JAN T. GROSS

Polish Society Under German Occupation

The Generalgouvernement, 1939–1944

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To my parents

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Preface

THIS work is a study of a society under occupation. Its subject matter stands at the crossroads of history and sociology. Though I deal with a historical phenomenon in an individual country—the occupation of Poland by the Germans during the Second World War—the choice of the subject was motivated by my belief that the occupation of Poland has a universal significance. It lasted longer than the occupation of any other country during World War II. It was also the most severe, as the result of the racial conceptions held by the Germans, who made an absolute distinction between Jews and Slavs on the one hand, and the nations of Western Europe on the other. Such views allowed little room for either compromise or accommodation between the occupier and the occupied. What happened in Poland between 1939 and 1944 provides an exemplary case for studying the impact of a prolonged disaster on various forms of societal life.

In this study I shall analyze the occupation of Poland in the framework of sociologically significant questions. My main purpose is to identify the alternative forms of collective life that emerged in response to the social control exercised by the occupier. Thus the study will focus on two interrelated sets of factors: the model of German occupation and the way it was realized in practice; and the patterns of collective behavior in which the Polish population engaged as a result of the occupier's policy. The main orientation of my analysis is to identify the peculiar processes of reconciliation among various groups acting in pursuit of incompatible and mutually exclusive goals.

The original intention of the German occupiers was to set

up a social system geared entirely to the possibility of unlimited exploitation of the subjugated populace. My contention is that such a model of social control cannot work. Or, to put it differently, a social system cannot be based on the total exclusion of the majority of the population from the benefits of social cooperation. Contrary to the occupier's intentions, there emerged in Polish society alternative forms of collective life that allowed for at least a minimal satisfaction of social needs, including the need for a normative order to determine the rules of social organization. When the occupier has no explicit policy of providing institutions through which the local population can satisfactorily pursue its interests, then such institutions, or substitutes, are built spontaneously on the remnants of previous forms of collective life. The occupier, if he wishes to achieve his own goals of exploitation, must in some way adjust to these forms of societal "self-defense." My hypothesis is that a *society* cannot be destroyed by coercion, short of the physical extermination of its members.

Since a variety of strategies aiming at the restitution of the nation-state and the preservation of national life were worked out and put into action in Poland during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries prior to the Second World War, I think it necessary first to devote some space to a presentation of certain central themes from Polish history. Such a brief discussion, I hope, will introduce the main actors to those unfamiliar with Polish history and provide sufficient background for understanding the developments in the years 1939-1944. It was, after all, around the nucleus of various prewar organizations that the underground network was set up and developed.

It seems appropriate also to inform the reader at the beginning about two subjects missing from this text. I do not offer a sociological interpretation of life in the Jewish ghettos. It is a subject for a separate book, not only because of the sheer amount of existing evidence and documentation that bears on it, but also because the Jews were

separated from the rest of the population and treated differently by the occupiers.

The other omission derives from the methodology of presentation. I am aware that an analysis of the German occupation of Poland is not complete without giving some attention to the threat of a Communist takeover, which became more and more unavoidable as the end of the war drew near. I have purposely omitted this issue, however, because it would demand an extensive presentation of the political history of the underground and would frustrate my effort to give a sociological orientation to my analysis. Besides, omitting the problem of the Communist underground does not make it impossible to give a satisfactory description of the processes of adjustment of Polish society to German occupation. In the first place, the Communist underground was born very late, after all other underground institutions were already well established; second, it never grew to sizable proportions. A recently published chronicle of life in Cracow under the occupation (Wroński, 1974:433-440) lists the underground publications in that city. Of 137 titles, only 9 are Communist papers. In fact, a closer scrutiny reveals only 4 different titles, since the same paper reappeared at different times but was listed separately each time (see entries 46 and 119; 77 and 93; 51, 105, 106, and 107). Only one of the four Communist journals was published for longer than a year. If proof of the relative obscurity of the Communist underground by a not unfavorably biased source is needed, Wroński's list provides it. Thus, by omitting from this analysis the problem of the Communist underground, only a very marginal area of society is left out; at the same time, we avoid a more detailed political history than a sociological presentation can support. Finally, I would argue that the threat of the Communist takeover and the Communist takeover itself belong, or rather, constitute, the next period (following the German occupation) in contemporary Polish history. I think that one can speak about a distinct *process of transition*

from the German-occupied Poland to the Soviet-imposed People's Poland, a process taking place between, say, mid-1944, when the Red Army crossed Polish prewar eastern boundaries, and, say, December 1948, when the Unification Congress of the Polish Socialist Party and the Polish Workers' Party took place. This, incidentally, accounts for "1944" rather than "1945" in the book's title.

This book was, three drafts ago, a doctoral dissertation written under the direction of Professor Juan Linz, whose help was invaluable to me. Also, I am particularly indebted to Professor David Apter for his criticism at the early stages of the writing. To Professor Piotr Wandycz and Dr. Lucjan Dobroszycki I wish to express my gratitude for their guidance and advice concerning the history of Poland. I would also like to thank Professors Allan Silver and Andrzej Korboński for having given their time generously in reading the manuscript. Finally, I wish to thank my copyeditor, Gretchen Oberfranc, for her thoughtful professional assistance.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Archives and Collections

(Most of the archival collections I consulted are not catalogued. Full identification of each document therefore requires that I provide, in addition to the name of the archive and collection, the title or number of the file in which the document is kept and, wherever possible, the date that appears on the document.)

GSHI	Instytut Historyczny Imienia Generała Władysława Sikorskiego (General Sikorski Historical Institute), London
	PRM Kolekcja Prezydium Rady Ministrów
	A Unnamed Collection
HIA	Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University
	PGC Polish Government Collection
HL	Hoover Library, Stanford University
	PUC Polish Underground Collection
	MSW Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych (Ministry of Internal Affairs)
UPST	Studium Polski Podziemnej (Underground Poland Study Trust), London

Published Documents

IMT	International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal*, 42 vols. (Nuremburg, 1947-1949)

Polish Political Parties and Organizations, 1919-1939

BBWR	Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem (Nonpartisan Bloc of Cooperation with the Government) (Sanacja)

COP	Centralny Okręg Przemysłowy (Central Industrial Region)
ONR	Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny (National Radical Camp) (also ONR-Falanga)
OZN	Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego (Camp of National Unity) (also OZON) (Sanacja)
PPS	Polska Partia Socjalistyczna (Polish Socialist Party)
SN	Stronnictwo Narodowe (National Democratic Party)

Polish Underground Political Parties and Organizations, 1939-1944

AK	Armia Krajowa (Home Army) (earlier SZP and ZWZ)
AL	Armia Ludowa (People's Army) (Communist)
BIP	Biuro Informacji i Propagandy (Bureau of Information and Propaganda) (AK)
BP	Biuro Polityczne (Political Bureau)
CKON	Centralny Komitet Organizacji Niepodległościowych (Central Committee of Organizations for Independence)
CKRL	Centralne Kierownictwo Ruchu Ludowego (Central Leadership of the Peasant Movement)
GRP	Główa Rada Polityczna (Main Political Council)
KON	Konwent Organizacji Niepodległościowych (Committee of Organizations for Independence) (Sanacja)
KRN	Country's National Council (Communist)
LSB	Ludowa Straż Bezpieczeństwa (Peasant Party)
NLOW	Narodowo-Ludowa Organizacja Wojskowa (National People's Military Organization) (SN)
NOW	Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa (National Military Organization) (SN)
NSZ	Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (National Armed Forces)
ODB	Obozowe Drużny Bojowe (SN)

OPW	Obóz Polski Walczącej (Camp of Fighting Poland) (Sanacja)
OUN	Ukrainian Nationalists
PKP	Polityczny Komitet Porozumiewawczy (Political Consultative Committee) (later RJN)
PPR	Polska Partia Robotnicza (Polish Workers' Party) (Communist)
PPS	Polska Partia Socjalistyczna (Polish Socialist Party)
PS	Polscy Socjaliści (Polish Socialists)
RJN	Rada Jedności Narodowej (Council of National Unity) (earlier PKP)
SL	Stronnictwo Ludowe (Peasant Party)
SN	Stronnictwo Narodowe (National Democratic Party)
S.O.S.	Samoobrona Społeczna (Societal Self-Defense)
SP	Stronnictwo Pracy (Labor Party)
SZP	Służba Zwycięstwu Polski (Service for the Victory of Poland) (later ZWZ and AK)
TWZW	Tajne Wojskowe Zakłady Wydawnicze (Clandestine Military Printing House)
UPA	Ukrainian Insurgents' Army (OUN)
WRN	Wolność, Równość, Niepodległość (Freedom, Equality, Independence) (PPS)
ZO	Związek Odwetu (Association of Revenge) (AK)
ZWZ	Związek Walki Zbrojnej (Association of Armed Struggle) (earlier SZP, later AK)

Polish Welfare Organizations, 1939-1944

RGO	Rada Główna Opiekuńcza (Main Welfare Council)
SKSS	Stołeczny Komitet Samopomocy Społecznej (Capital's Committee of Social Assistance)

German Administration

DAAD	German Academic Exchange Office
DVL	German National List

GG	Generalgouvernement
HSSPF	Higher SS and Police Leader
NSDAP	German National-Socialist Workers' Party
ROA	Russian Liberation Army
RSHA	Main Reich Security Office
SD	Security Police
U.W.A.	Office of the Plenipotentiary for Special Missions
Z.A.M.	Central Registration Office

Russian Administration

NKVD	State Secret Police (earlier ChK)

POLISH SOCIETY UNDER GERMAN OCCUPATION

CHAPTER I

Historical Background

A READER of the underground Polish press during World War II found it largely devoted to Polish history. He was not surprised, because he wanted it to be that way: a people faced with rapid changes, crisis, and, finally, disaster, feels it necessary to interpret events, to understand the new things that are happening, and to discover clues to the solution of its current problem. Its impulse is to revisit history and to draw lessons from the strains already coped with and survived.

Polish history interested the German occupiers as well. Their curiosity also derived from their concern with contemporary problems: they wanted to find the most effective methods to perpetuate Poland's subjugation. Heinrich Himmler, one of the main architects of the new German empire, found it so useful to study nineteenth-century Polish history that he ordered all SS leaders in the Generalgouvernement to read a report he had received on this subject: *Die polnischen Methoden bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung des Aufstandes gegen die Russen im Jahre 1863. Die Art der russischen Abwehr* (Polish Methods of Preparation and Conduct of the Uprising Against the Russians in 1863. The Manner of Russian Defense).[1]

[1] The document Himmler received in February 1940 (Halicz, 1965:356-368) can be summarized as follows:

The Poles may wish to remind the world of their existence, as they did in 1863, and they might start an insurrection.

Religious differences between Catholic Poles and Orthodox Russians reinforced the patriotic appeals of 1863. Today the situation is similar because Germans are considered by the Poles as Protestant, that is, heretic.

In 1863 the Russians kept the peasants from participating in the

Indeed, a variety of strategies for coping with occupiers had been worked out in Poland during the nineteenth century. For over a hundred years, until the outbreak of the First World War, Poland was occupied and partitioned, and, as Jan Szczepański put it, Poles "proved their ability to endure and their capability to resist" (Szczepański, 1970:20). Thus, when after twenty years of independence Poland was again occupied in 1939 and partitioned by its eastern and western neighbors, Polish society already had considerable experience in living under foreign domination. Some brief comment on the attitudes of Poles vis-à-vis their nineteenth-century occupiers may make clear the kinds of experience they could draw upon when faced with another occupation in the middle of the twentieth century.

The Polish Patriotic Tradition

At the risk of oversimplification, the Polish patriotic tradition forged during the nineteenth century can be said to have two components: a romantic tradition of patriotic

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revolt by introducing reforms that benefited them. It is perhaps possible today to keep certain parts of the population quiet by meeting their economic demands.

The Russian government employed large numbers of Poles in the local administration. This was a mistake. The National Government in 1863 had some authority over the Poles employed in the Russian administration; as a consequence, the postal service and the railways were often used by the insurgents.

The uprising in 1863 failed militarily because the Poles had not had a standing army since 1831 and because the population was not trained in the art of warfare. Today, after twenty years of the draft in independent Poland, the situation is different.

Since partisan operations cannot succeed without help from the civilian population, close attention must be paid not only to the military but also to the civilian organization of the uprising.

The Russians hesitated in their repression of the uprising in the initial stages; that is why it lasted so long. Repression should be immediate and severe. Collective responsibility should be introduced.

conspiracies and armed insurrections; and a positivistic tradition of peaceful efforts to find a formula that would promote coexistence with the occupier but still allow for the encouragement of national identity and economic strength.

Insurrections came first. The program of coexistence gained support only in the last forty years of the nineteenth century, after the series of insurrections by every generation since 1815 was finally judged to have been too costly. After a sequence of ruthlessly suppressed uprisings, young and educated members of the bourgeoisie came forward with a program calling for "realism." The nation should *build* its strength, rather than dissipate it in futile uprisings, and this could only be achieved by abandoning politics for the time being and promoting economic development and education. *Enrichissez-vous* was one of their most popular catchwords.

In the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, with the coming of socialism, problems of social reform were added to those of national liberation or preservation. Socialists opposed the solidaristic vision of the society advocated by the positivists, and they pressed not only for social revolution but also for independence by force of arms. For this reason they seemed, in twentieth-century independent Poland, to be the most legitimate heirs of the romantic tradition. It was only natural, therefore, that a socialist, Józef Piłsudski, organized the legions that won back independence, and that he was hailed in the aftermath of the war as the Chief of State (*Naczelnik Państwa*).

Although the romantic revolutionary period was succeeded by "Warsaw's positivism," the program of "organic work," or Galician loyalism,[2] it remained the more important and somehow more treasured inheritance in the eyes

[2] Under the Hapsburgs the patriotic program of accommodation went even further and called for political cooperation. But in the Austro-Hungarian partition of the province of Galicia, where far-reaching autonomy was granted, loyalism without apostasy was possible.

of later generations, perceived in brighter colors and treated more extensively in literature and education. Let us therefore examine in detail the heritage from the nineteenth century that was most meaningful for the active participants in the anti-German conspiracy one hundred years later: the tradition of opposition and insurrection, or as it was later called, romantic messianism.

Deep commitment to freedom and liberty has roots in Polish tradition that reach back to the sixteenth century and the so-called "golden freedom."[3] The golden freedom was conceived of as a symbol for the special quality embodied by the Polish state, indeed, as the highest value that can be achieved in the life of a society, more important even than political stability and economic prosperity. This value could not be compromised or traded for any other. Furthermore, it was viewed as indivisible: a society, a nation, or class, the Polish gentry believed, was either entirely free or was, of necessity, enslaved (Hernas, 1974:5, 6).

This notion turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophesy: in defending the total freedom embodied in the institutions of the "gentry's republic," the gentry lost its freedom completely when internal anarchy weakened Poland to the point where it could not but yield to foreign domination. It is important, however, to note that nineteenth-century Polish patriots drew upon this tradition of freedom and consequently professed libertarian beliefs of a universal character. Accordingly, the watchword of the Polish legions that fought in the Napoleonic wars was "for your and our freedom and for future brotherhood" (Szczepański, 1970:17). As the poet Adam Mickiewicz wrote: "*Ibi patria ubi male*: wherever in Europe liberty is suppressed and fought for, there is the battle of your country" (Namier,

[3] During the sixteenth century Poland was probably the freest and most tolerant country in Europe (Fox, 1924:64-66; Wilbur, 1945: 266; Kot, 1960:22). Even after the Counter-Reformation began, the Polish gentry continued in what was known as "golden freedom."

1964:58). Thus, after Poland was partitioned its patriots could *again* demand freedom in a radical, unrestrained fashion.

When demands for freedom are raised in the midst of oppression, they may very well be pushed to extremes and still remain unambiguous. Only later does the dialectic develop that demands that freedom in a society be in some way restricted in order to be preserved. While it is still being sought, freedom is a crystal-clear, unadulterated concept; it loses that clarity only when it is actually won and is no longer simply freedom *from* (the oppressor), but must be translated into freedom *for* (and freedom for *what* may be subject to the widest disagreement). As has been repeatedly demonstrated in many parts of the world, the struggle for liberation is capable of arousing incomparably more enthusiasm and hope than the actual exercise of liberty, and the struggle is further ennobled by the symbolism of sacrifice. Writing about the nineteenth-century cult of Napoleon in Poland, Jules Michelet remarked: "*Vainqueur, s'etait pour eux un grand homme; vaincu et captif, un heros mort, ils en ont fait un messie*" (Treugutt, 1974:37-38).

The messianic quality of the romantic tradition emerged from this admixture of idealism and historicizing. According to this tradition, Poland's commitment to the ideal of freedom was unconditional, and its struggle for liberation was a selfless effort undertaken on behalf of all mankind. "Poland," wrote Mickiewicz, "will re-arise and free all the nations of Europe from bondage" (Namier, 1964:58). Polish poets and writers perpetuated the image of Poland as the Christ of Nations (Walicki, 1970:57ff.; Miłosz, 1972:88-89). Martyrdom became the key to understanding Polish history.[4]

[4] Such an interpretation of history, however, is double-edged: it can be used to rationalize two opposite modes of relation to the world—the most desperate gestures, or lethargy and inaction. A maverick of Polish radicalism, Stanisław Brzozowski, analyzed this double consciousness with particular insight: "always, those who

The heroic interpretation of the martyrdom myth inspired Poles with a conviction that the main component of their "national character" was a unique propensity for desperate actions in defense of such ideals as freedom and independence. From the historical point of view, however, this conception, like many similar constructs, does not stand the test of truth. In fact, many other European peoples also fought for their independence and freedom and asserted their national identity in the nineteenth century. But it is not historical truth that concerns us here. Rather, we are looking for socially relevant history, for what is preserved in the collective memory.

Recognizing a nation's myths about its past may be more useful for an understanding of present-day attitudes than knowing the actual facts behind those myths. The people themselves know the myths better than the facts of history, and not just because they are simpler and easier to remember than the complicated sequence of historical events. For collective memory is not only *less*, but also *more*, than history itself; it serves a people's eternal longing to make sense of its existence, giving intelligibility and meaning to the past. No wonder myths are so difficult to eradicate, and lost myths so quickly replaced by new ones. Collective memory cannot remain empty.

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survived all miseries and learned nothing, insist that in view of this past misery we show indulgence to them, to all, to ourselves" (Brzozowski, 1937:36-37). The sense of martyrdom nurtured by the Poles, he argued, was a substitute for efforts to deal with the questions of social and political reform that were emerging throughout Europe at that time. Evidently, Poles felt that they had already done their share, through suffering. "From Henryk Sienkiewicz to a Marxist social-democrat, everybody in Poland, with very few exceptions, was convinced that he could once and for all be insulated from the problems of life. . . . Until today, all of us, in the depths of our minds, are convinced that in one or another form we have something that allows us to look calmly and perhaps with a slight contempt at the enormous transformations of human thought and morality in the whole of the big, laborious world" (Brzozowski, 1927:98).

Myths about the past are projections into the future. History is read not merely for information, but for help in understanding present-day situations and their implications for the future. It is recalled when a nation faces a problem, when new, unexpected developments in its life force it to abandon daily routines and reevaluate its behavior. We may hypothesize, then, that when the Poles, threatened with the loss of freedom and independence, recalled their mythologized past, they opted for a radical course of action—the desperate defense of the values of independence and freedom—not necessarily because they had always fought for these values more fiercely than others, but because they *thought* they had.

Fragmentation of the Polity

Division of the territory of Poland among three different countries throughout the nineteenth century left a profound imprint on the twentieth-century Polish society and state. The task of consolidating the reborn state after World War I, when its eastern frontiers remained undefined,[5] was further complicated by the necessity of unifying into one organism territories that during the past century had developed different political traditions, were part of different economic entities, followed different laws, and, last but not least, encompassed a variety of ethnic groups. Altogether, this was a formidable challenge during the difficult interwar years, and it was met with some degree of success.

First, there were significant variations in the political cultures to which Poles had been socialized in different regions. Ferdynand Zweig describes them well:

> the political and social education of the Polish people differed greatly as between the three parts of Poland. . . .

[5] Poland was involved in a protracted conflict on its eastern frontiers that developed into a full scale war and lasted until March 1921, when Poland and Bolshevik Russia finally concluded the Treaty of Riga (Davies, 1972; Wandycz, 1969).

> The citizens under Hapsburg rule were inclined to be democratic and bourgeois in outlook, accustomed to hold the rule of law in great respect, and educated in self-government, which was widely practised with the cooperation of large masses of bourgeoisie. Those under the Hohenzollerns were nationalistic in outlook, liked order and discipline, were much under the influence of the land proprietors, and were very successful in business and trade. Those ruled by the Romanovs were old hands in the underground movement, socially minded, and extremely distrustful of administration in general. (Zweig, 1944:17, 18)

Thus, when referring to the nineteenth-century tradition of insurrections, one should note that the two most important —the November 1830 and January 1863 uprisings—took place in the Russian partition. That the insurrections occurred in this area should not be surprising, since the restitution of Polish statehood could not have *excluded* territories occupied by Russia. By reason of historical geography, if only one partition rose up to struggle for liberation and independence, it would necessarily be the Russian. Thus, it should be remembered, the tradition of armed struggle for independence was associated in the minds of the Polish people primarily with anti-Russian insurrections.

Anti-Russian orientation, however, was by no means characteristic of the entire spectrum of patriotic political movements that played dominant roles in Polish politics during the so-called period of Twenty Years (Dwudziestolecie, 1918-1939). The National Democratic Party, which originally started in the Russian-occupied territory and later found its strongest support in the German-ruled region, actually professed a pro-Russian orientation.[6]

[6] The leader of the party, Roman Dmowski, believed that no realistic Polish statesman could be anti-German and anti-Russian at the same time. He chose the anti-German orientation, speculating that the Central Powers would ultimately lose to the Russian-French-

As another consequence of the nineteenth-century partitions, sections of Poland were economically integrated with Russia, Germany, and Austria, but not with each other. Before 1914, 83.3 percent of all imports into the Polish area came from those countries. At the same time, only 8.2 percent of the total imports of the three sections can be attributed to trade with each other. There was no communication between Pomerania and Warsaw; Lwów had no communication with Warsaw; Silesia was not linked with the sea or with eastern Poland; Wilno had no link with the sea, and so on (Zweig, 1944:13-14).

Poland's economic predicament was intensified by the heavy industrial losses suffered during the military campaigns of World War I.[7] Moreover, as a former part of enemy territory, the newly unified Polish state was given no rights to reparations. It even had to share some of the debts of its former imperial rulers. Economic unification of the country was never completed during the Dwudziestolecie. Legal unification also took a long time. Fiscal laws were unified in the late twenties, but the Code of Civil Procedure did not appear until 1933, and the Commercial Code and the Code of Obligations came out a year later.

The ethnic composition of the country promised further difficulties in the unification of the state. Although state boundaries were drawn by the Versailles Treaty following ethnographic lines, the European problem of national minorities was not solved during the interwar period, and Poland was no exception to this malaise. Ethnic minorities constituted more than 30 percent of Poland's population.

English alliance, and that the boundaries of the Russian empire would shift west, incorporating all Poles into one state. Consequently, since Russia could never cope with the "Polish question," the ethnically Polish territories would have to be granted some kind of autonomy. He therefore did not advance any program for Polish independence, as a dynastical union with Russia would eventually allow for the reconstruction of Polish statehood.

[7] These losses were estimated at 12 million gold francs.

In addition, ethnicity and religious affiliation overlapped, producing cumulative cleavages that effectively introduced subcultural differentiation into the polity (see Table I.1). Compact pockets of minorities further contributed toward strengthening separtist identifications.[8] Clearly, Poland was susceptible to all the kinds of complications that often arise in multinational polities or in polities with large subcul-

TABLE I.1

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF ETHNIC GROUPS IN POLAND, 1939
(In Percentages)

	Native Language							
Religious Affiliation	*Polish*	*Ukrainian*	*Ruthenian*	*Belorussian*	*Russian*	*German*	*Yiddish and Hebrew*	*Other*
Roman Catholic	92		1	8	1	16		13
Greek Orthodox	2	52	95					
Russian Orthodox	2	47	3	91	72			80
Protestant	1					81		1
Other Christian					25	1		1
Jewish							100	
Other								2

Source: *Petit annuaire statistique de la Pologne*, 1939:26.

[8] The Polish majority was unevenly distributed throughout the country. Poles constituted about 90% of the population in the western vojevodships and then declined to about 80% in the central and only about 60% in the southern (with the exception of the Cracow vojevodship). In the eastern vojevodships Poles were a minority, and a not very sizable one in some: for instance, they constituted only about 14.5% of the population of the Polesie vojevodship and slightly over 16% of the Wołyń vojevodship.

tural cleavages that have not developed an accommodating approach to politics (Lijphardt, 1968).[9]

The strains of economic recovery, millions of landless peasants awaiting land reform, a mixed national composition, economic and legal fractionalization accompanied by different political traditions—all these pressures put a heavy burden on the system and produced, to no one's surprise, a very fragile and divided polity.

Democratic Institutions in a Traditional Society

"It is doubtful," wrote Leonard Schapiro (1969:99), "if in the world that emerged after the First World War any legitimacy other than democratic (or pseudo-democratic) legitimacy could have been successfully asserted in the 'climate of opinion' then prevailing." Indeed, the first constitution enacted in twentieth-century Poland was most democratic in spirit, established a weak executive, and gave predominance to the legislative branch of the government. This was due in part to the prevailing "climate of opinion," but it also reflected the fear, particularly by National Democrats, that Józef Piłsudski might take power into his own hands (Polonsky, 1972:46). In reality, this institutional setup, rather than helping to avoid difficulties, created them.

The purpose of those who shaped the world's order after the First World War was to establish in the new nation-states an institutional framework for representative, democratic government. This intention, however, was not necessarily consonant with the character of "civic culture" in

[9] Arend Lijphardt (1968) formulates a set of conditions that have to be fulfilled in a subculturally divided society in order to produce a stable political democracy. Among others, he mentions commitment to the preservation of the system by all participants, permanent minority position of all blocs, overarching cooperation at the elite level, habits of pragmatism and prudence in politics, proportionality, and depolitization of issues.

those states. The rapid introduction into Europe of the new formula of legitimacy produced strains between the political institutions it created and the societies those institutions were supposed to serve.[10] Peter Gay characterized this phenomenon in his *Weimar Culture* (1968) by describing supporters of the Weimar Republic as *Vernunft Republikaner*, thus emphasizing the ambiguity of their commitment. In Poland, additional strain was put on new institutions by the presence of the towering figure of Piłsudski, who by his charisma embodied still another, competing principle of legitimacy of authority. Naturally, this produced further disequilibrium in the democratic institutions of the new country.[11]

Before long, it became clear that a stronger executive power was necessary to cope effectively with the long agenda of pressing issues, to order priorities among them, and to allocate scarce resources. In 1926, the year of Piłsudski's coup, even such committed parliamentarians as the socialist Ignacy Daszyński and the peasant leader Wincenty Witos were demanding a stronger executive. The ease with which Piłsudski's coup was legitimized post factum indicates, it seems to me, not only that politicians were dissatisfied with the performance of the system, but also that the legal-rational formula of legitimacy had rather weak support even among the ranks of the parliamentarians.[12] Evi-

[10] "Europe, like Asia, is still a monarchic continent," wrote Guglielmo Ferrero in 1941 (1941:172).

[11] After the May 1926 coup, when the National Assembly elected Piłsudski president of Poland, the two principles of legitimacy—legal-rational and charismatic—could have been brought together and could have reinforced each other, but Piłsudski declined to take the job (Próchnik, 1957:237-240). For a brilliant analysis of the process of institutionalization of legal-rational authority in a new nation by a charismatic leader, see Seymour Martin Lipset's (1967:21-26) comments on George Washington's role in establishing national authority in the United States.

[12] As noted above, Piłsudski was subsequently elected president. He grasped the paradox of this situation when he stated that for the

dently, the Polish public could still identify more easily with a person than with abstract philosophical formulas, and they were better prepared to rely on the wisdom and benevolence of a leader than on the justice and impartiality of the law.

Economic Grievances and Social Unrest

Statistical yearbooks list Poland in a section entitled "Agricultural Europe," together with Spain, Portugal, the Baltic countries, Hungary, Rumania, and the Balkan states.[13] Poland was indeed one of the rural countries of Europe. More than two-thirds of its GNP came from agricultural production, and about 60 percent of the country's population earned its livelihood from the land.

The agrarian reforms enacted soon after the reestablishment of the state went far toward improving the lot of destitute peasants. But even the redistribution of 200,000 hectares of land a year from the largest estates, as stipulated by the reform, could not solve the problems of the overpopulated rural areas. In 1937 there were more than 5 million "superfluous" people of working age in the countryside, and each year their ranks were increasing.[14]

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first time in history a revolution had been made without revolutionary consequences (Próchnik, 1957:238). Piłsudski let the public know that his coup was not made "in the name of a social program, but in the name of public morality." "My program," he said, "is the eradication of thievery and the pursuit of the path of honesty" (Polonsky, 1972:172-178). The name *Sanacja*, denoting the government establishment in Poland during the period 1926-1939, is derived from the Latin root *sanus*. It was intended as a declaration of commitment by the new government to bring "health" to a deteriorating political system.

[13] There were 10 cars per 10,000 inhabitants in Poland in 1938, as opposed to 13 in Rumania, 63 in Portugal, 69 in Czechoslovakia, and 100 in Italy. Production of electrical energy in Poland was 10% lower than in Czechoslovakia, which had 3.5 times less population.

[14] According to estimates by J. Poniatowski, a noted agricultural expert and a minister in one of the interwar cabinets, 42% of the

The international scale of the great depression condemned each country's economy to dependence on its own internal market. The volume of Polish international trade, for example, was two and a half times smaller in 1938 than in 1928 (*Petit annuaire statistique*, 1939:163). Immediately after the crisis began, "price scissors" for agricultural and industrial products opened, and they did not close until the end of the Second Republic (see Table I.2). This, of course, implied contraction of the internal market and a relative worsening of the material conditions of the peasant population. Not surprisingly, it was accompanied by a political

TABLE I.2

Price Scissors in Poland, 1932-1938
(1928 = 100)

Year	*Prices of Industrial Articles Purchased by Farmers*	*Prices of Agricultural Articles Sold by Farmers*
1932	81.0	48.9
1933	72.6	42.6
1934	70.3	37.0
1935	66.3	35.8
1936	64.6	38.7
1937	66.2	49.2
1938	65.0	43.8

Source: Drozdowski, 1963:18, 196.

rural population was "superfluous." He estimated that on January 1, 1937, there were 5,346,000 unemployed or partially unemployed persons of working age in the countryside. Similar results were obtained using methods of calculation by G. Zalecki, M. Szawlewski, B. Stolarski, T. Oberlander, and S. Antoszewski. Of the annual increase of rural population from 1935 to 1939—estimated by the Institute for Social Problems at 230,000—around 30,000 were absorbed by industry, and about 50,000 received land through the agrarian reform. Thus, every year an additional 150,000 people of working age compounded the burden in the already critically overpopulated countryside (Drozdowski, 1963:199-200).

radicalization of the peasants, who, Witos reported, pressed the leadership of the Peasant Party for an all-out confrontation with the government (Witos, 1963:171). Dating from the period of agricultural unrest in 1933, when scores of prominent peasant community leaders were arrested, censorship and social ostracism no longer extended to the families of people in jail as a matter of course. Instead, a spirit of solidarity spread throughout agricultural communities, and help was given to the families of those who were arrested (Witos, 1965:352-354). It was a significant change, indicating a potential for more unrest in the future. In fact, that potential was realized a few years later in a rather unusual form of protest—peasant strikes—which were brutally put down by the government.

Needless to say, the working class also suffered economic hardships in the thirties and signaled its dissatisfaction on many occasions. The number of industrial strikes remained high from 1932 to 1939 (*Petit annuaire statistique*, 1939: 146). In 1936, a confidential paper prepared by the security department of the Ministry of the Interior estimated the number of urban unemployed at one million ("Sprawozdanie referatu," 1961). Although urban unemployment included others besides industrial workers, most of the jobless in the cities belonged to the working class. In 1938, employment in large and medium enterprises (small enterprises were similar to craftsmen's shops, and their employees should be classified on the fringes of the working class) reached 784,900, compared with 809,000 ten years before.

But in truth, not all the blame for the economic difficulties lay in the international scope of the crisis. The government was at first reluctant to abandon its orthodox, deflationary monetary policy. Poland was among the last countries to impose restrictions on monetary exchange and to suspend payment of its debts. Only in 1936 did the government decisively step into the economy by proposing a large investment plan and by undertaking a huge project

to construct a new industrial region (Drozdowski, 1963: 68ff.). These were indeed important and successful measures. But they came rather late, and people accustomed to seeing the government intervene in every sphere of life could not easily be persuaded that the international scope of the crisis relieved the government from at least some of the responsibility for domestic economic problems. In any case, by the late thirties Sanacja had succeeded in so alienating the political parties of the pre-May coup era and the social forces that stood behind them, that a full stomach was no longer the key to political stability.

Ethnic Minorities

In addition to conflicts among social classes and the political parties representing them, the government could not solve the problem of coexistence of the Polish majority and the ethnic minorities that constituted one-third of the country's population. Indeed, nationalism, on the rise in the interwar years in Europe and gathering strength in Poland, was adding urgency to the problem of minorities while it prevented a reasonable formula for solution that would take into consideration the interests of all concerned parties.

The first important political crisis in Poland following independence highlighted the issue of the minorities. The country's first president, Gabriel Narutowicz, was assassinated by a fanatic nationalist shortly after being sworn into office. This act was applauded by the National Democratic Party (SN), which previously had denounced his election because they attributed it to the votes of minorities. While the Nationalists subsequently grew in power, the minorities still comprised more than 30 percent of the total Polish population, and the relationship between the ethnic minorities and the Polish majority continued to worsen.

As early as 1923, a center-right coalition government under the premiership of Witos formulated a program, the so-called Lanckorona Pact, around the issue of preserving,