had spared his country a similar fate in 1956, this seems to be a peculiar turnaround. The potential for trouble in Soviet-Polish relations appeared in 1964, when Khrushchev informed Gomułka in January that he was going to seek to establish relations with Bonn. This led to a quarrel between the two men but the danger of greater conflict passed when the Soviet Politburo removed Khrushchev later that year (Bethell, pp. 244-6). The Soviets obviously recognized Gomułka's worth to them, for on his sixty-fifth birthday in 1970 they awarded him the Order of Lenin "for outstanding services to the development of fraternal friendship and cooperation between the peoples of the Soviet Union and the Polish People's Republic, for the strengthening of peace and socialism, and for many years of active participation in the world Communist movement." (Pełczyński, p. 23).

very aware of this fact, or risk finding themselves very popular ex-leaders as a result of Soviet intervention. Hence, using Polish resentment toward the Soviet Union was not a viable option for Gomułka.

Gomułka did try to make use of the side of Polish nationalism antipathetic to Germany, however, often justifying his foreign policy positions on the basis of the threat of German revanchism. It was argued that the Soviet alliance afforded Poland security against a resurgent Germany some of whose historic lands had been incorporated into Poland after the war./36/ The dubious threat of a divided Germany however, compared to the very real fact of party-state dependence on the Soviet Union, led many to discount such pronouncements. Gomułka himself went further to discredit such claims by his own diplomatic activity: his response to Brandt's Ostpolitik resulted in the signing

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/36/An excellent example of this sort of reasoning was provided by Wojciech Jaruzelski, then Minister of Defense, when he was part of a government delegation that met with striking workers in Szczecin in January 1971. While explaining the role of the army in the massacre of striking workers, he added: "At this very moment, while we're talking here, West German vessels are patrolling beyond that horizon. Espionage and reconnaissance vessels -- we even know them by name. Over the Baltic, the aircraft of the Bundeswehr are flying day and night. ...it's only our strength that they fear...thanks to Socialism." From "Polish Workers and Party Leaders -- A Confrontation," New Left Review, 72 (1972), p. 50.

of a treaty of mutual recognition with the Federal Republic in 1970./37/

Gomułka's inability to perpetuate his early popularity made his last years embattled ones. He was a disappointment to his countrymen on democratic, economic and nationalist grounds. After a few early reforms, he had retrenched somewhat, and then settled into a very conservative defense of what he had done. He steadily lost the support and respect of the Polish intelligentsia. Those who had seen their hopes for a more democratic form of socialism wither began to oppose him openly. They advocated a more humane and efficient socialism, similar to the revisionism of the Prague Spring./38/ Very soon, these differences broke into open conflict. The arrest and punishment of some of the more outspoken revisionist intellectuals such as Kołakowski, Kuroń, and Modzelewski, failed to bring an end to the movement. The banning of a production of Mickiewicz's

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/37/Such arguments were further discredited under Gierek when expanded economic cooperation between Poland and the Federal Republic began in the early 1970s. From 1969 to 1974 Polish imports from the Federal Republic rose from \$157 million to \$1,402 million. The corresponding figures for exports were \$137 million and \$555 million. (Roger E. Kanet "East-West Trade and the Limits of Western Influence," in The International Politics of Eastern Europe, Charles Gati, ed. (New York: Praeger, 1976), p. 196).

/38/In 1968 demonstrating Polish students chanted the rhyme, "Poland is waiting for her Dubcek" (Polska czeka\ na swego Dubczeka)," in Bethell, p. 262.

Dziady (Forefather's Eve) in March of 1968 sparked student demonstrations at Warsaw University which then spread to most university towns. The regime finally resorted to guttersnipe anti-Semitism/<sup>39</sup>/ and police brutality to suppress the students and imprison their leaders. The revisionists were effectively isolated within the party, and many of their leading intellectual spokespeople joined in an exodus of Polish Jewry.

As stated earlier, Gomułka's policies brought an economic slump during the last years of his rule. The slow growth of consumption led many to grumble, but the possibility of real economic loss made them angry. By the late 1960s, the price system had become untenable. Terms of trade were such that they posed a constraint on growth. In 1970, the regime made the mistake of introducing price increases just before the Christmas holiday, sparking the now-famous strike movement on the Baltic coast. As the authorities sought to restore order, workers fought street battles with the police and army. At this point, the

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<sup>39</sup>/It is not fair to blame Gomułka for initiating the outburst of anti-Semitism in 1967-68. The 'Partisan' faction in the party, led by Mieczysław Moczar, actually used the anti-Semitism as part of a power play against Gomułka, who had a Jewish wife. However, Gomułka did stand by while anti-Semitism was used against the revisionists because it served his political goals as he fought for his political life. Gomułka was certainly no anti-Semite, but his lip service to it for the sake of political expediency makes him responsible as well for the exodus of Polish Jews that followed.

Politburo removed Gomułka, who was convinced that the counterrevolution had arrived and was prepared to call for Soviet military assistance.

Gomułka had failed to live up to the hopes of the Polish October of 1956. When he came to power he was clearly the most popular man in Poland; he left it despised. He had failed to transform the popular reform aspirations of 1956 into any sort of "Polish model" of socialism for which he could have claimed the support of Polish society. Instead he had isolated himself from the concerns of that society. The intelligentsia had grown openly rebellious and had to be subdued by force. They were soon followed by the workers and the party hierarchy reasoned that Gomułka was not the man to restore order. In his stead they chose the Regional Party Secretary from Silesia, Edward Gierek.

### III. THE GIEREK REGIME.

When the Politburo chose Edward Gierek to replace Gomułka, he decided to confront the source of his immediate problems, the workers of Gdańsk and Szczecin. In face to face discussions with factory representatives in January 1971, he exacted a pledge of their help for his efforts to correct the situation. Finally, strikes in textile factories in Łódź in February 1971 compelled him to relent on the price increases, and they were repealed.

Gierek had managed to put out the fire, but he had to work fast to prevent the smoking coals from igniting again.

He quickly distinguished himself from Gomułka by presenting a much bolder vision of what he wanted to accomplish in Poland. In the interest of domestic peace, he chose to address society's craving for greater consumer satisfaction, which the ascetic Gomułka had denied. Thus Gierek and his advisors had to devise a means to rapidly accelerate economic growth if they were to raise the standard of living. In an effort to do so, they outlined an ambitious economic plan to industrially modernize Poland.

The new strategy heralded a "technocratic" approach/40/ to economic growth in order to satisfy the rising

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/40/The notion of "technocracy" here refers to practical "goal oriented" economic management, rather than strict adherence to ideological principles. To a certain extent Gierek's reputation as technocrat was based on his performance as party leader in Silesia, the most industrialized part of Poland, which enjoyed a reputation for efficient management and high wages. The Gierek regime projected this image through a series of slogans which stressed greater autonomy for those who were economically qualified such as "the party directs and the government governs," "people of good work," and "the right person for the right job." Perhaps the most famous slogan in this regard was "We are building a second Poland." The "second Poland" referred to the introduction of the latest advanced technologies into the Polish economy that had grown rather antiquated as the result of an investment policy that had neglected plant modernization under Gomułka. Gierek's team also put added stress on the role that science was to play in economic development and social policy. Under Gierek the notions of "social policy" and "social planning" first entered the lexicon of the Polish party-state. Finally, an examination of Gierek's personnel policy seems to bear out the notion that he took this commitment to "technocracy" seriously. Under his rule, the composition of the central committee changed to include more economic officials. See Jack Bielasiak, "Recruitment Policy, Elite Integration, and (Footnote Continued)



expectations of Polish consumers. Gierek's team decided upon an "import-led" growth strategy based on an influx of Western capital stock financed by credit. This massive investment was to be accompanied by institutional and price reforms. However, these reforms were never truly implemented and extensive foreign credits were erroneously considered a panacea for an economy in severe need of structural reform./41/ Still, the new team was confident it could create a Communist version of consumer society. It

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Political Stability in People's Poland," in Background to Crisis: Policy and Politics in Gierek's Poland, Maurice D. Simon and Roger E. Kanet, eds. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), pp. 116-7; Taras, p. 109, 114, 130, & 140; Lewis, p. 443; Michael D. Kennedy and Konrad Sadkowski, "Constraints on Professional Power in Soviet-type Society: Insights from the Solidarity Period in Poland," (University of Michigan, CSST Working Paper 113, November 1988), p. 9; and Vincent C. Chrypinski, "Political Change under Gierek," in Gierek's Poland, Adam Bromke and John W. Strong, eds. (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 38.

/41/It seemed at first that Gierek and his team were committed to reforming the economy. In 1971 measures were drawn up providing for greater autonomy of economic units from the planners. Groups of firms were to be consolidated into a kind of larger enterprise dubbed "WOG" (Wielka Organizacja Gospodarcza -- Large Economic Organization). The WOG was to be freed from the system of centralized planning, being controlled instead by indirect instruments such as interest, depreciation, and taxation rates. It would also have increased autonomy in generating its own small-scale investments and in price setting. Compensation to employees would no longer be based on plan quotas but tied to value added for workers and profit for managers. However, the WOG reform was never fully implemented and when the Polish economy began to ail in 1975 even the partial measures were cancelled. See Waldemar Kuczyński, "Upadek Reformy Gospodarczej," Biuletyn Informacyjny 33 (September-October 1979), pp. 30-36 and Farrell, pp. 308-9.

was hoped that in this way the support of society, in particular the recently rebellious working class, could be secured./42/

There was a second component to Gierek's new approach. After the success of his discussions with the workers in Gdańsk and Szczecin, he promised that the leaders of Poland would routinely hold consultations with representatives of important social groups./43/ In this way, the mistakes made in the past because of the party's isolation from the people would supposedly be avoided./44/ This uninstitutionalized

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/42/Examples of this sort of thinking were common soon after Gierek's rise to power. For a selection of such, translated into English, see Adam Bromke's "New Political Style," Problems of Communism XXI:5 (1972), p. 8.

/43/In the early part of his reign Gierek seemed to have been committed to a formalized system of consultation with the workers through renovation of trade unions. He made promises to this effect at the Central Committee Plenum in February of 1971. However, shortly thereafter, the regime postponed a trade union congress scheduled for the middle of 1971 until November 1972. Free elections were held for trade union representatives, but while some of the strike leaders of 1970-1 were elected to positions, they did not command a dominant position within the trade unions and were effectively neutralized by the power of management in the factory structure. The large rises in wages in the early Gierek period seemed to have cut support out from under radical shop-floor activists. See Alex Pravda, "Poland in the 1970s: Dual Functioning Unionism under Pressure," in Trade Unions in Communist States, Alex Pravda and Blair A. Ruble, eds. (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 127; Chrypinski, p. 44; and Martin Myant, Poland: A Crisis for Socialism, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982), p. 83.

/44/In his radio and television speech of December 20, 1970, Gierek said: "The iron rule of our economic policy  
(Footnote Continued)

practice became fairly common in Poland in the early 1970s. Major party figures travelled to factories to hold "consultations with the working class."/45/ It has been said that Gierek himself held some 187 grass roots level meetings in 1971./46/ This practice promised, in effect, that the party would now listen to the concerns and desires of the people.

Taken together, Gierek's plan for economic growth and modernization and his scheme for "consultations with society" comprised the legitimation strategy of the new regime. It was a hybrid of party populism toward society wedded to a technocratic approach to the economy. In reality, the consultation plank of the strategy soon collapsed. The most damaging blow to its credibility was delivered in June 1976, when the Gierek's regime attempted to introduce a wage and price reform without preparing

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and our policy in general must always be respect for reality, broad consultation with the working class and the intelligentsia, and the observance of principles of collegiality and democracy in the life of the Party and the functioning of the supreme authorities.

The most recent events reminded us painfully of the fundamental truth that the Party must always maintain a close bond with the working class and the whole nation, and that it must not lose a common language with the working people." From Pełczyński, pp. 3-4.

/45/Bromke, "New Political Style," p. 9.

/46/M.K. Dziewanowski, The Communist Party of Poland, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 318.

society for its introduction. The workers promptly struck and demonstrated in several cities. The party-state authorities responded by brutally repressing the larger demonstrations and by quickly repealing the wage and price reform./47/

Gierek's pledge to hold consultations was thus exposed as hollow. Later, he would admit that there had been no real consultations in 1976, and one of his Prime Ministers, Edward Babiuch, would also admit that in the late 1970s "consultation" had no longer been a serious policy./48/ The consultations held in the latter part of the 1970s were rather ritualized in nature, little more than lavish self-congratulatory events that brought prominent Warsaw politicians together with members of the local apparatus./49/

The retreat of the authorities from the policy of consultation in the late 1970s had the effect of undermining the Gierek regime's legitimation strategy. Consultations might have provided a shock absorber for economic

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/47/For more on these events see Michael H. Bernhard, "The Strikes of June 1976 in Poland," East European Politics and Societies 1:3 (1987).

/48/Grażyna Pomian, ed., Protokoły tzw. Komisji Grabskiego, (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1986), pp. 79 & 138.

/49/For an account of such a meeting (Gierek's visit to the Gdańsk Shipyard in August 1979) see "Szczera dyskusja nad antrykotem," Robotnik 38-9 (October 5, 1979), p. 4.

dislocation, enabling the authorities to argue that they were still trying to take society's needs into account despite economic setbacks. However, without this, the nature of support the Gierek regime could hope to attract was at best contingent. Only the economic component of Gierek's vision for Poland remained and support could thus be maintained only by "delivering the goods." Political support was thus tied to the vagaries of economic policy outcomes. By backing away from consultation the Gierek regime precluded the possibility of legitimating the system of domination and was reduced to seeking support only on the basis of economic performance. The regime had placed itself in a position where the best it could hope for was some sort of non-legitimate domination accepted by the populace on instrumental, economic grounds.

When in the late 1970s Poland's economy entered into the worst downward spirals that any industrialized economy has suffered in the postwar period, Gierek's rule began to crumble. With the formation of the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR) in 1976, his regime came to face rapidly expanding and diversified opposition movements./50/ When

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/50/For details on this see -- Jan Józef Lipski, KOR: A History of the Workers' Defense Committee in Poland, 1976-81, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, and Michael H. Bernhard, The Rebirth of Public Politics in Poland: Workers and Intellectuals in the Democratic Opposition, 1976-80, (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1988).

another set of price increases was announced in the summer of 1980, the most extensive strike movement in Polish history erupted and culminated in the formation of the trade union Solidarity. Gierek was replaced by Stanisław Kania.

#### V. SOLIDARITY AND BEYOND.

The full significance of the Solidarity period in Polish history is certainly beyond the scope of this paper. The negotiation of Gdańsk Accords as a "social compact" (umowa społeczna) and the recognition of organizations outside the framework of the party-state system were in themselves an admission of the necessity to restructure the dominant-subordinate relationship in Poland. Clearly, Solidarity itself represented the desires of the overwhelming majority of Polish society. Its scrupulous observation of rules of procedural democracy and its attempts to negotiate "good-faith" solutions with the party-state authorities to the problems confronting Poland in the early 1980s demonstrate that, on balance, society sought to restructure the system of domination in Poland to include a measure of reflective consent.

The response to this radically new situation by the central party elite under Kania was to pursue a policy of "renewal" (odnowa). Renewal on one level implied an attempt to calm unrest and frame solutions to Poland's problems by negotiating with the Solidarity leadership. This continued willingness to negotiate with society's representatives on a

formal basis represented Kania's attempt to shore up the crumbling structure of domination. However, the inability of central party elite to control the local apparatus and compel it to live up to the spirit and letter of the new "compact" helped to undermine society's belief in "renewal" and forced the negotiation procedure to focus on a series of pressing local problems. The event most emblematic of this was the "Bydgoszcz crisis" of March 1981.

Bydgoszcz was emblematic as well of internal decomposition of the party both in an organizational and ideological sense. Clearly, the dominant-subordinate relationship between the central elite on one hand, and local and sub-elites on the other, was crumbling. The central party elite was beleaguered on two sides. A "horizontal structures" movement presented a democratic challenge to the principles of party organization, while a various "concrete" (beton) factions, backed by Politburo members Olszowski and Grabski and certain interests in the police apparatus, stood against further concessions to Polish society and greater reliance on the party-state's coercive apparatus. The response of the Kania leadership was to extend the policy of renewal inside the party, by means of an Extraordinary Congress of the PZPR (IX) which selected delegates for its July meeting in a remarkably democratic fashion. At the Congress, the mainstream party was able to effectively isolate the "horizontalists" and

attempts by Olszowski and Grabski to use Soviet backing to replace Kania failed in a pre-Congress skirmish.

Despite Kania's reelection at the Congress and his successful defense of his authority in the face of the horizontalists and the betoni, his leadership continued to falter and he was replaced by Jaruzelski. Hardliners, organized around the shadowy "Katowice Forum" and "Grunwald Patriotic Association," raised tensions considerably with law and order rhetoric, anti-Semitic innuendo, and continued clamour for repressive action. Party renewal had clearly failed and by late 1981 the PZPR had collapsed into a state of moribund inaction.

Solidarity as well began to show signs of political division that impeded its ability to act. The Solidarity Congress in the Autumn of 1981 revealed strong factional divisions that hampered the union from speaking and acting univocally. The majority was clearly held by the union mainstream which supported Wałęsa, but unity was threatened by both the extreme anti-Communist, xenophobic "True Poles" (prawdziwi Polacy) who supported Jan Rulewski, and an ultra-democratic faction organized around Andrzej Gwiazda.

It was in this situation of extreme tension, chronic shortage, and organizational paralysis that Jaruzelski chose to declare martial law, abolish Solidarity and other independent movements, and restore political order. The Jaruzelski regime attempted to convince Polish society that the crushing of Solidarity was in the interest of Poland.



This appeal was framed in terms of traditional "law and order" arguments and a sort of inverted nationalist rationale that if the Polish army had not stepped in to restore order, somebody else's army would have. Thus Jaruzelski's initial justification of Martial Law was that it saved Poland from anarchy and Soviet intervention.

With time such rationales were supplemented by attempts to establish pseudopopular bodies to drape Jaruzelski's rule in the cloak of popular consent. Bodies such as the Patriotic Movement for the Salvation of the Nation (PRON), new government trade unions (OPZZ), and consultative councils to advise Jaruzelski never quite gained a measure of popular trust.

Despite the fact that with time a large part of Polish society came to accept the imposition of martial law and, by implication, the fact that Solidarity had been crushed,/51/

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/51/Large independent public opinion surveys conducted by sociologists at the Polish Academy of Sciences (Polacy '84) show the following results to the question "In your opinion was the decision to introduce the state of war in 1981" --

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage.</u>
Definitely correct	26.0
Rather correct	29.7
Rather in error	13.4
Definitely in error	13.3
Difficult to say	17.0
No answer	0.6

[Source: Jan Powiorski, "Polacy '84 -- opinia publiczna w dwa i pół roku po wprowadzeniu stanu wojennego," Krytyka 27 (Footnote Continued)]

the Jaruzelski regime was unable to completely dislodge underground Solidarity structures from large factories, discredit opposition leaders, or to curtail the circulation of an underground press./52/ Simultaneously, the regime proved quite inadequate to the task of turning the decrepit Polish economy around. Numerous economic reform plans were announced but none seem to have been successfully implemented. Deteriorating standards of living made it hard to motivate workers./53/ Capital stock and infrastructure

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(Footnote Continued)  
(1988), p. 59.]

Further research also presented the following breakdown of political attitudes in Poland in 1984 and 1985:

Attitude	Percentage in:	
	1984	1985.
Opponents of the ruling political order	22.7	15.7
Center	29.9	23.2
Supporters of the ruling political order	26.2	28.4
Silent Minority	21.2	32.7

[Source: Powiorski, p. 69.]

/52/Additional research from Polacy '84 and other sociological studies conducted in Poland show opposition to the political system concentrated among both skilled workers in large enterprises and the intelligentsia, particularly in large cities and under fifty years of age. Thus while opponents of the system are clearly a minority in society, they occupy a key structural position. They are those necessary for the effective running of a modern, urban, industrial society. For a report on this line of research see, Krzysztof Jasiewicz, "The Polish Crisis in the Eyes of the Public," Washington and Lee Political Review (Fall-Winter, 1989), pp. 8-9.

/53/In 1989 according to Economist Intelligence Unit Polish per capita income had fallen to \$1900, approximately one-fifth of the per capita income in East Germany at that

(Footnote Continued)

continued to deteriorate, and foreign debt continued to mount. Thus while Jaruzelski was able to defeat Solidarity by military force in the short run, the regime found itself in a political stalemate because of its inability or unwillingness to finish off political opposition and its inability to restore Poland's economic vitality. Had the Jaruzelski regime stayed on that course, the prognosis for its future no doubt would have been further economic hardship with the potential for violent social unrest.

The year 1988 constituted a date of departure for Jaruzelski's regime. Two major political defeats have led the regime to call the wisdom and success of martial law into question. The first of these defeats was the plebiscite organized by the government of Zbigniew Meissner. The plebiscite was designed to provide popular justification for a wide-ranging program of economic and political support. It was composed of two very broad questions on the desirability of pluralism and radical economic reform in Poland. Despite the fact that the questions were phrased in such a way as to make voting against them nearly impossible, they went down to defeat due to the technicalities of the plebiscite law. This failure brought the resignation of the Meissner government in late 1988.

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(Footnote Continued)

time. Reported in Andrew Clark, "Poland Survives Poverty Putsch," The Australian Financial Review (January 25, 1989), p. 11.

Secondly, in 1988, Polish workers staged small strike waves in both May and August, serving notice to the regime that their willingness to work was predicated upon delivering the goods. The striking workers made their desire for a reconstituted Solidarity to speak on their behalf by making the union's relegalization their number one demand. Their acceptance of Wałęsa as both participant and spokesman created an opportunity for Solidarity to once again assert that it spoke for Polish workers.

The regime was able to negotiate indirectly with Wałęsa to call an end to the August strikes in return for a vague promise to consider relegalizing Solidarity. Under a new government led by Premier Mieczysław Rakowski, despite reservations even at the highest levels of the party,<sup>/54/</sup> the regime entered into multilateral talks in order to seek a way out of the impasse. These talks, known as the Roundtable Negotiations, convened in Warsaw on February 6, 1989.

The negotiations ended on April 5, 1988 and produced the Roundtable Agreements, a wide-ranging political, social,

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<sup>/54/</sup>At the highest level, eight Politburo members were replaced in the days before the decision to negotiate was taken and General Jaruzelski reportedly threatened to resign in order to push the decision through the Central Committee. It is suspected that hardline factions with police connections also staged extreme provocations to try to derail the talks. During this period two Polish priests perished under mysterious circumstances.

and economic compromise between Solidarity and party-state forces./55/ During the course of the negotiations the party-state was much more forthcoming than the Solidarity side had expected. They had hoped for a relegalization of the union. Not only did they secure its relegalization, but also that of Rural Solidarity and the Independent Students' Union, both of which had also been banned with the declaration of Martial Law.

But even more significantly the party-state side agreed to a series of reforms that represented a major restructuring of the political system. The Sejm (parliament) was to be reconfigured and opened to a more competitive election system. The existing unicameral Sejm was to be transformed into the lower house of a bicameral National Assembly (Zgromadzenie Narodowe). An upper house of the National Assembly, the Senate (Senat),/56/ would also be created.

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/55/The full text of the Roundtable Agreements were published in Trybuna Ludu (April 7, 1989), pp. 3-5.

/56/The recreation of the traditional upper house of the National Assembly, the Senat, was an act of great symbolic importance. In 1946 the Senat had been abolished after a referendum, the results of which are now broadly acknowledged as having been falsified by the Communists. The question of whether or not to abolish the Senat was a key point of contention between the Communists and their strongest opposition, the Polish Peasant Party led by Mikołajczyk, and thus its abolition was an important juncture in the destruction of the latter.

A two-stage election process was established. There was to be a first round (later scheduled for early June), followed in two weeks time by runoff elections between the two leading candidates from the first round in districts where no candidate won a majority. The election of deputies to the Sejm was not to be fully competitive. Thirty five percent of its 460 seats were to be openly contested. The other sixty five percent of the seats were to go to the ruling coalition (the PZPR and its electoral allies)./57/

The ruling coalition was entitled to put a number of candidates, up to ten percent of the Sejm's membership (forty six deputies), on a national list which would face no opposition. However, the election of the candidates on this list would not be automatic; the electorate still had the right to reject them by crossing them off the ballot. With regard to the remaining seats reserved for the ruling coalition, individual members of its component parties and organizations were allowed to contest seats reserved for their particular group. Thus these seats were open to limited electoral contestation. These special privileges for the ruling coalition were not to be a permanent part of the new system. All subsequent elections were to be fully

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/57/For how the seats were apportioned between the PZPR and its electoral allies see my "In Lieu of a Conclusion: Whither Poland after the Formation of the Mazowiecki Government?" in this volume.

and freely contested. Thus at the latest, Poland would have free elections in 1993 when the term of the members of the National Assembly would be up.

The election of the members of the new Senate were to be freely contested. It was to be composed of one hundred members, two from each of Poland's forty nine provinces (województwa) with the exceptions of the two large cities of Katowice and Warsaw which were to each elect three members.

After the election of the National Assembly, its membership was to elect a new chief executive, a President, for a term of six years. This office would have wide powers in the areas of foreign policy and national defense,/58/ as well as right to veto legislation, dismiss the parliament and call new elections. The sixty five percent of the seats in the lower house that were reserved for the PZPR and its electoral allies were sufficient to insure that their choice of President would be the first to occupy this new position.

Within the reformed system all legislation initiated in the lower house was subject to a veto of both the Senate and the president. As the PZPR's future candidate for President, widely assumed even at this time to be General Jaruzelski, was expected to be the first to occupy the office, the reform almost assuredly guaranteed the PZPR a

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/58/Under the agreement all major presidential acts were to be countersigned by the Prime Minister, except those concerned with these two areas.

veto over all legislation. It also held out the prospect of a veto for Solidarity, which was expected to win the majority of seats in the competitive elections to the Senate. The Sejm was given the power to overturn both the presidential and the senate veto by a two-thirds vote. Thus the reform of the political system was designed to revive Poland's state structure as the essential locus for rule and furthermore to lead Solidarity into a ruling coalition with the PZPR and its allies. This however, would be a real coalition where both powers would have to compromise because both were expected to be able to exercise veto power independent of the other.

#### VI. CONCLUSIONS.

None of the PZPR regimes that ruled Poland managed to legitimate party-state domination. It is important to understand what this exactly means with respect to political stability. It should be emphasized that domination which has not been legitimated does not necessarily equal political instability. Domination can also be non-legitimate or illegitimate. The latter is by definition politically unstable. One can speak of illegitimate domination when a system of domination is being challenged in such a way as to call its very existence into question. This is a condition of acute instability including situations such as dual power, anarchic interregna, revolts,



and civil wars.

Non-legitimate domination is different. It can be quite stable, but obedience to the commands of the elite will be based on a calculus of material gain or on fear of punishment. The record of stability in Communist Hungary and East Germany prior to the most recent period serve as counterexamples to the Polish case. Both regimes were initially quite fragile -- the Hungarian Communist regime barely survived the revolution of 1956 and the viability of the German Democratic Republic was continually called into question by the existence of the Federal Republic. None the less, both of these regimes were able to avoid the kind of instability that periodically wracked Communist Poland. Recent developments indicate that this was not due to the legitimization of party-state rule in Hungary or East Germany but that the regimes there were able to achieve a much higher level of popular obedience on the basis of providing higher standards of living and the more effective application of coercion.

Poland has shown a very different pattern of development. Periods of non-legitimate domination were followed by crises that threatened the very existence of the system, leading in turn to adjustments which restored a state of non-legitimate domination. Polish Stalinism collapsed when it could no longer command the obedience of society by terror and economic incentives. The party-state elite responded to this crisis by choosing Gomułka as First

Secretary. His reputation as a victim of Stalinism and the initial reforms he made secured the new regime broad societal support. However, Gomułka's unwillingness to make further reforms in the "spirit of October" prevented him from building broad voluntary obedience on the basis of a genuine Polish model of socialism. His innate conservatism and the slow nature of economic growth during his tenure led to the alienation of key social groups. In 1968, his regime found itself at war with segments of the intelligentsia and, in 1970, rebellious workers forced the party to replace him.

Gomułka was followed by Gierek, who managed to temporarily secure the support of the striking workers and presented a bold new plan to remake the Polish system. He promised a much more dynamic economy with greater consumer welfare and a system of consultations to keep the party-state elite in touch with society. Gierek's economic plans, however, were far too ambitious, poorly worked out, and badly implemented. By the mid-1970s, disequilibrium in the economy demanded attention, and the party-state elite again tried to correct the situation with the wage and price reform of 1976. This struck a rather sensitive nerve with the working class, as it contradicted Gierek's promises to avoid the mistakes of the past. In one day, the Gierek regime destroyed its strategy of consultation. At this juncture, it could not hope to secure legitimate domination, but only for contingent obedience based on economic satisfaction, i.e. non-legitimate domination. This was

already courting disaster, since the economic situation was rapidly deteriorating.

After the strikes of 1976 well organized social movements began to emerge in Poland and contest the policies of the Gierek regime. When it attempted to rise prices a second time widespread strikes erupted in the summer of 1980. Elements within the social movements of the 1970s took control of the strike movement in Gdańsk and moved to institutionalize the concessions they had wrested from the regime through Solidarity.

While in the short term, the Jaruzelski regime was able to contain Solidarity by the imposition of martial law, the opposition was able to survive repression and continue to contest party-state rule. The continuous opposition by independent social movements in Poland from 1976 until the signing of the Roundtable Agreements is another strong indication that the instability there was of a "systemic" character rather than "regime" instability.

It should be emphasized that legitimation problems like those experienced by the Polish party-state do not inevitably lead to a generalized societal challenge to domination such as the one that ensued in Poland in 1980. However, such problems do present favorable conditions for the organization of opposition to systems of domination because under non-legitimate domination obedience has not been internalized as a norm of routine action. Under these receptive conditions, because domination rests on far less

sturdy social foundations counterelites will find it easier to mobilize the public against domination. This is particularly true when deteriorating economic conditions create the rather potent motivating force of injustice.

It is in this light that we can appreciate the reasons why Jaruzelski and Rakowski took the risk of calling the Roundtable Negotiations and opening the political system open to a strong dose of electoral competition. Since Martial Law the regime had been unsuccessful in restoring dynamism to the Polish economy. By the late 1980s it was unable to introduce the austerity measures necessary to correct the situation due to the obvious surliness of the Polish working class and the resistance of its own apparatus. If workers had struck in response to deteriorating conditions twice in the last year, Jaruzeski and Rakowski could hardly expect an encouraging response to the introduction of a party-state sponsored austerity package.

The regime lacked the material resources to maintain their non-legitimate domination without resort to extreme coercion. Nor could they be sure how Polish society would respond to a repressive strategy. Having failed to place their domination on a legitimate basis, support for an economic reform which in the short term would cut into the material basis of non-legitimate domination was extremely risky. The regime thus found that it had painted itself into a corner. They feared the possibility of a spontaneous

and general outbreak of strikes or violence whether they took no action or if they did what was necessary.

Austerity being necessary, there was only one organized force in Poland that might be able to discipline the working class long enough for economic reform measures to work -- Solidarity. Furthermore, Solidarity began to look like a constructive and moderate opposition. Other smaller, more radical groups in the opposition/59/ seemed to be gaining strength among the younger generation, whose prospects for any level of material satisfaction seemed to grow dimmer with each passing day. It had been the younger workers, not the old Solidarity hands, who had made the strikes in 1988. Wałęsa had only jumped onto their bandwagon once the strikes were in progress and had exercised a strong moderating influence.

Thus the party-state needed Solidarity's support to reform the economy. Facing the prospect of total collapse of the system with grave potential for extreme social strife, the party-state opted to share power with Solidarity. It was both a rational and courageous choice, the first to explore the new possibilities for East Central Europe posed by Gorbachev's rule in the USSR. The best

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/59/Such groups included the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) and Fighting Solidarity (Solidarność Walcząca), which did not exclude the possibility of taking up arms against the regime at a later date. Even the mainstream student movement, the Independent Student Union (NZS), publicly presented itself in a much more strident fashion than Solidarity.

outcome that Jaruzelski could hope for was that Solidarity would be co-opted as the junior partner in a reform coalition. From the standpoint of early 1989, this would have represented a major change in the politics of European communist regimes. In order to entice Solidarity to cooperate the Jaruzelski regime had to open the system to a significant level of political competition. This held out the possibility of the party being forced to cede so much power that Solidarity might be able to radically change the system. Thus necessity compelled Jaruzelski to embark upon a potentially dangerous course. Reform held out the possibility of saving some elements of the old system. It also held out the possibility that the system itself would unravel and communist power would disintegrate. Jaruzelski risked becoming the "historical demolition man"/60/ of the party-state system in Poland. This is indeed what now seems to be happening. These developments will be discussed in my second piece later in this volume.

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/60/I have taken this bon mot from Hans Magnus Enzensberger's contribution to "The State of Europe: Christmas Eve 1989," Granta 30 (Winter 1990), p. 137.

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