A RAND NOTE

Poland Since Martial Law

J. F. Brown

December 1988

40 Years 1948-1988

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PREFACE

This Note analyzes developments in Poland since the imposition of martial law. It was prepared, using RAND Corporation funds, to supplement earlier analyses of recent developments in other East European countries and topics. Those analyses were reported in the following RAND publications:

F. Stephen Larrabee, *The Challenge to Soviet Interests in Eastern Europe: Romania, Hungary, East Germany*, R-3190-AF, December 1984.

J. F. Brown, *The Challenge to Soviet Interests in Eastern Europe: Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia*, N-2498-FF, December 1986.

Keith Crane, *The Soviet Economic Dilemma of Eastern Europe*, R-3368-AF, May 1986.

Events in Poland prior to the imposition of martial law are analyzed in RAND Note N-1891-AF, *Poland in Crisis*, by A. Ross Johnson, July 1982.

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SUMMARY

The coup led by General Jaruzelski in December 1981 against the Polish independent trade union, Solidarity, quickly achieved its immediate object: the breakup of Solidarity's organization and the neutralization of its leadership. But in the seven years since the coup, the Jaruzelski regime has failed to introduce any viability into either the Polish economy or public life generally. Most Poles have refused to cooperate with the regime, and Poland has never become "normalized" in the sense that Czechoslovakia was after October 1968. Although Solidarity's organization was broken, the union retained the sympathy, and even the loyalty, of the majority of the population.

Unlike many of those who supported him, Jaruzelski did not wish to turn back the clock in Poland to a neo-Stalinist past. He believed in the "renewal" of the Polish political system, in economic and administrative reform, in a workable relationship with the Church, and in the highest standards of governmental efficiency and probity. But although his ultimate authority has never been challenged, he has seldom seemed able to pursue his policies with any substantial success. This has been due partly to opposition inside his own regime, partly to the sullen apathy of the population at large, and partly to his own lack of experience and flair. His greatest failure has been in the economy, which has yet to recover even to its pre-1980 level.

To overcome popular apathy, Jaruzelski has tried to follow a "neo- Kadarite" policy of reconciliation. In this he has had only limited success. Many hardliners are opposed to his policy, and many officials in the security apparatus have even been determined to sabotage it. Both elements probably have had support from their counterparts in Moscow. The hardliners have been opposed by a group of relatively liberal politicians who support Jaruzelski but who have wished him to go further in his efforts at reconciliation with the people and in his attempts to implement economic reform measures.

The Roman Catholic church has increased its standing and authority among the population, partly because it moved into the vacuum left by Solidarity, and especially since the October 1984 murder of a popular priest, Father Tadeusz Popieluszko, by security officers. This crime, though perpetrated without Jaruzelski's knowledge—in fact, in conscious defiance of him—only made his task of national reconciliation all the harder.

But in the course of 1985, it seemed not only that Jaruzelski was getting the better of his hardline opponents inside the regime, but also that the more active anti-regime opposition in society was diminishing. The Sejm (parliamentary) elections in October 1985 produced a 70 percent voter turnout, in spite of underground Solidarity's call for a boycott; while this figure may have been inflated, it was satisfactory for the regime to claim a political victory and for Jaruzelski to feel confident enough to step down from the premiership. He retained, however, the party leadership, the presidency of the military council, and command of the armed forces.

The "Gorbachev factor" was also an important element in Jaruzelski's increasing confidence. The Soviet leader was present at the 10th Congress of the ruling Polish United Workers' (Communist) Party in July 1986 and gave Jaruzelski a strong personal and political endorsement. This constituted a serious defeat for the party hardliners, one from which they have never recovered, and a corresponding boost for the relative liberals.

These political developments reached their climax in the total amnesty for all regime political opponents that was declared in September 1986. This unexpected political masterstroke had three immediate results:

1. It made at least some dent in the public's unwillingness to participate in official public activities, and it was also favorably received by the Church.
2. It tended to take the political initiative away from the opposition, which then became more divided than ever.
3. It greatly improved the Jaruzelski regime's image in the West; relations with the United States were normalized and, even more important, Jaruzelski was received by the Pope in Rome in January 1987 and the Pope visited Poland for the third time the following June.

But Jaruzelski's political successes continued to be vitiated by his failure to implement changes in the economic system that would lead to economic recovery, particularly measures that would improve the people's standard of living. Many thought Poland was slipping into "Third World status" as its economy, infrastructure, and welfare-state provisions deteriorated rapidly. Overshadowing this alarming situation was the country's mounting Western debt. Despite successful efforts to improve Poland's foreign trade performance, the hard currency earned was still not enough to pay for even the interest on the debt, which, by the end of 1987, stood at about $36 billion.

For several years, the regime's efforts to improve the economy were ineffective, vacillating between inadequate reform measures and regressive lurches back toward centralization and more rigorous planning. But following the victory of the liberal element within the regime in 1986 and the clear backing from Gorbachev, Jaruzelski's advisers formulated a set of economic and political reform proposals which, though still vague and often loosely formulated, represented a significant step forward. The proposals incorporated recommendations contained in the aborted economic reform of 1982 and were more advanced than those of any other East European country except Hungary.

The "liberalism" of these reform proposals, however vague, was not solely due to the Gorbachev factor or to pressure from inside the regime itself. It cannot be explained without reference to societal pressures emanating from the different groups that constituted the "opposition" in Poland. Solidarity itself was no longer the sole opposition force, but one of several. Its organization had suffered seriously and it had lost much active (and financial) support. It was also becoming seriously divided into militant and moderate factions. But it still had enormous prestige and a huge symbolic following. Its leader, Lech Walesa, had become a world figure. Now, in addition to Solidarity, there is "Fighting Solidarity," a Solidarity splinter which advocates *active resistance* and has been persecuted for it. Still another group, "Freedom and Peace," a militant youth movement, has practiced civil disobedience and has campaigned against military service, Poland's military subservience to the Soviet Union, and the destruction of the environment.

The outstanding feature of the opposition, however, is its multiplicity and variety—many groups share only a common dislike of the ruling system.

This active opposition has generated an astonishing volume of unofficial, or underground, literature, which has not only become a phenomenon in itself, but has also forced a remarkable degree of freedom onto the regime media. Poland has, as a result, become probably the most liberal East European country in terms of freedom of both the written and the spoken word.

But the regime is not worried only by the persistence of so much opposition. The amount of youthful apathy in society also presents a threat. This apathy expresses itself in "alternative" lifestyles, a withdrawal from public participation, and large-scale temporary, and even permanent, emigration to the West. There has been growing opposition to military service, and the morale in the armed services generally has apparently suffered.

The regime has tried to counter this active and passive opposition by exercising relative tolerance and by trying to draw the population into the process of public participation and even decisionmaking. The "official" trade unions that replaced Solidarity have been encouraged, for example, to show a certain independence. They have often done so, sometimes probably exceeding the desired limits. But the most significant result of the regime's encouragement of participation was in the referendum of November 1987 on the official package of economic and political reform proposals.

The referendum, badly organized and poorly conducted, resulted in a serious humiliation for the regime. Although the outcome seemed to indicate that a substantial proportion of the Polish population is prepared to endure the privations of a promising economic reform, it reflected, at the same time, a lack of trust and confidence in the regime itself and in its capacity for efficient action.

The referendum failure also signaled the beginning of another downturn in the fortunes of the Jaruzelski regime, after about three years of apparent improvement. It coincided with severe price increases which took effect during the early months of 1988, and it was the immediate cause of a round of strikes that took place in the spring. The strikers demanded wage increases over and above those granted as compensation for the price increases. And most of the strikers also made another demand that was purely political: the legal recognition of Solidarity.

This strike-wave soon petered out, and the regime appeared to have won an important trial of political and organizational strength. But the popular rancor, stoked by the continuing impact of the price increases, did not peter out. New strikes began in August, and this time their outcome was different. The regime leadership, surprisingly, offered talks with Walesa on the legalization of Solidarity. The motives for the regime's sudden change of line remain obscure, but the change clearly reflected a victory for its more liberal wing, which had responded positively to earlier calls by some leading members of the intellectual opposition for the beginning of informal talks to tackle the national crisis.

But the initial relief over the end of the strikes and the regime's agreement to talk to Solidarity changed to frustration because of official procrastination and evidence of bad faith. Public suspicion over the appointment of Mieczyslaw Rakowski as prime minister hardened when it was announced in late October 1988 that the Lenin shipyard, the "birthplace" of Solidarity, was being closed, ostensibly for economic reasons. The Polish situation was more crucially poised than at any time since December 1981. The way it developed would not only decide Poland's fate, but would also profoundly influence the future of the rest of Eastern Europe.

CONTENTS

PREFACE iii

SUMMARY v

Section
I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. THE JARUZELSKI REGIME 2
Characteristics of Jaruzelski's Policy 2
Struggles Inside the Regime 5
The Strength of the Church 6
Factors Behind the "Liberalization" 9

III. THE STATE OF THE POLISH ECONOMY 12
Economic Crisis 12
Attempts at Economic Reform 14

IV. THE REFORM MOVEMENT 18

V. THE EXTENDED IMPASSE 24

I. INTRODUCTION

The coup carried out on December 13, 1981, by General Jaruzelski and the Polish military had one immediate aim: to destroy the free trade union, Solidarity. In the immediate sense, this aim was quickly achieved. By the end of the year, Solidarity as a functioning public organization was shattered; most of its leaders were in detention, and the remaining few had gone underground. Active worker resistance was forcibly put down, not by the army but by special riot police, the ZOMO (*Zmotoryzowane Odwody Milicji Obywatelskiej*, or Motorized Detachment of the Citizen's Militia), with surprisingly few casualties. The whole operation was a highly effective one, by Poles against Poles, under Soviet pressure but without the active intervention of a single Soviet combatant.

Solidarity had begun in August 1980 as a trade union and had swiftly become a national movement, implicitly rejecting communist rule. In a period of just 15 months, Solidarity eroded much of the communist power structure that had taken 35 years to build. But Solidarity, as it turned out, made little impression on the underpinnings of communist rule. The forces of coercion—the military and the police—remained intact and loyal to communist authority and, in the events of 1981, preserved that authority. Behind these forces lay the external pillar of Soviet strength and determination, but on December 13, 1981, Soviet action was not needed. General Jaruzelski was able to do the job himself—and with unexpected speed and efficiency. Within two weeks, he had pacified Poland. But he must have harbored few illusions about the difficulties of normalizing Poland, and even fewer about the difficulties of activating it. Seven years after the coup, he seems as far away as ever from doing either.

II. THE JARUZELSKI REGIME

CHARACTERISTICS OF JARUZELSKI'S POLICY

Jaruzelski took the huge risk of declaring martial law in December 1981 both to save the Soviet-type system and to save Poland from Soviet invasion. But he was also convinced that Poland could not be returned to the pre-Solidarity status quo. Many *apparatchiki* and security officials appear to have pressed for that, some apparently even wanting a status quo that had never actually existed in Poland, except perhaps in Stalin's time, one where anomalies like Church power and private agriculture did not exist. They and their backers in Moscow thought that with Poland prostrate, it was now or never—the ideal time to move against such historical throwbacks, the persistence of which was said to be fatally weakening Polish socialism. Jaruzelski and others in the martial law regime—notably the relatively few political liberals and the many technocrats who were prepared to support him—dismissed this as lunacy under the prevailing situation. Though he has remained the most enigmatic of Soviet bloc leaders, Jaruzelski has always appeared to believe in "renewal" (*odnowa*) rather than reaction. For many in the party, from leading representatives like the conservative populist Albin Siwak and the conventional hardliner Tadeusz Grabski down to the legions of officials at the provincial level, *odnowa* had been a sham ever since it was first proclaimed by Jaruzelski's predecessor as party leader, Stanislaw Kania. *Odnowa* was for them a handy pose until Solidarity was defeated and times got better. (Kania himself, though, however incompetently, seems to have tried to implement what he understood by it.) But for Jaruzelski and his close supporters, *odnowa* meant something; no one knew exactly what that was, but the new leaders were sincere in their insistence that Poland's special character and situation had to be taken into account.[1]

This did not, of course, make Jaruzelski a radical. His instincts and background made him careful, and he appears to have initially favored a conservative type of renewal—an administrative reorganization and a reordering of priorities that would still have preserved a strong degree of centralization—combined with an implacable drive against corruption in all branches and of whatever type. In some ways, the situation immediately after December 1981 tended to reinforce Jaruzelski's own personal and political predilections. The

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[1]Roger Boyes, in *The Times* (London), December 18, 1986, wrote: "Martial law had two functions: to crush Solidarity and any direct competition to the communist party, and to allow General Jaruzelski to outflank the anti-reformist old guard of the state apparatus."

economic crisis was the deepest communist Poland had ever faced, and this in itself tended to strengthen inclinations toward centralization, at least in the initial phase. Nowhere were these inclinations more strongly embodied than in the thousands of mostly efficient and dedicated military officers who filled posts at all levels in the martial law regime.

Jaruzelski was, therefore, in a situation where the requirements appeared to conform to his inclinations. It was a situation without precedent in East European communist history, one that made speculative comparisons between him and both Kadar and Husak not so much premature as irrelevant. Apart from the personal differences among the three men, the situation in Poland at the end of 1981 was quite different from that of Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968. For one thing, Poland's economic situation had the least prospect of improvement—less even than the Hungarian economy in 1956. Kadar may have taken over a ruined economy in Hungary, but it was within an overall bloc economic context that still had potential. Kadar also had in Khrushchev a Soviet leader with a vested interest in his success who was prepared to be bounteous in his support. Similarly, when Husak took power in 1969, although the inefficiency of the command economy system had already been exposed, most of the global economic indicators were favorable. He could therefore initiate a policy of "consumerism," which had considerable political success.

The political differences between Poland's situation in 1981 and those of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1969 were even more striking. Kadar took power over a nation defeated and shattered. Husak did much the same—after 1968, the Czechs and Slovaks (especially the Czechs) had lapsed into dispirited apathy. Both Hungary and Czechoslovakia had suffered Soviet invasion, which Poland had not. Although Jaruzelski quickly defeated Solidarity as an organization, he conspicuously failed to break its hold on the loyalties of the nation. Whereas in Czechoslovakia and Hungary there had been resignation, in Poland there was defiance. Many Solidarity leaders and thousands of active sympathizers were imprisoned or interned, but Solidarity as an organization went underground and established a network of large and small cells throughout Poland. And though its occasional calls for nonviolent demonstrations of resistance had progressively decreasing effect, popular sympathy for the union, and identification with it, remained very strong. Communist rule in Poland may have been saved by martial law, but its influence was weakened even further. That influence always had been weak, but some tenuous ties had existed between the rulers and the ruled in Poland, and there were areas of public life where some degree of mutual tolerance and identification had been possible. There was, for example, national unity over the sanctity of Poland's postwar Western frontiers and pride in the way the new Western territories had been developed. There was also mutual pride in the achievements of Polish

artists, scholars, and athletes. Those ties were now broken or gravely weakened, and the areas of mutual identification narrowed.

The popular mood in Poland may have mellowed since December 1981, but it has remained the major factor in Polish domestic politics, exercising a crucial influence on both the policy and strategy of the Jaruzelski regime. Jaruzelski has tried to break the identification of society with Solidarity; he has also tried to isolate Solidarity by appeasing society and encouraging it to participate in public life. When this has not proved possible, Jaruzelski has seemed to be satisfied with a grudging neutrality or, at worst, a grudging acceptance of his power. He put it well in a speech to a party Central Committee meeting in May 1983:

> We must carefully study views that differ from ours but that are characterized by a sense of responsibility for Poland.... We have enough real foes who are passionate and stubborn. This is why we do not want to regard as adversaries those who are not adversaries in fact.[2]

There was some similarity between this and Kadar's famous exhortation of 1962: "He who is not against us is with us." But the Polish people were not ready—and are still not ready—for anything like the great unwritten compact the Hungarian people struck with Kadar in the early 1960s, which lasted a quarter of a century. The Poles have remained loyal in spirit to the ethos and the aims of Solidarity. Jaruzelski, however, has tenaciously stuck to his strategy of trying to wear down public antipathy and steer society toward a more positive relationship with the regime. He undoubtedly made some progress, but, as events in late 1987 and in 1988 were to show, it was nowhere near enough to vindicate his policy.

Jaruzelski for several years alternated between severity and relative charity toward those "real foes who are passionate and stubborn"—i.e., toward Solidarity activists and active sympathizers. Thousands were interned immediately after the imposition of martial law and, though many of the internees were gradually released and martial law was technically lifted in July 1983, Polish prisons remained full of unrepentant Solidarity activists. In 1983 and 1984, there were partial amnesties which satisfied no one. Some of those released were soon back behind bars, having failed to comply with the inhibiting conditions accompanying the amnesties. In July 1986, yet another amnesty, called the Clemency Law, was announced—again hedged with conditions, even more tantalizingly vague than usual. Thus, the amnesties did little to lighten a gray period of general oppressiveness that lasted for almost five years.[3]

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[2]*Trybuna Ludu*, June 1, 1983.

[3]See Abraham Brumberg, "A New Deal for Poland," *New York Review of Books*, January 15, 1987.

STRUGGLES INSIDE THE REGIME

Jaruzelski's momentous success in December 1981 left him unchallenged as regime leader. But it did not make him all-powerful. He still had to contend with those who opposed his apparent intentions, those who, while not challenging his authority, did not accept it either.

First, the very nature of his regime was controversial. Though it ruled in the name of the communist party, it was generally identified as a military regime. Hence it conjured up in the minds of many the threat of "Bonapartism" and its attendant dangers. On this account alone, it caused opposition or apprehension in the Polish party itself, in other East European parties, and, probably most of all, in the Soviet Union. Even toward the end of 1988, after seven years of the Jaruzelski regime and after the military presence in local government and in the economy had been considerably thinned out, the impact of uniforms at the highest level was still very strong. At the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) Congress in July 1987, the military presence had even been strengthened, with four generals in a newly elected 15-member Politburo. For many communists, inside and outside Poland, the return to the barracks must have seemed suspiciously slow.

Within the party itself, numerous elements were also disaffected by Jaruzelski's principles, style, and methods of leadership. Jaruzelski soon made it clear that his notion of saving communism in Poland could result in thousands of *apparatchiki* losing their jobs and their privileges. The whole *nomenklatura* system appeared to be up for both revision and purification. Between 1981 and 1986, 80 percent of the posts in the party apparatus were filled by new cadres.[4] Many of those who were purged, of course, were deemed unreliable because of their ties or sympathies with Solidarity. But many others constituted hardline, incompetent, or corrupt ballast. These were the hangers-on who had considered themselves safe after 1981. Now they came to realize that the present savior could be just as dangerous as the previous threat.

Within the party leadership, factionalism and continual maneuvering persisted from the imposition of martial law to the 10th Party Congress in July 1986. The dissension centered on both personalities and policies. Within a regime that was united only by a compulsion to preserve the Soviet-type system, there was a "hardline" group and one that was made to look "liberal" by comparison, as well as a number of "floaters" not committed to either group. For several years, the hardliners appeared to have the momentum, while the

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[4]Boyes, loc. cit.

liberals were on the defensive. Occasionally, the hardliners went too far and had to be disciplined. Grabski, for example was rusticated to East Berlin as trade counselor in 1983. But throughout 1983, the hardliners were very assertive in the media, as well as in party meetings at various levels. Nor was there any doubt that they enjoyed considerable support from some elements in Moscow during the interregnum between Brezhnev and Gorbachev.

Most of the "liberals" around Jaruzelski were intellectuals. They regarded economic reform as a prime necessity, involving a major role for the market mechanism and enterprise independence. Politically, they favored concessions to, and even the appeasement of, the largely recalcitrant public, to a degree the hardliners considered dangerous. In this, their views eventually appeared to prevail over those of the hardliners. Parts of the media, for example, became the liveliest in the Soviet bloc, often carrying incisive criticisms of government policy. A high level of freedom of speech was also tolerated, and the authorities soon began to allow a degree of freedom of foreign travel—especially Western travel—astonishing for a country newly emerged from the grip of martial law. Western visitors to Poland were often as struck by the personal freedom as they were by the appalling state of the economy. But the widening freedoms did not serve to lessen the tensions between the regime and large sections of the population. Poland never became "relaxed" in the sense that Hungary was for many years under Kadar.

THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH

The regime's permissiveness was partly designed as a public safety valve. But its extent could only be explained by the burgeoning underground, or *samizdat*, press, the writing, production, and distribution of which had fast become a minor industry. The bewildering variety of this unofficial literature (referred to below) was to become one of the most striking testimonies to the gulf between the *pays reel* and the *pays legal* in Poland. Its relevance here, however, lies in the role it played in broadening and liberalizing official policy toward the media and free speech generally. The regime tried to compete with the press rather than to suppress it.

A still more important aspect of the enforced liberalism of the Jaruzelski regime lay in the strength of the Roman Catholic Church. The Church's power and moral authority had already made it a phenomenon in the Soviet bloc—an independent religious institution in a governmental system that professed atheism and aspired to totalitarianism. Since the defeat of organized Solidarity in December 1981, the moral authority of the Church had actually increased to a point unprecedented in the entire history of Poland. Jaruzelski knew that he dare not ignore this authority, and he sought to strike a working agreement with the Church

in the interests of both political stability and economic revival. Josef Glemp, who had become Primate of Poland on the death of Cardinal Wyszynski in May 1981 and later became Cardinal, made it clear that the Church was ready for some degree of cooperation with the state, but only if political prisoners were released and certain basic human freedoms were recognized and safeguarded. And behind Glemp stood the towering prestige of Pope John Paul II, who, despite his universalist preoccupations, has remained a powerful factor in Polish public life.

The Polish Episcopate's relations with the Jaruzelski regime deteriorated sharply during the long period of repressiveness after December 1981. It occasionally seemed that a permanent deadlock had been reached, with the regime no longer interested in any agreement. But Jaruzelski always seems to have been aware that some compromises were necessary. The Church, therefore, because of its very existence and the stand it took, was probably able to soften regime policies in a number of indefinable ways. Like the opposition and its unofficial literature, the Church served as a substantial constraint on regime policy.

The authority of the Church and Jaruzelski's willingness to recognize its political significance gave the hardliners further reason for dissatisfaction. Nowhere was this dissatisfaction more deeply felt than among the police and the rest of the security apparatus. Many members of the security apparatus undoubtedly felt cheated by the outcome of the December 1981 victory over Solidarity. In their eyes, what had followed that victory was not the establishment of a totalitarian system over which they would be the watchdogs, but a regression to the same old system of rotten compromise with both the Church and the public. Thus many members of security made little attempt to hide their contempt for Jaruzelski and his approach.

The hardliners had always reserved a special hatred for the Church, and after December 1981, this hatred was mainly directed against the parish priests who continued to be strong, vocal supporters of Solidarity. Many of these priests, most of them young, nationalistic, and devoted to their flock, scarcely hid their impatience and even their contempt for the leadership—or lack of it, in their view—of Cardinal Glemp. To the police, these priests were the shock troops of clerical reaction, the power of which they saw as increasing and against which Jaruzelski and others appeared helpless. And there can be little doubt that these sentiments were fully shared by many in the Soviet bureaucracy, not only in the KGB, but elsewhere also.

Against such a background, and the inevitable conspiratorial *imperium in imperio* in which any security apparatus traditionally operates, the killing of Father Tadeusz Popieluszko, one of the most prominent priest-activists, had a certain logic. Father

Popieluszko was brutally murdered, his body found in October 1984. His murder was aimed, of course, primarily against the Church, but it was also an act of defiance against the Jaruzelski leadership, of mindless protest against its alleged impotence and an atavistic reminder of secret police power. Of course, Popieluszko's murder gave the Polish people one more martyr and greatly strengthened the Church's moral—and, indirectly, political—authority. It also gravely weakened Jaruzelski in his efforts to build bridges to the Polish people. Nor did the subsequent capture, trial, and sentencing of the murderers do much to salvage the leadership's reputation. In Poland itself, the strong suspicion persisted that the crime could not have occurred without at least the connivance of officials very much senior to those who actually perpetrated it.

The murder of Father Popieluszko seemed, for a time, to force the Jaruzelski leadership into a more aggressive response to public opinion. The regime betrayed its defensiveness by actions that seemed designed to antagonize rather than to pacify. Policy toward the Church, for example, hardened. During the trial of Popieluszko's murderers, it often seemed that the Church was being tried, as well as the defendants.[5] Attacks on the Church in the officially controlled media increased, and negotiations between Church and state on a series of public issues remained stalled. In culture and education, government policy also seemed aimed at stamping out the few areas of autonomy that had survived the crackdown after December 1981. The police also stepped up activity against the underground opposition. There seemed, in fact, to be a general attempt to intimidate, not the public at large, but rather those centers of independence or opposition still remaining.

By the middle of 1985, the regime may have felt it was gradually gaining the upper hand in the open struggle against the opposition. The active opposition was becoming more disorganized and divided; hence its effectiveness as a political instrument was reduced.

This was especially evident in its lack of success in calling for public demonstrations or acts of overt (nonviolent) opposition. The most spectacular test of strength in this regard occurred in October 1985 at the elections to the Polish Sejm (parliament), which the Jaruzelski leadership had called in an attempt to demonstrate (or to test) both its strength and its legitimacy. The underground Solidarity leadership called for a boycott of the elections. Inevitably, conflicting figures were given by each side about the percentage of the electorate that actually did vote, but the turnout was high enough—perhaps about 70 percent—to enable the regime to claim a political victory in the circumstances. It certainly seems to have been a

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[5]See Jan de Weydenthal et al., "The Torun Trial," in Vojtech Mastny (ed.), *Soviet-East European Survey 1984-1985*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986, pp. 166-173.

boost to the regime's self-confidence, one result of which was Jaruzelski's stepping aside from the premiership, which he had held since February 1981. This now went to Zbigniew Messner, an economics professor-official from Katowice.[6] Jaruzelski subsequently became head of state, still retaining the key posts of first party secretary, head of the military council, and commander of the armed forces.

FACTORS BEHIND THE "LIBERALIZATION"

Even after this relative political success, the regime continued its aggressiveness toward most centers of opposition. The first half of 1986 was marked by a severe crackdown on resistance and dissent. Lech Walesa himself was apparently nearly arrested. Five activists of the KPN (the Confederation for an Independent Poland, an active right-wing nationalist group) were arrested, and in May 1986 the security forces scored a spectacular success with the arrest of Zbigniew Bujak, the leader of underground Solidarity since December 1981. There were even fears during the summer that a large-scale political trial of leading opposition personalities was being prepared.

It appeared that the repressiveness was partly a precautionary measure in preparation for the 10th PUWP Congress to be held in July 1986, the first since the imposition of martial law. But the congress itself actually marked the turning point toward reform. Its significance lay in the presence of Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet party leader since March of the previous year. Gorbachev not only appeared, but he gave Jaruzelski an unmistakably strong endorsement.

This gesture was a serious defeat for the party hardliners. They had, in retrospect, already suffered a serious blow at the end of 1985, when Politburo member Stefan Olszowski, the ablest and most influential of the hardliners, was purged and returned to private life. Now the Gorbachev factor confirmed the trend. Its impact went deeper than just demonstrative support for Jaruzelski at the party Congress. Gorbachev was beginning to emerge in the second half of 1986 as a radical reformer in his own country, with an obvious preference for radical change in Eastern Europe as well. The effect of this situation on Jaruzelski was soon to appear.

Until the second half of 1986, Jaruzelski had made little impression as a politician. Here, it seemed, was a typical example of a soldier in the wrong setting. He had been effective enough in December 1981, but more as a military commander than as a politician. Subsequently, his political performance had seemingly lacked flair, decisiveness, and even

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[6]On Messner, see J. F. Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988, pp. 489-490.

consistency. But the total amnesty he announced in September 1986 was a political masterstroke. It had three immediate results:

1. It caused some shift in public opinion toward willingness to consider participation in official or semiofficial public activities. It was also favorably received by the Church leadership and removed previous obstacles to negotiations.
2. It took the political initiative away from the opposition, something the opposition had been gradually losing anyway. Serious divisions had already been appearing in its ranks, and the question of how to respond to Jaruzelski's move only caused more fragmentation.
3. It greatly improved the image of the Polish regime in the West, leading to the American decision in February 1987 to lift the sanctions imposed five years earlier.[7]

Jaruzelski followed up his initiative by establishing, near the end of 1986, the so-called "Social-Consultative Council," a body of notables attached to the State Council who were to advise on the larger issues of public life. (In 1982, he had founded the Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth (PRON), which was intended as a mass movement embracing all Poles of good will, at least toward the military regime. It was an egregious failure.) Most of the notables in Polish society continued to be very chary of the new council and of the implications of joining it. But a few men of blameless record did join, and the Church leadership, though it conspicuously avoided hinting at cooperation in its own name, made it clear that it had no objection to lay Catholics associating with the council. The council made a slow beginning but, if the sociopolitical climate were ever right, it might, as the regime hoped, prove a useful means of channeling elite societal participation.

The second half of 1986 also witnessed something of a Western diplomatic offensive by Jaruzelski. He was taking advantage of a general desire in the West, including the United States, to get back to something like business as usual with Poland, a desire strengthened (or rationalized) by increasing signs of Jaruzelski's better behavior at home. The main aim of this offensive was normalization of relations with Washington, particularly the lifting of sanctions (which, as already mentioned, was achieved early in 1987). But the Reagan Administration's decision followed moves by several West European countries to restore

[7]On the effect of the amnesty, see Abraham Brumberg, "Poland: The New Opposition," *The New York Review of Books*, February 18, 1988.

international respectability to Poland, a process with which the Warsaw regime made no attempt to disguise its satisfaction. More important than any other Western recognition, however, certainly in terms of its impact on domestic opinion, was Pope John Paul II's decision to receive Jaruzelski officially during the latter's state visit to Italy in January 1987. This visit had great political importance in Poland and paved the way for the Pope's third visit to his native land the following June.

III. THE STATE OF THE POLISH ECONOMY

ECONOMIC CRISIS

Jaruzelski's diplomatic successes and his political progress at home continued to bolster the regime's confidence, but it was obvious that any success would be short-lived if it could not tackle, or at least contain, the country's huge economic problems. For several years, the Polish economy had been in a state of near collapse, threatening to undermine the whole fabric of society and to degrade Poland, as many observers feared, to the status of a Third World country.

A thorough analysis of the Polish economy would constitute a study in itself. All that can be given here are a few facts and figures to illustrate the depth of the crisis. Experts (not to mention partisans) differ over the extent of the damage to the economy caused by the Solidarity period between August 1980 and December 1981.[1] These differences partly explain the divergent views about how serious the economic crisis became after December 1981 and who was responsible for the prevailing situation. Putting the differences aside, however, some conclusions about the subsequent deterioration seem indisputable. A regular visitor to Poland painted the situation with a few broad strokes:

> Poland has one of the lowest growth rates in Eastern Europe, about 3 percent. Spare parts for industrial machines, as well as cars, trucks, and freight trains, are virtually unobtainable, and they stand idly rusting away. Sixty-two percent of industrial capacity is not being used. Ryszard Bugaj, the economist, ... puts the rate of inflation at nearly 20 percent. State investment is growing at 4.5 percent annually, but since consumption increases at little more than 2 percent a year, the average Pole's living standard hasn't improved at all. Housing construction is practically at a standstill—which means that young couples, even those with children, are forced to live in cramped quarters with their parents, a situation breeding domestic tension and divorce. Polish products, once fairly common on the industrial market, are now so shoddy that no one wants to buy them.[2]

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[1]See, for example, the debate between Zbigniew Fallenbuchl and George Blazyca in *Soviet Studies*, July 1985.

[2]Brumberg, "A New Deal for Poland," op. cit.

For the mass of Polish citizens, whatever the annual increases were in gross social product after 1983, national income per head was 20 percent lower in 1985 than it had been in 1979.[3] In the first year after martial law, the Polish people had experienced shortages of food and consumer goods more crippling than anything since Stalin's time. True, these goods subsequently became more plentiful, and the length of the shopping queues was for a time shortened. But this was helped considerably by a series of large price increases, which in 1988 eventually caused the precarious social calm to be broken. The Jaruzelski regime did have one stroke of luck, however, in that agriculture, still overwhelmingly private, generally produced well, due to a rational agricultural policy providentially buttressed by generally good weather.

Overshadowing all Poland's economic problems, even though its full impact may not have been visible in everyday life, was the size of the foreign hard currency debt. By the end of 1987, this debt stood at about $36 billion, but, despite a gradual recovery in Polish exports, hard currency earnings could not even cover interest on the debt, let alone begin to pay installments on the capital. Since there were few prospects of further significant Western loans, the only course for the Polish government was to plead for a continuing series of reschedulings. Nor were Poland's Western economic relations the country's only source of anxiety. The Soviet Union, which had since World War II been prepared to at least partially shield the Polish economy in times of crisis (as, for example, in the Solidarity period of 1980-1981), now seemed set to adopt a less solicitous attitude toward Eastern Europe generally, demanding better quality imports and extending fewer favors in its raw material exports.[4] It remained to be seen how far this attitude would eventually become policy, and how far Poland might be exempted, or cushioned, from it.

As if all this were not enough, a new and still more ominous factor gradually entered the crisis, one that eroded one of the basic assumptions on which the entire socialist system had been based. This assumption was that the "socialist system" should, and could, ensure for its citizens the basic material necessities of life, including a sufficient income, however modest, adequate housing, food, medical services, professional mobility, job security, and education. These were among the "human rights" on which the socialist system was said to be predicated. The overt assumption was that the socialist system was uniquely fitted to

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[3]See Bernard Margueritte, "Polen 1986: Realitaten und Perspektiven," *Europa-Archiv*, Vol. 20, 1986.

[4]See, for example, A.O., "Harte Haltung Moskau's am Comecon Gipfel," *Neue Zuercher Zeitung* (Fernausgabe), June 22, 1984.

provide and protect these rights; the covert assumption was that if it did, it would acquire enough legitimacy among most of the population to withstand the negative popular impact of curtailment, even the outright denial of some of those personal and political liberties that in the West are considered essential "human rights."

This, therefore, was the system's unspoken and unwritten "social contract." And despite the occasional, spectacular upheavals in Polish and East European history over the past 40 years, this "contract" has, with Soviet power as its ultimate guarantor, helped to ensure some measure of social and political stability. But the system's ability to provide its own version of "human rights," to keep its "side of the bargain" in the "social contract" has crucially declined.[5] Nowhere is this more so than in Poland. Inflation has replaced stable prices, and, if economic reform is to mean anything, job uncertainty will supersede full employment. Professional mobility, once an important safety valve against worker discontent, has been slowing down for at least a decade. Medical and hospital services are shockingly decrepit and inadequate. Many aspects of the whole welfare system seem about to collapse. To many Poles, the prospects now seem hopeless, with emigration (short-term or permanent) as the only solution.

ATTEMPTS AT ECONOMIC REFORM

Some alleviation of the economy's problems at one time appeared possible through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to which Poland was readmitted in June 1986. Readmittance brought the promise of some $2 billion to $3 billion in new credits—a promise, however, conditional on the Polish government introducing more market-oriented policies. Surprisingly, Jaruzelski's economic program, announced at the 10th PUWP Congress in July 1986 (and which must have been prepared at least partly with the readmission to the IMF in mind), gave little or no hint of any market orientation. The stress was on recentralization, and subsequently proposed legislation called for amendments to the economic reform laws of 1980-1981, which had been prepared under the pressure of Solidarity. These laws, due for implementation in 1982, were strongly market-oriented. They were, in fact, among the most strongly reformist proposals ever introduced in Eastern Europe. Few of their provisions, however, had been put into practice, with the exception of those involving self-financing and self-administration at the enterprise level and (the most reformist aspect of all) a considerable degree of enterprise self-management. (These provisions became known as the "three S's.")

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[5]For further discussion on this, see J. F. Brown, "A Western View in East-West Relations and Eastern Europe (An American-Soviet Dialogue)," *Problems of Communism*, May-August 1988.

Now, the new government proposals, which were strongly supported by Jaruzelski himself, seemed aimed at dismantling even the "three S's." They appeared to reflect the classic knee-jerk response of discipline-driven leaders to a critical situation. But they met with an indignant and vigorous response, which must have surprised their originators and which was to have both economic and political ramifications.

The proposals were attacked in the Polish Sejm, in meetings of the usually supine PRON, by a nationwide workers' self-management conference meeting in November 1986, by the official trade unions that were established in 1982 after Solidarity was officially disbanded and forced by its shadow to show some spirit, and in the media as well.[6] The opposition, in fact, was so extensive that several of the proposals were withdrawn or amended, including a provision reducing the power of the workers' self-management bodies. Jaruzelski's economic planners had to go back to the drawing board. Simply put, opposition to Jaruzelski's proposals appears to have rested on a determination to retain existing autonomies and on a principle of "no austerity without consultation." Poles and other East Europeans, especially workers, have become strongly suspicious of even the best-intentioned economic reforms, because they may involve factory closures, relocation, unemployment, or higher prices, usually without visible or adequate compensation. What Jaruzelski seemed to be offering this time was more hardship, no compensation, and even the loss of some autonomy, which most workers valued. Many workers were apparently not prepared to accept regime assurances that its proposals were essential if better times were to appear later on. Once again, therefore, it was a question of legitimacy and credibility. In the second half of 1986, the Jaruzelski regime still had little of either.

Politically, the sources of the opposition to the regime's proposals were perhaps as important as the opposition itself. Parliament, PRON, the official trade unions, and the workers' self-management conference were all quasi-representative institutions which society generally despised as regime-dominated or regime-manipulated. But on this occasion, these institutions did what regime propaganda always said they should: They represented and channeled public opinion, even to the point of opposing regime policy. This episode may not have indicated the first signs of an incipient pluralism, but it did show opposition being directed through several channels. At any rate, the Jaruzelski leadership appears to have taken it seriously. It proceeded throughout 1987 to rework its economic reform proposals in a more comprehensive and imaginative way.

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[6]There were many cases of this negative reaction. For official trade union opposition, see, for example, *Rzeczpospolita*, December 1, 1986.

The new proposals—or the "second stage" of reform, as they were officially dubbed—contained much that was vague. Some of the vagueness was probably deliberate, enabling the regime to improvise, adapt, or engage in its own version of "plausible deniability." Part of the vagueness, though, may simply have been due to a failure to think proposals through properly. Most Poles, if they considered Jaruzelski's 1987 proposals at all, were baffled by their complexity. But there was no doubt that the proposals represented a serious attempt—on paper, at any rate—at both economic and political reform.[7] They incorporated some of the ideas advocated by the economic reformers back in 1956 and many from the reform measures that should have gone into effect in 1982.[8] Politically, the proposals contained some of the ideas on political pluralism, albeit cautiously expressed, that reformers had been advocating with increasing boldness in some East European countries—most notably Hungary—for several years. Without involving any "democratization" of society through genuinely representative institutions, they still seemed to push the bounds of political pluralism very far in terms of the principles and previous practices of one-party rule.

Jaruzelski's decision to retreat from conservative recentralizing and take a quite different course in 1987 was obviously not solely the result of opposition from the Sejm, PRON, and other quasi- representative institutions. The increasing economic difficulties themselves may have convinced him (or those around him) that more radical steps were necessary. The IMF may also have made it clear that recentralization was going in the opposite direction from that of any future credits. But the biggest stimulus of all was the example of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union.

During most of 1986, the degree of Gorbachev's commitment to reform had not been clear, nor was the type of reform to which he might be committed. Most observers, in fact, had originally pigeonholed him as a "reorganizer," or "modernizer," rather than a genuine reformer. But in 1987, first at the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) Central Committee meeting in January and then in June, he emerged as a radical, almost a root-and-branch, reformer. It was Gorbachev's identification with the spirit of real reform (even if the hard

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[7]Many observers felt a decisive turn was imminent: "They will try to preserve the ideal of social justice. What will remain is completely unsure." (Stephen Dietrich, "Polens Kommunisten vor der zweiten Reformetappe," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 5, 1983).

[8]See Stanislaw Gomulka and Jacek Rostowski, "The Reformed Polish Economic System 1982-1983," *Soviet Studies*, July 1984.

details could still only be guessed at, and even though he was still meeting with strong domestic opposition) which bolstered the confidence of political and economic reformers throughout Eastern Europe and emboldened the Hungarian, Polish, and even the Bulgarian regimes to venture much further than they otherwise might have dared. But Gorbachev clearly did not stop at encouragement or inspiration. While protesting, as all Soviet leaders since Stalin had done, that each socialist regime is master in its own house, he left no one in doubt that reform should be on the agenda of all. In any case, the customary role of Moscow as pattern-setter, pacemaker, and arbiter for Eastern Europe, though no longer universally accepted, still remained a strongly influential factor.

IV. THE REFORM MOVEMENT

In Poland itself, there were also political factors at work moving Jaruzelski further toward reform than he might originally have wished. The opposition, in spite of its setbacks, was still strong and had become diversified. Jaruzelski's strategy of trying to go over (or around) it to achieve conciliation with the Polish people was constantly frustrated by the popular refusal to respond—hence, the need to go further with reform in the hope of breaking down the front of refusal. The masterstroke of the amnesty in September 1986 shook the opposition and divided it further, but by no means destroyed it. Solidarity, though weakened, still claimed the instinctive loyalty of most Poles, as well as the active support of a considerable minority. And Lech Walesa, Nobel Peace Prize winner and international hero, was still active and unbowed.

By 1987, however, Solidarity was just part of what was now the "opposition" in Poland—albeit, because of its worker following, the most powerful part. But the workers' loyalty to the union appeared to have decreased. That loyalty certainly did not extend to doing everything the leaders said, and the number of workers still supporting Solidarity with regular financial contributions had fallen off quite dramatically over the years.[1] Solidarity had ceased trying to promote the kind of opposition that could lead to reprisals and seemed to have adjusted to a changed situation. But there was a continued and often bitter debate among its leaders and advisers as to what constituted "realism" at any particular time. As the economic situation failed to improve, there was a growing feeling among Solidarity's leadership that everything should be subordinated to trying to remedy it. Some of the leaders indicated that they were prepared to cooperate with the regime, but only if the latter showed the required "seriousness" in its policy and if Solidarity itself was given a legal and recognized status in public life, a demand repeated by the Pope on his third visit to Poland in June 1987. The government, however, seemed bent on making Solidarity simply look obsolete. It continued to allow the new official unions considerable freedom of action. Consequently, these unions often took an increasingly militant stand, in the workers' interest, and, although they were still despised by many, gradually increased their membership and their authority.[2]

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[1]See Brumberg, "A New Deal for Poland," op. cit.

[2]See Eric Bourne, "New Polish Unions Assert Their Power," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 24, 1984.

This permissiveness toward the official unions was but one aspect of the increasing effort to "court" society by stimulating popular expression and participation through institutions which, if not free, would be largely autonomous. There was a readiness to talk to some Solidarity advisers, to make new concessions to the Church, to recognize the autonomy of certain professional bodies and special-interest groups (closely following the Hungarian pattern), even to license an independent journal and to widen the scope of workers' self-management. The overall purpose of this policy was aptly described by Jerzy Wiatr as:

> The filling of the social space between the coalition of ruling forces and the political opposition; the setting up of various organizations, clubs or associations providing an outlet for people who do not fit into the present pattern of coalition rule but who accept the constitutional order of People's Poland and are guided by a sense of realism.[3]

The Jaruzelski leadership presumably realized that it might take years before the effects of this strategy could be observed. But the stalemate between state and society that had existed for so long in Poland made it a sensible course. The strategy was based on the assumption that not all Poles were romantic fundamentalists, as popular tradition and common self-portrayal often maintained. It appealed to the more pragmatic aspects of the Polish character, which had their precedents in the positivist "organic work" concept of the nineteenth century. Many Poles, for example, who had supported Solidarity and basically detested the military-communist regime, might be ready to put their public spirit at the disposal of their country. They would not collaborate, but would instead participate, thereby indirectly influencing the prevailing power structure. There were also many Poles, primarily of the older generation, who were simply tired of turmoil and conflict and who welcomed a path leading to peace and quiet, provided it involved no loss of dignity or self-respect.

The number of pragmatists and of those who longed for peace and quiet was undoubtedly growing. But in Polish society there were still many men and women who in different ways opposed the regime actively or who were so alienated from it that they wanted as little to do with it as possible.

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[3]*Polityka*, December 20, 1986. Wiatr had been publicly criticized three years earlier in both the Polish and Soviet press for his alleged "liberalism."

The evolution of Solidarity has already been referred to. But alongside it—and sometimes criticizing it—there were now many other movements, groups, and splinter groups. They formed a bewildering spectrum of principles, politics, prejudices, and philosophies—from "Fighting Solidarity," a militant offshoot from the parent body, through various nationalist organizations and neo-facist splinters, to libertarian groups ostensibly dedicated to the restoration (or at least the proposition) of old Manchester School liberal capitalism. (Noticeably rarer were groups dedicated to socialism in any of its forms.)

Some of these groups, like Fighting Solidarity, advocated active resistance and were prosecuted for it.[4] But most of them made their presence felt by agitation, through literature, or through the spoken word. An earlier RAND report referred to this as follows:

> The Polish opposition has produced a wealth of underground papers and publishing houses. In 1986 alone, 20 new titles appeared. There are about 600 underground papers at present, 400 of which have been issued continuously since 1982. Approximately 20,000 people are involved in distributing the underground press. Twelve major underground publishing houses have formed a syndicate. An underground bank pays advances for books, and an underground insurance company pays compensations in case of arrest or confiscation of equipment. There is also a network of clandestine lending libraries. Radio Solidarity can be heard in various parts of the country on frequencies of the official radio and television. Use of audio and especially video cassettes has revolutionized the underground media. The number of video recorders in the country rose from zero in 1983 to 350,000 in 1986. The underground press has also produced over 400 satellite television antennas to date.[5]

The sheer volume of underground literature may have diminished since 1986 as the official press has become much freer and less restrained. But this literature still continues to play a crucial role in Polish public life, reflecting the manifold pluralism of both opinion and unofficial groupings.

The visible opposition has been largely, though not exclusively, a youthful endeavor (if the frontiers of youth were pushed to, say, a graying 35 years of age). All the different parts of this opposition sought publicity, especially among members of the Western corps in Poland. Many of those attracting the most attention were not workers but the better-

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[4]See Brumberg, "A New Deal for Poland," op. cit.

[5]A. Ross Johnson (chair) and Barbara Kliszewski (rapporteur), *United States Policy Toward Poland: A Conference Report*, The RAND Corporation, R-3545-FF, April 1987, pp. 1-2.

educated sons and daughters of the intelligentsia. In 1987, for example, none did better in this regard than the militant Freedom and Peace Movement, which attracted the support of many young people. As one Western reporter put it, Freedom and Peace "ushered in a new generation of opposition leadership eager to test the communist authorities."[6] Founded in March 1985, it campaigned against military service and Poland's relationship to the Soviet Union, and it argued for organizing hunger strikes, sit-ins, petition drives, and various acts of civil disobedience, one of the most spectacular of which was the burning of military service cards. Its main objection to military service was the Polish subordination to Soviet authority it involved. (The regime subsequently made a concession by deleting any reference to the Soviet Union from the oath of loyalty taken by Polish recruits at the beginning of their service.) In its ethos, as in its aims, actions, and unstructured leadership and organization, Freedom and Peace had much in common with the West German "Greens" and other groups in the West, and to some extent in Eastern Europe, as well. One of its most publicized concerns involved the destruction of the environment, which had already become a national scandal and which, if not soon reversed, could become Poland's most serious problem by the turn of the century.

Freedom and Peace offended many older Poles, including members of Solidarity, with its aggressiveness and iconoclasm. In its opposition to military service, for example, it came up against a residual popular Polish attachment to the army (or at least to the tradition of military service), which had survived martial law. (Walesa, apparently, was originally offended by this, but subsequently seems to have given his general blessing to the movement.) The Polish Episcopate must have had strong reservations about Freedom and Peace, although many parish priests probably strongly supported it. But it appealed to the youthful urge for action and had the irresistible attraction of being modish. Jacek Czaputowicz, one of its leaders, somewhat pretentiously but perceptively compared it to Solidarity: "What for them was impossible to consider, for us has become possible."[7]

But while Freedom and Peace was there for the militant, many Polish youth by 1987 wanted nothing more than to be left to do their own thing in the alternative way of life they chose for themselves. (Here again, there were many counterparts not only in the West, but also throughout Eastern Europe, most notably in Czechoslovakia, the GDR, and Hungary.) It was this mass of young people and their alternative way of life that was causing deep-

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[6]Jackson Diehl, "New Polish Movement Challenges Military Draft, Tie to Soviets," *Washington Post*, November 4, 1986.

[7]Brumberg, "A New Deal for Poland," op. cit.

felt concern within the regime. Some of the young people's attitudes also worried the Church. The Church was presumably not overly concerned about the virtual disappearance of any youthful belief in "some form of socialism," but it was very worried about the rush to emigrate, which intensified in the 1980s and which the Pope himself eventually warned against. The Church could draw some comfort from those surveys that showed young people leaning more to concepts like truth, human dignity, religion, and family, but much less comfort from youth's apparent unwillingness to harness its values in a constructive, purposeful way. As for the state, it could draw no comfort whatsoever from what Poland's youth were thinking or doing—or where so many of them were going, i.e., Westward.[8]

The Jaruzelski regime must also have been worried about the effect this youthful malaise was having on vital organs of state. Nowhere was it more potentially dangerous than in the military. A growing number of youths were directly refusing military service, dodging it, or, as Freedom and Peace was doing, suggesting alternatives to it. But this was still a relatively minor problem and was likely to remain so for a long time to come. The worry that was pressing was the attitude of the mass of conscripts who came into the armed forces. After 1981, many were actively resentful of military service, and this resentment, stoked by the prevailing culture of youth, was growing. Problems of military morale, discipline, and efficiency were greater than ever.

Nor were these problems confined to recruits. They were common among junior officers, for many of whom a career in the Polish military no longer evoked pride or even self-respect. (The parallel with Czechoslovak junior officers after 1968 is striking.) For many Poles inside and outside the armed forces, the military had become "much more a pillar of the regime than the defender of the nation."[9] And this regime seemed totally subservient to the Soviet Union, in whose ultimate interests it had used the military against the nation in December 1981.

It was sentiment like this that tended to belie opinion polls, which still showed the military as the second most respected public calling in Poland, after that of the priesthood;[10] or at least it put them in a quite different perspective. However much of the military myth

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[8]See *The Economist*, August 30, 1986; and I.V., "Unabated Emigration of the Young Worries the Government and the Church," *Polish Situation Report*, Radio Free Europe Research, March 17, 1988.

[9]Yvon Dujon, "La Victime d'une Crise: l'Armee Populaire Polonaise," *L'autre Europe* (Paris), December 3-4, 1984.

[10]The result of polling in 1985 and 1988 conducted under the direction of Professor Stanislaw Gebethner of Warsaw University showed that 70.3 percent of those polled had "confidence in the army as an institution." This was second to the Church, which had the "confidence" of 85.6 and 88.1 percent, respectively, of those polled in the two years. (Information supplied by Professor Gebethner.)

might persist among the public at large, it seemed to have been partly shattered among those sections of society most immediately associated with the profession of arms, i.e., the youth about to be inducted into it and many officers and other ranks already serving in it. In any case, the high marks scored by the military in the polls may have reflected little more than the vague conviction that Poland had to be protected.

In this situation, those senior Polish officers who had always been isolated by the exclusiveness of their situation and their obligatory loyalty to the Soviet Union now became more than ever the objects of estrangement and alienation. Even more serious was the fact that within the military, the senior officers could no longer wholly count on the officers and men they commanded. The Polish military had more than ever become a doubtful quantity. It was no longer sure it could discharge its traditional obligations of preserving order and defending the state. Still less could it be counted on to discharge its obligations to the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact Alliance.

V. THE EXTENDED IMPASSE

The persistence and the proliferation of opposition in Poland has resulted from the interaction of two factors: the inability of the Jaruzelski leadership to acquire any real political credibility, or legitimacy, among the public, and its inability to improve the economic situation, especially as it immediately affects the ordinary citizen. Legitimacy, though by no means totally dependent on economic improvement, is practically impossible without it. At the same time, economic improvement, because of the depths into which the economy has been allowed to slide, is impossible without a degree of political legitimacy enabling the regime not only to harness the national effort, but also to ride out the unpopularity of the hard measures necessary for effective reform.

This interaction became dramatically evident toward the end of 1987 and through the spring and summer of 1988. During this period, a tragic irony was played out in Poland. The regime set in motion (or put on a show of) a program for economic reform which depended on the support, or at least the acceptance, of the population, particularly of the workforce. But the workforce, because it had no confidence in the regime and because it felt no constraints about showing how it felt, was not prepared to put up with the hardships necessary for the program to succeed. True, only the most militant were actively involved in the strikes of the spring and summer of 1988. But the militants were simply the most aggressive symptoms of a general malaise. Many workers had come to be convinced, however grudgingly, that economic reform was necessary—certainly, their leaders in the opposition kept telling them so—but they had no trust in the men who were implementing it.

The Jaruzelski leadership, by no means unaware of the public mood, sought support for reform (or hoped to get the public to commit itself to it) through a referendum, to be held at the end of November 1987. But in doing so, it suffered a serious humiliation: The exercise turned into a debacle.

The voters were asked whether they were "in favor" of two propositions:

1. A "full government program for radical economic recovery," also involving an improvement in living conditions, on the understanding that this would necessitate a "difficult" two- or three-year period of "rapid changes."

2. Introduction of a new "Polish model" for "democratizing political life aimed at a strengthening self-government, extending the rights of citizens and increasing their participation" in public life.

A close observer of the Polish scene has commented:

> The government, in effect, was saying, "We recognize that the national economy is not working; it may, in fact, be approaching a catastrophe. We are finally prepared to take steps to decentralize the economy and allow more political liberty. But these steps—especially the economic ones—will require austerity and sacrifice, including higher prices, and cannot be carried out without the cooperation of the people.[1]

Both propositions were in fact rejected on a technicality. According to a very recent act of parliament, a referendum has to be won by a majority of all *eligible* voters. In this case, although both propositions were approved by about two-thirds of the votes cast, this only amounted to about 45 percent of the total eligible voters, of whom about one-third did not vote. The regime's failure took on the aspects of a fiasco when it became evident that many voters had been (understandably) baffled by instructions which called for voters to vote "yes" by putting a cross in the box marked "no," and vice-versa, a complication that somehow symbolized the doom-laden destiny of the whole operation. It is likely that the regime saw the referendum not so much as part of a democratization process, but as a means of inducing the public to give a commitment in advance to economic changes that it, the regime, would decide.

Jaruzelski's basic mistake in the referendum lay in exposing himself to a judgment that transcended the specific questions being asked and covered the broader and more complex issue of confidence in, and identification with, his leadership. The questions could not be taken out of the whole attitudinal context in which the referendum was held. On economic reform, most Poles, though resentful of the inevitable steep price increases and hardly welcoming the other painful consequences, were probably resigned to its necessity. As for the proposed political reform, it was certainly too little in terms of what was desired, but few would have rejected it outright. Economic reform, at least, was still as urgently needed after the referendum as it had been before, and the regime expressed its determination to proceed with reform, despite the result. However, the reform might now be

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[1]Brumberg, "Poland: The New Opposition," op. cit.

implemented somewhat more slowly than it would otherwise have been. Price increases that would have been imposed over a shorter time would now be stretched over a longer time.

But in the longer perspective, what the referendum illustrated was the complexity of the political spectrum in Poland. The regime had obviously suffered a defeat that was self-inflicted. Yet Solidarity, which had urged a boycott of the referendum, could claim little more than a hollow, technical victory. Over two-thirds of the electorate had, after all, voted, and well over two-fifths had voted for the regime proposals. Just as there were deep divisions within the governing regime, so there were among Polish society. Reputable opinion polls in the second half of 1987, while pointing to the aforementioned deep disaffection among Polish youth, also indicated that about 25 percent of the total population actually supported the regime, and about the same percentage supported the opposition. The remaining 50 percent tended to float between these two viewpoints, many of them prepared to back some degree of cooperation with the authorities in their efforts to extricate the country from its dire situation.[2]

These were figures on which the regime could undoubtedly have improved if the standard of living had improved. Some of the 50 percent who were uncommitted could have gone over to its camp. Instead, inflation accelerated, largely because of the considerable price increases the regime felt constrained to impose. Regardless of the fate of the referendum, it was clear that increases were necessary— although the wisdom of making them the central feature of any economic reform has been questioned by many economists. When imposed in early 1988, though they were said to be only half of what they would have been had the referendum been approved, the increases were painful enough for most Poles, whose standard of living was already lower than it had been 10 years earlier. The inflation rate for 1988, taking the increases into account, was expected to be about 50 percent—virtually double that of the previous year.[3] The government provided compensation in the form of wage increases, but almost inevitably, these were deemed insufficient. The initiative, therefore, which up until the November referendum had been passing over to the regime, now swung sharply back to the opposition, the more militant members of which decided on direct action in the factories.

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[2]These divisions had apparently remained remarkably stable. Jacek Kuron, one of the leaders of the intellectual opposition, was giving the same percentages as early as 1985.

[3]These total figures were often deceptive. For example, in February 1987, food prices increased by 40 percent. The following April, the price of coal increased by 200 percent (*Neue Zuercher Zeitung*, May 11, 1988). By mid-1988, some observers put the inflation rate at about 100 percent.

As early as February, many factories were threatened with strikes unless compensation was increased, and factory directors, anxious for "social peace" at any price, caved in to the workers' demands.[4] This acquiescence had two serious consequences: The extra costs involved in paying higher wages impeded the preparation of some aspects of the planned economic reform, and more immediately, workers were encouraged to demand even bigger wage increases. Thus, preserving "social peace" actually meant encouraging social unrest.

The first round of that social unrest actually started in April in Bydgoszcz with an eventually successful strike by transport workers. Strikes next spread to several industrial centers but were soon settled. They then became concentrated, first in the Nowa Huta metallurgical plant just outside Krakow, where several thousand workers struck, and then in the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, the birthplace of Solidarity in 1980. The crisis in these two famous industrial centers took a serious turn for the regime when the workers demanded not only pay increases, but also recognition of Solidarity. The unrest thus was politically as well as economically motivated. It also attracted worldwide attention, leading many observers to believe that the widely expected "next historic round" between state and society in Poland had begun.

At first, it seemed that these judgments were premature. The strike at Nowa Huta was ended forcibly by police action. At the Lenin shipyard, the strikers eventually gave up, the police wisely having thought better of invading an emblematic, emotion-drenched bastion that had once again captured the international spotlight. The spate of social unrest, therefore, temporarily petered out in early May. Politically, the strikes seemed to have failed: Solidarity had not been legalized or recognized. The strikes failed for lack of support. Cities that had become known as Solidarity strongholds, including Poznan and Wroclaw, remained generally passive, and a strike in the big Ursus tractor plant in Warsaw which, had it continued, might have led to a national strike was called off after only a few hours.

For a few weeks the regime appeared to have ridden out the storm. The strike-wave had not spread. Demands for official recognition of Solidarity had been resisted. The Gdansk strikers had not been supported. But beyond that, the regime could derive little satisfaction from the episode. The strikes had shown, far more accurately than any social

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[4]Reuter news agency reported on February 10, 1988, that "in many cases, as soon as men stopped work, the director just came and asked 'How much do you want?' and then gave it to them, and in 15 to 20 minutes it was over."

survey statistics, just how tense the situation in Poland really was. The atmosphere of calm that would have been conducive to the introduction of economic reform measures was further away than ever. Jaruzelski might well have paused to reflect on how little he had achieved since 1981.

But neither could the opposition have derived much comfort from the April-May strikes, except for the publicity it had received. The strikes had been badly organized and had revealed a serious split between younger militant workers, who had apparently initiated most of the stoppages, and many older workers who were counseling caution. Lech Walesa clearly thought the strikes premature, but he joined the Gdansk strikers for the sake of a unity that did not really exist. Indeed, the failure of the strikes was generally interpreted, both inside and outside Poland, as confirmation that if Solidarity were ever to regain its *organizational*, as distinct from its *symbolic*, significance, a reappraisal of its philosophy, strategy, discipline, and leadership was due.

But a surprise was in store for any who were prepared to write off the appeal of Solidarity. The atmosphere of social conflict in Poland was further aggravated by the failure of the April-May strikes. As the effect of the price increases deepened and factory managements became noticeably less willing to dole out extra wage increases to compensate, the disaffection in many parts of Polish industry increased. In August, it burst out again, this time among the miners in lower Silesia, the most vital (and best-paid) element of Poland's entire workforce, responsible for producing the hard coal that is the most important national export. The strikes quickly spread to Szczecin, Gdansk, and a few other centers. Once again the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk became the pivot of the entire strike movement, with Walesa, who had personally called the shipyard out on strike, its acknowledged national leader. This time, the main demand of the strikers concerned not so much wage increases, but the recognition of Solidarity. These strikes, therefore, were clearly more political than economic.

After several days, however, it appeared that the August strike-wave would peter out like the previous one. Although at its peak the industrial unrest may well have been the worst in Poland since 1981, it was by no means massively supported. None of the large factories in Warsaw, Cracow, Poznan, or Wroclaw joined in, and after a few days, some of the Silesian mines that had begun the strike went back to work, most of them after strong-arm tactics by the police.

But just when it appeared that the strikes were crumbling, the Jaruzelski leadership announced that it was ready to talk to Walesa personally on the question of legalizing Solidarity. On the face of it, this was a sensational reversal of policy. One of the main

planks of Jaruzelski's entire policy since 1981 had been the total refusal to grant Solidarity any official standing.

The regime, of course, did not have in mind what the strikers were demanding, i.e., an immediate decision to legalize Solidarity as an independent trade union along the lines of the original concession made in the summer of 1980. What it did have in mind was not at all clear; perhaps it had just a vague notion of a much fettered "independent" trade union body operating on a factory level within the framework of a more widespread pluralism, the details to be hammered out over time.

But even that would have been a major concession, particularly hard to explain when the regime seemed to be winning this renewed trial of strength with the militant workforce. The timing of the offer was also curious. If the regime was winning the struggle, why not wait until it had won and then offer the concession from a position of strength?

Perhaps the regime was not as confident of winning as it appeared to be. If even two or three big factories in, say, Poznan or Wroclaw had joined the strike (as the Ursus plant might have done in the spring), the whole situation might have been dramatically reversed. And the economy was in no position to stand a nationwide strike. This time, the leadership had obviously decided that it could not afford to buy the workers off, even if some of them might eventually have been ready to accept this. The regime may therefore have resorted to offering the vague promise about Solidarity in the hope of ending the strikes and buying time.

Whatever the motives, the regime leadership was apparently divided on the issue. The prime minister, Zbigniew Messner, spoke out against concessions to the strikers, and perennial hardliners, of whom the head of the heavy industry lobby, Vice-Premier Zbigniew Szalada, was most prominent, seemed to have urged the use of force to break the strikes. Jaruzelski himself seems to have been initially surprised by the strikes. Despite the obvious worsening of the economic situation, his overall optimism was apparently greatly bolstered by Gorbachev's visit in June. Eventually, Jaruzelski must have approved the offer to Walesa on Solidarity, but it is difficult to imagine that he was one of the originators of it.

The initiative was probably taken by the liberal group in the leadership which favored both cooperating with "moderate" elements in the opposition for the national good and the introduction of some degree of institutionalized political and trade union pluralism. Included in this group were Politburo members and Central Committee secretaries Jozef Czyrek and Wladyslaw Baka, the latter now the regime's main economic official; Politburo member and leader of PRON, Stanislaw Ciosek; and economist Vice-Premier Zdzislaw Sadowski. Men

like these constituted a powerful reform lobby whose influence was increasing because of the worsening of the economic, social, and political situation of the country.[5]

Among the opposition, support had been growing since the general amnesty of September 1986 for contacts with these "moderate" elements in the regime, with a view toward cooperation. Many Poles supported the initiative of Bronislaw Geremek and several other counselors to Solidarity in the first part of 1988. Geremek, by profession a medieval historian, suggested the opening of consultations with the authorities about overcoming the crisis. He continued to insist, however, on the legalization of Solidarity as a precondition for talks, and his overtures were therefore rejected by the regime.[6] But some medium-level regime-opposition contacts did take place early in 1988. Clearly, then, the regime liberals wanted to continue and enlarge contacts like these with their proposals to meet Walesa and talk about the future of Solidarity. Here at least was a meeting ground, and many thought it to be Poland's only hope.

The Church leadership also played a vital role in bringing about the summer truce. Although they strongly favored the cause of political and trade union pluralism and sympathized with the striking workers, Poland's bishops had continually urged moderation and compromise in the pursuit of popular demands. Hence it could be assumed that they would urge a favorable response to the regime's offer for talks. Their influence on Walesa was vital, although Walesa's own moderation probably coincided with the urgings of his clerical and lay advisers. It was no coincidence that in the meeting with Interior Minister General Czeslaw Kiszczak, which followed the regime's offer of talks, Walesa was accompanied by one of Poland's senior Bishops, Jerzy Dabrowski. (Kiszczak was accompanied by Ciosek in his capacity as head of PRON.)

But just when it seemed that, despite the doubts and suspicions, some progress toward negotiations might be possible, there came a reversal which, once again, typified the regime's inability, or basic unwillingness, to achieve national reconciliation. In September 1988, Zbigniew Messner was forced out, after a singularly unsuccessful three years as premier, and his place was taken by Mieczyslaw Rakowski.

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[5]See O.K., "Aspekte der polnischen Krise," *Neue Zuercher Zeitung* (Fernausgabe), August 31, 1988.

[6]Geremek first formally made his suggestion in *Konfrontacje*, a new monthly sponsored by PRON. His suggestion appeared in an interview published in February 1988, which had taken place the preceding December. See I.V., "Is an 'Anti-Crisis' Pact Possible?" *Polish Situation Report*, Radio Free Europe Research, April 1, 1988.

The former editor of the weekly *Polityka*, for many years one of the liveliest journals in Eastern Europe, Rakowski had gained the reputation of a liberal, especially in the West. It had been a reputation not entirely undeserved when public life in Poland was narrowly circumscribed and the Stalinist residual remained very strong. But Rakowski was more a "revisionist" of the 1960s than a "liberal" of the 1980s. He strongly supported the party's monopoly of power, however much he might want to humanize and streamline it. And though he was hated by many of the *apparatchik* hardliners who still abounded under Jaruzelski, he was at one with them in his determination to preserve the Leninist essentials of the system. It was this hardliner enmity that helped give Rakowski the reputation of a progressive in the Jaruzelski regime—this combined with his undoubted intelligence and his numerous Western contacts. Indeed, so entrenched was this reputation that the ups and downs of Rakowski's fortunes in the 1980s were seen by many observers as a barometer of the political climate: When Rakowski was up, it was in thaw; when he was down, it was in freeze. Thus, when he was catapulted into the Politburo in November 1987, after over two years in political purdah, and still more when he entered the Secretariat in June 1988, this was construed as a real sign of progress.

But when Rakowskki was made premier, at precisely the time the crucial negotiations with Solidarity were due to begin, old suspicions about him came to the fore. (Among most of Poland's intellectuals, those suspicions had never receded.) In 1981, he had been vice-premier responsible for negotiations with Solidarity. At the beginning he may have been eager for the regeneration the situation seemed to offer, and he undoubtedly considered himself well-suited for the responsibilities with which he was charged. But as the negotiations with Solidarity showed how basically incompatible the two sides were, what became most evident about Rakowski was his self-esteem and basic lack of flexibility. What seems to have soured him most was the brusque lack of deference shown him by the Solidarity negotiators.

The suspicions about him were almost immediately confirmed when he announced the closure of the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk for the coming December. Ostensibly this was to be done on economic grounds in the framework of economic reform. (The shipyard had been making big losses.) There were certainly many large plants in Poland that warranted closure on those grounds, but the birthplace of Solidarity was unmistakably singled out by Rakowski. No announcement of any other plant closure was made at the time, and no one in Poland believed that the announcement was anything other than a show of personal spite and revenge on Rakowski's part. Nor was the cynicism of its timing lost on most

Poles—immediately prior to a visit by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, no shrinking violet herself when it came to plant closures.

The regime had, therefore, challenged and offended a large section of society in a provocative and unnecessary way. In its determination to "put Solidarity in its place," the regime had jeopardized any negotiations and had made general reconciliation more difficult than even before to attain. It was all the more the pity, because in the strictly economic aspects of its policy there had recently been some promising signs. There was apparently a new determination to press ahead with meaningful reform based inceasingly on the market mechanism. There had already been a surprising surge of private entrepreneurial activity. Some aspects of the bureaucracy and the bureaucratic habit of mind were being dislodged. Some Western governments were beginning to take a more sympathetic interest in Poland's situation. But all this would come to nothing if the gulf between rulers and ruled were not bridged. At the end of 1988, that showed no sign of happening.