

The Social Report
Poland
2005

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Friedrich Ebert Foundation
Representation in Poland
2005

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Foreword

Dear Readers,

It is with great pleasure that we present our latest publication: *The Social Report: Poland 2005*. Our *Report* was prepared by the following team of experts: prof. Stanisława Golinowska, PhD; prof. Maciej Żukowski, PhD; prof. Juliusz Gardawski, PhD; and Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, PhD; in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's in-house scholars Anna Kierzkowska-Tokarska and Krzysztof Getka.

The subject of the *Report* is a description and analysis of the key social problems in Poland today and of the social policies that have been pursued over recent history. It is our intention that this *Report* will help launch public debate on the ways in which pressing social concerns should be resolved, as well as on the challenges which Poland now faces as a member of the European Union. One of these challenges is to link social policies with the European Social Model (ESM).

The European Social Model may well be considered an element of European identity. We can define it as a system of the manifold activities of the state and of civil society aimed at satisfying citizens' material needs, ensuring their participation in social life and strengthening societal cohesion.

Societal cohesion is not an end in itself. Within the ESM concept it also serves to support economic growth. In striving to reconcile cohesion with economic competitiveness, the European Social Model differs from models observed in non-EU countries. At the same time, growth achieved in this way will constitute a material basis for realization of the ESM. This is why the strengthening of Europe's competitive capacity in our globalized world is a prerequisite for the further development of the ESM.

In reality, the European Union is still very far from having achieved the uniform implementation of the European Social Model. EU countries are pursuing divergent models of social policy, the range of which has increased with successive stages of the Union's enlargement. In the 1950s and 1960s the continental model was clearly predominant, while in the 1970s – after the admission of the UK, Denmark, and Ireland – social models became more diverse. The southward enlargement of the Union in the 1980s added a Mediterranean dimension to the model, while the northward enlargement and opening up to EFTA countries in the 1990s added a Nordic dimension. The consequences of the 2004 enlargement of the EU are at present still difficult to assess. However, there are many indications that the existing diversity of social policy models will be supplemented with a new approach, one combining the socialist past with a liberal future.

Despite the increasing reform tendencies and the attendant institutional diversity seen in the social policies of respective European countries, one element remains common: the understanding that social inclusion and balanced social development are conducive to economic development and are not merely a factor generating additional costs. The converse is also true: economic growth should support social cohesion.

Our *Report* presents a general outline of Polish society and the situation on the labour market and sums up the changes which have taken place during the transformation period, not neglecting to highlight their connection with the social policies pursued. We would like our *Social Report* to serve as a starting point for discussion on Poland's future social and economic development within the EU. In the upcoming reports we are planning to publish we shall analyze various areas of social policy with a view to their European dimension and draft guidelines to assist in policymaking.

The general premise of the undertaking embarked upon by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation is to obtain answers to the following questions:

- Whence have we travelled?

- Where are we at present?
and finally:
- Where are we heading?

The Social Report: Poland 2005 endeavours first and foremost to find an answer to the first two questions. Our next Report, planned for next year, will try to provide an answer to the question "Where are we heading?"

This year's *Report* describes and analyzes such key aspects of the social situation as demographics, health care, the labour market and social protection. At the same time, it discusses the relevant changes and characterizes the social policies that have been pursued. The structure of our *Report* revolves around two axes. The first two chapters have been structured around a timeline. The following chapters depict the current situation thematically, in terms of given problems and/or their solutions. Consequently, these chapters address the following issues:

- the legacy of state socialism
- the transformation process
- demographic development and its consequences
- the labour market
- social protection
- health care
- the condition, structure, values and attitudes of Polish society 15 years after the downfall of the Polish People's Republic

On the one hand our *Report* should contribute to an enlivening of the debate and the exchange of views between academics and civil society. On the other hand it should help build a bridge to the world of politics. Civil society and politics are co-dependent in a democratic state. Their continued cooperation is a prerequisite for the success of politics in Poland, the two major challenges of which remain transformation and integration.

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation is planning to soon begin a series of discussions devoted to "Work and social issues". The seminars held during this series will form a broad plat-

form for dialogue between representatives of civil society and the world of politics.

Debate on the labour market, the social situation and social policies should not be limited only to Poland. The question "Where are we heading?" will need to be answered not only by Poles, but also by Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians and the citizens of other countries of Central Europe. For the challenges those nations are facing today are not so very different from those Poland faces. And indeed, other EU countries will also embark on paths of reform chosen to ensure their continued economic growth and social cohesion.

We will appreciate any comments and suggestions you may have regarding the issues addressed in *The Social Report* and the discussions we are planning.

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We wish you an interesting read!

Peter Hengstenberg
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Chapter I

Polish society during
the communist period.
The legacy
of state socialism

Stanisława Golinowska, Juliusz Gardawski

The legacy of the past – this is one of the essential factors defining the social order of Poland's post-1989 transformation period. Yet this seemingly obvious premise is not easy to demonstrate. For the past as present in the values and the behaviour of today's society differs from that which is embedded in its institutions. Indeed, whereas the oldest generation's frame of reference points to the pre-war period, the generations raised after World War Two frame their experience in reference to the various periods of the PRL (the Polish People's Republic)

Reference to the past also differs along conceptual and emotional lines. Those who have no personal experience of the functioning of an institutional order different than that formed in the PRL, along with those for whom that was a period of positive emotional connotation and life-time achievements, relate positively to the organizational models and behaviours that they assimilated in the past, ones they know and understand. Conversely, negation of the otherwise positive models from the PRL past can be observed among those who suffered from its repressive institutions. This concerns both those groups of people who acutely felt the lack of freedom and who greatly suffered as a result of the inefficient functioning of the economy, as well as those who knew other models and professed other values than those that were officially upheld.

Today, an increasing portion of the population has no personal experience of the pre-transformation period. Their knowledge about the past and their attitude towards it are formed by historical accounts, literature, film and the recollections of their parents and grandparents.

Is this diverse past still present in the current reality? If so, to what degree? This is the subject taken up in the first chapter of the present *Social Report*. The impact of the past on today's social life in Poland shall be identified and described through an attempt to respond to the following two questions:

- Whence have we travelled?
- What is the legacy of the past in our present social life?

In order to answer the first of these questions, it is necessary to establish a timeline for past events. Herein our *Report* refers to the historical periodization of the PRL, taking into account its overt political changes and institutional development, as well as changes in Polish society's living conditions. As there exists a large number of in-depth studies devoted to this subject, we may readily draw upon an established body of relevant facts and figures.

The answer to the second question calls for reference to analyses and studies that are not free of individual and/or group judgements. As a result, this part of the chapter is undoubtedly saddled with a certain amount of subjectivity resulting from the individual experience and personal views of our team of authors. Although the team has sought to remain fair and to present both the liabilities as well as the achievements of the past in an equitable manner, it is up to the reader to assess whether that attempt has succeeded.

1. The various stages of social life in the PRL period

Although the period of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) is very often treated conterminously with the period of communism, particularly in foreign literature, this is an oversimplification that may be said to falsify Poland's past to a significant degree.

The pre-1989 period can be divided into five qualitatively distinct stages of the country's development. The period of totalitarian communism itself lasted relatively briefly. This was the period from 1948-1956. During the first three post-war years (1945-1947) – a period of rebuilding the country on the one hand and of political conflicts on the other – Poland relied to a large extent on pre-war solutions in the institutional sphere. It was the political changes of 1948, to wit, the creation (imposition) of one-party rule (the Polish United Workers Party, PZPR); the establishment of the State Commission for Economic Planning (PKPG), i.e., a super-ministry to implement the command economy system; as well as the adoption of the six-year plan (1950-1955) that put Poland on the path of rapid industrialization – that fundamentally changed Poland's institutions and social relations. Institutional solutions taken from the USSR¹ were imposed. Politically, this was a period of totalitarianism entailing both the absolute monopoly of ideology and repressions against actual or presumed enemies of the system.

Following the "thaw" of October 1956, the corset of the totalitarian communist system was relaxed and the "Polish road to socialism" began, one evincing significant divergences from the Russian model for building the new system. By the late 1960s that path had proven too crude and uniform. Hence, together with the swift curtailing of the post-October freedoms, Poland's otherwise independent socialist development failed to win broad social acceptance. This fact manifested itself in the "March events" of 1968 and in December, 1970.

In the 1970s, power in the party and the state was held by an ambitious group that set out to modernize the country. That group viewed with favour the income and the consumption aspirations of society. The social and economic programme it elaborated, based as it was on capital derived from foreign loans and without the application of an efficient management regime, led to enormous economic imbalance and, subsequently, the crisis at the turn of the 1970s. Difficult living conditions in the crisis period, the inefficient economy and maintenance of limitations on civil and employee rights led to the emergence of mass-scale political opposition under the banner of the independent *Solidarność* trade unions. Initially *Solidarność* challenged the party authorities, later the whole system. In reaction to this, the communist leadership declared martial law. The 1980s were a period of acute crisis and the emergence of an extreme form of a deficit economy. It was also a period of political conflicts, and of ones that were no longer concealed.

¹ In 1947, when relations between the West and the Soviet bloc deteriorated, giving way to a climate of cold war, the Cominform strongly pressed for a uniformization of activities and submission to Moscow's guidelines in all areas: political, economic and social. Political activists who would not conform to the prerogatives so determined were eliminated.

The period of communist totalitarianism

In the economic sphere, the period of communism meant the abolishment of private ownership, whether in the form of the nationalization of industry, prosecution of private entrepreneurship or elimination of individual farming, coupled as that was with the effort to collectivize rural areas. Communism also entailed control over social and cultural life, as in censorship and repressions against freethinkers. The communist state also fought against the Church and religious practice and enforced secular models of collective life.

However, in the social realm the period of communism in Poland does have a number of achievements to show for itself, particularly in the area of education and health care. (Golinowska, 1990). Programmes were undertaken to eliminate illiteracy (initiated in 1949 and successfully completed after a few years) and to build schools where none existed. Seven-year elementary schooling proliferated, as did the development of vocational education, along with complementary and compensatory education. In the area of health care a new infrastructure of health centres and hospitals was being reconstructed and created. Moreover, health care training was undertaken, along with measures to fight the epidemics and public diseases that were widespread at the time, most notably tuberculosis. Large-scale health care embraced children and began to cover maternity.

During the period of totalitarian communism and rapid industrialization, the living conditions of Polish families did not improve to a degree corresponding to the social effort undertaken by the public. A doctrine of belt-tightening on behalf of future prosperity was in force. The priority of developing heavy industry led to numerous shortfalls in the provision of food and other consumer goods. Despite the huge scale of migration from rural areas to cities, neither housing nor necessary service infrastructure (such as retail shops) were constructed at the required pace. The result was a huge disproportion in economic development, with the consumption requirements of the population neglected. In 1956, worker

protests took place in Poznań that determined the party's decisions with regard to personnel and programme changes. Interestingly, changes in the programme had been discussed within the party already since 1954.²

The October "thaw" and the Polish road to socialism

The October "thaw" that took place in 1956 led to the replacement of the communist model of Soviet totalitarianism with a significantly milder version. Although the state continued to control most social organizations and institutions and to maintain censorship and limitations on freedom of thought, the independence of the Church was allowed, which effectively meant that the party was giving up its ideological monopoly.

The authorities' decision to permit the Church a large measure of independent activity after 1956 in the area of religion was further accompanied by tolerance for the social activity of religious orders and associations. This allowed a significant source of societal autonomy, particularly considering that restrictions on the social³ and religious activities of the Church were altogether harsh in Stalinist times.

The social activities of the Church concentrated on the most difficult cases of human tribulation: total disability, incurable sicknesses and mental illnesses. Over time, this activity was broadened, with aid also provided to lonely and homeless people. A significant moment in the Church's social activity was the foundation of the Catholic Intelligence Clubs in 1957. These were organizations independent of the government authorities (positions in the organization were not staffed by

² After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, the USSR revised the manner in which the communist system was to be realized, a change which was declared by the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Feb. 14-25, 1956). This was not without impact on the "thaw" taking place in other countries of the Soviet bloc, particularly in Poland.

³ From the social viewpoint, a very significant limitation from that time was the nationalization of the Church charity organization Caritas in 1950.

the party) that did not stop at providing charity, but also provided support in education, child-rearing and in culture. Meanwhile, the Oasis organization, which was founded in 1954 and later became known as the "Light-Life" organization, conducted outreach towards the younger generation.

Lay groups of independent intellectuals coalesced around the Church. The Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), the weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Warsaw's monthly *Więź* and Kraków's *Znak*—these were communities that developed a model for positivist work on behalf of Poland despite the lack of independence and full freedom. Jakub Karpiński, following Andrey Amalrik, described their approaches as "conformist-reformist" (Karpiński, 1985).

In the economic sphere, the right to private land ownership was restored, significantly undermining the state's monopoly on the means of production. The party withdrew from forced collectivization. Furthermore, the development of individual crafts was allowed, and this segment of the economy grew to become a significant, although tightly controlled and constrained, partner for the dynamically growing state industry.

Decisions were taken to narrow the developmental disproportions within the economy. Investments were made in those branches of industry that produced consumer goods, among them, those that supported agriculture (machinery and fertilizers). The aim was to increase food production. Peasants were still required to deliver the mandatory quotas that the law had imposed in 1951.

A wide-scale programme of housing construction was undertaken. Housing was the good that members of society most sought after. Residential construction plans were a response not only to the housing shortage in a country devastated by war and to the intense demographic upsurge (more than 11 million children were born by 1960), for they were also an element of supporting further urbanization and industrialization (the plan for the second stage of industrialization was adopted for implementation in the 1960s). Approximately 2 million people emigrated from the country-

side to cities in the 1950s.

Housing development plans were being carried out very frugally. Exceptionally low standards for housing space were adopted, with the aim of building a large number of small and cheap apartments. Thus, these small apartments became a symbol of that period in the area of material development. They usually featured tiny, so-called 'blind kitchens' (without windows). This was justified by a model of development of social life in which domestic family life would be replaced by collective forms.

Economic plans also incorporated the development of social services infrastructure, particularly in education. The post-war baby boom had reached school age and schools were needed. They were largely financed from private funds gathered from among the public, with fundraising events organized among employees and their families and as part of so-called "social campaigns", all held under the slogan "One thousand schools for the one-thousandth anniversary of the Polish state", to be celebrated in 1966.

The period from the end of the 1950s through the 1960s was one of considerable achievements in culture. The development of literature, theatre, film and cabaret in those years was unrivalled. Despite censorship and the efforts to constrain independent thought, creative artists were a relatively coherent group. And although the authorities took special measures to control this group, there were moments when censorship was relaxed, thereby giving a stimulus to particularly intense creative activity.

Institutional areas of limited freedom also emerged. In some instances institutions from the pre-war period were restored, though they were included within the system of government control. In others, new, relatively independent social organizations were founded. Cultural associations (e.g., concerning music or the culture from a particular region of the country), professional associations (grouping writers, librarians, architects, economists, etc.) and creative organizations turned out to be the strongest of these. These organizations

operated on the basis of an ordinance from 1932, appended with contemporary decisions. From the viewpoint of freedom of activity, there was an interesting decision made in 1958, but not published, allowing associations to conduct for-profit activity (Ilczuk, 1995).

Once the fetters of totalitarianism were loosened in 1956, they could not be tightened again, despite the attempts subsequently made. This gave Poland's development and social relations its unique features (i.e., the Polish road to socialism), ones which were not to be observed in the majority of the other countries of the Eastern bloc, with the qualified exception of Hungary.

The social life of the 1960s was characterized by marked lack of ostentation (even asceticism) and egalitarianism, scornfully referred to as "urawniówka", equalizing to the lowest common denominator. The model of "frugal socialism" was imposed by the top echelon of the party, indeed, by Władysław Gomułka himself, the first secretary of PZPR from 1956 to 1970. This model was approved of neither by the younger generation, nor by the younger members of the party ranks. Television, which was becoming more and more popular, displayed new and attractive consumer goods and new opportunities in life: free time, leisure, rest and tourism abroad. Young people were also demanding more freedom. Initially they had voiced this demand alone (in 1968) and without much support. They were disparagingly referred to as the "banana" young, in regard to their relative pampering. Later – in 1970 – the workers came out with demands. That movement led to a change of the authorities and the creation of a programme for national development.

Modernization through borrowing

The 1970s in Poland was a period significantly distinct from the preceding one. The growing consumer aspirations of the public posed a potential source of approval for the new party authorities that took the helm in 1971 with a programme for

social and economic modernization. The production of consumer goods, including luxury goods (e.g., the production of a small car for the working population: the Fiat 126), was a part of the successive economic plans. The positive influence of an increase in household incomes on economic development was also accepted. Ambitious plans for further industrialization (the 3rd stage) were not abandoned, as these were justified by the argument that the post-war baby boom generation was entering adult life and needed jobs. These plans were carried out through borrowing from abroad, which at that time was suddenly much easier to obtain, thanks to the high supply of "petro-dollars" (extraordinary profits generated as a result of the oil crisis).

Policies with regard to individual farming also changed. Mandatory quota deliveries were abolished and investment support was provided to farms, which together allowed wide-scale imports of animal feed (and later food products, as well). The support provided to farmers had a selective nature. It was addressed to younger farmers having the required skills and involved in more modern production (so-called specialized farms). These agricultural policies very quickly led to differentiation in rural areas. The structure of farms began to change slowly in the direction of an increase in the average farm size (from 4 hectares at the end of the 1950s to 7 hectares at the end of the 1980s), and disparities in farmers' incomes and holdings increased. The inequality which arose at that time among farmers impacts the total income disparity in Poland to this day, making it larger than in other countries of the region (Wiśniewski, 1995).

The concepts of social development adhered to in the 1970s were significantly different from those of the preceding period of real socialism. A clear turn-around from the pressure on the collectivization of social life was to be observed. Instead, the authorities began to promote the family and support its activity and responsibility for the social and educational development of its members. The emphasis on women's emancipation decreased. Housing construction standards were altered, with acceptance of the right to "normal family apartments". The right of individual ownership

was extended to owning an apartment and a recreational plot of land.

The 1970s were a period of rising intra-group divergences, not only in the private, but also in the collectivized sector. With the increased diversity of industry (resulting on the one hand from the planning priorities of coal mining and steel industries, and on the other from the inflow of foreign technologies) the living conditions of workers also diverged. Employees from privileged sectors and branches of industry not only earned higher salaries, but also enjoyed better living conditions and better access to scarce consumer goods and services. The policy of granting privileges had other criteria, as well, whether membership in communist party structures or the repression system, or the "buying" of professionals and talented people. The aspirations of modernization created conditions for acceptance and gave impulse to rational and creative attitudes. "A good professional, although not a party member" – this was a personnel policy slogan for many enterprises undergoing modernization.

Looking back, the attempts to reform the organization of enterprises and improve management appear noteworthy. That process hearkened to both the Yugoslavian model of increased employee participation in the management process (employee councils), as well as concepts of creating giant enterprises. Although those attempts were unsuccessful and the authorities' approval for them sometimes only had a tactical character, the potential of experts, which was fostered at the time, had considerable influence on the future initiatives of economic transformation in Poland.

An effort was undertaken in the 1970s to reform the education system. A team of experts headed by sociology professor Jan Szczepański prepared a report on the state of education and then drafted an outline for reform (1973). This was an ambitious project, referring on the one hand to post-war education concepts. On the other hand it was ahead of the education needs of the time in its adaptation to the modernized economy and its concept of social development. A common high school was proposed (a 10-year school), as well

as an earlier school-entry age (6 years), along with widespread pre-school education (exceeding 50% of children aged 3-6). It soon turned out that the project had no chance of being implemented. The only elements that were introduced were the extension of elementary school by one year (from seven to eight years) and the introduction of "zerówka" before the beginning of obligatory elementary school education. Although attendance in "zerówka" was not obligatory, the development of these classes, particularly in rural areas, did measurably improve the scholastic readiness of rural children, whose living conditions were on average notably below those of children in cities.

A significant element of social change in those years was that of allowing people to go on tourist trips abroad. Regulations on leaving the country were liberalized and it became possible to purchase foreign currency from the state for this purpose. For several years during that period Austria waived the need for Poles to have visas. The opening up of the "window to the West" strongly influenced personal aspirations. When going abroad, people would take up seasonal jobs and trade. Their foreign earnings were worth staggering amounts in Poland due to the favourable black market exchange rate of the dollar. For 25 dollars, the monthly needs of an entire family could be satisfied (Golinowska/Marek 1994). The experience of Western consumer societies and their civil freedoms contributed to the beginning of a powerful pressure to emigrate, something which was further fuelled by the political events of the following decade.

The socialist affluence of the 1970s ended in deep economic crisis. Abysmal macroeconomic management and voluntarism in management at the enterprise level, despite the planning process,⁴ led to a deep imbalance. Attempts to balance the economy by raising the prices of foodstuffs led to worker protests that won withdrawals of those decisions.

⁴ Many major investment decisions were made "outside the plan", for example regarding the construction of the flagship Katowice steel mill (Karpieński, 1986). In addition, the concept of planning changed at the time; a shift took place from planning in material categories to parametric planning, making the planning process more flexible, but because of poor management - highly ineffective (Golinowska, 1990).

The authorities began to lose control over the economy. The rationing of consumer goods was systematically introduced. The years of ration cards required to purchase products began in 1976 with the introduction of ration cards for sugar. Diverse markets for food products existed at the time, with lower official prices for basic goods and higher prices for luxury goods. At the same time a well-supplied bazaar trade and black market were functioning.

The economic and political crisis

Studies of the profound crisis that set in during the late 1970s in Poland point to a multitude of interrelated, but separate factors. Concerning the economy, problems arose due to disregard for the principles of balancing and stabilizing the economy (there was severe over-investment in heavy industry, while at the same time a policy of expanding consumption was being pursued). Moreover, there were unsuccessful attempts to improve management on the microeconomic level, which fact largely contributed to the squandering of Western loans⁵.

In social policy, there was a visible tendency toward rising disparities in the population's living conditions. The division lines associated with privileges granted by the authorities were not accepted. At the same time, the growing attraction of Western consumerism as a result of "the window to the West" was at play. The rising consumption aspirations in the situation of a deficit economy, along with the high prices of goods on parallel markets, led to frustration and discontent. In the political realm, Poland's PZPR authorities lost control

over the processes that had begun. On the one hand, the authorities were seen cosyng up to the public by handing out privileges and avoiding (or withdrawing from) drastic measures to balance the economy (i.e., price hikes). On the other hand, they launched or allowed acts of repression and thereby rocked a society lulled by socialist prosperity. The authorities reacted to strikes in 1976 with repressions, ones which in turn gave rise to a movement to defend the workers (the Workers' Defence Committee – KOR). Hence, as the wave of worker opposition was spreading it was joined by independent intellectuals. After another attempt to raise prices in 1980 in order to balance the economy, a wave of strikes took place which not only led to a change of elites, but gave birth to an enduring movement for systemic change. The key moment was the creation and registration on November 10, 1980 of the federation of independent trade unions – "*Solidarność*".

It need be admitted that opposition organizations at that time primarily espoused social objectives and the protection of human rights, rather than such political goals as changes of power and the political system (Karpiński, 2001, p. 31). This helps explain why during a strike in 1980 in Szczecin, Czesław Socha, one of the protesting workers, shouted: "Yes to socialism! No to its distortions!" (Wilamowski, Wnęk, Zyblikiewicz, 1998).

This situation changed with the declaration of martial law on December 13, 1981. This was the moment when the *Solidarność* opposition unequivocally distanced itself from the system.

Despite the delegalization of the Solidarity movement and a massive wave of arrests, the opposition of independent trade unions remained active and moved underground. In April 1982, the Provisional National Committee – *Solidarność's* new underground authorities – was constituted.

The policy of the Communist authorities with regard to the opposition in the 1980s, in its programmatic sense as well,

⁵ These were supposed to have been paid off by exporting output from enterprises modernized thanks to the application of new technologies.

was ambiguous. On the one hand they fought against and repressed opposition leaders and limited civil rights. On the other hand they initiated or allowed rational regulations governing the economy and administration. Several laws were passed contributing to increased entrepreneurship and administrative order, e.g.: the law on the Supreme Administrative Court (1980), on the Constitutional Tribunal (1982, but only taking effect in 1986), on prices (1982), on foundations (1984), on corporations with foreign capital (1986), on commercial activity (1988), as well as amendments to the Commercial Code (1988).

These regulations were a clear sign of a gradual abandonment of the central planning system. In 1988 the Planning Commission, until then a powerful strategic institution, was abolished and replaced with a new body, which was more of an analysis and forecast centre (initially called the Central Planning Office – CUP – and later the Government Centre for Strategic Studies – RCSS). A change in direction towards a market economy and entrepreneurship was also taking place in the Soviet Union. Mikhail Gorbachev initiated the *Perestroika* reforms which made the changes in Poland much easier to implement.

The daily life of citizens in the 1980s was marred by major problems with the provision of consumer goods. A semblance of balance was maintained only through rationing. Coupons were required to buy nearly all food products and queues became a permanent feature of everyday life. It was possible to obtain goods outside of the system of coupons and queues, but at bazaar (that is free market) prices, which were much higher. The difficult situation with regard to food meaningfully contributed to society's resourcefulness. Households significantly increased domestic production, the resources for which came from employee plots and the countryside. Food was bought directly from the peasants, as it was cheaper. Once again in Polish history, the countryside was aiding cities in a situation of crisis.

Significant material aid came from abroad. Its distribution was handled by parishes and church organizations. House-

holds passed along donated goods that were no longer of use to them, particularly children's toys and clothes.

Mutual support as part of spontaneous contacts and social initiatives was to be seen in the most dire of situations: sickness, disability, addiction and family dysfunction. The role of intermediary was not always assumed by the Church, although very often this was the case. Indeed, such initiatives were also taken up by journalists, teachers, doctors, as well as by normal families affected by adversities or problems which they could not handle alone, and for which a relevant government institution did not exist – or did not know how to help.

A significant part of the population could not accept the crisis situation and left the country. Making avail of a range of ways to cross the border, more than one million people left Poland in the 1980s. At the close of the decade, the level of foreign migration reached a higher level than that of natural increase (Okólski, 1993).

Social policy was unable to ease the difficulties of daily life in the 1980s. Its main thrust was aimed at drafting regulations that would allow families to function independently, without support in the form of an extensive system of social transfers and without non-essential reliance on social services. Basic measures included those aimed at: the professional deactivation of women; the introduction of paid child-raising leaves; and early retirement for women (at age 55 after 30 years of work). In this way women were to be provided greater time for their homes and for broader societal utility.

Expenditure on social transfers, for retirees and disability benefit recipients, was significantly limited. Although automatic indexation of benefits was written into the law on social insurance for employees and their families in 1982, this rule was not respected. Under high inflation (called "stagflation" due to the distinct characteristics of that period), benefits quickly lost their value and elderly persons, living on social benefits, became one of the poorest groups in the country.

In 1988, after a wave of strikes that demanded restitution of *Solidarność* and following Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Poland, the authorities declared their readiness to commence talks with the opposition. In Magdalenka (just south of Warsaw) during the autumn of 1988, the holding of "Round Table" talks was prepared. They took place between February 6 and April 5, 1989. From that moment on events unfolded at a rapid pace. Parliamentary elections, which took place in June, gave the opposition a landslide victory. All of the 35% of seats that were open to free election in the Sejm were won by the opposition. Moreover, the communists won not a single seat in the 100-person Senate. When Solidarity was joined by the "concessioned" parties that for decades had supported PZPR (namely the peasants' ZSL and the city-based SD), the first *Solidarność* government was created. A new political, economic and social era began in Poland. Its picture is drawn in the following chapters.

2. The social structure formed in the PRL

The years of Nazi occupation, followed by the political system forced upon Poland after World War Two, engendered a profound reshaping of the social and cultural structure. The social groups that had previously constituted the elite (namely, the bourgeoisie and the landowners) disappeared or were marginalized. Meanwhile, the groups that were socially disadvantaged before the war, advanced. The size of the petty bourgeoisie also notably decreased. A large new working class emerged in the period of rapid industrialization. Youth from rural areas advanced socially. A new intelligentsia emerged, mainly from a peasant background, but often from the working class. By the end of the PRL period, each social group was dominated by persons who were but two or three generations removed from the village. The old elites were replaced by new authorities who governed the party and the state through a sizeable bureaucracy and the apparatus of repression. This elite was described as the "nomenklatura", a name which arose due to the practice of how the party issued opinions on candidates for senior positions in practically all institutions and organizations in the country (with the principle exception of Church structures and organizations associated with the Church).

In the initial period of the PRL the social structure was open, exhibiting high social mobility: it was possible and relatively easy for people from lower and underprivileged social classes to move to higher ones. However, this society of open recruitment began to gradually close together with the formation of normal (ability-based), rather than revolutionary, selection criteria. In the 1950s, 55% of university graduates came from worker and peasant families (35% and 20% respectively). These proportions began to notably change in the following decades. Therefore, special "affirmative action" preferences were introduced to increase the admittance of children from worker and peasant families to universities,

The social structure which was formed in the PRL period consisted of the following categories:

Workers: a group whose size continuously grew at a significant pace, in step with successive stages of the industrialization process. This group was described in statistics as physical labourers and later – as persons employed in worker positions.

Peasants: the group of farmers owning their own farms. The size of this group decreased, but at a rather slow pace.

Peasant-workers: the group of individual farmers who also worked outside agriculture. This was a numerous and durable group. Most of the owners of small farms commuted to work in state industries or lived in worker hostels during the week, and during their time off went back to the countryside.

White-collar workers: the group of employees carrying out management and office duties, later described in statistics and labour legislation as persons "employed in non-worker positions". The size of this group grew, but at a slower pace than the group of physical workers.

Self-employed outside agriculture: craftsmen and owners of small businesses. The size of this group did not exhibit a single, clear tendency. In the Stalinist period, this group was reduced significantly. Its size then grew dynamically at the end of the 1950s and stabilized in the 1960s. The group then began to grow again in the 1970s and 1980s.

Free professions: a group of persons with employment contracts, but due to their special (professional) skills and the degree of independence associated with it (also reflected in regulations on these professions), this group is listed separately in descriptions of the social structure.

but this did not reverse the trend. The process of the social structure's closing was becoming increasingly evident. Studies of social mobility indicate that in the 1980s, 60% of adult men in Poland had the same social position as their fathers (Cichomski, Domański, Pohoshi).

A notable feature of the social structure formed during the PRL was the phenomenon of decomposition. This means that one's social position did not correlate with prestige. This was particularly true for the intelligentsia, i.e., a significant part of white-collar workers and representatives of the free professions. For whereas those people enjoyed high social prestige, they did not earn more than workers. Income disparities between the intelligentsia and the national average began to decrease in the 1970s. While in 1973 the average earnings of employees with higher education amounted to 156% of the average salary in the

economy, by 1978 they declined to 127%, in 1980 they amounted to 110% and in 1981 they were a few percentage points below the average (Mokrzycki 1997:41).

Egalitarian tendencies were very strong in the first 25 years of the PRL. At that time, only the peasants' incomes were markedly lower than the average in the economy. The so-called income parity ratio of the peasant and worker population amounted to around 80%, meaning that average peasant incomes were 20% lower than average incomes of non-farm employees. In the 1970s a change in income proportions between social groups occurred. The peasants and the self-employed gained relative to other groups. Workers also gained. The income parity of the farmer population improved notably against the non-farmer population. Very high incomes emerged in the private non-farming sector. Studies on income disparities in the 1980s

showed that these were high in Poland and in Hungary (Beskid, Kolosi, Wnuk-Lipiński).

Below are the characteristics of selected social classes: workers, peasants, the intelligentsia and private entrepreneurs.

The working class

In the rhetoric of party and government authorities during the PRL period, workers constituted the most important group – the leading force. This was due to the fact that the communist party, called the workers' party, was *de facto* an "industrial party"⁶. In the final stage of communist industrialization in Poland (at the end of the 1970s), workers constituted around 60% of the workforce (7.9 of 11.6 million).

In the first stage of industrialization, workers were mainly recruited from rural areas. The old industrial working class, present primarily in Śląsk (Silesia), accounted for a small portion of this group. The social advancement of workers from rural areas was an undeniable achievement of the system at that time. However, their working and living conditions were far from satisfactory. Hence, despite the fact they were fed the party's ideology, they could not tolerate the measly salaries and harsh living conditions for long. As a result, communist industrialization led to strikes.

The structure of the workers' class began to change, especially due to the influence of education. The post-elementary education system was dominated by basic vocational schools. 60%-70% of graduates of elementary schools went on to vocational schools. As a result, today's middle-aged working population is dominated by persons with only basic vocational education (more than 50%). The group of workers was augmented by graduates of middle vocational schools called technical high schools. Neither vocational education nor adult education were of a high quality. Graduates lacked both general and humanistic knowledge, while their technical skills also failed to meet world standards.

The material situation of skilled workers improved primarily in the 1970s. However, many studies point to their very difficult living conditions. A significant group of workers did not have apartments (they commuted to work from the countryside or stayed in worker hotels), and those who did have their own flat lived in cramped conditions (Malinowski 1981). The difficult working and living conditions contributed to disease and addictions, and this resulted in a strikingly high mortality rate among men at a relatively low age (Okólski 1988).

Labour relations and conditions were a significant factor determining attitudes in this, the largest social group. Therefore, we shall take a look at the results of studies devoted to this issue.

The first conclusion, one stemming from analyses carried out in the late 1950s and early 1960s, is the workers' low quality of work. The planning and management of production in that period led to a preference for quantity over quality, which obstructed the prestige of solid workers who had learned their skills before the war. Meanwhile, those who approached their duties instrumentally, carried them out hurriedly, without concern for quality, were tolerated. A new presence, that of the "worker-loafer" emerged, someone unheard of before the war, who would drink vodka on the job, steal, perform sloppy work, etc.

The direct superiors of the workers (foremen) acted more as representatives of worker interests vis-a-vis factory managers, than actual supervisors of the work performed. This was a consequence of a number of diverse factors, including the system's imperative not to allow conflicts within enterprises. As a result, management by "integration" and solidarity, rather than by "conflict" became one of the basic features of the social constitution of enterprises (Doktór 1987). A good indicator of the harmonious relationship between the managers of most enterprises and workers is that of worker attitudes in the period of the wave of strikes in 1980-1981.

⁶ Milovan Đilas claimed that industrialization was the basic objective of Soviet communism.

Participation in strikes rarely resulted from conflict within enterprises: what is more, there was "a sort of a climate of cooperation and lack of clear hostility [between managers and workers]" (Rychard 1987:130). The most frequent cause of strikes at the time was that of were demands regarding external issues (i.e., the state and the party).

The principles of rational organization were disrupted in state enterprises at that time and replaced with regulations described as "informal-familiar". The presence of informal structures and protection strategies utilized by employees were not the invention of societies of state socialism. This phenomenon was well-known in stable democracies, but under the conditions of state socialism, it had spread immensely. The social order resulting from these regulations has been called "administrative-familiar" (Żukowski 1987: 300).

Among other features described in the social order was the informal exchange of services. The basis for these services was the command over the enterprise's resources. This command was held by a foreman who would decide on the division of materials and who would formally supervise the work. He could consent to the performance, using company tools and materials, of private work during normal working hours. In this way, complex networks of dependence emerged that tied production-line workers to their supervisors and middle management. In the 1980s managers in state enterprises would treat such private jobs ("fuchy") as a form of service in kind, one constituting a relatively fixed bonus on top of salaries (Gardawski, 1992). Despite the organizational chaos, irregularity of work, problems with tools and materials, poor safety and hygiene standards, workers usually felt rather content in state-owned enterprises. However, the emphasis on the quantity rather than quality of work, demoralising "private jobs", insufficient control – these were

⁷ Some researchers even expressed their surprise that such attitudes existed. However, it should be noted that the description of a Polish worker as one whose work is of poor standard does not find confirmation in studies of Poland's economic emigrants. Working in international groups, Polish workers perform very well, better than others.

⁸ For example, in the 1960s a law was introduced forbidding the division of farms (single heir); later followed a regulation allowing farms to be turned over to the state in return for a pension benefit.

phenomena which many workers did not approve of. Workers were aware of their situation and were expecting changes. Many of them wanted to "finally do decent work" (Gardawski 1992:86). Indeed, and in spite of all, many of them did do decent work⁷. Jacek Kuroń (Kuroń/Żakowski 1995) writes that the staff structure of socialist enterprises which he had visited as a member of KOR was quite diverse, both in terms of background and attitudes. 1/3 of the staff were so-called "company patriots", firmly rooted in the environment and caring about the good of their employer. Another 1/3 had an instrumental attitude. They worked for the enterprise only for as long as they were reaping evident benefits. They would often change jobs in search of higher salaries. These "nomads" lived in worker hotels, exhibited weakened ties to family, and displayed a marked quarrelsomeness. The re-mainder of the staff was that of new people, generally school graduates or newcomers from the village. In time, they joined one of the two pre-existing groups.

Workers from the first group were not distinct from foremen and engineers. They constituted the core of the new working class. They cared about the quality of their work and about operating rationally. For young leaders of employee unions in the 1980s, the improvement of the situation at work and the rationalization of organizational structures was the main mission. This is the group from which arose representatives of the worker elite and trade unionists.

Peasants

When Poland turned away from collectivization, there were 3.5 million farms with an average area of 4.5 hectares. The policies with regard to farming and the peasant population that were pursued in successive years by the PRL authorities led to a systematic increase in average farm size⁸. By the end of the 1970s there were 1 million fewer peasant farms, while their average size had grown to 6.5 hectares. In the 1980s this process slowed down somewhat as the profitability of farm production increased, farmers were brought

into the social insurance system and demand for food in a deficit economy was high and steady. In these circumstances, farmers were less inclined to cease farm production. In 1990 there were 2.1 million farms with an average size of 7.1 hectares. Only 6% of Poland's farms were larger than 15 hectares. Despite a visible improvement in the agrarian structure, the road to Western-style farming was very slow in the PRL.

Individual farming, which encompassed around 80% of farmland ("PGR" State Farms and farming cooperatives accounted for the remainder), performed important cushioning functions concerning food provisions and social crises at various stages of industrialization in the PRL. In the first period of industrialization farming was also an important source of capital formation, and throughout the period it supported the urban population with private transfers. Only in the 1970s and 1980s did peasant farms become beneficiaries of government policies, both directly, as well as indirectly (as a result of the inefficiency of state farms and state food-processing industries).

The policies of the PRL with regard to farming and peasants can well be described as instrumental. By allowing private ownership in this sector, the authorities exploited and discriminated against it in the division of investment outlays, as well as in the accessibility of the farming population to social services. A change of policy in the 1970s led to the emergence of a group of younger farmers who have been able to adapt to the requirements of the open market economy today. It is estimated that at the end of the 1980s this group accounted for between 1/5 and 1/3 of farms (Gorlach and Woś).

Peasant villages did not undergo anything resembling the modernization that cities did. For this reason, PRL industrialization is described as flawed modernization (Wilkin). The traditional peasant mentality, together with its telltale version of religiosity, was reinforced in rural Poland.

Intelligentsia

The 'intelligentsia' is the traditional term used to describe the educated social stratum earning its living from non-manual work.⁹ This is quite a diverse group, encompassing the elites in politics and public administration, officials, managers working in enterprises, and specialized professionals: engineers, medical staff, teachers, academics, lawyers, along with artists and the clergy.

The Polish intelligentsia came out of World War Two decimated by extermination, its part in uprisings, and in the fighting on various fronts of the war. Its surviving representatives numbered some 40% fewer than in the pre-war period – when even so the intelligentsia was but a small social stratum.

⁹ The term 'intelligentsia' also encompasses the unique function of this social category, resulting from its high level of education and social awareness. This is the function of social leadership, a mission of enlightenment, explanation and evaluation of events, as well as pointing to their desirable direction. The fulfillment of such a function called for a high level of integrity, broad horizons, selflessness and a willingness to make sacrifices. The Polish intelligentsia performed this function for many decades of the late 19th century and early 20th century, taking over some of the features and obligations of the landowner class. After World War Two, some of these groups continued to aspire to fulfill the mission of the intelligentsia. However, we shall not focus on this problem in this Social Report, as it far surpasses the assumed boundaries of our review of issues.

The communist system needed to conduct central planning and management activities, as well as to run enterprises, while at the same time it did not particularly trust the old intelligentsia. Therefore, the training of new staff began on a mass scale and at an accelerated pace. In order to emphasize the integration of the new intelligentsia with the remainder of the "working masses", this newly educated group was called the "working intelligentsia".

Management positions in factories were staffed by hastily trained workers, known as "work leaders", and by party members. Only engineers were recruited from the old intelligentsia, as it was not possible to swiftly educate the "industrial officers", as they were called. It should be admitted that the limitless possibilities of participation in the rebuilding and building of new industry were a strong attraction, one which won the support of many representatives of this community for the party. By the 1970s the managing staff of enterprises and engineers posed a coherent group. In fact, it was usually the engineers who ran public enterprises. In that period, too, the party again managed to seduce them, as foreign loans and new technologies offered them considerable room for attractive professional ventures.

In the initial PRL period, public administration officials were largely recruited externally, from outside the intelligentsia. Their skills, although enhanced by way of the adult education system, remained low. Nor were their salaries above the average, and over time they fell below those of skilled workers. With the possibility of material advancement blocked and their prestige dwindling, public officials felt increasingly frustrated and discouraged.

Representatives of what was previously known as the free professions were regular contractual employees in the socialist economy. Sometimes they would organize cooperatives, as did, for example, doctors, in the aim of providing services for persons not entitled to medical care – mainly peasant farmers. However, even these pseudo-cooperatives were controlled in the same way as public enterprises, in some instances even more stringently. The salaries of this

social group were humiliatingly low and outright bred systemic corruption. The recruitment of professionals was not based on meritocratic principles. For example, the influx of candidates to the teaching profession with time was tantamount to a negative selection process.

The spread of corruption in the socialist economy was associated with two key attributes of the socialist economy: shortages and salary egalitarianism. Under these conditions, corruption took the form of additional gratification for a rare commodity or service provided. This additional gratification was factored into the decisions made by communist authorities. "Doctors do not need to be given raises. They have given themselves raises on their own", was the thinking. The Hungarian sociologist Hankiss considered this one of the more perilous pathologies and lamented that the socialist economy inevitably increases the scope of corruption (Hankiss, 1996).

The intelligentsia also includes the political or power elite. In the PRL this meant the extensive *nomenklatura*. However, not all party members¹⁰ should be counted among the *nomenklatura*; moreover, it also embraced non-party members, i.e., people who held senior positions in the administration or in other structures of the state or public enterprises. This group is sometimes defined as also including party officials or "apparatchiks", although they can also be treated separately. Their salaries were not significantly higher than those of "civilian" employees, but they also enjoyed significant privileges, ones, however, which were not immediately noticeable. Because of the high attachment to egalitarianism among the workers, the apparatchiks' privileges were concealed. In spite of this, or perhaps because of this, hearsay spread about shops "behind yellow curtains" and special recreation centres only for apparatchiks.

Artists, academics and the highest tier of the clergy were a significant and influential group among the intelligentsia.

¹⁰ In the 1950s the PZPR had around 1.2 million members, in the 1960s their number increased to 2.3 million and in 1980 - the peak year – it reached 3.15 million members and candidates (Karpirski 1985).

After 1956, this group obtained a certain margin of freedom of activity which allowed them to develop their activities and practice their professions and arts relatively "normally", provided that they steered clear of "sensitive" topics. A significant indication of normality is seen in the possibilities to go abroad (expanded in the 1970s), especially to conferences and on scholarship. This group had the opportunity to participate in international training, competitions and joint undertakings. Even when ideological control was tightened, they would protect one another, not letting "purges" take place¹¹. This makes the situation in Poland considerably different from that observed in Czechoslovakia following the "Prague spring", when the opposition intelligentsia was effectively purged by forced job changes, expulsion from the capital, and in many cases even loss of the right to practice their profession.

The artists, academics and the highest tier of the clergy were the group of the Polish intelligentsia that constituted the "brain" of the political opposition¹² formed in the 1980s, despite the initial sympathies of many of its representatives for the communist transformation. They were also the group that paved the way for liberal ideology and acceptance of the market economy.

"Private initiative"

After World War Two, a brief three-year period of freedom for small and medium enterprise activity ensued that result-

¹¹ Although many intellectuals and artists did leave the country (particularly in 1968 and later during the martial law period), they were clearly encouraged to do so by the authorities. Nevertheless, these were not mass-scale purges, such as those taking place in Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, these people usually continued to work for the country, e.g., by supporting — to the extent they were able to — Polish communities.

¹² It would of course be an exaggeration to claim that intellectuals were a group totally in opposition - covertly or openly. There were also those among them who accepted the Polish version of communism in its declarative version and devoted much energy to improve (or to perfect, according to the official version) the system and fight its distortions. The downfall of the PRL, despite the restoration of independence, made them feel despondent because of the sense of a "wasted" life it engendered.

ed in a great number of private initiatives of various magnitude. However, after that period there ensued a period of widespread dispossession of entrepreneurs and the state's seizure of all private companies with economic or social significance. An acrimonious "war over trade" swept the country, leaving it with bloated state and pseudo-cooperative trading companies and a scant number of private grocery stores or small producers of lemonade or toys.

When the economy was divided into precisely defined segments in the 1950s (divisions, branches and sectors¹³ which became monopolies in their respective areas), the private sector also obtained its "monopoly". This was the monopoly for provision of those services for the population which state enterprises could not guarantee. (Domański, 1994). In time, relatively fixed forms of "private initiative" emerged, such as the "green market" (which tied farmers with private traders), industrial cultivation of fruit and plants, production of building materials, and decorative items. This led to the formation of a socialist "private initiative" class, together with its distinct ethos.

Private non-farm activity had two dimensions. On the one hand, in the deficit economy, private companies (even those which were technologically obsolete) reaped incommensurably high profits that allowed their owners to pay their employees well. "It is an irony that the group which, at the very basis of its existence, was always under threat by the ruling ideology and political system, was — on average — the most affluent segment of the social structure in Poland" (Domański, 1995). At the same time, the situation on the market did not compel entrepreneurs to behave innovatively, to modernize their stock of machinery, improve efficiency, and so on. There was no competitive pressure: the market had the features of a producer's market. On the other hand, the functioning of private producers was subject to strict constraints. Owners of private companies faced constant audits by the financial administration, which could always charge

¹³ In his "History of the PRL for beginners", Jacek Kuroń described this as communist corporatism (Kuroń, Zakowski, 1995).

extra taxes according to their whims and drive companies into bankruptcy. Owners of private businesses were therefore forced to give bribes, impose limits on their own activity and carry out mimicry. As a result, their surpluses could not be invested. Rather, they were spent to increase consumption on the part of company owners and their employees. Sociological analyses in the late 1960s and early 1970s into the behaviour of representatives of private initiative in local environments indicated that "they were masking themselves from public opinion (...) hence the phenomenon of non-ostentatious consumption and of fortunes accumulated thanks to the external inconspicuousness of owners" (Tyszka 1971).

Government policies with regard to this group taught businessmen a distinct type of resourcefulness, that of caution and corruption. At the same time, however, by no means did it reward genuine entrepreneurship. As a result, this led to attitudes which can be described as "cautiously resourceful" (Gardawski, 2001). "Cautiously resourceful" attitudes on the part of private initiative were to a large extent morally dubious and some sociologists even claimed: "it is not [...] true, that socialist 'private initiative' was an area where the spirit of capitalism was growing [...]. It was more of an area shaping mentalities and skills typical for small-scale, underground economic activities and the shadow economy" (Mokrzycki 1995). This was one of the reasons why this group did not develop into the frontrunners of the new private economy in the years 1988-1993. It was stuck in its market niches carved out over the years, afraid of undertaking new challenges in the open market economy.

The divide between "us and them"

The structure of traditional social ties and the permanent tendency of the communist authorities to become ever more distant contributed to a dichotomous and vertical perception of the social structure. This meant a division into two classes, one of which dominated and the other was dominated, one ruled and the other was ruled. "They" rule, "we" are sub-

ordinate. "They" are the alienated, socially unaccepted *no-menklatura*. In stable democratic societies the propensity to perceive the social structure in "us-them" categories is typical of classes with a low status. In Poland, this perception was also held by representatives of the intelligentsia. This was, of course, associated with the fact of the objective alienation of the power elites, which were not subject to social control and thus constituted the core of "them".

"Them" is the world of official institutions: the party structures, institutions of control and repression, local and government administration, legislative authorities imposing legal norms and judicial power. "Us" is the world of family and social ties, as well as of informal relations. "We" were focused on our own matters and were not much concerned with the authorities of that time. There were no institutional links between the family-social-informal structures, where everyday life took place, and the structures made up of the ruling class. One could say these were two separate worlds. There was no participation in power but for façades. "We" could rebel against the authorities, "we" could harbour expectations or claims against it, but "we" were taught against trying to influence the decision-making process within the political segment of social life. Power was perceived in zero-sum terms: either one has it – and thus has a decision-making monopoly, or one does not have it – and thus is completely deprived of any influence on the decision-making process. This way of perceiving power, natural in the situation of people having closed themselves in up family-social-informal niches, proved to be surprisingly lasting in Poland.

A society defining itself as "us" was defined by Stefan Nowak as a "federation" of family-social-informal groups. Within the framework of these groups, Poles showed a lot of resourcefulness, as well as an ability to conduct complicated trade in goods and services (often with disregard for the law). The situation was different in the official world. Mirosława Marody (1987) showed that a "learnt inability to solve problems" persisted there. Studies also pointed to a high degree of trust (a high level of "social capital", as we would say today) within family-social-informal groups, and a relatively

low level of trust for members of other groups and, of course, for the world of official institutions.

3. Attitudes, values, aspirations

Social studies, as well as publications and films, point to a few generalizations that can help in portraying the values and social attitudes evinced during the period of real socialism. The main characteristics of Polish society as formed in the PRL and described by sociologists include: informality, resourcefulness and group solidarity, religiosity, along with a "homo sovieticus" attitude towards the state and moral relativism with regard to theft and corruption.

These attitudes and values are connected with the perception of the social structure in the "us-them" terms described above. The most important consequence of this divide is the relativity of moral norms: the very behaviour that would be considered morally reproachable among "us", would not necessarily be so considered in relations with the official world. Taking or destroying public property was not always seen as theft in the setting, for example, of the workplace. Similarly, giving false account would not necessarily be described as lying. It was possible to be an unreliable and irresponsible employee and at the same time maintain a standing as a decent person among one's own.

Adam Podgórecki (1995) wrote of a characteristic "bottom-line survival attitude" which compelled Poles to strengthen their bonds with family, social and informal groups, i.e., in areas where a person could find support. Podgórecki pointed to the phenomenon of "a dirty community" that coalesced from the common pursuit of illegal objectives, the provision of small services to one another and private transactions. These transactions offered the opportunity of mutual black-

mail when the informal binding code of cooperation had been breached. A derivative of the "bottom-line survival attitude" was, he wrote, the attitude which approved the pragmatic norms necessary to achieve desired objectives and which allowed the breaking of a number of moral norms. Jadwiga Koralewicz (1979) spoke of a distinct, widespread model of practical values dominating over moral values: there emerged "a common acceptance for petty-scale cronyism and 'finagling', meaning the reliance upon informal connections in order to obtain certain goods or privileges present in formalized systems".

A typical characteristic of employees in socialism, particularly in the Polish model, was the creation of enclaves of friendly (i.e., cliquish) group relations. "Small" employee collectives were built on personal ties, the exchange of services and friendly gestures. While this made everyday work more pleasant, colleagues friendly and the boss tolerant, the clients and beneficiaries of the institutions where such small collectives materialized increasingly had the feeling that they were intruders. This was to be alleviated by enticing public officials, whether with flowers, chocolate or a promise of delivering something in exchange. Small collectives were not clear-cut and participation in them did not have the features of unpleasant obligation. They functioned in a very flexible manner, but at the same time they made up the life-blood of the society as a whole. Narojek described this phenomenon in the following way: "the distinct folklore of 'being one of us' saturates the entire culture of everyday life in post-war Poland, and it is accompanied by the belief that there is nothing that cannot be 'hustled' – one only needs to know how and through whom" (Narojek, 1991).

An important feature of Polish society as formed in the PRL years was the approval of egalitarianism – the principle of social equality. In stable market economy societies, the principle of equality, particularly in its extreme form as the premise of equal salaries, is held primarily by representatives of the lower social classes. The peculiarity of Poland, in turn, was that this equality was accepted not only by representatives of the lower classes of poorly educated people, but also

by the intelligentsia and students. At the same time, Poles accepted the idea of differentiating salaries according to the quantity and quality of work and a minimum degree of inequality; albeit at a smaller scale than observed in the 1970s. This made it possible to speak of the "moderate egalitarianism" of Polish society (Nowak, 1978).

Another feature of Polish society as shaped by real socialism is the "gimme" or claimant attitude towards state institutions. This attitude was explained by the late Father Professor Józef Tischner in terms of the negation of private property. In his view, it is the negation of private property which first formed a "thief-beggar" mentality and later, once private property had been restored, the inability to deal with it (one does not know "what it means to own a horse and how much it costs" – Tischner 1998). According to the renowned Catholic philosopher, what we are dealing with in transformation countries is a constructed type of human being whom he memorably called "homo sovieticus" (Tischner 1990). The "Soviet man" is not illiterate, but he does not know how to be enterprising on his own account. At the same time, he has considerable consumer aspirations. This is because private property was scorned in communism, but human needs were rhetorically upheld.

Economic literature in the 1970s also pointed to the problem of "excessive" consumer aspirations, but the explanation of this phenomenon tended in the direction of the impact of demonstrations (related to allowing contacts with the West) and the influence of the media, particularly television (Pajestka 1975, Ostrowski, Sadowski 1978).

The majority of Poles were constantly criticizing the socialist state for not satisfying important social needs to a sufficient degree, but for a long period of time this did not lead to the conclusion that it would be a good idea "to take matters into our own hands" through genuine social organizations. Although the ability to self-organize had always been one of the notable traits of Polish society, state socialism led to a significant erosion of that quality. Of course there were objective grounds for this: state socialism made it very diffi-

cult to undertake independent social initiatives, but claimant attitudes were particularly strong even in these conditions.

This does not mean, however, that Polish society then was deprived of its own organizations. Margins of autonomy had always existed in Poland, and were tolerated in the PRL both in view of toadying up to the West as well as in recognition of the need for a safety valve to offset social tensions. This margin of autonomy was also visible in the activity of a number of the social organizations (The Friends of Children Association – TPD, the Polish Committee for Social Assistance – PKPS, the Polish Red Cross). These could hardly be called NGOs (they were steadily subsidized by the state and controlled by the authorities through the *nomenklatura* system of staffing top positions), but they did independently perform a range of social tasks for disadvantaged and neglected children, the disabled and seriously ill, and dysfunctional families.

In addition, traditions of social activism proved very strong among the intelligentsia. During the PRL this was evidenced in the form of associations, professional organizations and clubs for enthusiasts of a host of types. However, in the case of Poland, these were not only associations of fishing enthusiasts or dog breeders, as was the case for our neighbours, notably the Czechs or Hungarians. The strongest were cultural associations (musical, or for enthusiasts of the culture of a particular region of the country) and professional organizations (grouping writers, librarians, architects, economists, etc.).

Sociological studies on the system of values of Polish society (Nowak 1991), carried out systematically from the late 1960s, brought researchers' attention to the lack of association within vertical social structures. Between the nation (a value which Poles widely adhered to) and the family there was a vacuum. It was later to turn out that this vacuum was filled relatively easily in the form of opposition against the communist state. The degree of society's organization under the circumstances of a proactive opposition proved relatively large and, in view of the crisis of the 1980s, it brought considerable social benefits.

This ease with which society organized itself at the end of the 1970s to help others and in opposition to the totalitarian regime, is interesting in the sense that it undermines the hypothesis advanced by Stefan Nowak, the renowned Polish sociologist, about the institutional vacuum between the family and the nation. Indeed it seems that researchers underestimated the thrusts of the "quiet social activity" (usually focused around the Church, but not only) on the part of clandestine, local and spontaneous movements (Hryniewicz, 2000 and Siellawa-Kolbowska 2002). Nor did the officially operating social organizations limit themselves only to what was written in their statutes and regulations. Various support networks became an existential necessity. The deficit economy, as well as the underdeveloped social services (the situation in Poland in this regard was incomparably worse than in neighbouring countries) forced individuals to be resourceful, to exchange services and to support one another.

Regardless of the various limitations put on the activity of social organizations during the PRL, most of them still continue their activities today. And though they now operate on the basis of new regulations, they maintain the infrastructure and staff resources acquired previously.

4. The balance sheet on state socialism

It is not an easy task to draw up a balance sheet for the period of 1945-1989. The problem is that any assessment drawn up after 15 years of having built up a market economy and democratic state can define only a handful of phenomena from the PRL as conducive, or not, to the new order. The majority of those phenomena has an equivocal nature: from one point of view they can be considered positive, from another negative. The legacy of the institutional past in many cases obstructs the construction of a new order. However, there are also numerous examples of solutions, thanks to which the continuation of modernizing tendencies is possible. One should not overlook (or forget) that the central planning experiment in Poland was also aimed at speeding up the country's developmental process in the aim of overcoming more than a century of imposed neglect. For Western countries, the 19th century was an era of industrialization and civilizational progress. For Poles, deprived of their own state, it was an era of exploitation, insurgence and repression. Poland's energetic attempt to build its own institutional order during the interwar period was brutally interrupted by the destruction of yet another world war.

The compilation below is an attempt at outlining the main benefits and drawbacks of the main features of real socialism in Poland in various areas of life and social activity. This compilation is no doubt incomplete. Therefore, readers can expand it for their own use.

The phenomena which may be classed as unequivocally positive include the material and educational advancement of representatives of the working class in the 1940s and 1950s, the housing construction programmes of that time, improvement in health care, etc. This is why so many leftist intellectuals, who were at the same time distant from communism, supported the new system to some extent.

Meanwhile, the clearly negative phenomena included the "cliquish" climate in enterprises, allowance for a flippant attitude to work, the embezzlement of state property for one's own purposes and doing "private jobs" at the workplace. The demoralization of work can certainly be considered one of the worst legacies of state socialism.

The "us/them" divide of society had an equivocal character. It turned out to be extremely important during society's rebellion against authoritarian power and greatly facilitated the rise of the ten-million strong "Solidarity" movement. On the other hand, however, it led to a very dangerous relativity of moral norms, it reinforced the belief that all power is alienated, made it difficult to build societal trust, and contributed to a lack of respect for all official institutions, including legal norms.

Similarly equivocal was the distinct type of social bond which made Poles close themselves in family ("familism"), social and informal circles, and generally isolate themselves from official institutions and organizations. This type of bond significantly strengthened the institution of the family, but on the other hand it separated family-social circles from the broader social context and made it more difficult later to create non-government organizations, entities that are so important for a civil society.

Another phenomenon of an ambiguous character concerned the strategic decisions made with regard to the peasants. Their class was protected from collectivization, but it was exploited and discriminated against in the division of national income and became stuck for almost half a century in the dead-end of an obsolete agrarian structure. Peasants evinced an everyday resourcefulness, but they lacked innovation and entrepreneurship. At the same time, the countryside was a source of private transfers, an enclave of normality, and a place where many traditions important to national culture were cultivated.

The legacy of the mentality formed as part of "trade tourism" was also ambiguous. In this case, individuals not only be-

came resourceful, but also learnt mercantile innovativeness and practical entrepreneurship. However, the price of this education was high, for many also learned to avoid and disregard the law (not only customs regulations). Nor are the consequences of the regularly recurring economic migration unequivocally positive. Aside from material benefits and experience with a different organization and different way of performing work, returning emigrants often become alienated from their local community. Living in two worlds, in fact they were socially integrated with neither of them.

Therefore, the period of state socialism cannot be described only as a murky one. For aside from the negatives, particularly the habit of disregard for the law, there were also benefits, the foremost of which is the constructive resourcefulness and entrepreneurship that characterize many Poles.

The social balance of real socialism

Areas	Benefits	Negatives
Human rights, civil freedoms, employee rights	Norms for individual employee rights were introduced and usually respected	Civil rights strongly constrained and controlled, repressions in the case of "disobedience". Norms of collective labour law strongly constrained and controlled
Education	Elimination of illiteracy, proliferation of elementary schooling, educational advancement of workers, development of adult education	Insufficient development of pre-school education, domination of middle vocational education, limiting of higher education
Culture	Financing of cultural activity from public funds, access to culture: libraries, culture centres, reading clubs in rural areas, development of film and theatre, as well as cabaret	Censorship and controlled staff
Work	Full employment, social activity of the workplace	Low efficiency, mismanagement of resources, political criteria of promotion
Material goods		Permanent deficit economy, failure to satisfy many needs, especially housing, devoting vast time and energy to obtaining goods, economic migration and trade
Social protection	Developed based on employment in the state economy, but later extended	For a long period, social protection only covered contract employees in the state sector, farmers received social insurance rights only in the late 1970s. Low levels of benefits, particularly pensions. High disparity of benefits: some groups (the privileged) and employees of large employers were offered more favourable terms
Family	Family policy only since the 1970s – introduction of favourable benefits and entitlements	Until the end of the 1960s, the family was not an object of social policy, collective institutions were more important, particularly those associated with the workplace
Free time	Development of employee holidays and camps for children	Controlling of forms of spending free time
Values and mentality	Mutual support in family-friendly circles and as part of some social organizations (including those of the Church). Friendliness (in fact, cliquishness) at work (small collectives). Resourcefulness and ability to adapt to difficult conditions, large household production	Homo-sovieticus features: Claimant-mendicant mentality and lack of respect for property; avoiding the law (cronyism, bribes, corruption)