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14 April 1988

Professor Zbigniew Pelczynski
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Dear Professor Pelczynski

Many thanks for your letter and the text of your McCallum Lecture. I have passed the Lecture onto the Prime Minister and reported your suggestions about her visit to those engaged in preparing it.

I was myself fascinated by your account of the rise of conservative groups in Poland. This is something I would like to discuss further with you.

Very best wishes.

John O'Sullivan

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Mr John O'Sullivan
Prime Minister's Policy Unit
10 Downing Street
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Dear Mr O'Sullivan

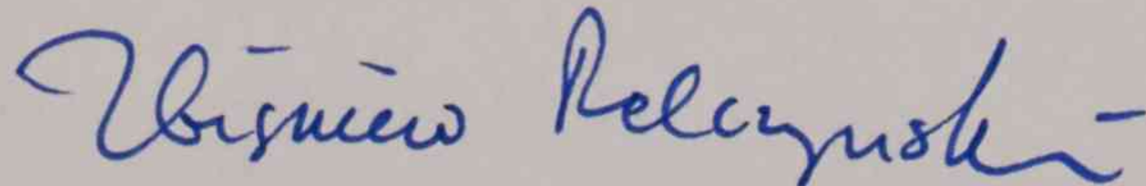
I hope you remember our meeting at the Centre for Policy Studies when David Willetts hosted a lunch for George Soros. Last week the Polish authorities finally approved his foundation for Poland and the British Charities Commission sanctioned a sister foundation in Oxford, which will cooperate with it. We hope to be operational in early May. Incidentally, Mr Soros's foundations in Moscow and Peking are flourishing, as is the foundation in Budapest. By the end of 1988 this remarkable gentleman may be spending something like US $ 10 million on his ventures in the Communist world.

My main reason for writing, however, is to ask you to pass to the Prime Minister my 1982 McCallum Lecture. I would be greatly honoured if she accepted it. As a brief, readable synthesis of postwar Polish history it met with very good reception when I first gave it at Oxford, and six years later seems still valid as a background to contemporary events.

Perhaps the picture needs altering in just one respect. In 1982 I stressed that the Poles broadly accepted "socialism" of some kind while rejecting the ideological and political implications of "real socialism", i.e. communism. On my recent visits I found a strong and growing interest in the expansion of private industry, market economy and economic liberalism. In Cracow and Warsaw independent associations of businessmen and free-enterprise oriented intellectuals have come into existence, headed respectively by Miroslaw Dzielski and Aleksander Paszynski. The monthly liberal-conservative journal RES PUBLICA, edited by Marcin Krol in Warsaw, is an important mouthpiece of the movement. I do hope that the Prime Minister's advisers ensure that she has contacts with both groups while she is in Poland. They share her ideals on economy and society more fully than any other group in the country and deserve her recognition.

On my recent visit to Poland I found great excitement about Mrs Thatcher's planned trip and I am sure she will receive a most friendly welcome from the people. It will be a historic visit and may even give the stalled economic and political reforms a significant boost.

Yours sincerely



Zbigniew Pelczynski

Special R.B.McCallum Lecture

29 May 1982

Z.A.Pelczynski

POLAND: THE ROAD FROM COMMUNISM

Pembroke College, Oxford

POLAND: THE ROAD FROM COMMUNISM

The Governing Body of Pembroke College did me a great honour by inviting me to deliver the Special R.B. McCallum Lecture. First, because the lecture commemorates a former Master of Pembroke and a distinguished political historian who in his lifetime made a notable contribution both to the development of the College and to the practice of history. Second, because my four predecessors in the series - the Hon. William J. Fulbright, Sir Charles Wilson, Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien and Professor Raymond Aron - have also been men of distinction in their respective fields although none of them has been a professional historian like McCallum. McCallum's strongest interest was in the contemporary history of Britain, in subjects such as the effect of the Versailles Treaty on British public opinion or the 1945 General Election. My chief interest, outside political theory, lies in the contemporary history of Poland, and my first academic venture into the subject was a monograph on the 1957 parliamentary elections in Poland. Since then I have been following developments there at first hand.

McCallum's peculiar gift as a historian, which appeals to me strongly, was for the analysis of political attitudes, opinions and ideas. He cared little about the struggle for power as such and was not very interested in the impersonal social and economic forces which are believed in some circles to be the only things which really matter in history. As a liberal and an admirer of John Stuart Mill he believed, on the contrary, that in politics attitudes, opinions and ideas mattered profoundly. They influenced human actions, inspired or inhibited politics, and reinforced or undermined institutions no less than material interests. Two hundred years before McCallum another Scotsman, David Hume, who was of course a philosopher as well as a historian, made a perceptive remark in one of his political essays that, since the ruled are many and the rulers few, government never in fact rests on force alone but always on opinion, opinion either of right or of interest. Should the opinion be eroded or vanish altogether, government in its old form cannot survive for long. This, argued Hume, applies as

much to the despotic as to the free states.

In my lecture I want to follow in the footsteps of both Ronald McCallum and David Hume by exploring, in the context of Polish postwar history, the interaction of subjective attitudes, opinions and ideas on the one hand, and objective forms of rule, policy patterns and institutional structures on the other hand. In doing this I am to some extent taking a line of analysis which in contemporary political science is known as 'the political culture approach'. It is the contention of this approach that the objective side of politics cannot be properly understood without relating it to the subjective side and in particular that change in political systems can often be best explained in terms of interaction of culture and structure. I find this approach rather fruitful in interpreting the Polish experience with Communism since the war. However, I hasten to say that my approach will be far more historical than sociological or 'politological' in character.

I have entitled this lecture, 'Poland: the road from Communism'. I must confess that the phrase comes from a joke which I heard in Poland in the mid-1950s. Wladyslaw Gomulka had just come back to power and there was much talk in Poland at the time about 'roads to socialism' or 'roads to communism'. The joke was as follows: In a party school an instructor explains differences between the various roads to Communism - the Russian road, the Polish road, the Yugoslav road, the Chinese road, and so on. Someone raises a hand. 'Comrade instructor, can you explain why all these roads always lead <u>to</u> Communism? Is there no road <u>from</u> Communism?' There is a terminological difficulty here which ought to be clarified at the outset. While for us in the West 'socialism' generally means 'democratic socialism', in Eastern Europe the word is used to refer to the economic, social and political system created and maintained by the Communist parties in power - a society which in Marxist terms is a transitional stage in mankind's march to full or true Communism. East European 'socialism', therefore, is essentially what we call 'communism'; while what is called 'communism' in Poland or the Soviet Union is for us just ideological mumbo-jumbo.

Gomulka had first used the phrase 'Polish road to socialism' in the 1940s, in his first incarnation as the Communist Party's General Secretary, and revived it in 1956. With its nationalist undertones it was not to the liking of the Soviet Communist leaders. At the end of 1956 I saw a cartoon in the Russian satirical weekly Krokodil which showed a diminutive Gomulka and a huge Cardinal Wyszynski (whose support Gomulka was seeking after recently releasing him from prison) walking hand in hand along a winding country lane above the caption 'the Polish road to socialism'. (I sometimes wonder if similar cartoons, showing General Jaruzelski and Archbishop Glemp, are circulating privately in the Kremlin today). A little bit later, when Gomulka's slogan began to lose its appeal in Poland, there was a very popular Polish joke. Question: 'which is the best road to socialism?' Answer: 'the longest'.

It is my contention that 'the Polish road to Communism' has become, since 1956, increasingly a road from Communism. This, of course, became abundantly obvious during the fifteen extraordinary months between August 1980 and December 1981. But I believe, and will try to show, that Poland had entered the road from Communism long before the emergence of Solidarity and it was due to this long preparatory process that the events in 1980-81 developed with such dramatic speed. I shall therefore devote the first half of my lecture to a historical analysis of Polish Communism to support my contention. In the second half I shall focus on the Solidarity period. I shall conclude by arguing that only if the historical trend away from Communism is fully recognized by the Polish and the Soviet Communist Party leaders can the present, most profound, crisis of the Communist system in Poland be overcome successfully.

I

The seed of the present Communist system was a body called the Polish Committee of National Liberation, set up in Lublin almost 40 years ago, in July 1944. Although ostensibly a coalition with a patriotic and democratic programme, it was dominated by the Communist Party (then known as the Polish

Workers Party and now as the Polish United Workers Party) and survived and grew in a highly hostile environment only because the Soviet army and security police and their Polish auxiliaries protected it in its infancy. It must be a sad reflection for Communist historians that today, almost 40 years after the establishment of the Communist regime, its functioning once more depends almost entirely on the army and the police. When the Soviet forces occupied Poland the total membership of the Communist Party and its partisan units was about 20,000, while the population of Poland numbered over 20 millions. Moreover, Communism had virtually no historical roots. Before the war, the Poles had regarded the tiny Communist Party as an alien, unpatriotic organization which was nothing but a tool of the Russian Communists for subverting, partitioning and ultimately conquering the Polish state - 'that ugly bastard offspring of the Versailles Treaty' as the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov delicately called it in October 1939, when the Soviet Union was sharing with Nazi Germany the spoils of the recent German conquest of Poland. Already at the time of the Munich Agreement Stalin could find no immediate use for the Polish Communist Party and dissolved it, physically liquidating most of its leaders and activists in the Great Purge. The marked dislike of Polish Communists for mass terror and bloody purges may well be connected with that experience. Elsewhere in East and Central Europe - for instance, Weimar Germany and the Czechoslovak Republic - Communism had been a strong, native, working class movement already in the 1920s. In Poland it became a mass movement only after the war, when the party was in power and attracted members less through its ideology than its enormous patronage. Of course the Party has always had a number of idealists, doctrinaires and fanatics in its ranks, but most of them lost their faith after discovering the truth about Stalin. The persistent ideological weakness of Polish Communism owes much to this historical factor.

In the immediate postwar period a section of Communist leaders and activists (grouped around Gomulka) appreciated the shallowness and feebleness of the party's roots only too well. They advocated a gradualist approach to the construction of the

Communist system, and favoured moderate policies and collaboration with the elements in Polish society which were not utterly hostile to Communism. The achievements of this first Gomulka period, in which an independent Socialist Party had played an important role, such as the settlement of the former German territories, land reform, nationalization of heavy industry, introduction of planning and far-reaching changes in the class structure, won general popular acceptance.

It is interesting to speculate whether the development of Communism would have been different had Gomulka stayed in power longer. But after only four years, in 1948, a Stalinist faction led by Boleslaw Bierut deposed him, condemned his 'Polish road to socialism' as a 'rightist-nationalist deviation' and under great pressure from Moscow embarked on the rapid sovietization of Poland. Within a couple of years the Communist Party had a monopoly of power and a tight grip on the state, the economy and all social, educational and cultural institutions. The Bierut team declared Soviet Communism to be the highest achievement of progressive humanity and an obligatory model for Poland. The model, it will be remembered, included severing all cultural links with the 'bourgeois' West, substituting for religion a secular, materialist ideology, changing the status of two-thirds of the population from small peasant proprietors into collective farmers, replacing all private enterprise and voluntary association by planned, centralized, bureaucratic administration and creating a brand-new governing Communist elite. The traditional suspicion that Polish Communists or at least their leaders were simply agents of their Moscow masters received a powerful reinforcement during the Stalinist period from direct Soviet interference and economic exploitation. Nothing could be more blatant than having a Soviet marshall as head of the Polish army.

Why did people accept those changes? First, because there was no conceivable alternative to them. Soviet armies surrounded Poland; the all-pervasive security police - the dreaded UB - nipped any opposition in the bud. Secondly, there was a widespread feeling that Communism, however alien, was a historical necessity; that the West was, in some sense, in retreat and

unwilling to stand up to Soviet power and expansion. Thirdly, the system brought some benefits which created what David Hume calls 'the opinion of interest'. The rapid growth of industry and the expansion of the bureaucracy, the army and the police, created tremendous job opportunities. Young workers and, even more, young peasants benefited most; between 1950 and 1955 half a million people per year left the villages for towns and town jobs. Despite draconian discipline, dreadful factory conditions, totally inadequate housing and pitifully low earnings, the move from country to town constituted a definite social advance for those young migrants and they acquired a stake in the system. Social mobility was further helped by the extension of educational opportunities at all levels; the quality of education sharply declined, but its availability went up enormously. In short, Communism in the forties and fifties hit the old upper and middle class and the older generation of the peasantry, but it promoted the interests of the new technical, managerial and bureaucratic intelligentsia and the rapidly growing army of blue and white collar workers of peasant origin. There is an overwhelming feeling in Poland to this day that opportunities for social advance have been very wide under Communism and that most people's status is higher than was their fathers' before the war. Finally the Communist rulers and their non-Communist subjects were united by some national goals. The memory of the war and occupation and the fear of German revanchism united all Poles. When NATO was being formed and West Germany integrated into it at great speed, the Communist Government's argument that the Polish-Soviet alliance and the might of the Soviet Union guaranteed the security of the Oder-Neisse frontier had a measure of plausibility. The reconstruction of Warsaw - destroyed on Hitler's order in revenge for the 1944 uprising - was another national goal, so was the rebuilding of other ruined towns and cities.

The term 'Stalinism' conjures up visions of Russia in the 1930s and beyond - the Russia of Solzhenitzyn's Gulag Archipelago. But Polish Stalinism was not like that at all. It took Lenin and Stalin over twenty years to weld the Soviet Union into a stable system that could plausibly be called

totalitarian. In Poland, Stalinism was brief: it began in earnest in the autumn of 1949, reached its peak at the end of 1953 and was dead in 1956 - seven years in all. The governmental structure and the structure of the planned economy proved to be all too enduring, and certain policy commitments, especially forced industrialization, became institutionalized. But otherwise Stalinism accomplished far less in Poland than in the other 'people's democracies'. The Church lost its land, schools, welfare associations and various privileges, and its hierarchy and clergy were subject to a great deal of villification and persecution, but its strictly religious functions continued undisturbed. The peasant farmers successfully resisted collectivization, and eighty per cent of all farming land remained in private hands. The intellectuals paid lip service to 'socialist realism' in art, and Marxism-Leninism in the natural and social sciences, but already by 1955 they were loudly questioning their practical and theoretical value.

Ideological indoctrination was too short and too superficial to change in any basic way the Weltanschaung of the Polish people. But how many of them in fact became Marxists? Here we have some interesting sociological evidence. A survey of Warsaw student opinion conducted in 1958 revealed a strong preference for 'socialism' as an idea. But only 2% of the sample called themselves 'strongly Marxist' and 11% 'fairly Marxist', while 60% described themselves as religious believers. An analogous poll conducted in 1978 showed that ideologically the students were almost identical with their 1958 counterparts.

To our minds communism (or in the East European parlance 'socialism') is inextricably bound up with Marxist ideology. What the two Polish surveys show, however, is that already by 1958 the vast majority of Poles dissociated 'socialism' from Marxism. They strongly approved of 'socialism', but rejected Marxism, and apparently thought that one could quite happily be a believing and practising Catholic and a supporter of 'socialism'. Communism had become primarily an institutional and policy concept, not a doctrinal or ideological concept. This was the start of a process one might call 'the ideological evaporation of Communism', which in Poland has gone unchecked ever since.

Stalinism, then, revolutionalised the structure of the state, the economy and largely society; it created a preference for 'socialism' over capitalism; but it failed to instil Communist ideology in most people's mind. Marxism-Leninism never became a part of what Hėgel and the German Romantics used to call Volksgeist, 'the spirit of the nation'. Outside the official, Communist-constructed and controlled reality there was always a different reality which owed little to Communism and expressed essentially traditional and individual ideas and beliefs. This reality fell into three distinct but interrelated areas of leisure, the family and the church. The first - the private, out-of-business hours activities of recreation, entertainment, café life, home parties, celebrations and so on - is often forgotten by outside observers. Yet this was the area where even during Stalinism masks could be taken off, where one no longer had to watch one's words and reactions and where one could safely ridicule or revile one's masters. At home the influence of parents, brought up in pre-war Poland, remained crucial in shaping the basic ethical values of their children.

The Poles always saw the Church as a vital part of 'the spirit of the nation', an element of national identity, a link with the country's past, an ancient institution that had stood by the Polish nation in its glories as well as misfortunes for over a thousand years. Whatever serious faults it might have had in the past the Church during Stalinism served as a refuge from the harsh political and economic reality and a repository of personal and family values.

II

Stalinism in Poland may have been brief and relatively mild; nevertheless it generated a reaction which was stronger and more hostile than anywhere else in East Europe except in Hungary. The reason for it was a serious mismanagement of the economy. The rapid tempo of industrialization, combined with declining farm production, caused enormous economic difficulties, a drastic fall in the standard of living and popular discontent which erupted into workers demonstrations and riots in Poznan

in June 1956. They were brutally suppressed by the army but split the Communist Party deeply. This split was aggravated by the ideological shock of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and also by a conflict with the Soviet leaders who tried to veto Polish leadership and policy changes and actually ordered the Red Army to advance on Warsaw. This first and only attempt at Soviet military pressure failed. In fact it boomeranged against the Russians by rallying the population to the Communist Party, or rather its reformist faction, which was perceived as a defender of Polish national interests against the Soviet Union. As a result of the triple conflict - between the party and the people, between conservatives and reformists within the party and between the Soviet and the Polish Communist Party - the purged Gomulka returned to power and for a time became almost a national hero.

Although his popularity waned fairly quickly, Gomulka's contribution to the development of Communism, objectively considered, was enormous. The mix of changes which he made in the system proved so successful that Communism enjoyed an unparalleled period of stability - eleven years without strikes, demonstrations or popular disturbances whatever. One could say that under his rule the Communist system for the first time achieved a measure of legitimacy. How did Gomulka achieve this success?

First of all the Communist system lost the stigma of its Soviet origin and overt Soviet domination. In a sense, Gomulka 'nationalized' Communism: it was no longer perceived as strongly alien, Russian, anti-Polish. People now attributed its failures (or successes) to 'our Gomulka', 'our Communists', 'our Government'.

Secondly, Gomulka made the system acceptable by keeping coercion down to a minimum. The grip of the police on the population relaxed tremendously and the previous discrimination against suspect 'anti-socialist' elements largely disappeared. For years there were absolutely no political prisoners in Polish jails. The persecution of the Church ended completely, as did all interference with its internal activities, although various restrictions, often petty, remained. Religious life became completely free, and flourished.

Thirdly, Gomulka swept away many irksome controls on personal freedom, especially on contacts with the West. The Iron Curtain was lifted; for Poles, travel was restricted more by the shortage of foreign currency than by passport difficulties; Western films, plays, novels and scientific literature became freely available; knowledge of the West - especially the wonders of the affluent consumer society - became widespread even in the most backward regions of Poland.

Fourthly, culture ceased to be moulded according to the canons of 'socialist realism' or other official dogmas. Universities and research institutions became virtually self-governing. Marxism-Leninism was now treated as one approach among several possible ones, although still favoured by the ruling party and subsidized heavily - just as the inefficient state farms were favoured over private agriculture. Professional associations and cultural institutions enjoyed wide autonomy, as long as they confined their activities to the officially authorized limits. One or two of them, like the Writers Union, completely shed their ideological character.

Finally, within the Communist Party, too, Gomulka allowed a considerable amount of freedom. Marxism-Leninism remained the official doctrine and its tenets could not be publicly questioned, but party authorities did not inquire very closely into the state of mind of its members; outward behaviour was all that mattered. Ideological agnosticism was common and even religious practices were condoned. The Party became a broad political church rather than a fanatical evangelical sect: its aim was not the redeeming of souls from the bondage of religious superstition or bourgeois nationalism but the efficient running of the state and the development of the economy. This was not due to a change of heart; the Party really had no choice in the matter. After 1956 it could only find recruits if it did not insist on ideological orthodoxy. Unlike the Stalinist Party, which had tried to adapt the country to itself, it was now adapting itself to the country.

But Gomulka's concessions had definite limits. The Communist Party preserved its monopoly of power intact. The Politburo or the Secretariat of the Central Committee decided all important

matters and many trivial ones. All offices and positions were held at the Party's pleasure, in accordance with the so-called 'nomenklatura'. Censorship was complete; the Party authorities decided what the country might read and know, and what criticisms and suggestions, if any, were allowed. The Party consulted more, especially the experts, but was not willing to share governmental power with anybody, not even with the two non-Communist satellite organizations - the United Peasant and Democratic Parties. A chance was rejected to involve in government and local administration an important body of lay Catholics, who had offered their support and cooperation to Gomulka after October 1956. Small Catholic political groups continued to be represented in Parliament and to enjoy the luxury of sometimes voting against government measures, but their influence was insignificant. This had important long-term consequences. Alienated from the system which they were fully prepared to support on grounds of raison d'état - Poland's geopolitical position - the Catholic intelligentsia eventually turned to dissident activity and, later still, became part of the intellectual backbone of the Solidarity movement. In Solidarity they found an outlet for political activity which Gomulka, and his successor Gierek, had short-sightedly denied them.

In 1956, a degree of political pluralism emerged for a time, foreshadowing the developments in 1980. Workers councils sprang up spontaneously but were soon merged with official trade unions. The peasants organized self-governing 'agricultural circles' but these quickly lost their independence. Catholic intelligentsia clubs remained independent, but confined to half a dozen large cities and limited to religious and cultural matters. Clearly Gomulka abhorred institutional pluralism in any form. The only independent body which played a political role in the Gomulka period was the Catholic Church. It regularly took up positions on various public issues and sometimes enraged Gomulka, but he took no effective steps to stop such interventions. Towards the end of the 1960s, in line with the Vatican Ostpolitik, the Polish Church ceased to question the legitimacy of 'socialism' as such. Cardinal Wyszynski publicly stated that, as a system of social justice and cooperation, 'socialism' was far superior

to competitive capitalism. But he then proceeded to argue that the socialist system in Poland fell far short of its own ideals and denied its citizens many basic human rights.

Let me illustrate the remarkable position of the Church under Gomulka with a couple of personal reminiscences. In the autumn of 1967 I heard a pastoral letter of the Polish bishops to Catholic parents being read in Cracow's St. Mary's Church - as it was simultaneously read throughout the country. It was amazingly frank. It reminded the congregation that education in Poland was a state monopoly, and that materialism and other doctrines incompatible with Christianity were being freely taught in schools. It was therefore a duty of Catholic parents to cross-examine their children after school and if they discovered they had been taught anything which contradicted truth or the Church's teaching they were in conscience bound to put the matter straight. To fail to do so was a grave sin, which had to be confessed and absolved by a priest.

On another occasion in the same year I asked a farmer over a glass of vodka what was the state of religion in his village. 'I am a party member', he said proudly, 'and on the executive of the local party committee. But all of us, the whole village party organization, are believing and practising Catholics. We have to be. If we did not attend Mass every Sunday and do our Easter duty, the parish priest would denounce us from the pulpit and we would become social lepers in the village; people would probably stop talking to us; certainly they would boycott any farming instructions'. Then he paused, downed another glass of vodka, and continued: 'I am a bit of an anti-clerical, you know. But I'll tell you one thing. We absolutely cannot do without religion in this country. Do you believe my son would obey me or my wife stay faithful to me if it weren't for the Church? The Party couldn't do a thing about it.' This conversation, with a fairly ordinary farmer, highlights both the impotence of the Communist Party and the power of the Catholic Church in Poland, and I could quote many other conversations.

Obviously Communism under Gomulka became largely an institutional or governmental phenomenon and abandoned its expressly ideological character. What, then, drove it on? What constituted

the mainspring of its supporters' actions? It was the belief that the economy was the decisive sector of the so-called 'socialist construction' and that the key to its success was industrial development. Gomulka probably held a fairly naive view about the Marxist relation between the 'base' and the 'superstructure'. He hoped that the development of economic forces within a planned economy would automatically produce a more socialist consciousness, in which eventually religion would find no place. The economic results, however, were disappointing. In spite of some industrial progress productivity remained low and the rate of growth declined steadily, despite massive injections of capital and labour. Light industry was neglected; housing made only modest progress; consumption stagnated. Collectivisation was abandoned, but tight controls and restrictions on private agriculture militated against the profitability and efficiency of the private sector which supplied the great bulk of food for the population.

The poor performance of the Polish economy under Gomulka was basically due to his failure to reform the nationalized economy. It remained over-centralized, bureaucratic, governed by directives and insensitive to economic reality or the workers' opinion. Gomulka rejected a blueprint for a more market-oriented economy, prepared after October 1956 by a committee of Polish economists who included such brilliant men as Oskar Lange and Michal Kalecki. Instead their ideas helped to inspire the successful Hungarian reforms of the 1960s, which are generally agreed to have been a major cause of economic prosperity and political stability in that country. Gomulka missed the chance of becoming the Polish Kadar.

Gomulka's attitude has often been called 'liberal' but this is a misleading term. He was liberal in the context of a Communist system retreating from the excesses of Stalinism; not in the sense in which Hume, Mill or McCallum would have understood the word. He viewed with dismay the Czechoslovak Spring of 1968 and willingly committed Polish troops to the invasion of Czechoslovakia. When 'revisionism' raised its head in Poland in the mid-60s its advocates were ruthlessly expelled from the Party, sacked from work or even imprisoned for defaming the

socialist order. When the intellectuals ventured outside the field of royalties and criticised censorship or the shortage of paper, Gomulka reacted sharply. When students publicly protested against the closing down of a play with anti-Russian undertones, they experienced the full force of police brutality. In fact at the end of the Gomulka era Polish society was beginning to jib at the authoritarianism and paternalism of the existing model of the Communist system, which 15 years earlier they had accepted quite happily. Stalinism was becoming a distant memory and gratitude for replacing it with something milder and more national was no longer enough to make the system acceptable.

This might not have mattered as far as intellectuals were concerned, but, disastrously for himself and the system, Gomulka lost touch with the working class whom he had championed in October 1956. The workers still appreciated egalitarianism and social mobility; they did not yet question the Party's right to rule alone; but they wanted to enjoy the other promised fruits of 'socialism' such as a higher standard of living: twenty-five years was a long time to wait for a taste of the consumer society. They had a good idea how much worse off they were than workers in the West. If they could not yet afford refrigerators, washing machines and television sets, they were determined to have bread, butter and meat at a price they could pay out of their modest wages. Their attitude of course showed how little the operative objective of the Communist system - industrialization - had become 'internalized' by the workers and accepted as the paramount goal. Only the ruling bureaucratic and managerial elite, whose material rewards, prestige and promotion, were closely bound up with industrialization, remained strongly committed to it.

Gomulka believed that in the 1970s what the system needed was not more consumption but a period of austerity. He ordered an unpopular wage scheme and higher food prices to pay for a new investment effort to modernise Polish industry. In December 1970 the workers rejected the measures, and for a week the Baltic coast cities of Gdansk, Gdynia and Szczecin became scenes of mass

strikes, demonstrations, riots and clashes with the police. Only the deployment of army tanks and submachine guns, which led to heavy casualties, brought the riots under control. Gomulka refused point-blank to negotiate or make concessions. Privately, it is said, he called the strikers 'counter-revolutionaries'. The chasm between the Party's leader and the workers could not have been greater. His colleagues made him resign and appointed Edward Gierek as the Party's First Secretary. Gomulka's fall came only days after Chancellor Willy Brandt had signed a document which _de facto_ recognized Poland's claim to the Oder-Neisse frontier, and would have crowned the Polish leader's statesmanship. The coincidence of the riots and the signing of the treaty showed that the old fear of German revanchism, which had helped to consolidate the people's acceptance of Communist rule during Stalinism, had lost its old potency.

III

The unrest of December 1970, which dragged on till the following February, was the first mass eruption of working class discontent since June 1956 and marked the opening of a major new phase in the development of the Communist system. In a sense this was the beginning of the Solidarity movement, and was recognized as such by the Gdansk workers, who in August 1980 resolved to erect a gigantic monument to their comrades killed outside the Lenin Shipyard ten years before. Certain features of the 1970-71 events are worth mentioning briefly for they are pointers to the future. One was the tenacity of the workers who stuck to their demands until conceded by Gomulka's successor Gierek. Two, the workers began to make, for the first time ever, explicitly political demands such as a secret ballot in local trade union and factory council elections. Three, the workers were united and party members overwhelmingly sided with the strikers rather than the authorities. Four, though the army used force, it did so with evident distaste and as a last resort. Finally, and perhaps most important, the events of 1970-71 brought the Catholic hierarchy fully into the public arena as a

legitimate political force. The episcopate condemned outright the use of force against the workers and defended their moral right to strike. At the same time they pleaded for a peaceful dialogue between society and the authorities and urged national reconciliation. Their intervention was welcomed by all sides. The Church had become a crisis mediator between the Government and the people - a role it continues to play today. A Communist Party which needs the Catholic Church to perform such a vital political function obviously loses much credibility as a ruling force.

Gierek faced two major tasks: the political task of healing the breach between the workers and the Communist Party, and the economic task of getting production and consumption up from the long Gomulka plateau. He began by freezing food prices and then lowering them. He made conciliatory gestures towards the Church and the intellectuals, and rather important policy changes in the countryside - the end of compulsory deliveries, high farm prices and the inclusion of private farmers in the national health service. Farmers ceased to be second-class citizens in People's Poland. Then, however, Gierek faced a choice of strategies. He could either go for the remodelling of the system and basic structural reforms in the economy, the state and society or leave the structure as it was, but devise some ingenious new policies which would accomplish the two fundamental tasks without changing the model he had inherited from Gomulka.

Polish intellectuals, party and non-party alike (the division became somewhat irrelevant at the time), had no doubts on the matter. Immediately after the coastal riots a debate among lawyers, economists, sociologists and political scientists revealed an almost unanimous consensus that the outburst of protest was a symptom of deep systemic crisis. It marked the rise of a new working class consciousness which could not be ignored and ought to find expression in fundamental structural changes. Discussions on how to increase the amount of socialist democracy in the system and to streamline the economy in fact lasted throughout the decade. As a concession to public opinion Gierek set up a commission on the reform of the state and the

economy, but, unlike Lange's economic committee of the 1950s, the Szydlak commission of the 1970s did not even report. The Gierek decade did see some changes in local government and in the planning mechanism, and a good deal of codification, but no really fundamental reforms in the economy or the state. The vestiges of factory self-government atrophied. The trade unions remained ossified and the party itself was stuck in the groove of 'democratic centralism' - 99 per cent centralism and 1 per cent democracy - which in practice isolates the leaders from the rank and file. Strict censorship continued to muzzle public opinion.

Gierek, in other words, opted for the other, non-reform course. Taking advantage of détente and the eagerness of Western bankers, industrialists and governments to give credit to Communist countries, he embarked on a novel strategy of expanding investment <u>and</u> consumption at the same time. He thought he could rapidly and painlessly develop and modernize the Polish economy with the aid of Western capital, and gambled on repaying his debts within a few years by exporting the products of the new factories. He ignored the possible risks - political as well as economic - which such dependence on the West might carry for a Communist system. By a magic which had eluded Bierut and Gomulka Gierek set out to square the investment-consumption circle. It seemed a perfect way to restore the workers' and society's trust in the Communist government, and for a few years it worked. Both industrial production and real earnings grew at a rate unprecedented in the whole history of Communist Poland. Cheap and plentiful food, reasonably priced consumer durables and rising wages brought prosperity to many workers, especially in the modernized industries, and created the beginning of a consumer society in Poland. Radios, television sets, record players, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators and washing machines at last became common articles in Polish households. Even cars ceased to be undreamed-of luxury. I remember a friend boasting to me half seriously in 1977 that, like a West European city, Warsaw was beginning to have traffic jams during the afternoon rush hour.

In other words, Gierek hoped to succeed where Gomulka had

tried but failed - in the economic sphere. He would make the system work and with economic successes vindicate Communist 'socialism'. His socialism was going to be tightly but efficiently run, and would be a popular socialism of plenty - ham and salami socialism so to speak - not Gomulka's socialism of austerity and self-sacrifice. The differences in their ideal of socialism sprang up from differences in their character - the modesty, toughness and asceticism of Gomulka and the vanity, softness and liking for the good life of Gierek. Gierek was a bon viveur, as perhaps befitted a man who had been brought up in France and in Belgium. Gomulka was a puritan, shaped by the harsh experience of Communist underground in pre-war and Nazi-occupied Poland. Like many other Communist leaders, the two men projected their personal values on to the party which they led.

Under Gomulka the income of Communist Party and government officials was not especially high; equality was a genuine attribute of the system. Under Gierek the same people were rewarded royally for their work and encouraged to look after themselves and their families. Spacious flats, dachas, foreign travel, dollar accounts became de rigeur. Egalitarianism was officially dismissed as a petty bourgeois idea. Corruption became rife: it was the constant topic of conversation when I visited Poland in 1977. The ideological degeneration of the ruling elite was obvious to all people. One friend, a Catholic intellectual, startled me by saying: 'There are times when I think of the Stalinist period with nostalgia. It is true that we hated and feared our rulers then; we thought them cruel and fanatical and stooges of Stalin. But, in a way, we respected them as idealists. They were wrong but at least they had principles. This can't be said of the men who are in power today. It is miserable to be ruled by people one despises.' This was the end result, inevitable perhaps, of what I have earlier called 'ideological evaporation'.

These negative phenomena not only set the population against the system; they also alienated the Party's intellectuals and its million and a half strong working class base from the leadership. Young people, always more idealistic, experienced

the alienation most. The economic inefficiency of the Gomulka team had previously cast doubt on the authoritarianism and paternalism of the system. The cynicism, corruption and inegalitarianism of the Gierek team made them even more questionable.

This was shown by the rapid growth of the dissident movement in the second half of the Gierek period. It fought for human rights, legality, freedom of speech and publication, and, in its most ambitious programme, for the creation of centres of critical thought and independent activity within the Communist system, which were called a form of 'social self-defence' against the evils inherent in the system. Samizdat - that is, uncensored - publications mushroomed; independent seminars were organized; and even committees for the creation of free trade unions made an appearance.

None of this would have been tolerated by Gomulka but amazingly the authorities under Gierek limited themselves to minor harassment. They may have thought coercion would make them very unpopular both at home and abroad in the West. Perhaps they hoped that workers would ignore all that intelligentsia nonsense about freedom. They were wrong: the workers also participated in the movement. Some of the future leaders of Solidarity were in fact drawn into organized dissident work during that time. There was no chance, of course, that the dissidents' activities would by themselves change the system; their importance was that they reflected deep dissatisfaction with the existing model of Communism and influenced public opinion to think of an alternative model.

A sociological inquiry into political attitudes, conducted three times between 1972 and 1978 in Warsaw and a provincial city confirmed a yearning for change. People of two different generations were asked to choose from a given list of positive and negative features of a social system and to rank them in order of importance. At the top, by a wide margin, came 'equality of opportunity irrespective of origin'. The next six features, in descending order, were 'proper living standards', 'freedom of speech', 'influence of citizens on the government', 'economic efficiency', 'nationalized industry' and 'equality of

opportunity irrespective of opinion'. The dominant value system was still undoubtedly 'socialist' in a broad sense, but the emphasis on so many democratic values revealed a clear divergence from the official system. Interestingly, the survey showed that young respondents stressed democratic values much more strongly than their parents.

In 1976 an abortive food price rise caused a wave of strikes and from then on the failure of Gierek's economic miracle became increasingly clear, although it took some more years to expose the utter bankruptcy of his economic strategy. Conscious of unpopularity and trapped in its own 'propaganda of success' the Gierek Politburo would not admit that their strategy had failed and take the necessary, painful, corrective measures. In any case the workers vetoed price increases, however modest. Like a bunch of drowning men, the ruling team clung to their policy and kept it - and themselves - afloat by further loans.

Their sole political initiative was a further rapprochement with the Church in order to win back some popularity. Gierek met Cardinal Wyszynski and visited Pope Paul VI at the Vatican, and declared publicly that nothing of substance divided the state and the Church in Poland; they could and ought to work harmoniously for the public good. In the autumn of 1978 a Polish Pope was elected and the following summer, a year before the next crisis, John Paul II made a triumphant visit to his native country. This, in a sense, was the climax of the new relationship between Church and State - a public recognition by the Communist state of the Catholic character of Polish society. The visit also had another aspect. The millions of Poles who assembled to see and hear the Pope found themselves strongly united by affection for the man and respect for his religious message. A sense of national pride, identity and unity became almost palpable. People became aware how powerful was the other, old Poland, the Poland which the Communist system had first tried to destroy, then ignored, and now only grudgingly recognized. In 1981 many people told me that they saw a direct link between that mass affirmation of Catholicism and the sense of national solidarity - spelt with a small s - generated by the papal visit, and the national movement which grew out of Solidarity - spelt with a capital S.

IV

Montesquieu once asserted, as a universally valid truth, that revolutions which are foreseen never occur - presumably because forewarned rulers take steps to maintain themselves in power. The emergence of self-governing trade unions in Poland in September 1980 - arguably the greatest change within the Communist system since its origin over 60 years before - was certainly unforeseen.

A remarkable report on the situation in Poland, entitled The State of the Republic, prepared by a group of Polish intellectuals at the very end of the Gierek period, foresaw an imminent working class protest, but gave no inkling that the workers might demand free trade unions.

On my visit to Poland at the beginning of 1981 I talked to a young leader of the Warsaw Solidarity branch, Zbigniew Bujak. 'Had there been any free trade union initiative committees in Warsaw before the 1980 strikes?' I asked. 'No', answered Bujak, 'but we were just beginning to talk of forming one in the Ursus tractor factory'. 'And how long did you think it would take before the idea caught on among Warsaw workers?' I asked. 'Four to five years', he answered.

It is said that in June 1980 the British Embassy in Warsaw sent one of their men to interview in Gdansk someone called Walesa, an electrician sacked from the Lenin Shipyard, a bit of a live wire who was reputed to be a leading member of the 'Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast'. Walesa told his interviewer that he was absolutely sure of success, but that it would be years before independent trade unions became a reality. They materialized in less than three months.

Yet in retrospect one can see a logical progression. Polish society, still attached to the ideal of equality and the principle of state-directed economy (at least in industry), had been steadily losing faith in the existing model of Communism. The undiluted power of the Communist Party had led to periodic economic crises and growing inequality between the elite and the masses. Occupation strikes had been an established feature of Polish industrial life since the winter of 1970-71, although

the authorities often penalized those who had led them and even more those who tried to demonstrate outside factory gates. The strikes were creating local heroes and martyrs and producing workers' leaders capable of acting outside the official framework. The idea of free trade unions was not new: it was mooted during the strikes of 1970-71 and popularized by dissident intellectuals after 1976; and the episcopate had been saying publicly for years that the Church's teachings sanctioned non-violent strikes and independent trade unions as an exercise of fundamental human rights. Cultural, social and economic pressures in favour of free unions were clearly building up for a decade. It was not so much a question of the workers wanting them but rather how soon the Communist rulers would agree to them.

The forces of official Leninist ideology, the tradition of bureaucratic centralism, the liking of all Communist Party leaders for absolute power and the hostility of the men in the Kremlin to any revision of the old dogmas did not augur well for an early acceptance of the idea. During the tense strike days of August 1980 few people in Gdansk and Szczecin, let alone elsewhere, could have confidently predicted the victory of the workers. And yet, in retrospect, one can see that there was some ground for optimism. One could have discounted Soviet intervention at that stage. Since the fiasco of October 1956 the Soviet leaders had been committed to respecting the internal autonomy of the Polish Communist Party and were unlikely to interfere militarily unless an imminent collapse threatened the whole Communist system. As we know, despite many warnings, threats and army manoeuvres, they have stuck to this rule up to now.

We have seen that since Stalinism Polish Communist leaders had shown increasingly ideological laxity and pragmatism; in their attitude to the Church, the intellectuals, and the farmers. So the rights to strike or to form trade unions were not wholly unprecedented deviations from Communist orthodoxy. However, they were much more radical because they touched on a vital part of the system - the Party's relation with the working class whose interests and aspirations it had always claimed to represent.

A really massive application of coercion during the Gierek decade might have stifled the growing independence of the workers, but it went against the whole trend since 1956. Gierek had denounced Gomulka's showdown in 1970; he probably felt morally committed not to use force in 1980; besides, he was a soft, conciliatory man by nature.

Moreover, had he asked the Polish army to intervene by force it is doubtful whether the high command would have agreed. What might be called the 'party-military complex' from which Gierek's successors - Stanislaw Kania and Wojciech Jaruzelski - both came, would have regarded it as disastrous for the image, prestige and possibly discipline of the army. I might add in parentheses that they probably found the 1980 strikes also a good excuse for ditching Gierek and his thoroughly compromised team, and assuming power themselves, as they have done - by degree - ever since. The Minister of Defence, General Jaruzelski, became Prime Minister in February and First Secretary of the Party in October 1981. Today, under martial law, he is Chairman of the 'Military Council of National Salvation', in a sense the real government of Poland, and exercises unprecedented authority.

It is safe to say that when the Polish Politburo and Central Committee conceded the demands of the Gdansk and Szczecin workers, and later the Jastrzebie miners, they did it from expediency rather than principle. They certainly had not been converted to a new model of Communism overnight; they simply bowed to necessity and made unpalatable concessions which, as had happened before, they would hope in due course to take back. This, however, does not change the fact that in 1980 Poland took a long step towards institutionalized pluralism. The rigid framework of the political system, virtually unchanged since the Stalinist years, began to reflect the realities of the country's political culture and the new social forces. The workers and all state employees acquired a mass organization independent of the Communist Party, capable of negotiating with the Government on an equal footing. This was not just a change of men or policy as happened in 1956 and 1970, but of principle and structure. The widely felt need for autonomy, criticism

and participation, as remedies against the malfunctioning of the system, crystallised in the institution of an independent, self-governing trade union. A model of a pluralist Communist system, never tried before and scarcely thought possible in East Europe (though it had been foreshadowed in the ideology of Eurocommunism), began to emerge in Poland. The leadership of the Communist Party and of Solidarity had of course no clear conception of such a model. They and their followers were not thinking in terms of models at all, but acting ad hoc and responding to constant emergencies. Hence the development was not peaceful, gradual and controlled from above, but chaotic, uneven and spontaneous. There was pressure and resistance, now from one side, now from the other, and the old structure tended to break down.

The creation of Solidarity had opened the floodgates through which various other forces seeking autonomy and influence poured in. In the countryside a self-governing union of private farmers, Rural Solidarity, was established; so was the new Independent Students Union. Professional organizations elected new leaders and adopted new goals. They became active pressure groups for changes in national policies and institutions, and formed a common front with Solidarity. The new leaders of the Journalists Union, for example, led the fight for a freer press, and the Government was compelled to liberalize censorship: the press ceased to be the mouthpiece of the Party and came to reflect more and more the views of society. Parliament and its committees became the main institutional forum for the expression of the growing political pluralism. On a number of occasions Parliament disagreed with Government proposals and enacted measures which embodied a compromise between the Government's and society's viewpoints. The censorship law and the law on self-management were products of such a compromise. During the whole of this period, the Church, while pleading for political prudence and concentration on trade union matters, gave its full support to Solidarity and blessed all its proceedings.

How did the Communist Party, which continued to hold all the major levers of power, respond to the situation? The truth is

that it lost its traditional 'leading role' in all but name. It was so badly shaken by the rise of Solidarity that it lost the capacity for clear thought and vigorous action. Jockeying for positions, propping up the Government, holding the Party together and coping with Soviet bloc criticisms took up as much energy as trying to contain Solidarity and its allies and halting the collapse of the economy. With its overcentralized structure the Party depended on firm leadership from above, but the purge of the Gierek group had created a power vacuum at the top, which no one was able to fill until martial law. In a sense the Party was split into a pro-Solidarity and anti-Solidarity wing with a large, hesitant and confused group in the middle. One million party members, mostly workers, voted for Solidarity with their feet by joining it. Solidarity and institutionalized pluralism found also vocal supporters among the Communist intelligentsia. On the other side, the host of state and party officials, managers, policemen and so on abhorred pluralism of any kind, and their hostility to Solidarity and its allies provoked bitter local conflicts and strikes.

At the grass-roots of the Communist Party the dominant mood was bitter disillusionment with leaders and officials, a sense of having been let down and misled about the country's condition, and a desire to prevent the leaders from making such ghastly mistakes ever again. Party members demanded changes in the party statutes, for instance, a freedom to nominate candidates for office, to submit resolutions and ballot secretly in all party elections. These demands for internal democracy were conceded despite the fact that Soviet leaders had expressed disquiet. Democracy was put into effect in elections to the extraordinary Party Congress in 1981 and became embodied in the new programme passed by the Extraordinary Party Congress in July 1981. The composition of the new Central Committee and the new Politburo elected by the Congress changed radically, and the two bodies came to represent, to a degree never achieved in any Communist Party, the rank-and-file party members - workers, peasants, technicians and intellectuals - instead of the usual party and state bureaucrats.

The party programme promised the re-examination of all policies and the renewal of outdated institutions; the political and economic system were to be remodelled in the direction of 'socialist democracy' and 'market socialism'. But this was not the breakthrough which the country had expected. The programme ignored the degree of <u>de facto</u> social and political pluralism and the need for its legitimization and full institutionalization. There was no redefinition of 'the leading role of the Party' and no mention of the concept of pluralism. The programme had simply too little to offer Solidarity. Independent trade unions were hardly mentioned in party documents, and only accorded the same footing as the discredited party-dominated unions and other satellite organizations. The Congress perhaps made the Party internally more democratic. But for Solidarity and Polish society generally 'democratization' meant simply a greater amount of consultation, not a meaningful partnership with the Communist Party - in other words the continuation of the old Party hegemony in a new form.

There is a basic difference between consultation and participation. To consult means to hear the views of others before deciding, without having to take those views into account; if their views are ignored, the consulted cannot do anything about it. Participation means taking part in decision making, having full right and at least some power to oppose whatever one disagrees with. The consultative status for Solidarity was in any case wholly inappropriate since the movement had the powerful weapon of strike at its disposal and could veto any government decisions it disliked.

Nevertheless, at first Solidarity had only demanded consultation while the Government tried to ignore it in practice and took unilateral decisions. In March 1981 the Government offered regular consultation through a special ministerial committee, but after the Party Congress, Solidarity raised its demand to partnership. It had overcome its earlier aloofness from production and management issues and set up research centres, experts' committees and other 'think-tanks' to scrutinize the Government's policies and formulate alternative proposals. In the second half of 1981 it embraced the Yugoslav

idea of self-management and succeeded in getting the Government to incorporate it in the scheme for the reform of the economy. The Party leadership, however, showed no inclination to share power at governmental level.

In the autumn, Solidarity's demands seemed to escalate beyond partnership. Its congress approved the idea of a 'self-governing republic' and studiously avoided any mention of the Party and its 'leading role'. In early December the Solidarity leadership dropped all ambiguity and made its opposition to the Party explicit. While not ruling out last-minute agreement with the Government, they threatened to organize a national referendum on the issue of Communist rule early in the New Year and insisted on the forthcoming local elections being free. The Party's response was the declaration of martial law on 13 December.

It is far too early to apportion blame for the breakdown of the Polish experiment with institutionalized political pluralism. The Party failed to offer Solidarity a meaningful role and thus lost credibility and relevance in the eyes of the movement. Solidarity in turn denied the Party any privileged place in the system and in effect the legitimacy to govern. In theory and in practice there was no basis for partnership here. Meanwhile the economy had become an arena of political struggle rather than cooperation. The deteriorating economic situation, while caused by the colossal blunders of the Gierek era, was worsened by stoppages, rising wages, the short working week and the rejection of necessary price increases. Austerity and sacrifices were inevitable, but the Government had no material compensation to offer Solidarity; what it could have offered instead was institutional pluralism and partnership in government, but this is precisely what the Party leadership had refused to concede. Fear of the Soviet Union may have inhibited the Polish Party leaders from making concessions, but it was not strong enough to restrain the Solidarity militants. Nationalism in some very potent and traditional forms had got hold of popular consciousness, especially the consciousness of the young generation of Poles who had come to take the official slogans of independence and sovereignty seriously during the Gomulka and Gierek periods.

Martial law temporarily has put a lid on all political pluralism, except for the Church whose role once again has become crucial. The military Council has abolished or suspended virtually all the institutional modifications introduced _de facto_ or _de jure_ in 1980 and 1981. But the revolutionary changes in social consciousness, brought about during the 15 months of Solidarity's existence, are unlikely to wither away. Ideas about socialism combined with self-government, democracy, freedom, equality, rights and Christian values had been current long before August 1980. Solidarity gave them a powerful mass circulation. They had ceased to be abstract ideals and were actually practiced and dramatically enacted on the public stage, perhaps not always very skilfully but with great aplomb. Memories of the extraordinary solidarity of the working class and the whole nation against the Communist authorities will remain alive; so will memories and legends of battles and victories. Martial law may repress aspirations for a time but cannot extirpate them. As the shock of the 13th of December wears off or martial law is relaxed pressures from below will inevitably increase.

V

For the present the prospects for Poland are exceedingly gloomy. The standard of living is still falling and will go on doing so for a long time. Industrial production is spiralling downwards and neither internal efforts nor Soviet bloc aid can reverse the trend. The Soviet Union has huge economic problems of its own and cannot subsidize Poland on a sufficient scale. Only Western governments can put the Polish economy back on its feet, by writing off the $30 billion of old debts and granting the necessary new aid. But the West's terms are politically harsh: the end of martial law, the restoration of Solidarity, the continuation of reforms.

Martial law, however, cannot be lifted at once. There are dangers of a popular explosion while the standard of living is falling and Solidarity remains suspended. And what would happen to the power which is in the hands of the Military Council?

It cannot be handed over to the Party as long as it remains disorganized and uncertain what to do. What is needed is some form of national coalition, a genuine 'front of national accord', to support a programme for lifting Poland out of the crisis. The price for such support must be a degree of power sharing; Polish society will not support just a return to the traditional model. So far only the Catholic episcopate has come out unambiguously for such a national front. General Jaruzelski has declared himself in favour, but his actions have yet to match his words; it is also not clear how far his senior military and political colleagues support him. The third pillar of a national agreement, an independent trade union movement, has yet to be restored. Solidarity's leaders are still in detention or underground; Lech Walesa has steadfastly refused to talk with the Government under these conditions. Solidarity had many moderates, but its middle rank activists, who were the most radical before December, are bitter, intransigent and distrustful. For the moment it is hard to see how national accord can be quickly forged out of such diverse elements.

But while the short-term prospects are gloomy and obscure, the path further ahead seems clearer. The lesson which follows from my analysis of post-war Polish history is that none of the models of Communism so far tried in Poland has proved adequate. The Stalinist model failed and is inconceivable today. The Gomulka-Gierek 'pragmatic model' has obviously been rejected. The 'consultative Communism' which the post-Gierek leadership tried to offer the country might have worked well enough in the 1970s, especially when combined with prosperity, but seems inadequate to the exigency of the present crisis and the level of national consciousness. So a model of 'pluralist Communism', which began to emerge in Poland last year, is still the one that has the best chance of success in the long run because it comes nearest to reconciling structure and culture, the objective and subjective sides of social reality.

The Polish road from Communism, then, is a road that leads from traditional, orthodox, Russian-type Communism to a novel, hybrid political system. In this system the Communist Party

has to have a special position for geopolitical reasons, but it must be prepared to accept the loss of many of its old privileges and be willing to share power with the rest of society. Details of this power-sharing cannot be worked out in advance; they will depend on circumstances and must be negotiated, as to some extent they were last year, area by area. One cannot tell at this stage if the new democratic organization of the Communist Party which was adopted last year, would be adequate to the pluralist model or if further reforms would be needed. Whether such a pluralist system still merited the name of Communism could be left for semantic debate among political scientists and sovietologists.

The parameters of what is realistic in Poland today are defined by two events: the agreements of August 1980 and the martial law of December 1981. The former show that the Communist Party can no longer govern alone; the latter that Poland cannot be governed without the Communist Party. A solution must be found within those parameters. The Italian Communist Party (which welcomed the rise of Solidarity with enthusiasm and denounced General Jaruzelski's coup last December) has coined the phrase ilcompromesso storico, 'the historic compromise'. The phrase encapsulates its recent conviction that in the conditions of contemporary Italy the Communist Party must come to terms with parliamentary democracy, political pluralism and the Roman Catholic Church. A similar historic compromise is needed in Poland today. In a sense it was already foreshadowed by the original Gdansk-Szczecin-Jastrzbie agreements which included the workers' acceptance of the leading role of the Communist Party and Poland's international alliances in exchange for independent trade unions and a new relationship between the Government and society. The Polish 'historic compromise' of August 1980 survived less than 15 months, but the need for it has become more rather than less obvious since martial law. If the Catholic Church, identified with the fortunes of the Polish nation for hundreds of years, is ready to accept it today, it is not unreasonable to hope that most other elements in Polish society will also be prepared to work towards it.

But is there anything in the 'historic compromise' for the leaders of the Polish Communist Party and even more for the Soviet leaders? I think there is. I do not believe that the majority of Polish Communists have the will to govern permanently against the determined opposition of their compatriots. They prefer authority to coercion. As for the Soviet Union more than anything else it needs stability in East-Central Europe so that it can tackle its own economic problems and search for a nuclear *modus vivendi* with the United States. Poland has been the most restless of the countries of the Soviet bloc because the Communist system has never acquired permanent legitimacy to tide it over periodic crises. Legitimacy could be grounded in a new agreement, a new 'social contract', negotiated by the authentic spokesmen of the Polish people with the Communist Government, and resulting in what I have called a model of 'pluralist communism'. There is no other rational solution. Unfortunately, a historian can only draw lessons from history; he cannot guarantee or predict that the lessons will be heeded by governments and by peoples.

The above text is a revised and expanded version of the R.B. McCallum Special Lecture, delivered at the Oxford University Examination Schools on 29 May 1982, by Dr. Z.A. Pelczynski, Fellow and Tutor in Politics, Pembroke College, Oxford.

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