4 From 'Economic Miracle' to the 'Sick Man of the Socialist Camp'

Poland and the West in the 1970s

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The 1970s were a particular decade in Polish history. In December 1970, an economic and political crisis resulting from price increases led to the dismissal of Władysław Gomułka as head of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) and the appointment of a new leadership. Edward Gierek's takeover of power symbolised a new beginning and hope for constructive reforms in Poland. Nevertheless, ten years later in August 1980, Gierek and his political agenda were also dismissed in a context of economic and political crisis. However, despite some similarities, Poland's situation in the summer of 1980 was very different to that before Christmas in 1970. Strikes were no longer spontaneous worker demonstrations but instead a coordinated cross-country movement supported by powerful dissident organisations. Moreover, this time the protesters demanded not only an improvement in economic and labour conditions but also human rights, such as freedom of speech, which the socialist regimes had committed to respecting in the Final Act of the CSCE, signed in August 1975. The economic situation which underlaid the political upheaval was additionally complicated by $22 billion in debts owed to Western creditors which had accumulated over the previous ten years. Unlike in 1970, the crisis could hardly be explained without considering Western influence or be handled independently of Western actors. The ties between socialist Poland and the capitalist world were the most irreversible outcome of Gierek's decade.

Despite the paramount impact which the unprecedented opening up towards the West had on the situation of the Polish socialist regime, it has rarely been studied as an independent phenomenon.[1] Instead, the historiography of the 1970s deals predominantly with the two crises, their origins and consequences.[2] The emphasis on revolts against the regime, however, results in a perception of political decisions, including those concerning economic and foreign policy, being solely responses to pressure from society. The strategy of the Polish socialist elite is therefore usually regarded as a constant balancing of claims by the population on the one hand and commands arriving from the Soviet Union on the other. However, looking at the socialist regimes from a comparative perspective allows the differences between national strategies to be highlighted and therefore the socialist elites to be rediscovered with their convictions, interpretations and goals as agents of the diversified trajectories of the Eastern European states in the 1970s.

This study contributes to this task by reconstructing the strategy of the Polish socialist elite and its dynamics between the 1970 and 1980 crises, a period marked by international détente and accelerating globalisation. While in these circumstances all the European socialist regimes increased their cooperation with the capitalist countries, aiming to improve their international and economic situations, Poland was not only the frontrunner in exchanges with the actors on the other side of the Iron Curtain but also was the country which ended the decade with the most spectacular economic and political crisis. As a consequence, in the Polish case, alongside scrutinising the motivations and expectations behind the policy of opening up, the question also arises concerning the exaggerated scale of this phenomenon.

This chapter argues that the opening towards the West was an outcome of the socialist elite's ambition. This sentiment, which was driven by the traditional Polish aspiration for international grandeur, was reinforced in the 1970s by confidence that the socialist state, even though unreformed, could experience an economic revival and that détente would remain a permanent feature of international relations. However, as problems accumulated, the groups of policymakers who shared these assumptions became increasingly small. The history of Poland in the 1970s is therefore not only a history of the escalating influence of Western actors on the domestic situation but also a history of internal decomposition caused by declining confidence and unity among the socialist elite.

Towards détente, the late 1960s

Poland was one of the socialist regimes most politically, economically and culturally linked with Western Europe before the Second World War. While during the Stalinist years these economic exchanges almost disappeared, unofficial ties persisted. Polish emigration, on a scale and with an influence unseen in the cases of the other socialist regimes, played an essential role in maintaining private and cultural connections with the other side of the Iron Curtain. In this sense, Polish society exerted persistent pressure on the leadership to open up and positively welcomed any sign of rapprochement between the two parts of the continent.

At the official level, a major revival of Polish cooperation with capitalist countries took place after 1953 thanks to the process of de-Stalinisation. The idea of a national way to socialism, which triumphed in 1956 with the takeover of power by Gomułka, who had been imprisoned between 1951 and 1954 under allegations of national deviation, allowed Poland to loosen its dependence on Moscow and enhance its activity in the international arena.[3] Relying on his initial massive domestic support, the new first secretary of the PUWP openly rejected Soviet pressure concerning, for instance, collectivisation, which eventually failed to cover more than 11% of the land overall.[4] His insubordinate position, however, often drove him into conflict with the Soviet Union, which did not hesitate to threaten Poland economically with cuts in the supply of resources.[5]

In this context, the idea of expanding relations with the capitalist countries emerged as a means of counterbalancing Poland's risky economic reliance on

Moscow. Aiming to secure room for independent manoeuvre through hard-currency income, Poland increased its exports of agricultural products and raw materials to the West. Gomułka considered the mining industry to be particularly important in guaranteeing Poland's international position. The focus on industrialisation but overlooking both innovation and domestic consumption, however, already in the mid-1960s resulted in economic stagnation. In this period, the Western countries appeared not only as recipients of Polish exports but also as an important source of new technology, and in some cases consumer products, which were repeatedly lacking in the domestic market. In order to facilitate these imports and the access of Polish goods to Western markets, in 1967 Poland joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), becoming the second socialist state in the organisation after Czechoslovakia. Similarly, in the late 1960s it reached bilateral trade agreements with France and the UK. In total, between 1966 and 1970, the level of economic exchange with the capitalist countries rose by around one third.[6]

Gomułka's opening up was, however, limited. Despite developing foreign trade, the level of exchange with capitalist countries was never intended to come close to that with the CMEA members, which were envisaged by the leadership as the main receivers of Polish exports and the main pillar of Polish economic development.[7] During the late 1960s, Poland, alongside Hungary, became a main advocate for a reform of the organisation and further economic integration between the socialist states.[8] The aversion of Gomułka's leadership towards engaging closer with Western countries was especially apparent in the case of foreign loans. In the late 1960s Polish indebtedness was among the lowest in Europe. During a meeting devoted to the difficult economic situation in early 1970, Gomułka and his closest collaborators fiercely rejected the possibility of taking Western credit, motivating this position with the risk of entering a trap of indebtedness or even 'walking on the leash of capitalism'.[9] Instead, the leadership aimed to improve the economic situation through balanced economic exchanges and increasingly severe austerity measures.

The reluctance to expand cooperation with capitalist countries was largely determined by unregulated political relations with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The lack of recognition of Poland's western border on the Oder-Nyssen line together with tragic memories of the Nazi occupation of Poland which were shared not only by the leadership but also the population fuelled the official antagonism towards West Germany and consequently Western Europe as a whole. Despite the establishment of a trade representation in Cologne in 1963, in this period Poland aimed to limit political rapprochement between the socialist countries and the FRG.[10] Instead, Gomułka lobbied for a security conference which would confirm the territorial status quo in Europe and which he considered a preliminary condition for European détente.[11]

Alongside the unresolved problem of the German border, the hesitance of the 1960s leadership concerning further expanding East-West cooperation is often associated with the first secretary himself, or more broadly with his generation, which then dominated the political structure. As is widely recognised, Gomułka's

leadership in the late 1960s was marked by authoritarian methods, a limited inflow of challenges to the line he imposed and a concentration of policymaking in the small circle of politburo members.[12] Furthermore, this group consisted primarily of communists who had been politically trained in the interwar period and who were shaped by both the experience of the Second Polish Republic, a state economically dependent on the West and classical Marxist thought in which economic accumulation was a necessary condition for political independence. They therefore remained reluctant to expand contacts with capitalist countries.

A generational change and a gradual inflow of younger politicians, whose political views already originated in socialist Poland, challenged the older communists' monopoly of power. The events of March 1968, when the anti-Zionist narrative of the socialist states related to the Arab-Israeli war was used as a tool for party purges, played a major role in this respect.[13] The anti-Semitic campaign aimed at older communists of Jewish origin led to the removal of around a third of the party and government elite.[14]

Moreover, the events of 1968 significantly damaged Gomułka's authority and allowed the rise of alternative factions within the party. The first of these, labelled 'partisans' and defending extreme national views such as strong hostility to West Germany, predominantly included party members linked with the secret services, most notably Mieczysław Moczar, a former minister of internal affairs. The other 'Silesians' gathered around Gierek, a politburo member widely known for a modernisation programme he executed as the regional party leader in Silesia. Unlike the majority of the socialist elite at the time, Gierek experienced his political formation in the communist parties of France and Belgium, where he grew up and worked as a miner.[15] His faction mostly attracted the regional PUWP apparatuses and the managerial elite.

The negative attitude of Gierek's supporters to the leadership in place had its source in Gomułka and his closest co-operators' strategy of 'selective development' of the late 1960s for the new five-year plan for 1971–75. This policy attempted to focus exclusively on a few branches of economic production and marginalised others, which naturally resulted in opposition coming from the unprivileged sectors. Among other losses, the groups related to these industries were supposed to have limited access to new Western technologies, which they traditionally demanded.[16] Tadeusz Wrzaszczyk, an engineer and the head of the Polish automobile industry association 'Polmo' in the late 1960s, was the most influential representative of these circles and became well known for his lobbying for the motorisation of Poland. Gomułka considered cars an unnecessary luxury good, contradictory to the very idea of socialism.[17] On the contrary, already in the late 1960s Gierek openly supported Wrzaszczyk's proposals.[18]

The question of motorisation became an emblematic battle over visions of the regime's future, attracting not only industrial managers and politicians but also experts in the state apparatus, above all in the Planning Commission, and in academic institutions such as the Main School of Planning and Statistics. Within these groups, the most open supporting voice arrived from Józef Pajestka, professor of economics and deputy chief of the Planning Commission since 1968.[19]

Not only did he advocate mass motorisation and point out its numerous strengths for the economy, but he also triggered a debate about the 'socialist model of consumption'.[20] This long-lasting discussion between party-related and more independent experts and also professional journalists increasingly revealed growing discontent with the economic austerity implemented in the late 1960s, pointing to shortages, low quality and the limited offer of accessible supplies.[21] Many of the economic experts participating in the debate, including Pajestka himself, advocated a policy of intensification of economic growth and technological modernisation which would move Poland towards a second phase of industrialisation in which the quality and modernity of production was expected to replace its quantity.[22] The Japanese model of fast modernisation through technology transfers was considered a possible example for Poland.[23] Postulates concerning modernisation, foreign technology and consumption often appeared on the pages of two weeklies: *Polityka* (Politics), edited since 1958 by Mieczysław Rakowski; and Życie i Nowoczesność (Life and Modernity), established in early 1970 and edited by Stefan Bratkowski. While both editors-in-chief were PUWP members and subject to censorship, their newspapers represented liberal and reformist outlets of the socialist elite.

Gomułka's policy was finally challenged by the détente agenda in Western Europe. In March 1969, several Western European leaders positively welcomed the Budapest Appeal for a European Security Conference issued by the socialist states. In September, the results of elections in the FRG brought the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) to power. The new chancellor, Willy Brandt, advocated a policy of bringing the two parts of the continent closer and among other things started negotiations with the Polish leadership on a bilateral treaty. This period witnessed a substantial change in attitudes to the FRG, and as a consequence to Western Europe as a whole, which found reflection in the party's theoretical monthly *Nowe Drogi* (New Paths). In late 1968 and early 1969, the journal still emphasised links between the US and the FRG and evidenced their 'imperial' and 'Cold War' aims.[24] By September 1970 Brandt's policy was classified as a force for peaceful coexistence.[25] Although the visible change in the official narrative might be interpreted as an effort to rationalise the ongoing negotiations with West Germany, it still signalled a major shift in the ideological framework of the Polish socialist regime, which traditionally legitimised itself with the threat of German revisionism. In this context, the treaty of 7 December 1970 in which FRG accepted Poland's western border on the Oder-Neisse line was widely recognised as a historical breakthrough.[26]

Gomułka and his closest collaborators expected this diplomatic success to improve their popularity and facilitate the austerity measures they planned to introduce a few days later.[27] On 12 December, the leadership increased the prices of basic alimentary products, most notably of meat. The decision led to social upheavals on a scale previously unseen in Poland's socialist history. Brutal suppression of workers' demonstrations in the coastal region executed by the army resulted in the dismissal of Gomułka and the appointment of Gierek as PUWP first secretary. This course of events, however, remains an object of historical debate. Views vary from opinions that Gierek did not expect to become first secretary

to opinions that he himself triggered the political crisis or that his victory was planned in advance in Moscow.[28] In any case, the dismissal of Gomułka and the arrival of Gierek might be seen as a reflection not only of political manoeuvring but also of ideas present in the party. The choice of him was a victory over other agendas popular among the socialist elite, in particular those represented by the nationalist "partisan" faction.

Despite developing foreign trade, Gomułka's leadership had remained hesitant about engaging more closely with capitalist states until the very end. However, the last years of the decade brought increasing challenges to the official policy arriving from the evolving international situation and from different groups among the socialist elite. Many arguments raised during that period signalled the direction of upcoming changes in the early 1970s.

A new ambitious strategy, 1971–72

In addition to the new first secretary, replacements of personnel in the party and the government took place which continued the generational change in the leadership initiated in 1968. In total, in 1971 ten of the sixteen members of the politburo lost their positions, as did half of the ministers and presidents of commissions in the government, in what has been labelled a 'revolutionary' reshuffle.[29]

However, while the manner and speed of personnel replacements might have had a revolutionary character, they did not foreshadow a revolutionary change in the political line. Despite the removal of Gomułka and his closest collaborators, still around half of the leadership, including Gierek, had been part of the previous cohort. This was also the case of the new prime minister, Piotr Jaroszewicz, who held this position throughout the 1970s. As vice prime minister and Polish representative to the CMEA for many years, Jaroszewicz was definitely not new to the socialist leadership. Similarly, Stefan Jędrychowski, a member of the government since 1945 and of the politburo since 1954, kept his position in the main decision-making bodies, first as minister of foreign affairs and after 1972 as minister of finance, as did Wojciech Jaruzelski, who had been active in the Polish army since the Second World War and became its general in 1956 and was minister of national defence and a member of the politburo throughout the 1970s. Although in 1971 Gierek marginalised Moczar within the leadership, many of his associates remained in place and acquired new positions. For instance, Franciszek Szlachcic, who was very influential in secret-service circles, joined the new politburo while Stefan Olszowski took over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in late 1971. The common characteristic of the majority of the newly promoted party and government members, including both those mentioned earlier, was their political training in the Union of Polish Youth, a formation inspired by the Soviet Komsomol which existed in the Stalinist period. Resulting from this education, younger members of the leadership often presented highly ideological attitudes.

Nonetheless, Western governments and media quickly labelled the new Polish leadership 'technocratic'.[30] Indeed, the renewed composition of the key political bodies brought to power engineers, academics and professionals in their fields.

Among others, this was the case of Wrzaszczyk, the new minister of machinery industry; Tadeusz Olechowski, who became minister of foreign trade after over twenty years of a professional career in foreign trade ventures and trade representations; Henryk Kisiel, who after serving at the National Bank for over twenty-five years first led the Trade Bank and then became minister of finance in the 1970s; and Pajestka, who had a position in the Planning Commission.

The professionalisation of the leadership was accompanied by institutional change. Already in January 1971, the politburo issued a document regarding a need for increased parliamentary activity.[31] This very early decision laid the ground for a rise in the government's influence, especially over economic matters, eventually marginalising the party apparatus in this respect. Given the overlap between the politburo and government members, at first glance this change might not appear relevant. Indeed, throughout the decade over a half of the politburo members also held ministerial positions. The leading role of the government, however, allowed the rise of people who had never pursued careers in the party structures, like Wrzaszczyk. The increase in government influence also meant a growth in the independence of particular ministries. Already in the first years of the 1970s, many of them officially widened their competences and therefore secured broader autonomy from the centre.[32]

Apart from improving existing institutions, the leadership aimed to establish new ones. In February 1971, the politburo decided to create a Commission for the Modernisation of the Economy and State Functioning – Szydlak's Commission, named after its supervisor, Jan Szydlak, one of Gierek's closest co-operators from Silesia. Over two hundred politicians, experts and professionals were gathered in ten different sections of the body to provide the party and government with effective solutions to tackle the most pressing problems. Also in 1971, for the first time in Polish socialist history the first secretary named a personal advisor. Zdzisław Rurarz was a graduate from the Main School of Planning and Statistics and a former employee of the Ministry of Foreign Trade with impressive international experience, including a career in Polish representation at Geneva dealing with the GATT and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

As is often stressed in testimonies from the decade, the new first secretary did not bring any ready-made programme but worked out a plan during his first year in power.[33] In this context, the increasing involvement of broader groups of the socialist elite became critical for the new agenda. Nevertheless, Polish historiography often dismisses the technocratic character of policymaking in the 1970s.[34] However, when compared with other socialist states such as Bulgaria and Hungary, where power was still concentrated in the hands of older generation communists, the new leadership and its governing methods stand out as unique.[35] The new management model was expected to improve the domestic situation and enable the successful implementation of a new agenda despite the principal ideological and personal continuities.

Already on 19 December, Gierek communicated a shift in economic strategy to the public by promising in a TV appearance to improve the quality of life. The

following day, the politburo decided to increase salaries and social benefits. These immediate actions were followed in January by a price freeze to the same level as before the 1970 rise. Further development of this agenda took place over the following year and resulted in a radical revision of the five-year plan for 1971–75 prepared by the previous leadership. Doubling the figures in the previous version, the new plan envisaged a rise in salaries of 18% and a 40% growth in consumption.[36]

Scholars usually see these decisions as an immediate response to the crisis and a means of securing social stability.[37] While this logic undoubtedly drove the immediate reactions and above all the cancellation of the price rise, it fails to explain the model of consumption proposed by the new leadership. Rather than efficiently improving the accessibility of foodstuff, as the protesters demanded in December 1970, the new five-year plan focused on enriching the supply of more sophisticated consumer goods, including electronics and machinery, thus responding to the postulates raised by experts in the late 1960s. Already in February 1971, the leadership started to explore the possibility of purchasing a licence to produce a widely accessible personal car, which materialised in a deal with Italian Fiat signed later in the year. Purchases of licences for many other consumer products including tape recorders, buses and colour TV sets followed. Given that the country was slowly emerging from economic turmoil, the decisions to initiate complex production and increase imports of machinery appear bold rather than necessary.

Moreover, the new model of consumption went further than improving the accessibility of goods. For example, the renewed five-year plan proposed a 17% rise in expenditure on tourism, leisure and sport.[38] Already in 1972, the leadership introduced the first free Saturdays and the annual number of them rose systematically through the decade.[39] The proposed model of life based on leisure, free time and the widespread accessibility of consumer products differed from that of the 1960s. As Rurarz recalls, he suggested to Gierek that he should call this programme a new official socialist doctrine of 'mass consumption'. The first secretary, however, objected to the proposal for ideological reasons.[40] Although since the 24th Congress of the CPSU the Soviet leadership had also aimed to improve the quality of life, it still regarded the concept of consumption as a capitalist state perversion. According to Rurarz, an article he wrote for *Nowe Drogi*, in which he praised the new consumption model, caused significant controversy among Soviet officials, who became sceptical about his advisory role to the first secretary.[41] In the article, he stated among other things that 'cars and comfortable apartments will become accessible for everyone. . . . To the mass tourism of those [Western] societies we will reply with our mass tourism'.[42]

Alongside improving the quality of life, the new leadership aimed to intensify economic growth and thus fulfil the ideological requirements of the socialist regimes concerning continual industrialisation. The revised five-year plan increased the envisaged 6% annual growth to 9%.[43] The document also dismissed the proposal for 'selective development' from the 1960s, instead introducing balanced growth in all sectors. Alongside the advancement of industries producing consumer goods,

the leadership initiated new investments in heavy industry. The most spectacular ones were in the Katowice Steelworks and the Gdańsk Refinery, both launched in 1971. Moreover, the government encouraged both new and more traditional industries to look for modern technology abroad.[44] The five-year plan named imports of Western technology one of the principal pillars of the new programme and recommended using licences to establish more long-term cooperation agreements with Western companies. The document assessed that the lack of ties with foreign industries had often limited Poland's production ability and recommended doubling expenditure on this kind of agreements.[45] The impetus of the modernisation programme of the early 1970s stimulated comparisons with the demanding first six-year plan implemented after the Second World War.[46] Moreover, the Japanese development model based on technology imports and intensified economic growth, which was praised by experts already in the late Gomułka period, explicitly resonated in official documents from the early 1970s.[47]

While the new leadership responded to pressures from regional PUWP apparatuses and the managerial elite securing the internal cohesion of the party, its proposals concerning intensified economic growth carried many risks. Combining intensified economic growth with a similarly ambitious rise in consumption violated the assumptions of the socialist economy, which regarded the simultaneous development of both as exclusive. Moreover, the experience of the previous decades spoke against exaggerated economic goals. The new plan also openly encouraged closer links with companies in the capitalist countries, disregarding the possibility of dependency on Western industries. Finally, in the post-crisis reality Polish accumulated capital was not sufficient to achieve these ambitious aims. From early 1971 onwards, it was clear that the new strategy critically depended on foreign loans.

The politburo explored Western credit opportunities immediately.[48] The new economic plan for 1971–75 was initially expected to allow Poland to extend its debt to 9 billion exchange złotys – over twice as much as was proposed in the late 1960s. A strong preference was given to investment credits, but consumption credits were also acceptable from 1971 onwards.[49] This policy encountered an especially strong backlash from the highly positioned members of the previous leadership, including Gomułka himself, who in an emotional letter to the PUWP Central Committee blamed the new leadership for 'eating from someone else's plate'.[50] On the other hand, according to testimony from Piotr Kostikow, head of the Polish department in the Central Committee of the CPSU, Moscow not only allowed but recommended the Polish leadership to look for credit opportunities in the West.[51] Undoubtedly, in the early years of the decade the Polish leadership informed Moscow about its economic plans concerning credits and regularly consulted on its political choices.[52]

Given the scale of the envisaged debt, long-term repayment schedules and the launch of costly new investments, the success of the new economic agenda was conditioned on efficient trade with the capitalist countries. The new five-year plan forecast a 57% increase in foreign trade volume, including 55% in exports.[53] These goals were not only already higher than those assumed in the late 1960s,

but also surprising given the experience of unfulfilled export promises in previous economic plans.[54]

While expecting an improvement in economic performance, the new agenda did not entail significant systemic reforms. As already mentioned, the newly established Commission for the Modernisation of the Economy and State Functioning was expected to propose more general changes in this respect. Its activity was, however, ideologically limited. As Szydlak, the head of the Commission, stated during a meeting, 'First of all, we will not be making any noise, any propaganda noise. As you all well know, comrades, we are under constant fire, both from within the country and from the outside, so we will not make any noise. Economic reforms are the least suited to propaganda noise'.[55] According to testimonies from the decade, ideological concerns constrained implementing proposals from the Commission.[56] Similarly, the idea of fashioning the Polish economic system on the Hungarian or Yugoslavian models, which had supporters among the socialist elite, remained at the level of unofficial debates.[57] In the aftermath of the suppression of the Prague Spring and the rise of the Brezhnev doctrine, reform of the system became a taboo for the Warsaw Pact members.[58]

Members of the leadership were well aware of the bold character of the new agenda. As Jaroszewicz framed it when referring to the new economic plan: 'We have to conclude that the plan is not smooth and easy. It is bold and ambitious and contains many difficulties and risks'.[59] During discussion on how to present the new agenda to society, Stanisław Trepczyński, a diplomat, highlighted that 'a big novelty is the vision of our industrial modernisation on a scale unseen before. This includes the question of foreign debt and licenses and other things which used to be a deadly sin to think of, and we are not afraid of them'.[60] Interestingly, the ambition and confidence underlying the new economic strategy were also expected to serve as a means of mobilising society and improving the popularity of the socialist elite. This logic stood behind famous propaganda slogans, such as 'Poland, the 10th global industrial power' and 'We are building a second Poland', which originated in that period.[61]

A bold international agenda accompanied the new five-year plan. The new guidelines for foreign policy expected Poland to become the most influential socialist state in Europe after the Soviet Union. The document considered Europe as a primary field of Polish diplomatic activity, identified the EEC as an important new actor in European politics and recommended expanding contacts with the body as well as improving the institutional apparatus working on integration processes. It also envisaged Poland having a critical role in shaping the CSCE.[62] The list of the first secretary's planned travels and visits by politicians to Poland reflected the launch of a new diplomatic offensive.[63] Apart from traditional channels, documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conceptualised economic relations as an integral part of foreign policy, describing them as a means of 'making détente irreversible'.[64]

In view of the traditional hostility between socialist and capitalist countries, the choices in the early years of the decade not only signalled the boldness of the leadership but also reflected the evolving perception of the international situation. Following the signing of a treaty with the FRG in December 1970, and especially

after its ratification by the Bundestag in May 1972, antagonism towards West Germany gradually disappeared from propaganda and foreign policy.[65] Moreover, official documents and academic publications associated Western European integration with a trend towards European 'emancipation from American hegemony'.[66] The ongoing talks preceding the CSCE, together with the increasing role of social democratic parties in Western European states, further fuelled the positive perception of the region as opposed to the US.[67] In this context, from the early 1970s not only the popular press and PUWP journals but also some official documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs started to refer to the Cold War as a phenomenon of the past, proclaiming a new era of peaceful coexistence whereby the superiority of one system over the other would be decided by its attractiveness.[68] Similarly, in academic party-related writings, the period between the end of the Second World War and the Polish-FRG treaty was depicted and historicised as a 'Cold War'.[69] In an interview with Gierek published in 1990, the first secretary himself confirmed that at the time he 'bet on the end of the Cold War'.[70]

The strong confidence in the attractiveness and success of the renewed domestic economic agenda and of the durability of détente in Europe allowed the leadership to introduce significant cultural liberalisation in the early 1970s. An immediate improvement in the traditionally problematic relationship between the PUWP and the Catholic Church became emblematic of the new approach.[71] Moreover, already in the first years of the decade, authors and artists banned from presenting their work publicly by the censorship received rehabilitation. An inflow of Western culture followed, including publications, films, arts and music. Also, the leadership substantially liberalised the passport policy and created a fund allowing Polish citizens to exchange a limited amount of domestic currency against foreign currencies at the official beneficial rate. This decision opened the door to an unprecedented number of visits to Western countries, which tripled within five years compared to 1971.[72] Except for Yugoslavia, which was known for its openness and broader individual freedoms, no socialist regime experienced such a cultural liberalisation in the détente period. The decisions enabling the inflow of Western culture and visits to the West are evidence not only of the belief that the system could stand up to domestic challenges but also that it could successfully sustain comparison with capitalism.

The Gierek leadership's first plan largely responded to the questions raised by different groups in the socialist elite already in the late 1960s. The new leadership took into consideration the demands of regional party apparatuses, the managerial elite and experts and lastingly increased the influence of these groups in policymaking, securing a unity of the socialist elite in a period of a shift in national strategy. The new technocratic approach and détente, which was assumed to be the permanent condition of international relations, drove the ambition underlying the new agenda for complex cooperation with the West.

External and domestic challenges, 1973–76

The 1970s are often referred to as a belle époque in socialist Poland's history.[73] This picture emerges predominantly from the first half of the decade, which

witnessed consistently rising wages and a substantial increase in consumption, which contributed to securing domestic stability. The policy of large investments also allowed accommodation of the children of the post-war demographic boom, who entered the job market during this period. Moreover, in 1975 the volume of foreign trade with capitalist countries tripled compared to 1970, fulfilling leadership's expectations from the beginning of the decade.[74] However, it quickly became apparent that while imports rose, exports remained quite modest, which made the repayment of loans more and more burdensome. Polish indebtedness in 1975 is estimated at around $11 billion. At the same time, however, the economic plan drawn up in 1971 foresaw that the 'investment harvest' would only come in the second half of the decade when all the new factories would start producing.[75]

The honeymoon in political relations with Western Europe accompanied promising results in the domestic economy. Gierek's command of French and German soon enabled him to establish personal relations with Western leaders and, alongside Nicolae Ceauşescu, pursue a 'policy of prestige'.[76] The diplomatic renewal was marked by numerous visits, such as trips by the first secretary to Paris in 1972, Brussels in 1973 and Bonn in 1975. Likewise, Western leaders including Richard Nixon, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and others visited Poland during that period. Preparation for the CSCE additionally drove the explosion of contacts with Western politicians. The first secretary's international activity brought an unprecedented quality change in official relations with Western partners and improved his domestic image.[77] The press widely described Gierek's international travels, portraying him as an influential global leader.[78]

These results in economic and foreign relations fuelled confidence in the early 1970s. As is pointed out in testimonies from the decade, the leadership was overwhelmed and surprised by its own success.[79] Positive assessment of the new policy also found reflection in support from the PUWP, which between 1970 and 1980 acquired 700,000 new members, reaching its maximum size, involving around 12% of the Polish population. This perception was also shared by both Eastern and Western observers. As Kostikow recalled, more and more people talked about a Polish 'economic miracle'.[80] Similarly, Western states competed for lucrative business opportunities in Poland, debating whether Gierek had found a 'magic key which unlocked the door to efficiency'.[81] In the circumstances of internal and external enthusiasm, the leadership did not perceive a revision of its strategy to be necessary.

At the same time, international developments in the 1970s accelerated Polish cooperation with the West. While Poland praised the Western European states for increasing their independence from the US, their proceeding integration posed a significant economic challenge for Poland. Unlike exporters of natural resources such as the Soviet Union and Romania, Polish exports to Western Europe consisted above all of agricultural products, the access of which to the EEC market was already limited in the 1960s with the introduction of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The enlargement of the Community to the UK, Poland's second biggest trading partner in the West, challenged Poland's export ability in 1973. The most important threat, however, concerned the Common Commercial Policy (CCP) envisaged for introduction in 1975, according to which trade agreements

could no longer be negotiated and signed with Western European states but had to be agreed with the European Commission instead. The EEC's intensified integration process clashed with Polish plans in the early 1970s based on large-scale exchanges and a vision of Pan-European cooperation.

In these circumstances, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Trade, two institutions primarily concerned with the EEC, responded by expanding the institutional apparatus monitoring developments in Western Europe, for instance by establishing a special unit in the Polish embassy in Brussels.[82] The general CMEA policy of non-recognition of the EEC, however, limited the actions of such institutions. In the period of increasing Western European integration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and associated experts became a source of pressure on the politburo and the government to regulate the relationship with the Community.[83]

Unwilling to depart from the unified socialist front, while lobbying alongside Hungary in Moscow for recognition of the EEC, the Polish leadership aimed instead at means to overcome the challenges posed by EEC integration, particularly before the introduction of the CCP in 1975.[84] As a consequence, the guidelines for Polish foreign policy assumed: 'Our goal is to maintain, as long as possible, bilateral relations with the EEC states, not allowing any interference by the Commission. In the short term, we should take advantage of these relations to mitigate harmful restrictive and discriminatory practices.'[85] Following this direction, Poland concluded economic agreements with eight out of nine members of the EEC before 1975, some for the first time since the Second World War. Moreover, looking for an alternative to the regional integration in Western Europe and for a space for interaction with the representatives of the officially unrecognised European Commission, Poland intensified its activity in international organisations, above all in the GATT and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The Polish leadership aimed for as many economic gains as possible before the further closure of the EEC markets. Although the EEC never planned to unify the terms of credits, reports from the Ministry of Foreign Trade suggested: 'We should expect that the EEC will aim to unify the terms of investment credits for socialist states, especially after 1974. We should take advantage of the time separating us from this moment to get indebted as much as possible with the EEC member states.'[86] A similar recommendation concerned establishing as many long-term cooperation agreements as possible, which if signed before the introduction of the CCP could still function on the terms in the original contracts.[87] This strategy of bypassing the EEC, however, often reached a dead end and direct unofficial contacts with representatives of the European Commission became inevitable. In the first half of the 1970s, alongside Hungary and Romania, Poland became a frontrunner in such practices among the CMEA members.[88]

Inflation in capitalist countries in the early 1970s, fuelled by the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and a stock market crash resulting from the oil embargo proclaimed by Arab petroleum countries in 1973, similarly accelerated Poland's engagement with the West. The leadership welcomed the difficulties of the capitalist states, quickly recognising the attractive financing conditions in which 'the

real prices of instalments are lower than initially assumed', and pushed for as many loans as possible.[89] Poland's position as a coal exporter only encouraged its confidence in its ability to take advantage of the turmoil in global resources.[90]

At the same time, the problem of energy supplies put Poland in a disadvantageous position with regard to the other socialist states. As the key producer of coal, it was obliged to sell more to the CMEA countries at set unfavourable prices.[91] This concern caused increasing scepticism over socialist economic integration, which in that period was also emerging over the unreformed model of economic exchanges still based on transferable roubles, which meant that Polish goods, which were often based on expensive foreign technology and contained parts imported from the West using hard currency, were sold for prices not corresponding to the production costs. This situation naturally led to privileging the West as a trading partner.

However, the oil crisis had another effect on Polish national strategy in the 1970s. Reports from the Planning Commission assumed the difficulties of the capitalist countries to be the reason behind insufficient Polish export revenues.[92] This argument was often used by Jaroszewicz when justifying his commitment to the economic agenda of the early 1970s. According to this logic, the moment the international economic situation improved, Polish trade exchanges would bring the expected results.[93] In this sense, the oil crisis not only speeded up Poland's opening towards the West but also blurred the picture of the domestic economic situation.

Not everyone in the new leadership, however, shared the mainstream interpretation of 'beneficial momentum' with regard to the first half of the 1970s. Reports produced by Minister of National Defence Jaruzelski warned against a positive assessment of Western Europe and the building of economic ties with the EEC states, recalling the continued existence of security dangers.[94] Similarly, some reports from the Planning Commission in 1974 advised a cut in expenditure and an economising of resources given the prospect of economic slowdown in global markets as a consequence of the oil crisis.[95] Minister of Finance Jędrychowski also insisted on a reversal of the economic strategy, which drove him into conflict with Jaroszewicz and resulted in his dismissal from the government in 1974.[96] The same trajectory was followed by Szlachcic, who openly warned the politburo against 'idealising credits' and 'slithering towards the West'.[97] He lost his influence soon afterwards and was removed from the leadership in 1975.[98]

Criticism of the official policy was also the reason behind the removal in 1973 of the original editorial board of the weekly *Life and Modernity*, which since early 1970 had consisted of members of the liberal side of the socialist elite and economic experts advocating reforms and modernisation. Moreover, already in late 1972, Rurarz, Gierek's personal advisor, resigned from his position and transferred back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In his own assessment, this change was motivated by profound disagreement over the economic choices made by the leadership.[99] He was quickly replaced with Paweł Bożyk, a professor at the Main School of Planning and Statistics and, like his predecessor, a specialist in foreign trade and international economics.

The mid-1970s also witnessed a decline of the Commission for the Modernisation of the Economy and State Functioning. While the majority of the proposals prepared by this institution remained unimplemented, the government established Huge Economic Units (WOG) in 1973 following a recommendation by the Commission. The new entities enjoyed unprecedently wide prerogatives. Not only were they exempt from the obligation to follow the central plan closely, but they could also decide on foreign trade deals and in some cases on the prices of goods produced.[100] The reform contributed to the general trend of widening the competences of specific ministries and industries initiated after Gierek's arrival in power, which made the coordination ability of the central institutions looser. Moreover, each industry and ministry behind it was primarily concerned with its own interests and constantly sought funding for new investments. The activity of Wrzaszczyk, the highly influential minister of machinery industry, best illustrates these practices, which were labelled 'investment pressure'.[101] Even though many of the newly initiated productions, such as the Fiat, turned out to be much costlier than initially assumed, he always successfully persuaded the rest of the leadership to provide more funds and launch further investments.[102]

Already before his removal, Szlachcic drew attention to the loss of coordination over the rising economic engagement with the West, above all credit-taking.[103] Ensuing efforts to increase party and government control over the matter, however, did not prevent a growing concern in the Soviet Union over the economic situation in Poland.[104] Signs of the Soviet preoccupation are often recalled in memoirs by the policymakers of the decade.[105] They also find illustration in the leadership's actions aiming to obscure the cooperation with the West, for instance by covering up official statistics which indicated that the level of economic exchange with capitalist countries already overtook that with the CMEA around 1975.[106] The Soviet Union's growing concern explains Gierek's symbolical gestures of subordination, which multiplied in that period. In 1974 the first secretary honoured Leonid Brezhnev with the Virtuti Militari, the highest Polish military award. Moreover, a year later he announced plans to incorporate into the constitution a new article proclaiming a timeless alliance with the Soviet Union.

These actions triggered the unification of the opposition-minded intellectuals, who in early 1976 issued a 'Letter of 59' protesting against changes in the constitution and calling for respect for citizens' rights. The signatories directly referred to the Final Act of the CSCE signed in Helsinki in August 1975, which acknowledged these prerogatives. The leadership strongly condemned the protest and accordingly proceeded with its initial plans despite the objections raised.

In late 1975, alongside revising the constitution the government launched work on the new economic plan for 1976–80. Driven by Poland's positive achievements and regardless of the increasing domestic scepticism and worrying external developments, the document predicted a boom in exports and modern high-quality production and therefore established intensified growth and improvement in the quality of life as the main economic goals for the following five years.[107] Similarly, with the peak of European détente marked by the CSCE Final Act, the leadership did not anticipate a reversal of the positive international trends. As in the case

of economic policy, the guidelines for foreign policy for 1976 remained largely untouched.[108]

Securing the status quo, 1976–80

The second half of the 1970s brought to the fore the previously marginalised negative outcomes of Gierek's policy. The existing price freeze combined with rising wages, which in 1976 were double those of 1970, resulted in repeated shortages and often made it necessary to import basic agricultural products from the West. Aiming to restore equilibrium, in June 1976 Jaroszewicz announced price rises. Gierek is reported to have expected that the population would support the leadership and its agenda and understand the necessity of the decision.[109] Instead, the new prices triggered mass protests, especially in Radom and Ursus, where the police brutally intervened, injuring some of the participants. This negative reaction resulted in an immediate cancellation of the decision.[110] Social stability had been one of the key features of the early 1970s, and the leadership wanted to secure it at any price.

An alarming report issued after these events by the Planning Commission in cooperation with Bożyk exposed the state of the Polish economy. It revealed expenditure was around 20% higher than income and that the debts accumulated over the previous years already consumed 44% of export revenue, a figure that would probably rise to more than 60% in the next two years. It stated that exports were often rejected due to their disappointing quality and were growing insufficiently, while imports, which were necessary for continuing production in many sectors, were rising rapidly. The authors firmly recommended drastically cutting the number of new investments, improving centralised control and accelerating exports.[111] These recommendations laid the ground for a revision of the draft five-year plan prepared in 1975, which was labelled an 'economic manoeuvre'. By slowing down the negative trends, the leadership aimed to put the original agenda on hold rather than drastically reversing it. This strategy, based on the hope of a sudden improvement in Polish performance, continued until the end of the decade.

However, even the limited changes in economic policy quickly proved difficult to implement in practice. The 'open plan' idea aiming to improve the leadership's flexibility in reality only facilitated unforeseen expenditure. Moreover, a partial cancellation of the WOG reform in 1976, which was part of the programme to reinforce central control, did not put an end to 'investment pressure'. Representatives of the managerial elite still often managed to successfully persuade the leadership to grant more funds.[112] Preserving the unity of the socialist elite by avoiding discontentment among these groups became another feature of the policy to maintain the status quo.

The continuation of exchanges with the West was critical to maintain the favourable situation of the early 1970s, and the leadership interpreted international developments as not foreshadowing any change. Elections in the FRG in October 1976 confirmed the SDP in power, thus removing concerns about a

reversal of Ostpolitik. Moreover, despite increasing awareness among the Western states and banks about the real state of the Polish economy after the 1976 crisis, foreign loans continued to flow in to Poland.[113] These developments confirming the durability of détente enabled and encouraged the Polish leadership's passive policy in the second half of the 1970s.

At the same time, however, its actions following the price rises contributed to a deterioration in East-West relations. Despite the fact that the scale of repression in 1976 was much less severe than in 1970, it substantially undermined the peaceful image of the leadership. The persecution of demonstration participants, which included lay-offs and imprisonment, raised the attention of the opposition-minded intellectuals who had already been active on the occasion of the 'Letter of 59'. A Workers Defence Committee (KOR) was officially established in September 1976 with the aim of supporting the families harmed by the repression both financially and legally. This continually growing group and others that originated in that period became permanent actors on the political landscape in the second half of the 1970s.[114] Although only the US officially linked the stream of loans with respect for human rights, Western European politicians also regularly inquired about the KOR and the situation of dissidents.[115] Fearing an end of détente and economic exchanges with the West, policymakers tolerated the dissident activity.[116] As Rakowski stated in his memoirs, 'A few words from Giscard d'Estaing . . . would be enough to let everyone out of prison'.[117]

The events of 1976 and the following rise of the dissident movement triggered concerns not only in the West but also in the East. As memoirs of the decade recall, the Soviet Union frequently urged the Polish leadership to regulate the domestic economic and political situation.[118] In addition, the other socialist states became anxious about possible contagion by the Polish situation and annoyed about often unfulfilled export promises.[119] As a result, from 1976 the Soviet Union increased its scrutiny of the socialist regimes.[120] The rising concern and involvement of Western and Eastern actors limited the independence of the Polish leadership, confirming its passivity.

The external developments further harmed Poland's economic situation. After the implementation of the CCP, the EEC introduced new regulations negatively impacting Poland's steel exports and its access to fisheries in the Baltic Sea.[121] In addition, the continuing slowdown of the international economy caused by the oil crisis limited the access of Polish exports to Western markets. Against the expectations of the mid-1970s, the cost of servicing foreign debt increased as a result of Western countries defending their currencies with high interest rates.[122] Moreover, many energy-intensive Polish industries experienced unforeseen costs as a consequence of energy price rises, especially after the oil crisis in 1979 caused by the Iranian revolution. If that was not enough, in the second half of the decade Poland suffered adverse meteorological conditions. In particular in 1979, a "winter of the century" and a devastating drought during the summer resulted in agricultural difficulties and unexpected energy consumption.

These developments and the lack of decisive action by the Polish leadership accelerated the negative trends. Apart from the constantly worsening quality of

everyday life and burdensome shortages, the suspension of many investments resulted in massive depreciation. Meanwhile the debts kept rising and reached over $20 billion in 1979, which made Poland the most indebted socialist state in Europe. In these circumstances, Polish economic problems were 'on the lips of all the [PUWP] members'.[123] A rise in Cold War tensions due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 fuelled and polarised internal debates.

On the one hand, the economic crisis pushed Poland closer to the Soviet Union, which to some members of the socialist elite appeared as the only remedy to the situation. This group included the former minister of foreign affairs, Olszowski, who according to Rakowski's journals already stated in 1976 that 'in order to leave the crisis we need to rely on Moscow. There is no other choice'.[124] Jaruzelski and Stanisław Kania, the politburo member responsible for the security services, also shared this view. Together with Olszowski, they became the strongest opponents of Gierek's policy and the most prominent candidates to replace him.[125] However, Moscow signalled to Polish interlocutors that the idea of a 'Soviet umbrella' over the Polish economy was misplaced.[126] Soviet engagement in Afghanistan only lowered the chance of it providing economic support.

Meanwhile, expert bodies suggested a more profound reform of the system, an improvement of export capacity and an easing of the increasingly burdensome loan instalments through cooperation with Western institutions. Reports issued by the team of experts gathered by Bożyk unequivocally insisted on joining the IMF and the World Bank.[127] Similarly, bankers and representatives of the Ministry of Finance, who in this period acquired unprecedented importance as they were at the forefront of securing Polish economic stability, advocated the solution of negotiations with creditors and participation in Western economic institutions.[128] Experts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Rurarz, who since the early 1970s had called for regulation of the relationship with the EEC, in this period explicitly emphasised the positive economic and political consequences that could flow from recognition of the organisation.[129] Despite these recommendations, both joining the IMF and the World Bank and establishing official relations with the EEC remained impossible due to the position of Moscow.[130]

Despite the pressure, the leadership, which was increasingly concentrated in small group around the first secretary, still hoped to continue balancing between the West and the East and to handle the crisis independently. While a meeting between Giscard d'Estaing and Brezhnev in Warsaw in May 1980 aimed to preserve the favourable international circumstances, a rise in the prices of basic alimentary products in June was the last attempt to cure the Polish economy.

The decision triggered massive strikes, especially in the coastal region, which eventually led to the creation of the independent self-governing labour union Solidarity and an unprecedented rise of civil society. While the price rise was the spark for the protest, historiography concerning the origins of the phenomenon shows longer structural developments. Despite the daily worsening of the economic situation, propaganda continually proclaimed spectacular successes, which contributed to the frustration in society.[131] Moreover, in 1978 Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected pope of the Catholic Church. Pope John Paul II

became a symbol of the strength of the Polish church and an important counter authority to the socialist leadership. His official visit to Poland in 1979 played a major role in the mass mobilisation.[132] Finally, scholars studying Solidarity also agree on the paramount importance of the economic agenda established in the early 1970s. The new consumption model elevated social expectations which were still unfulfilled in the late 1970s, more prevalent visits to the West brought frustration with domestic living standards and liberalisation created space for the rise of alternative culture centres and organisations; all jointly paved the way for the rise of civil society.[133]

The 1970s ended with a consolidation of workers, the church and the opposition, and the PUWP experienced a profound crisis. Already in early 1980, Jaroszewicz lost his position, being blamed for the economic decline. Facing mass protests in the summer of the same year, the vulnerable leadership agreed to twenty-one demands formulated by Solidarity, thereby confirming its legal existence. The event triggered the replacement of Gierek and his closest collaborators such as Wrzaszczyk and Szydlak. Kania acquired the first secretary position, acting (as is often stressed) under the influence of Jaruzelski, who took over the prime minister's office in early 1981 and after a few months became head of the PUWP. After a party convention in July 1981, only four previous members remained in the politburo and none of the ministers from Jaroszewicz's government secured their positions. The critical economic situation also affected the regional party apparatuses and the managerial elite, preventing these groups from initiating new investments or even modernising and completing old ones. Similarly, widely marginalised leading experts retreated from political life to academia, as in the case of Pajestka; emigrated to the West, as in the case of Rurarz; or joined the opposition, as in the case of Bratkowski. Between 1980 and 1981, a period described as the "carnival of Solidarity", over 300,000 members officially left the PUWP.

The events in Poland in 1980 caused not only an internal crisis among the socialist elite but also a deterioration in Polish relations with both the East and the West. On the one hand, since the rise of Solidarity a threat of a Warsaw Pact intervention in Poland hung over the PUWP leadership. On the other hand, from the Western European perspective, the consolidation of the opposition challenged the policy of close cooperation with the socialist leadership. From the summer of 1980, Western states maintained relations with both the official Polish representatives and the opposition, regarding Poland as the 'sick man of the socialist bloc' which could be used to undermine socialist unity.[134] The tragic financial situation resulted in the launch of multilateral talks concerning rescheduling Polish debts in Paris and London clubs gathering the creditors. Facing these institutions in March 1981, Polish representatives declared that the country was insolvent.[135]

The new circumstances terminated the peaceful coexistence as envisaged by the Polish leadership in the early 1970s and put a radically polarised choice in front of Poland. The introduction of martial law in 1981 epitomised a short turn towards the East, which hardly helped the domestic situation. Economic support from Moscow was limited, and the suspension of foreign debt repayments further aggravated the economic situation. The socialist elite was left in no doubt that the remedy to Poland's problems lay in the West.

Conclusions

The ambition of the leadership in the early years of the 1970s plays a paramount role in understanding of the subsequent developments in socialist Poland. In fact, the scale of the confidence underlying the agenda at the beginning of the decade was in proportion to the scale of the crisis which ended it. In the early 1980s, unlike in the late 1960s, the accelerating problems could hardly be resolved with personnel replacements in the party and the government. Poland's dependence on both the West and the East and the rise of civil society permanently limited leadership's room for independent manoeuvre. Moreover, the socialist elite never recovered from internal decomposition caused not only by the bankruptcy of the regime and the rise of alternative authorities but also by increasingly diversified views and declining confidence. Frequent personnel reshufflings characterised the leadership in the 1980s. Moreover, socialist Poland never pursued such an ambitious economic and foreign strategy again. Gierek's leadership was the last one to believe that the system could experience revival without profound economic reforms implying marketisation and moving further away from the Soviet model.

In comparison with the other socialist regimes, the Polish strategy in the 1970s had some important particularities. The significant cultural liberalisation and the tolerance of dissident activity in the second half of the decade had no equivalent in the other socialist countries. At the same time, the Polish trajectory in the 1970s shares some important similarities with the GDR and Hungary, where the ruling elites also focused on rising living standards and consumption. All three – Hungary with its special economic system and unreformed Poland and the GDR – found themselves on the edge of economic collapse at the end of the 1970s. With debts exceeding $22 billion in 1980 – more than Hungary's and the GDR's debts combined – and with Solidarity disqualifying the possibility of introducing austerity measures as in Romania, Poland was the only socialist state to default.[136]

Assessments of Polish policy in the 1970s vary between two positions. According to most contemporary Polish historians, the agenda was misplaced and rooted in the incompetence and short-term thinking of the Polish socialist elite. In contrast, the participants in the events, including politicians and experts, instead blame external factors and the lack of central coordination of economic matters. The answer to this dilemma lies in the middle. On the one hand, the Polish leadership successfully tackled some challenges of the 1970s such as the demographic boom, modernised Poland's industry on a scale incomparable with the 1960s and 1980s and effectively participated in easing Cold War tensions. Moreover, Gierek's policy mirrored the modernisation efforts and credit practices not only of other socialist states but also of other peripheral countries around the world. In the case of Poland, however, the strategy was characterised by overconfidence and misinterpretation. Assumptions regarding the termination of the Cold War underlying the ambitious planning of the early 1970s and expectations concerning the consequences of the oil crisis and Western European integration accelerated the negative outcomes of the decade. As the leadership nevertheless continued the policy of the early 1970s, the external factors were not the only ones to blame for the regime's evident decline in the early 1980s and fall at the end of the decade.

Notes

1 For general studies on Poland's history in the 1970s, see Kemp-Welch, *Poland under communism*, 180–236; Paczkowski, *The spring will be ours*, 351–410; Eisler, *Czterdzieści pięć lat*, 287–352.
2 E.g. Paczkowski, *Revolution and counterrevolution in Poland*; Friszke, *Rewolucja Solidarności 1980–1981*; Eisler, *Grudzień 1970*. On critiques of this approach and the cultural turn in Polish historiography, see Fidelis, "Pleasures and perils of socialist modernity," 1–12; Zaremba and Brzostek, "Polska 1956–1976," 25–37.
3 On Gomułka, see Prażmowska, *Władysław Gomułka*; Eisler, *Siedmiu Wspaniałych*, 167–252. On Poland in 1956, see Machcewicz, *Rebelious satelite*; Skrzypek, *Dyplomatyczne dzieje PRL*, 15–97.
4 Jarosz, "The collectivization of agriculture in Poland," 113.
5 Skrzypek, *Mechanizmy autonomii*, 65–312.
6 Jasiński, *Bliżej centrum czy na peryferiach?*, 231.
7 Archiwum Akt Nowyth (AAN – Central Archives of Modern Records), KC PZPR 1354, III/51, "Stenogram XI plenarnego posiedzenia KC PZPR" (Minutes of the 11th PUWP Plenary Session), 27–28 February 1968, 304.
8 Kansikas, *Socialist countries face the European Community*, 59–92; See Chapter 3 by Pál Germuska in this book.
9 AAN, KC PZPR 1354, XI/186, "Stenogram narady członków BP i sekretariatu KC z I sekretarzami KW i kierownikami wydziałów KC oraz członków Rady Ministrów i Prezydium Komisji Planowania" (Minutes of the PUWP and government meeting), 16 April 1970, 256.
10 On Poland and FRG, see Stokłosa, *Polen und die deutsche Ostpolitik*; Jarząbek, *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*.
11 Jarząbek, "Hope and reality," 6.
12 Namiotkiewicz, *Byłem sekretarzem Gomułki*, 80; Tejchma, *Pożegnanie z władzą*, 81 and 89; Bobrowski, "Na to nas nie stać . . .," 190–1.
13 On 1968 in Poland, see Eisler, "March 1968 in Poland," 237–52; Stola, *Kampania antysyjonistyczna w Polsce 1967–1968*.
14 Szumiło, "Pomarcowa wymiana kadr-elita PZPR w latach 1968–1970," 528.
15 On Gierek, see Eisler, *Siedmiu Wspaniałych*, 253–312.
16 Dwilewicz, "Reformy Bolesława Jaszczuka,"107.
17 Rakowski, *Dzienniki 1958–1962*, 124; Rakowski, *Dzienniki 1969–1971*, 266; Rurarz, *Byłem doradcą Gierka*, 113.
18 Rakowski, *Dzienniki 1969–1971*, 52.
19 Józef Pajestka, "O społeczno-kulturową koncepcję motoryzacji," *Polityka* 2 (1969): 3.
20 Józef Pajestka, "Problemy polityki strukturalnej konsumpcji na obecnym etapie rozwoju," *Nowe Drogi* 10:245 (1969): 12–29; Józef Pajestka, "Smalec czy garsonka?," *Polityka* 38 (1969): 1 and 5.
21 See the summary of the debate: "Kierunki kształtowania struktury konsumpcji," *Życie Gospodarcze* 10–11:964–5 (1970): 2–4.
22 E.g. Józef Pajestka, "Na nowym etapie postępu," *Życie gospodarcze* 22:872 (1968).
23 Włodzimierz Wowczuk, 'Japonia. Kulisy dynamicznego rozwoju', *Życie Gospodarcze* 14:864 (1968): 11.
24 Marian Naszkowski, "Na widowni międzynarodowej," *Nowe Drogi* 10:233 (1968): 114; Marian Naszkowski, "Na widowni międzynarodowej," *Nowe Drogi* 3:238 (1969): 40; Marian Naszkowski, "Na widowni międzynarodowej," *Nowe Drogi* 4:239 (1969): 65.
25 Marian Naszkowski, "Na widowni międzynarodowej," 9:256 (1970): 74.
26 Westad, "Beginnings of the end," 68–81.
27 Eisler, *Grudzień 1970*, 59.
28 For debates on Gierek's arrival in power, see Szumiło, "Rozmowy Edwarda Gierka," 315–36; Eisler, *Grudzień 1970*, 282–93.

29 Szumiło, "Kierownictwo PZPR w latach 1971–1980," 32.
30 E.g. "Poland's new leader," *New York Times*, 21 December 1970, 15; Adam Bromke, "Beyond the Gomulka era," *Foreign Affairs* 49:3 (1971): 480–90; Adam Bromke, "Poland under Gierek. A new political style," *Problems of Communism* 21:5 (1972): 1–19.
31 AAN, KC PZPR 1354, V/91, "Wnioski w sprawie aktywizacji funkcji Sejmu" (calls for increase in parliamentary activity), 25 January 1971.
32 E.g. AAN, URM 290, 5.4/22, "Projekt rozporządzenia Rady Ministrów w sprawie zakresu działania Ministra Handlu Zagranicznego i jego uprawnień w dziedzinie koordynacji stosunków gospodarczych z zagranicą" (draft decision concerning competences of the Minister of Foreign Trade), 9 July 1971.
33 Bożyk, *Apokalipsa według Pawła*, 34; Waszczuk, *Biografia niezlustrowana*, 33.
34 Dwilewicz, "Rola ekspertów," 7–46.
35 See Chapter 7 by Elitza Stanoeva and Chapter 3 by Pál Germuska in this book.
36 AAN, KC PZPR 1354, V/100, "Główne propozycje, zadania i problem projektu planu 5-letniego na lata 1971–1975-plan podstawowy" (main tasks of five-year plan), Planning Commission, accepted by the politburo, 15 February 1972, 4.
37 E.g. Dwilewicz, "Polityka gospodarcza," 333–53; Jarząbek, "Polish economic policy," 298.
38 "Główne propozycje," 14.
39 Council of State decision no. 203, 20 July 1972, accessed February 2020, http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19720290203/O/D19720203.pdf.
40 Rurarz, *Byłem doradcą*, 157.
41 Rurarz, *Byłem doradcą*, 162-3.
42 Zdzisław Rurarz, "Przesłanki przyspieszonego rozwoju kraju," *Nowe Drogi* 10:281 (1972): 137.
43 "Główne propozycje," 3.
44 AAN, URM 290, 5.4/20, "Zamierzenia w zakresie polityki licencyjnej w latach 1971–1975 na tle dotychczasowych wyników wykorzystania zakupów licencyjnych w krajach kapitalistycznych" (plans concerning license policy), Committee of Science and Technology, accepted by the government, 14 May 1971.
45 "Główne propozycje," 17.
46 Eisler, *Czterdzieści pięć lat*, 293.
47 AAN, KC PZPR 1354, XIA/1172, "Koncepcje Rozwoju Gospodarczego Polski w latach 1971–1995" (concepts of Poland's economic development), Rurarz's report for Gierek, 24.
48 AAN, KC PZPR 1354, V/90, "Protokół nr 24 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego" (Protocol from the politburo meeting), 29 December 1970, 3.
49 AAN, KC PZPR 1354, V/92, "Notatka w sprawie kierunkowych założeń rozwoju gospodarki narodowej w latach 1971–1975" (memo on the direction of Poland's economic development), Planning Commission, accepted by the politburo, 16 April 1971, 9.
50 AAN, KC PZPR 1354, V/93, Gomułka's letter to PUWP Central Committee, 27 March 1971, 25.
51 Kostikow and Roliński, *Widziane z Kremla*, 152.
52 On Poland and the Soviet Union in the 1970s, see Szumski, "Leonid Brezhnev and Edward Gierek," 253–86; Borodziej, "Polskie peryferie polityki," 51–72; Skrzypek, *Mechanizmy klientelizmu*, 119–221.
53 "Notatka w sprawie kierunkowych," 8.
54 AAN, KC PZPR 1354, V/90, "Podstawowe założenia projektu Narodowego Planu Gospodarczego na 1971" (economic plan proposal), Planning Commission, accepted by the politburo, 30 October 1970, 3.
55 AAN, KC PZPR 1354, XIA/415, "Dyskusja na posiedzeniu Komisji Partyjno-Rządowej d/s usprawnienia gospodarki narodowej" (Minutes from the Commission for the Modernisation of the Economy and State Functioning meeting), 12 June 1972, 289.

56 Rurarz, *Byłem doradcą*, 82–4.
57 Bożyk, *Marzenia i rzeczywistość*, 221; Rurarz, *Byłem doradcą*, 83.
58 Kramer, "The Czechoslovak crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine," 169.
59 AAN, KC PZPR 1354, V/100, "Protokół nr 11 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego" (Protocol from the politburo meeting), 28 February 1972, 2.
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73 Paczkowski, *The spring will be ours*, 351.
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76 Machcewicz, "Materiały: Polityka Zagraniczna PRL w roku 1975," 120.
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96 Bień, Jak doszło do zadłużenia Polski, 18-24; Rurarz, *Byłem doradcą*, 75.
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100 On WOG, see Slay, *The Polish economy*, 36–42.
101 Kotowicz-Jawor, *Presja inwestycyjna*. For other authors describing the phenomenon, see Balcerowicz, *Przetarg planistyczny*; Kuczyński, *Po wielkim skoku*.
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103 "Skrót wypowiedzi," 11 December 1972, 3.
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113 E.g. Das Politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PA/AA), BA63/122531, "Verschuldungssituation Polens," 21 August 1978; Centre des Archives diplomatiques de la Courneuve (CADC) 1929/4594, "Relations économique franco-polonaises, Ministre de l'Economie," 14 September 1978; Mourlon-Druol, "The role of a creditor in the making of a debt crisis."
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118 Rakowski, *Dzienniki 1976–1978*, 199, 301 and 440; Rakowski, *Dzienniki, 1979–1981*, 21, 42 and 46.
119 Lüthi, "Drifting apart," 382.
120 Majewski, "Polityka zagraniczna PRL w roku 1977," 115–17.
121 Romano, "Untying Cold War knots," 15–7.
122 See Chapter 1 by Federico Romero in this book.
123 Rakowski, *Dzienniki 1976–1978*, 416.
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125 Pawłow, *Generał Pawłow*, 84–5; Rakowski, *Dzienniki 1976–1978*, 292–3.
126 Rakowski, *Dzienniki, 1979–1981*, 141.
127 Kozłowski, *Raporty dla Edwarda Gierka*, 192.
128 Bień, *Jak doszło do zadłużenia Polski*, 80–1; Karcz, *Zadłużenie zagraniczne Polski*, 29 and 57–8.
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131 Kubik, *The power of symbols*, 31–74.
132 Kubik, *The power of symbols*, 129–52; Zaremba, "Karol Wojtyła," 317–36.
133 E.g. Ash, *The Polish Revolution*, 13–34. Staniszkis, *Poland's self-limiting*, 150–88.
134 Rakowski, *Dzienniki, 1979–1981*, 130.
135 Although Poland declared default, the creditors did not proclaim it officially insolvent. See Bartel, "Fugitive leverage."
136 See Chapter 5 by Maximilian Graf and Chapter 3 by Pál Germuska in this book.

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