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David S. Mason

Butler University, dmason@butler.edu

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Policy Dilemmas and Political Unrest in Poland

David S. Mason
Butler University

The recent unrest in Poland is not simply a struggle between the workers and the regime over political freedom and economic reform. A basic cause of the unrest, as in past years, is the failure of the regime to balance adequately the conflicting policies of promoting long-term investment in industry, raising the standard of living, and reducing social class inequalities. Each of these policies represents a major goal of the regime, and of socialist ideology. The regime has not been able to emphasize all three goals simultaneously, and has shifted resources and attention from one to the other over the years. But the shifts themselves are disruptive and were a major factor in the unrest in 1980 as well as earlier years.

All political systems, in East and West, have to balance various interests and emphasize certain programs above others. This is both caused by and results in political conflict. Whether this conflict spills over institutionalized channels and becomes violent depends on the extent to which the aggrieved sectors of society can be mollified by material or psychological means, or repressed. These phenomena are frequently studied and well understood in Western societies. And Western social scientists have had some success in replacing the totalitarian and monolithic model of communist politics with a more pluralistic one that identifies the roles of elite conflict and interest group articulation.

But whereas the earlier models identify conflict between the elite and the masses, and the later ones focus on conflict within the elite, neither has much addressed the role of conflicting interests in society, and the dilemmas that communist regimes face in balancing conflicting interests and promoting multiple goals. David Lane has criticized Western

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studies of political power in "state socialist societies" for concentrating "on the struggle for power between contending personalities and groups, rather than as the medium concerned with effectively mobilizing resources to achieve collective goals" (1976, p. 70). And Frank Parkin finds Western sociological research overly concerned with "the niceties of social differentiation" rather than the more important process of "mutual competition for scarce resources" among social groups (1979, pp. 29-30).

For the regimes in the communist states the problem of balancing these conflicting demands is complicated by the existence of multiple goals: industrialization, equality, and a higher standard of living. These regimes have not generally had the resources to pursue all three goals simultaneously. But when one or the other of them is emphasized different social groups benefit and social tensions are fueled (Lane, 1971; Parkin, 1979). The fact of policy change itself also is disruptive, as old priorities are abandoned and entrenched interests are challenged. The dilemma for communist regimes then is a multiple one: they cannot pursue all goals at once; to emphasize only one risks the alienation and disaffection of the disadvantaged groups; and to shift policies will also bring about disruption.

All of these issues have been particularly acute, and acutely visible, in Poland. The recent unrest in Poland is not simply a struggle between the workers and the regime over political freedom and economic reform. An underlying cause of the unrest, as in past years, has been the failure of the regime to balance adequately the conflicting policies of promoting long-term investment in industry, raising the standard of living of consumers, and reducing social class inequalities. Each of these policies represents a major goal of the regime, and of socialist ideology. Investments in industry are necessary for the creation of an economic base sufficient for material abundance. Consumer policies are necessary both ideologically, to fulfill the socialist promise of a higher standard of living, and politically, to maintain some degree of support for the regime. And the reduction of social class differences is necessary because it provides the very *raison d'être* of a socialist polity.

The Polish regime, of course, has not been able to emphasize all of these goals all of the time. Rather, it has shifted resources and attention from one to the other over the years, only occasionally attempting to make gains in all three simultaneously. But this poses a dilemma for the regime. Since different social groups benefit from the different policies, to ignore one policy area risks the alienation of major sectors of the population. Although the "strategy of imposed industrialization" (Morawski, 1980) may be consistent with past policies and therefore non-threatening to bureaucratic and managerial interests, it does require sacrifices from the population in terms of consumer goods. An emphasis

on the latter, on the other hand, may rectify this situation but jeopardize long-term growth and require economic or political decentralization with consequent possibilities of destabilization of the existing system. Social policies benefit the poor, but may undermine efforts to stimulate the economy with incentives and stricter productivity requirements.

All of these tradeoffs are, of course, necessary in any society. But in Poland they have been particularly difficult for a number of reasons. First, the communist regime has never been able to develop an image of legitimacy, through either persuasion or compulsion, that is characteristic of most other governments in Eastern Europe. Second, the Poles have not quietly suffered from deprivation, and time after time have forced the regime to change its policies or its leaders in response to popular unrest. Third, the regime has not had either the resources or the ability to balance adequately the competing needs of the society, the party, and the bloc.

These difficulties have been manifested in a dramatic way in increasingly demanding circumstances. Gomulka's emphasis on heavy industry at the expense of the consumer, for example, eventually alienated much of the Polish population. His government's intensified efforts at egalitarianism in the later 1960s, however, further incensed the white collar workers and the higher income groups. To put resources into all three policy areas, however, is only a short-term possibility, and risks the frustration of popular expectations when this effort is reversed or slowed. This was the pattern in the years 1953-56. But when the regime tried to maintain growth in all three areas for a sustained period, as it did in the 1970s, the result was economic bankruptcy. The problem now is the opposite one: the martial law regime is having to cut back in all three areas, and to do so in a forcible way besides. This is almost certain to increase social tensions and lead to another round of confrontation.

This paper examines the problem of juggling of priorities among these three sets of policies, focusing in particular on the role of social policies, that is, those aimed at the reduction of social and economic differences. Social policy has been the most neglected of the three in Western studies of policy change and political unrest. Western scholars have tended to portray the major policy conflicts in Poland as between investment and consumption. Yet, social policy is at least as important as these two in terms of the regime's goals and popular support.¹ And the question of the role of social policy has been an important issue during Poland's periods of unrest, especially so during this last year.

I will begin with a treatment of the meaning of social policy, and its role in socialist development in Poland. The next section will illustrate

¹ See, for example, Connor (1979, pp. 110, 127; 1977, pp. 19, 24), Parkin (1971, p. 52), and Lane (1976, pp. 13, 27).

the nature of social policy and the timing of changes in this area by examining a number of annual indicators of social policy, as well as several representative indicators of consumption and investment policies. The final section compares the developments in these three policy areas, and examines their relationship to the periods of unrest in 1956, 1970, and 1980, and in the period before and after martial law.

SOCIAL POLICY

Western and Eastern socialists agree that the stimulation of social change is a major task, perhaps *the* major task, of a government. The British sociologist, Richard Titmuss, argued that "social growth—the need for integration, the need for more equality of opportunity, the need for freedom from want—deserves as much attention, intellectually as well as in terms of political action, as economic growth" (Reisman, 1977, pp. 19-20). In communist countries, of course, the fundamental task has been to eliminate class distinctions based on property relationships, and the inequalities accompanying those distinctions. A Polish sociologist asserts that the abolition of classes "can only be accomplished by the gradual, yet systematic reduction of all important differences in the social status of individuals" (Wesolowski, 1965, p. 117), including differences in the character of labor (mental vs. manual), income, education, way of life, status and prestige.

In Poland, the primary means to effect these changes is "social policy," which a Polish sociologist defines as those programs "aimed at improving the living conditions and work of broad strata of the population, eliminating inequalities, and raising the level of cultural life" (Szubert, 1979, p. 30). Social policy includes a broad range of programs affecting employment, income, social security, health care, housing, and leisure. The government promotes social policy through expenditures for "social consumption" (which constitutes about 10 percent of total consumption), which has as its primary function "decreasing the differentials in consumption levels between households, and of bringing closer to realization the ideals of an egalitarian distribution of goods and services among members of society" (Krzyzewski, cited in Mieczkowski, 1975, p. 36).

This egalitarian goal has been a continuous and fundamental one in Poland, although it has waxed and waned somewhat among the regime's priorities. To illustrate these changes I have selected a number of indicators which fit the category of social policy as described above: health and social insurance, education, housing, and wages. For each of them data are presented for all or most of the years from 1946 to 1980.²

² All of these data are from official Polish sources and, as such, must be used with some caution. But although the data may be distorted, it is likely that the distortion is in the same

Health and Social Security Policy

The widening of access to health care has been a major element of social policy in Poland, as in other communist states. The 1952 Constitution guaranteed all citizens the "right to health protection" and was reaffirmed in the 1976 Constitution as the "right to free health care for all working people and their families," although this full coverage for the entire population was not achieved until 1974. Social security (*ubezpieczenia społeczne*) is a broad concept in Poland, embracing a number of benefits including sickness benefits, old-age pensions, disability pensions, maternity and family allowances.

The indicators used to examine these policies over time are health expenditures as a percentage of the total budget, social security expenditures as a percentage of the budget, and the average monthly pension as a percentage of the average monthly wage. The annual data for these indicators appear in table 1.

Education Policy

In all societies, especially in revolutionary ones, education is a major means of familiarizing and inculcating the population with the goals, values, and regulations of the regime. This is recognized explicitly by the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. As a Polish educator notes, "next to land reform and the nationalization of industry, the educational reform [under the communist regime] was the essential factor that determined the new economic, political, social and cultural face of a reviving Poland" (Swiecki, 1974, p. 321). Under the postwar regimes, education was treated "as a means of changing the social structure inherited from the previous system." The specific goals of education were the elimination of illiteracy and the reduction of class differences (Allardt and Wesolowski, 1978).

The goal of universal literacy has been largely accomplished. The mechanism for doing so has been a large-scale expansion in the number of schools and universities and in access to them. Since the state has assumed control over education, the funding for this has come from the government budget. The commitment to the expansion of education, then, can be tapped by the percent of the total budget allocated to education (see table 2).

direction over the years studied. If the distortion is relatively constant, then the analysis of the changes in the data over time will not be greatly affected. When the method of calculating a particular indicator is changed, comparison across the year of change is more difficult. I have adjusted for variations of this sort when possible, and have indicated these adjustments in the tables.

TABLE 1

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY POLICY, 1950-80

Year	Percent of Total Budget spent on: Health	Social Security	Average Monthly Pension as % of Average Monthly Wage
1951	5.8	10.3	16.7
1952	4.6	9.3	16.4
1953	3.6	7.0	17.6
1954	4.2	8.3	18.2
1955	4.5	8.6	19.1
1956	4.9	9.3	20.2
1957	5.3	10.4	24.6
1958	5.4	11.1	32.9
1959	6.2	11.9	40.7
1960	6.2	11.0	39.7
1961	5.9	10.0	39.8
1962	6.0	10.0	40.1
1963	6.5	10.8	40.0
1964	6.3	10.6	40.7
1965	6.4	10.7	41.8
1966	6.5	10.2	41.8
1967	7.1	10.8	42.0
1968	7.4 ^a	12.1	45.2
1969	7.3	12.6	48.6
1970	7.1	12.8 (4.4) ^b	51.2
1971	7.0	14.5 (5.1)	51.5
1972	7.3	14.4 (5.2)	50.2
1973	7.8	(5.1)	46.6
1974	7.1	(4.8)	43.6
1975	6.8	(5.2)	40.8
1976	6.7	(4.3)	40.8
1977	6.6	(4.4)	43.9
1978	6.4	(4.3)	47.4
1979	6.7	(4.0)	48.3
1980	7.0	(4.3)	46.3

^a 1968-69 data adjusted to be comparable to other years.

^b Percentages based on revised (in 1973) method of calculations in Polish sources.

Sources: *Rocznik Statystyczny Finansow 1945-1967* (Warsaw: 1968) and annual volumes for 1971, 1973, 1978, 1979; *Rocznik Statystyczny 1981*, pp. xxxiv-xxxv and 583, 585.

Wage Policy

Remuneration through wages has two basic functions according to Polish sociologists: "to satisfy human need," and "to guide and evoke certain modes of behavior" such as by providing incentives to raise productivity (Sarapata, 1966). These two goals are not always complementary, and wage policy is constantly pulled in opposite directions by demands for economic growth on the one hand, and a more egalitarian social system

on the other. In a sense these two contradictory goals reflect the basic tension within all communist countries. They are trying to revolutionize society by eliminating classes based on property, but they have not yet achieved the level of material prosperity that Marx postulated as necessary for these changes.

TABLE 2

EDUCATION AND HOUSING POLICY, 1946-80

Year	Housing Investments as Percentage of Total	Education Expenditures as Percentage of State Budget	
1946	24.8		
1949	15.4		
1950	11.7		
1951	11.6	7.7	
1952	10.6	6.6	
1953	10.6	5.6	
1954	13.0	6.4	
1955	15.1	6.7	5.5*
1956	17.3		5.8
1957	19.5		5.7
1958	20.9		5.8
1959	19.7		6.0
1960	19.3		6.0
1961	19.0		5.7
1962	16.8*		5.7
1963	16.5		6.1
1964	16.4		6.1
1965	15.0	7.0*	6.2
1966	14.9	7.1	
1967	14.7	7.5	
1968	14.8	7.8	
1969	14.5	7.7	
1970	15.6	7.5	
1971	15.4	8.0	
1972	13.9	8.2	
1973	13.3	8.5	
1974	12.3	7.4	
1975	13.1	7.2	
1976	14.2	7.0	
1977	16.0	6.7	
1978	17.4	6.4	
1979	19.2	6.5	
1980	21.0	6.4	

* 1946-61 in 1961 prices; from 1962, current prices.

* Revised method of calculation in Polish sources for 1956-65.

* Revised method of calculation in Polish sources from 1966.

Sources: *Rocznik Statystyczny Gospodarki Mieszkaniowej i Komunalnej 1965* (Warsaw: 1967), p. 174; *Rocznik Statystyczny Finansow 1945-1967* (Warsaw: 1968); *Rocznik Statystyczny*, 1966-80, and 1981, pp. 583, 184.

There is, though, a recognition of the importance of wages in the determination of social and class differences. Adam Sarapata (1966), for example, emphasizes that the narrowing of wage differences between manual and mental laborers also has led to changes in ways of life and mental attitudes of workers. And Jan Malanowski in listing the "numerous manifestations of social inequality" in societies mentions first one's "material position," especially in housing and wages. But there is also recognition of the need to maintain income differentials as well, to maintain adequate incentives for labor effort and economic growth (Sarapata, 1966; Wesolowski, 1966).

Although growth in real wages is used below as a measure of consumer policy, wage *differentiation* is a useful indicator of egalitarianism, and thus of social policy. Data on the changes in income equality appear in table 3. There are two indicators in this table. The first measures the average wage levels among the different social groups in Polish society.³ The table compares the highest paid group, the intelligentsia, and the lowest paid salaried workers, state farm workers, with blue collar workers. Since the method of reporting these data in the Polish statistical sources has changed several times, the data are not comparable over the whole thirty-year period. But one can use the data, as we do here, to examine changes over shorter periods within each set of calculations. The second set of data (third column) is the ratio of the average wages of the top 10 percent of workers in the socialized economy to those of the bottom 10 percent.⁴

Housing Policy

Housing has an important place in social planning in Poland for two reasons. First, adequate housing, especially housing space, is considered a major component of the standard of living, and the state has assumed the major role in the construction of new residential housing. Second, differences in housing are an important "manifestation of social inequality," as noted above, and the housing policy of the state has been directed at "equalising the housing conditions of workers and intelligentsia" (Wesolowski, 1966, p. 28). This desired effect has not always been

³ For a comparison of Poland with Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the USSR on this dimension see Connor (1979, p. 231).

⁴ These figures are calculated from data reporting the percentage of all workers receiving salaries at various levels. There is some problem with these data in that the wage scales are open ended at both top and bottom. To make these calculations here, the top and the bottom wage categories were assumed to have the same range as the penultimate categories at each end. The small percentage of workers in these two categories also tends to minimize the distortion.

achieved (see, for example, Lane, 1976, p. 181; Lane and Kolankiewicz, 1973, pp. 127-28) but, nevertheless, has absorbed a sizable percentage of total investments, as indicated in table 2.

TABLE 3

INCOME DIFFERENTIALS BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS AND DECILES

Year	Index of Wages ^a (Workers = 100):		Ratio of Top 10% to Bottom 10% in Socialized Economy ^b
	Intelligentsia	State Farm Workers	
1945			41.1
1947			13.8
1950	180 ^c		
1954	152		
1955	157	67 ^c	
1956	163	67	5.2
1957	160	61	5.4
1958	159	64	5.4
1959	158	68	5.3
1960	160	72	5.1
1961	162	72	4.8
1962	162	71	4.8
1963	161	71	4.8
1964	166	71	4.6
1965	164	73	4.7
1966	161	74	
1967	160	74	4.8
1968	158	75	
1969	154	74	
1970	153	74	3.7
1971	151	75	
1972	149 146 ^d	81 83 ^d	3.7
1973	144	87	3.8
1974	141	85	
1975	130 ^c 138	100 ^c 79	
1976	131		5.1
1977	132	101	
1978	132	110	4.9
1979	129	107	
1980	123	107	4.3

^a Net wages in socialized industry for blue collar workers and engineering-technical workers (here "intelligentsia").

^b Some of these ratios calculated by using lower 10% data from one source, and upper 10% from another, when two sources provided more detail.

^c Gross wages, 1950-72.

^d Net wages, 1972-80.

^e New method of calculation in Polish sources for 1975-80.

Sources: *Rocznik Statystyczny* 1948-80; and 1981, pp. 166, 250, 333. *Rocznik Statystyczny Pracy 1945-1968* (Warsaw: 1970), p. 463.

CONSUMER POLICY AND INVESTMENT POLICIES

As a basis for comparison with social policy, I have presented in tables 4 and 5 some representative indicators of both consumer policy and investment policy. Consumer policy, as it is used here, refers to those government programs aimed at improving the overall standard of living of the population. This includes efforts to increase the level of wages and personal income, to increase the share of national income and investments for consumption, and to increase the availability and quality of consumer goods, including food.

TABLE 4
CONSUMER POLICY, 1949-80

Year	Real Wages: % Change From Previous Year	Consumption as % of National Income	Per Capita Consumption of Meat (kilograms)
1949	----	82.8	28.0
1951	-0.9	77.1	36.7
1952	-6.1	74.7	32.7
1953	-1.4	68.0	35.2
1954	12.8	74.5	36.2
1955	7.1	78.6	37.7
1956	11.6	80.5	41.0
1957	8.3	78.3	43.9
1958	3.3	78.2	45.3
1959	5.1	78.0	44.1
1960	-1.5	76.9	42.5
1961	2.6	76.1	45.2
1962	0.4	77.3	45.8
1963	2.4	76.0	46.3
1964	2.1	75.9	47.1
1965	0.0	74.6	49.2
1966	3.3	73.8	51.0
1967	2.5	74.6	52.3
1968	1.3	73.3	52.2
1969	1.7	74.6	52.6
1970	1.3	73.9	53.0
1971	5.5	72.5	56.1
1972	6.6	70.4	59.3
1973	8.7	67.0	62.1
1974	6.6	64.4	65.6
1975	8.5	64.8	70.3
1976	3.9	65.9	70.0
1977	2.3	68.6	69.1
1978	-2.7	69.4	70.6
1979	2.0	74.3	73.0
1980	4.0	80.7	74.0

Sources: *Rocznik Statystyczny*, 1971-80; 1981, pp. 113, xxxv, li.

Consumer policies are distinguished from social policies in two important ways. First, social policy is aimed specifically at the disadvantaged in society and at social and economic differentiation, whereas consumer policies provide for the whole population. Second, social policy is accomplished by government allocations (e.g., housing, education) or regulation (wage differentials) and is delivered to the population as services, whereas consumer policy provides money income (through wages) and consumer products (through investments) for direct purchase.⁵

TABLE 5

INVESTMENT POLICY, 1949-80

Year	Total Investments (Previous Year = 100)	% of Investments in Producer Goods
1949	113.9	65.0
1951	112.2	70.6
1952	118.7	73.5
1953	115.2	73.1
1954	105.9	71.4
1955	104.0	68.5
1956	104.7	68.0
1957	107.8	65.7
1958	110.3	64.0
1959	116.6	63.9
1960	105.9	63.8
1961	107.3	66.1
1962	109.7	68.9
1963	102.7	70.0
1964	104.7	70.0
1965	109.5	72.0
1966	108.4	72.8
1967	111.3	73.4
1968	108.7	73.3
1969	108.2	74.1
1970	104.1	73.1
1971	107.4	75.1
1972	123.0	77.0
1973	125.4	77.9
1974	122.3	78.4
1975	110.7	79.1
1976	101.0	78.5
1977	103.1	77.4
1978	102.1	75.7
1979	92.1	73.0
1980	87.7	72.6

Source: *Rocznik Statystyczny* 1981, pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

⁵ For a definition of "social consumption" see Mieczkowski (1975, pp. 19-21).

The trends of the three consumer policy indicators in table 4 are quite uniform. The last of the Stalin years showed declines in each of the three areas. Beginning in 1953 or 1954, there is a steady improvement in consumption levels that continues until 1958-59. There is a leveling off or stagnation in each of the areas until the late 1960s, when there is some increase in all of them. The new Gierek leadership initiated a dramatic and sustained five-year growth in both wages and meat consumption. The share of national income to consumption actually declined rather sharply during this period, though this partially reflects a rapid growth in total national income during the period. The late 1970s witnessed a stagnation in consumer welfare, though consumption's share of the national income actually began to increase again.

Investment policy, as it is treated here, refers to the policy of the government to promote investments, particularly in producer goods, for the purposes of fostering "socialist industrialization." This industrialization is considered necessary for the construction of a socialist society, and in particular for the rapid rate of economic growth necessary to catch up with the industrialized West (Morawski, 1978).

Probably the best indicator for tracing changes in investment policy is the percentage of investments allocated for producer goods, presented in the second column of table 5. Productive investments increased steadily during 1951-53, then began a steady decline with the beginning of the new course in 1953-54. This decline continued until 1961, when productive investments again began to grow. This growth lasted through the 1960s, leveled off somewhat in the period 1969-71, then began to grow again, reaching record levels in 1974-76. This was the period of Gierek's economic renewal, which called for rapid modernization of Poland's industrial base. After 1975, there was a significant decline in the growth of total investments in the productive sector.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES AND POLITICAL UNREST

The relationship between policy change and political unrest in communist countries has been examined by Mieczkowski (1978), Bunce (1980a), Bunce and Echols (1978), Mason (1978), and others. In most of these, though, policy change is seen as a *result* of political unrest or leadership changes rather than a contributing factor. Bunce, for example, sees socialist leaders as "rearranging priorities in their first year in office" in order to win support of the masses. Later, however, when succession is no longer at issue, "other interests line up at the trough for their fair shares and the emphasis on mass concerns withers away" (1980b, pp. 966, 972).

Here, however, we examine the extent to which policy changes

themselves contribute to unrest and leadership change. As will be seen below, the issue of balancing conflicting interests and juggling priorities is a problem of continuous concern to the Polish leadership, and a source of constant tension in Polish society. The dilemma is a permanent one, not episodic. This will be illustrated by a comparison of the trends in social policy with those in consumption and investment policies. These reveal some interesting patterns that help explain the periods of unrest in Poland.

The Thaw and the 1956 Succession

From 1950 through 1953, the first years of the first Six-Year Plan, investment took precedence over both social policy and consumer policy. With the death of Stalin in 1953 and the inauguration of the new course in the Soviet Union, Poland also began to change direction. Beginning in 1954, both social policy and consumption policies were emphasized at the expense of industrial investments. This increased emphasis on social policy and consumption policy continued through the 1956 unrest and succession, and began to taper off only in 1959 and 1960. This trend prevails for virtually all of the indicators in all four of the policy areas discussed above.⁶ The popular disturbances of 1956, therefore, cannot be understood simply in terms of economic dissatisfaction or declines in the standard of living. The years before 1956 had seen rapid increases in both wages and consumption, especially of meat products.

There are, however, three other factors of importance here. First of all, the very nature and extent of the political and economic changes in Polish society in the 1954-56 period had fostered greatly heightened expectations of further improvements. This is in line with Gurr's theory in *Why Men Rebel* (1970) that revolts tend to occur not when conditions are at their worst, but when they are improving, and when expectations begin to exceed reality.

Second, any revolution needs a spark, and what sparked the disturbances in Poznan in June 1956 was a bread shortage. This was due in part to a poor harvest in grains in 1956, resulting in a significant decline in per capita grain consumption for that year. Consumption of most other products, food and otherwise, was up substantially in that year. But the combination of rising political and economic expectations and a shortfall in the availability of the most basic food commodity was enough to initiate the disturbances. These eventually escalated and led to the removal of party leader Ochab and the return to power of Gomulka.

⁶ These results are contrary to studies by Bunce (1976; 1980a), Mieczkowski (1978), and others that have pointed to the succession years as the key factor in initiating policy changes. As is apparent from tables 1-5 in this paper, the shifts in policy usually began several years before each of the successions of 1956, 1970, and 1980.

Third, although the reforms of 1954-56 had benefitted most people in Poland, some benefitted more than others. Although the data in table 3 do not permit a definitive judgment on this issue, it is likely that the most highly skilled (and paid) workers did not experience as much improvement in their living standards as did less well paid people. The emphasis on social security and pensions, for example, allowed pensioners to gain somewhat on wage earners (see table 1). Indeed, it was the highly skilled workers of the Cegielski Engineering Works in Poznan who initiated the protests that eventually spread throughout the country.⁷

The reforms of the early 1950s, in Poland as in the Soviet Union, were meant to improve the standard of living and generate some legitimacy for the regime without recourse to coercion. The shifts in policy, though, also had unexpected results. Old patterns were disrupted, new social groups were favored, and new expectations were engendered. The economic and political change of 1954-56 was too slow for the population; the demands for Gomulka's return reflected the expectation of further change.

The Gomulka Years and the 1970 Succession

Gomulka's eventual return to economic orthodoxy and political conservatism is a familiar one, although analysts differ on the reasons for this. Certainly one of the reasons, however, was that the regime could not sustain the continued fortification of consumer and social policy and renew the development of industry and investments at the same time. The burden on the budget of all these policies was substantial. The increased allocations for social and consumer policies had continued through 1959. But the slide in productive investments also had been halted by that year. Consequently, total investments in 1959 increased by almost 17 percent over 1958. The rapid increase in expenditures in all three areas had by 1959 caused the state budget to increase by 57 percent over 1954. These rates of growth were much faster than the growth in the economy and could not be sustained. So emphasis on consumer and social policies was ended, and investments once again took precedence.

Through most of the 1960s productive investments grew, whereas allocations for social policies remained at 1959 levels, and consumption and wages stagnated. But by the late 1960s the priorities began to change again. Investment levels remained high during this period, even increasing somewhat. Wage increases in the years 1967-69 were the lowest of any three-year period since the early 1950s. Per capita consumption, especially of meat products, did not increase during this period. There

⁷ John Montias offers other explanations for the activism of skilled workers: their trade union history, their "workers' culture," and their shop floor organization.

was, however, a renewed emphasis on social policy, beginning about 1967. Tables 1-3 demonstrate that for every social policy indicator, there was a marked change initiated in the three years before 1970. Health, social security, and education allocations and pensions all jumped significantly in 1967. There was also a substantial narrowing in the wage gaps during the period from 1967-70. In housing the pattern is not as clear, but there was a marked increase here as well in 1970, before the December succession.

In all of these cases the stress on social policy began several years before the succession, and carried across the succession for several years. The motivation for this shift in policy seems to be twofold. On the one hand, the regime may have felt that it was time to shift some resources back into consumption, direct (personal) or otherwise (social). By 1968 social and consumer policy had been neglected for almost a decade. On the other hand, there seems to have been an intensification of the ideological drive toward egalitarianism in the late 1960s. This was partly a response to the challenges by the "technocrats" to Gomulka and the dominant party leadership, and was invigorated by the disturbances of March 1968 in Poland and the spring and summer of that year in Czechoslovakia (Weydenthal, 1978). Consequently, the resources available to the population were channeled into social policy, which supports egalitarian principles, rather than into consumer policy, which does not.

As in 1956 bad harvests in 1969 and 1970 had exacerbated the food shortages, particularly in meat. It was largely in response to these problems that the regime decided upon an increase in food prices in December of 1970. This was like rubbing salt into the wounds of the workers who had experienced depressed wages and consumption levels over the previous three years. The disturbances initiated in the shipyards on the Baltic coast were met by force, which only served to inflame and widen the unrest. Once again, the party first secretary was replaced.

The situation in 1970 was quite different from 1956, however. The 1956 disturbances, as noted above, came after a period of substantial improvement in conditions and were at least partly a result of rising and frustrated expectations. The 1970 unrest followed no such improvement, and was in fact a manifestation of protest against the continuing stagnation of wages, consumption, and the management of the economy. But there were other forces at work here too. While the economy as a whole may have been depressed in the late 1960s, there were differential impacts on different social groups. As is apparent from table 3, the relative wages of the intelligentsia and the better paid workers had eroded substantially in this period, while conditions for the less well off had improved somewhat as a result of some leveling of wages and increased allocations for health, social security, pensions, and education.

The demands made by the dockworkers and miners, who are among the most highly paid workers in Poland, were largely economic (wage increases, price freezes, tax reduction) and political, not social. One could view the 1970 disturbances, then, as partially a demand for attention and resources by those who did not benefit from the social policies emphasized in the previous years.

The response of the new Gierek regime did not entirely satisfy the workers. Although Gierek did promise a two-year freeze on food prices, better market supplies, and more housing, the wage increases announced at the end of December were aimed largely at low income families and workers since they were the ones who were most directly affected by food price increases. Along similar lines, it also was decided to increase the minimum wage by 17.6 percent and family allowances by 25 percent and to improve pension and disability payments. But as George Blazynski points out: "the initial economic concessions offered nothing to skilled industrial workers who already earned more than 3000 zlotys a month. They continued, therefore, to press for either adequate wage increases on a national scale or for a complete abolition of Gomulka's price increase package" (1979, p. 41). Eventually the workers prevailed; Gierek rescinded the December price increases and he promised across-the-board wage increases. With the revision of the 1971-75 Plan in June 1971, individual and social consumption was to increase by 38 percent, compared to 27 percent in the previous five-year plan period, and real wages were to increase at an annual average rate of 3.4 percent, almost twice that of the previous decade (Blazynski, 1979, p. 75).

The Gierek Years

The policies pursued by the Gierek regime in the next several years were unprecedented in Poland's postwar history in that there were major advances in all three policy areas: consumption, social policy, and investment. Gierek's modernization plan called for a rapid modernization of Polish industry and an improvement in agricultural production, both of which required greatly increased levels of investment. But there also were to be significant increases in wages and in the availability of consumer goods as incentives to increased productivity, and as a means to avoid further unrest.

Meanwhile, the increased allocations for social policy begun under Gomulka continued under Gierek through 1972 or 1973. The promised wage increases for the lowest paid groups further narrowed the gap between rich and poor. Housing construction targets were revised upward by 25 percent under the new 1971-75 plan. But since capital investment for modernization and increased consumption to stimulate productivity were the key elements of Gierek's long-term plan, social policy was de-

emphasized somewhat after 1973. The increase in expenditures for housing, education, and health and welfare could not keep up with the growth in the economy, and the move toward wage equalization was postponed to provide incentives for increased productivity.

Poland's economy and standard of living grew at an unprecedented rate during the years 1971-75. National income grew at an average annual rate of almost 12 percent, and real wages by over 7 percent a year. Gross agricultural output grew at 3.7 percent a year, and livestock production at 5.3 percent annually (Newcomb, 1981). Per capita meat consumption grew from 53 kilograms in 1970 to 70 kilograms by 1975, higher than that in some West European states. All of this occurred despite a declining share of the national income for consumption, as capital investments also increased at a record pace.

This high rate of growth in all sectors of the economy could not have been possible without massive amounts of foreign capital, a rapid acceleration of technology transfer, and agricultural imports from the West. By 1975 Poland was a net importer of foodstuffs, her foreign trade deficit was 7.5 billion zlotys and her hard currency debt had reached \$8 billion, from only \$1.1 billion in 1971.

By 1976 the economy was in serious trouble. Although there had been cutbacks in social policy, personal incomes and investments continued to increase at almost unmanageable levels. Although the *planned* increases in these areas were high, actual increases were even higher. In 1971-75 both real wages and investments increased by about twice the planned rate. As Fallenbuchl describes the situation:

The planners lost control over both investment and personal income because of political and social pressures, which were created by the backlog of long postponed increases in wages, pensions and social welfare payments, shortages of consumption goods and services, and competing claims on limited resources by sectors which had enjoyed priority in the past and were anxious to maintain their privileged position and those that had been neglected and wished to make up for it now (1981, p. 38).

These rates of growth could not be sustained even without increased expenditures for social policy. The 1975 draft for the 1976-80 five-year plan called for rates of growth in personal incomes (18 percent), investments (40 percent), and industrial (50 percent) and agricultural production (16 percent) that were only about half of the rates actually achieved in 1971-75 (Blazynski, 1979; Fallenbuchl, 1981). With these reduced growth levels for consumption and investment, though, social policy was partially revitalized, with welfare payments to increase by 70 percent and housing construction by 40 percent. Again, it seems that social policy was being used to help the population adjust to planned reductions in consumption and wages.

Another feature of the new plan, of course, was the decision to ra-

tionalize the price and production structure of agriculture. Agricultural production and consumption had increased dramatically in the years 1971-74, but bad harvests in both 1974 and 1975 had reduced the availability of some foods, especially meats. The problem was compounded by the fact that real incomes in Poland had grown much faster than the production of either consumer goods or agriculture, causing demand for food, especially meat, to exceed supply. The artificially low meat prices, frozen since 1971, put further pressure on supplies.

The regime's sudden implementation of drastic price increases for food in June 1976 led to strikes and demonstrations that forced the government, for the second time in six years, to rescind the food price increase. This placed the regime in a major dilemma. The rationalization of agricultural prices was a key element in the plan to reduce Poland's foreign debt. The failure to achieve this meant that the regime had to depend even more heavily on foreign loans. Moscow responded with a one billion ruble loan, increased supplies of consumer goods, and a resumption of grain deliveries. Meanwhile, although imports of machinery and equipment from the West were reduced, grain purchases were increased to boost domestic food supplies. All this, of course, simply deepened Poland's foreign trade deficits and debt, and postponed the solution to the problem.

By this time Poland again was experiencing the phenomenon that characterized the 1956 unrest—the revolution of rising expectations. In the years since 1970 personal incomes, social services, and consumption levels had grown at unprecedented rates. By 1976 the regime found it no longer could sustain such rates of growth. The efforts to cut back, even if they did not result in absolute reductions in the standard of living, did frustrate popular expectation of continued growth. The inability of the leadership to inform the population of the problems and solutions, and to initiate public discussion of these issues, contributed to the sense of frustration and led to a standoff between the party and the population for the next several years. Meanwhile, the economic policies of the regime became increasingly untenable and dangerous.

THE 1980 EVENTS

By 1980 a significant portion of Poland's \$20 billion currency debts was due for repayment, and Western bankers were demanding economy measures in Poland in order to extend the loans. Governmental subsidies for food production were swallowing up 25 percent of the state budget in 1980. It was in this climate that the regime once again attempted to raise food prices in the summer of 1980. Once again, the process was a clumsy one with little public consultation or advance warning. But even at this

time, when the economy was in shambles, the tug of social policy was evident. In Gierek's explanation of food price increases he promised that the revenues from this gain would "in their entirety" be used to improve the lot of the lowest income groups, as well as single mothers, large families, and pensioners (Robinson, 1980, pp. 33-36). This, however, did not mollify the workers who wanted across the board wage increases for all workers. The "21 demands" from the Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS) in the Gdansk shipyards made no special provisions for the more poorly paid workers. The economic demands were across the board: increased market supplies, meat rationing, wage increases of 2000 zlotys per month, and automatic cost-of-living raises (Robinson, 1980, pp. 49-50).

After the initial wage increases granted to the strikers in August, the government stuck to the position that the poorest paid workers should receive the most increases. In a speech on August 15 Prime Minister Babiuch agreed that there would be no further meat price increases for two years. Wage increases had to be tied to productivity *except* for low income and retired people and large families. He also pledged to reduce the gap between minimum and maximum wages.

As the port strikes grew during August, the MKS also grew and no doubt became more heterogeneous. Although the initial demands of MKS had few provisions for the poorer workers, these concerns increasingly were incorporated in the demands of the strikers. The initial demand in Gdansk for a uniform wage increase, for example, was modified during bargaining with the government by a formula asking for 1000 zlotys monthly for poorer workers, and 500 zlotys for all others (Robinson, 1980, p. 365). It is apparent that the differences between the workers and the government were complicated by differences among the workers themselves. And the position of the government on these economic issues was closer to that of the poorer workers, demanding disproportionate wage and benefit increases for the lower paid.

The tension within the MKS may have facilitated the final agreements reached in Szczecin and Gdansk at the end of August. Both these agreements reflect much greater emphasis on social policy than the original demands of the strikers. In the Szczecin agreement, signed August 30 (translated in Robinson, 1980, pp. 416-18), the economic provisions were aimed largely at the needier groups in Polish society. The government promised "a gradual raise in the pay of all employee's groups," but "primarily the lowest wages." There were also promises to raise minimum wages and pensions, improve maternity and family allowances, improve the health service, and to initiate a "program to solve the housing problem."

The results of the Gdansk agreements (translated in Robinson, 1980, pp. 423-34) were much the same. On many of the social policy issues

the government went beyond the workers' demands, but not always precisely fulfilling other economic and political requests. To the key economic demand to "raise the basic salary of each worker by 2000 zloty per month" the government agreed to "gradual increases for all working groups," but "especially to the lowest paid groups." The agreements also made specific reference to "a program of pay increases . . . for those earning the least, with particular attention to families with many children." In response to the workers' demands for automatic pay increases to keep up with inflation the government agreed to consider new rules on this matter, but these rules were "to take into consideration the problem of the 'social minimum.'" As with the Szczecin agreement the Gdansk pact included other provisions for improvements of social policy, housing, preschool facilities, pensions, minimum wages, family and maternity allowances, and health care. Some of these were among the original "21 demands," but some were not.

The 1980 events were similar to those of 1956 in that they derived from a sense of frustrated expectations. In 1956 the expectations were newly formed and the realization of them insufficiently fast. In 1980 the expectations were born of genuine gains in the early 1970s.

In all three cases the revolts occurred after a period in which social policies had been emphasized and wage differentials reduced. The frustrations, therefore, were felt most keenly by the more highly paid workers who saw their own positions slipping more so than other sectors of society. This is not the only reason that skilled workers initiated the protests. But it is these workers who benefited most from the system of incentives, and who had the most resources for the purchase of consumer goods. When they experienced a contraction of both wages *and* the availability of consumer goods they were bound to feel aggrieved.

THE POLICY DEBATES OF 1980-81

In the sixteen months after August the workers and Solidarity pushed for, and got, major concessions from the government in both social policy and consumer policy. Even though the national income shrank sharply in 1981, the percentage of national income in consumption continued to grow past the record level of 1980. Virtually every facet of the economy contracted in 1981 while wages increased by 25 percent (as did the cost of living, neutralizing this gain).

In social policy the workers got most of what they had asked for in the Gdansk agreements, and more. The minimum monthly wage was raised from 1800 zlotys to 2400 in September 1981, and to 2800 in early 1982. The minimum pension was raised from 1800 zlotys to 3000. Family, maternal, and child care allowances also were raised substantially. All of

this was an enormous drain on the budget. As the official report on the 1981 budget noted: "expenditures for social security increased by half, for health care, education and other social and cultural needs by one fourth, and for municipal economy and housing by one fifth. The total increase reached 90 billion zlotys, the largest such increment in our economy" (*Rzeczpospolita*, May 27, 1982).

The interest in protecting the most needy during the crisis was evident in major policy documents adopted by both Solidarity and the party during 1981. In Solidarity's program adopted at the union's October Congress (*Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, October 16, 1981), there were frequent references to Solidarity's special commitment to protect and support the "weakest groups of people," "the poorest," and "those for whom life is hardest." There are specific provisions to establish "a social minimum as the guiding principle of incomes policy" and for efforts to protect the incomes of "the least powerful parts of society." The union opposed wage and social inequalities between places of work and regions. But, as Solidarity's critics were quick to point out, the program did not once use the word "socialism."

Despite this omission, probably largely symbolic, Solidarity's commitment to social policy was similar to that of the Party in its "Program for the Development of Socialist Democracy" adopted at the Extraordinary Ninth Congress in July 1981 (translated in Stefanowski, 1982, pp. 171-86). The party program had numerous provisions for improving the status of families, particularly young ones, the needy, and the poorly paid. These included increases in maternity and family credits and allowances, health care and child care facilities, pensions, and social programs in rural areas. The party document was less sweeping but more specific than Solidarity on incomes policy. Although there was no mention of a social minimum as the "guiding principle" of incomes policy, there was an appeal for raising the lowest salaries and pensions and even a specific formula for the relationship of the lowest and highest incomes: the lowest salary should be half of the average; the highest should be no more than three and one-half times the average.

But it is evident from the party's program that it still was bedeviled by the problem of multiple priorities. Despite the obvious commitment to developing social policy, in listing the priorities for investments, these areas did not fare well. Resources were to be concentrated in "food, the building industry, expansion of the fuel, raw material and power base, health protection, and culture and education," in that order. The regime was trying to provide the population with the basics only, food and housing, while moving to re-establish the production of raw materials as an industrial base and for export.

THE DILEMMA OF MARTIAL LAW

At the end of 1981 the Polish economy was in much the same state as it had been in the later 1970s: in trying to push ahead on all fronts simultaneously there were increasingly fewer resources in all areas. The imposition of martial law on December 13 was at least partially a political move, to protect a disintegrating party from the increasingly strong and political labor union. But it also was meant as an economic emergency measure. Jaruzelski believed that in the increasingly critical economic situation the economy no longer could withstand Solidarity's strike actions, and the government could make no further concessions on wages. Even one of Solidarity's advisors (Tymowski, 1981) argued that the union's demands were unrealistic in the current economic situation: "there can not be simultaneously a contraction of the work week, an increase in wages, and an improvement in market supplies in the economic situation in which we find ourselves."

With Solidarity suspended and strikes prohibited the martial law regime could move ahead with its own economic reform program, including substantial food price increases, without fear of opposition and disruption. In the first six months of martial law the regime began a policy of reducing consumption while temporarily boosting social services to help the needy through the crisis and the readjustment. There were frequent articles in the press aimed at reducing expectations, pointing out the long time frame for economic recovery. Meat consumption was a particularly touchy issue. Per capita meat consumption was expected to decline for the next five years or so, but nevertheless would not fall below the levels of 1971.

To offset the food price increases of February 1982 there were income-compensation formulas that particularly benefited young families, pensioners, and the poorly paid. The regime committed itself to the "care of those worst off." It was asserted that the role of the state budget must change to "protect the weakest social groups during the reform," so that social policy was to make up 30 percent of the 1982 budget, compared to 22 percent in 1981 (*Rzeczpospolita*, May 27, 1982).

There were also renewed promises to reduce the highest incomes, "earned by a narrow group of people usually representing the private sector," but this was to be accomplished with a progressive income tax rather than administrative measures, in line with the new economic reform program. On the other hand, there were no further commitments to *increase* wages, even for those earning the least.

In fact, by the middle of 1982 it apparently had been decided that there could be no further allocations for social welfare or consumption until the economy began to pick up. As Minister Krzak said in a Sejm speech in

May: "we must break out of the trap of promises allowing for future development of social benefits and wages. Welfare in the future must match economized incomes" (*Rzeczpospolita*, May 27, 1982). The wage system was criticized for having "more of a social than a motivational nature." The new principle guiding wage policy was "pay according to one's work" and basic wages were to constitute a higher proportion of total remuneration by cutting back on various allowances, bonuses, and awards.

Thus, after several years of unsuccessfully attempting to drive ahead in all three policy areas, social policy, consumption, and investments, the martial law regime was scaling back. With extremely limited flexibility and resources it was going to focus on investments, temporarily abandoning the other two areas after a final infusion of funds there to maintain at least minimal standards. In the early 1970s the Gierek regime had initiated a multifaceted growth strategy, but the economy and the society could not sustain it. In 1980 the *workers* essentially had forced the same strategy on the authorities, but the economy was even less able to support such growth than it has been ten years earlier. By this time, in particular, Poland had exhausted its credit in the West which had been used to finance the growth of the 1970s.

The policy changes of 1982, resulting in immediate reductions in consumption (through price increases) and eventual cutbacks in social policy, were bound to be unpopular with the workers and Solidarity.⁸ The new economic reform program would require major new investments in agriculture, energy, and export industries. At the same time imports, especially from the West, would have to be reduced.

It was inevitable that the standard of living was to decline for everyone, and the official media attempted to brace the population for such changes. But these shifts in policy, like all previous ones, were to affect different groups in different ways. With the reduced emphasis on social policy it was likely that the poor would suffer the most. Indeed, the ranks of the poor already were growing. As a government spokesman pointed out:

Various groups of families are threatened now, who earlier did not need any assistance from society. Now, not only old and lonely people need help but also young; not only single parents, but also normal families. Economic reform designed to produce economic effects in a natural way limits social functions performed by work establishments (*Trybuna Ludu*, April 17-18, 1982).

The combined effects of the crisis and the reform also undermined one of the fundamental concepts of social policy and socialist societies, that of

⁸ The Polish workers largely have internalized the values of socialism and especially of egalitarianism. See Simon (1983), Mason (1983), and Bielasiak (1983).

full employment. It was expected that in 1982 alone 20,000 secondary school graduates and 8,000 university graduates would not find jobs. Besides them thousands of workers lost their jobs as a result of the contracting economy and the dislocations of the reform program. The policy of "wages according to work" theoretically could benefit the more efficient workers. But as long as the economy stagnates, and the regime tries to *impose* the reform program, it is unlikely that this will happen.

The Jaruzelski regime, then, is faced with a series of dilemmas. The decentralizing economic reform depends on workers' participation and cooperation. But the workers are unlikely to support any program of a regime that suspended the most popular social institution in the country's history. The reform program inevitably involves dislocations. But the economy is already in such a critical state that any further dislocations are bound to increase resentments among workers and tension in the society. Furthermore, in every case in the past where the regime effected major shifts in policy the resulting shifts of economic burdens and benefits in society eventually led to popular unrest. The combination of these tensions makes Poland a tinderbox. Given the lack of communication between the martial law authorities and the workers, it is unlikely that an explosion can be averted without the regime allowing the workers to organize themselves in their own way.

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