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but, at time of deepening economic crisis, from facilitated access to the material goods and services in short supply. Functionaries of the state and party, especially the high ranking ones, did not need to stand in line for common goods. They took advantage of a network of special stores, called "yellow-curtain stores". They also had immediate access to medical care, while ordinary mortals suffered through long waiting periods for many medical procedures.

After the meeting between Mikhail Gorbachev and President Ronald Reagan in 1985 in Geneva, when Gorbachev declared the defeat of the Soviet Union in the cold war, time came in Europe to clean up the aftermath. As might be expected, the Communist elites in the Communist countries embarked upon preparations to ensure for themselves, in the new order, social positions corresponding to their aspirations. They knew that the demise of the Soviet empire in the central European states will result in changes to the political systems and that in any future system the social status will not depend on knowing Lenin's quotations by heart, or on position in the apparatus of power, but on material wealth. Consequently, already in the middle of the 80s, even though lip service was still paid to the dictum that socialism was the best system in the world, "nomenklatura owned" partnerships mushroomed within state-owned enterprises.

The term "nomenklatura-owned" comes from the fact, that these partnerships were not accessible to just anyone, but only to the members of the Communist "nomenklatura." Within each of certain administrative or, as they were called under Communism, "Economic Administration units", be it at the village, municipality, county or state level, the staffing of any public position had to be approved by the party committee appropriate to that particular level. In party jargon, these positions belonged to the nomenklatura of that specific organ of administration, and the persons or groups occupying those positions themselves constituted the nomenklatura. Only members of the so-defined class of people, i.e. managing directors, administrators of various enterprises, party secretaries, high-ranking officers of the police, military and security organs, prosecutors, or their spouses, were allowed to participate in the newly formed partnerships, even though officially no restrictions were set. A typical nomenklatura-owned partnership monopolized the supply of raw materials, sub-products and energy, on the one hand, and on the other - the sale of the finished products, thus taking over all the profits of the enterprise, the latter being left with a hapless crew and a lot of smoke. In practice, the managing director of the enterprise entered into an appropriate agreement with himself as the president of the nomenklatura-owned partnership. Thus, the nomenklatura, while preparing to greet the new system, accumulated capital - an action that could only be accomplished by stealing from the nation's property, since no other property existed. The lack of effective intervention of the workers and society was guaranteed by the "severe regulations of martial law", imposed and retained for that purpose. The Communist apparatus once again used terror, this time in order to privatize for its own gain that, which formerly with the help of similar terror had been nationalized. Thanks to this stratagem, the Communist nomenklatura showed itself to be the faction best prepared for the new system, and, as such, seized control over the basic elements of the country's economy.

Still, the "severe regulations of martial law" could not be kept in force indefinitely. At some point in time they had to be lifted, which meant allowing competition by people not belonging to the nomenclature. These people - mainly farmers and small business owners, often hardened in struggling against obstacles created by the Communist regime - constituted a potential danger to the social position of the nomenklatura members. Clearly, that danger had to be nipped in the bud. Thus, under the guise of fighting the three-digit inflation that appeared in 1989 as a result of the infusion of at least 40 billion zlotys into the market by the last Communist government (without

any underlying security), the Sejm (Polish Parliament) issued a new statute "on regularizing credit affairs." Leszek Balcerowicz, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finances initiated this. A so called "variable interest rate" was introduced, ignoring previous agreements with the banks. For instance, the new law decreed that in place of a formerly agreed upon interest of 4% per annum, the bank could charge 40% monthly interest rate! The creditors, who constituted the future and the hope for a Polish middle class, were bankrupted without even a day's notice. At the same time the interest rate on deposits in commercial banks was raised to 100% per annum, and the exchange rate for the US dollar was frozen at 9,500 zlotys for a period of at least a year. As a result, foreign currency traders exchanged dollars into zlotys, deposited these in Polish banks, and a year later, having acquired a profit of 100%, converted them to dollars at the same rate of 9,500 zlotys per dollar.

It is estimated that in 1990 about 17 billion zlotys were sucked out of Poland. Having been hit like this, the Polish middle class has not recovered to this day, a fact best illustrated by statistics on savings in Poland. The total sum of savings amounts to 500 billion zlotys, owned by about 8 % of the people. Approximately 60% of Polish households have no savings at all, and 30% are in debt.

Using old Marxist terminology, it is safe to say that in Poland we are dealing with the so-called "compradoric" capitalism, i.e. one organically tied to the apparatus of power, especially the government secret services, which constituted its core. Such an economic system is additionally strengthened by the Polish legal system. The edict establishing rules on economic activity, which went into effect on January 1st, 1989, ostensibly abolished the foundation of real socialism in the nation's economy, established in 1947 by Hilary Minc, Poland's economic dictator appointed by Joseph Stalin. Its economic ideal took the form of "a plan reaching down to each level of work." According to this, the planning authority, i.e. the government, made decisions regarding the creation of each working position. Without government approval no workplace, not even the smallest business like a cobbler's workshop, was allowed to open or conduct its activity. The 1989 proclamation rescinded this, leaving only the obligation to register for tax purposes. The requirement for permission, or concession to conduct economic activity ostensibly remained in only a very few instances pertaining to the requirements of public safety. Thus, a concession was required for trading in weapons, munitions and explosives, wholesale trade in medicines, operation of pharmacies, detective and customs agencies, trade in alcoholic beverages, etc. But shortly thereafter, the number of fields of economic activity requiring a concession started to grow. In 1999, ten years after implementation of the rules for economic activity, that number reached 202! Under the veil of free market terminology, Minc's real socialism was reinstated within ten years, and the Polish economy reverted to the system where the "compradoric" entrepreneur is king. Again, the economy became dependent upon the apparatus of power, mainly one of secret services and bureaucracy. This apparatus possesses the power to create monopolies by means of concessions and distribution of privileges as it sees fit, and is accompanied by corruption and oppressive taxation. For many would-be entrepreneurs lacking proper connections within the power structure this presents an insurmountable barrier.

Only in the light of the above background is it possible to appraise fully the attempt, under the "Fourth Republic" program, to dismantle that informal structure, the sincerity of its proponents notwithstanding. It would seem that without that initial campaign of returning normalcy in Poland by complete and final disengagement from Communism, the eradication of its legacy is simply not possible.

The Political Aspect

In 1980 a substantial part, perhaps even the majority of the Polish people revolted against the Communist party, which began

to disintegrate under the pressure, creating a political vacuum that started to fill almost immediately with elements of the secret military and civilian services. It is those services that prepared, imposed and administered the martial law, and retained absolute hegemony on the Polish political scene in the 80ties. As is well known, the Polish Communist order was totalitarian in nature, primarily because the secret services controlled and had oversight over all social behavior - particularly attempts to bring to light any views deviating in any way from those officially approved. This control would not be possible save for the penetration of all social spheres by those agencies. So, when in the middle of the 80ties it became evident, at least to the secret services, that the Soviet empire was about to retreat from central Europe, and that a major change in the system - perhaps with a reversal in military and political alliances - would ensue, it became a major concern of these secret services, comprising the hard core of the totalitarian regime, to find a fig leaf that would hide from foreign governments and the Polish people the fact that the leading social and political positions had been taken over by the Communist nomenclature. Thanks to materials made public by the Institute of National Memory, we can read about the offer made via officers of the Polish State Security Service to the then existing regime by the well known representative of the Polish democratic opposition, Jacek Kuron. In short, the offer stated that if the government would help to quietly eliminate the "extremists" from the hidden structures, then "we", meaning the group represented by Jacek Kuron, "in the name of the people" would guarantee to the current members of the regime the retention of their existing social positions and national property they were in the process of looting. This offer was accepted as the basis of the "Round Table" negotiations in 1989. "Extremists", meaning those who opposed or politically competed with the "secular left" as represented by Jacek Kuron, were thus successfully eliminated from participation in the "Round Table" negotiations. In this way, the role of the sole People's representative was basically usurped by the secular left - the former Stalinists, who at different times and for different reasons broke up with the Communist party, and even actively opposed it. They became one of two currents of democratic opposition in Poland.

The question arises why did the "secular left" go to such lengths to emerge as the sole, or at least the major representative of the people? Their reasoning was as follows: we fight communism because it is bad, because it stifles every aspect of spontaneous action of the people. If so, however, Communism is not all bad, since while rejecting the good, it also rejects bad actions. According to the "secular left", in the darkest corners of the Polish soul sleep various demons, which had better be kept on a leash. As long as Communism muffles all that, everything is OK. Yet we are fighting Communism and it looks like soon we are going to win. So what comes next? The risk exists that various demons will surface, which we absolutely cannot allow. Thus the basic worry of the "secular left" was how to keep the demons contained after communism was abolished. The answer readily presented itself: we must ally ourselves with those who put leashes on the demons, because they already know how to do it. Thus the desires of the "secular left" met the need of the government secret services for a fig leaf, and thus were the Round Table negotiations born. With this knowledge, it is not hard to deduce that the intent of the Round Table agreement was not reinstating political sovereignty and the opportunity for the people to shape their own life, but to share power OVER the people between the two parties involved in the Round Table negotiations, i.e. the security services people and the secular left.

The above suspicions were soon confirmed in an unusually spectacular and dramatic manner by the events of June 4, 1992. On that day the government of Jan Olszewski was overthrown by the two parties to the Round Table agreement in a way reminiscent of a coup d'etat. This happened because of attempts by the Olszewski government to make public

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excesses of functionaries in the former Communist regime. The new coalition resulting from the overthrow, soon joined by many activists of the Solidarity movement who had been released from prison by that Communist regime, is harmoniously building and strengthening the previously described "compradoric" system, with occasional showcasing of disputes and disagreements. They present these actions as "modernization" of the nation, and raising the "local savages" up to the European standard.

The Cultural Aspect

The modernization of the country and the "Europeanization" of natives, undertaken in mutual collaboration and understanding by the recent totalitarians, now appearing as teachers and guardians of democracy, and the "secular left", have resulted in the division of society into the "City of Light" and "City of Darkness", i.e. the enlightened elites very sure of their mission despite being self-appointed, and the dark masses in need of being brought to the civilized level of the "City of Light." This situation bears an uncanny resemblance to one prevailing in the 40's, when the Stalinist "City of Light" inexorably fought with the Polish "City of Darkness." However, the methods have changed. Today no one exiles the hardened and incorrigible representatives of the dark masses to Siberia, because Poland belongs to NATO and Siberia is no longer accessible; no one pushes them into dungeons, shoots them in the back of the head, tears out their fingernails or grinds them down into a vegetative state on the periphery of society. However, the goal, in the form of conforming to "Unrelenting Progress", remains constantly the same. Personifications of the ideal also change. Today it is no longer the "Father of Peace" or "Standard-bearer of Peace", as Stalin was then called, nor is it Pavel Morozov who denounced his own parents to the NKVD (Soviet secret police) thus condemning them to sudden death. No, today it is the representatives of the so-called "Open Society", who have taken their place in the vanguard of "Unrelenting Progress."

This vanguard of "Unrelenting Progress", it is well known, mercilessly combats "backwardness", the essential elements of which are generally all religions, and in Poland the Catholic Church. Of course, in agreement with the teaching of the ever-living Lenin, everything depends on the extant period of history and, for example, in the period of struggle with Communism, the Catholic Church was regarded as the bedrock of freedom and human rights. Barely, however, had the Round Table agreement been signed, it transpired that the greatest threat to Poland was the so-called "Nation of Faith" for which Catholics, the "ayatollahs" of the Polish Episcopate were pressing. Influenced by this rebuke, the

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