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978-0-521-71117-3 - Poland under Communism: A Cold War History
A. Kemp-Welch
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Poland under Communism

This is the first English-language history of Poland from the Second World War until the fall of Communism. Using a wide range of Polish archives and unpublished sources in Moscow and Washington, Anthony Kemp-Welch integrates the Cold War history of diplomacy and inter-state relations with the study of domestic opposition and social movements. His key themes encompass political, social and economic history; the Communist movement and its relations with the Soviet Union; and the broader East–West context with particular attention to US policies. The book concludes with a first-hand account of how Solidarity formed the world's first post-Communist government in 1989 as the Polish people demonstrated what can be achieved by civic courage against apparently insuperable geo-strategic obstacles. This compelling new account will be essential reading for anyone interested in Polish history, the Communist movement and the course of the Cold War.

Anthony Kemp-Welch is Senior Lecturer at the School of History, University of East Anglia. His previous publications include *The Birth of Solidarity* (second edition, 1991) and, as co-author and editor, *Stalinism in Poland* (1999).

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To Klara, Hannah, Maia and Nadia

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Preface

In 1989, Poland became the first country to leave communism peacefully. Its ruling generals invited leaders of the outlawed Solidarity to a Round Table on the future of communist power. Expecting to co-opt the opposition, they were swept away by an electoral avalanche and resigned. Solidarity then formed the world's first post-communist government. Within a few months, the Polish paradigm was emulated across all of Eastern Europe.

Afterwards, many actors claimed the credit. Soviet leaders from the Gorbachev era state that they took power in 1985 determined to withdraw from the region. They argue that their message was misunderstood by their East European counterparts, or simply disbelieved. Western officials are no more reticent in attributing to their own actions – whether CIA funding at critical junctures or the quiet word in the oppositional ear prior to the Round Table – the decisive tilting of the balance towards freedom. Some Catholic publicists – though not the Vatican – report that the Pope, in private audience with General Jaruzelski, put Poland on the path to power-sharing. Finally, Polish communists themselves declare that they always wished to liberate their country and had done so the moment geopolitics permitted. We are invited to believe that 1989 was the consummation of 'revisionism' they had espoused since 1956.

This book will take account of these prominent players. But it will also include the unsung heroes, easily overlooked by historians, and less able to claim their place in history. Politics also took place on the shop floor where grievances were discussed and strike posters sometimes put up. It occurred covertly in fields and forests at dead of night when farmers and their families planned to protect their property from seizure by the state. Local priests were political too, permitting uncensored publishing in their crypts, and steering their congregations from the pulpit to vote (or to abstain) in mono-Party elections. Thousands of young people jeopardised their future by joining the political opposition and the Solidarity underground.

Such activities by ordinary citizens, muted voices from the chorus, do eventually achieve legal expression. In this sense the Polish experience

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under communism holds wider lessons. The Polish success owed nothing to the threat of military force. It showed what could be achieved by civic courage against apparently insuperable geo-strategic obstacles. Refusing to be victims, they too helped to end the Cold War.

When I first visited (in 1971) Poland was opening to the West for capital and technology and communism was placating society with popular measures such as rebuilding Warsaw's Royal Castle, dynamited by the Nazis. Though writing a thesis on Stalinism in the 1930s, I became an increasingly engaged spectator of contemporary Poland. Under the pen-name 'Joseph Kay', I was able to record the origins of political opposition. During Solidarity's sixteen months of legality I was fortunate to attend its meetings at every level, including the Gdańsk Congress in 1981. These experiences informed my first book, *The Birth of Solidarity*.

After the fall, the British Academy enabled me to visit the post-communist historians assembling at the Polish Academy's new Institute of Political Studies. There was an immediate meeting of minds. The important works of its founder members Andrzej Paczkowski, Paweł Machcewicz and Andrzej Friszke have been seminal for mine. We jointly convened panels at the 1995 World Congress of Central and East European Studies (in Warsaw) which became *Stalinism in Poland, 1944–1956* (1999). Its Russian contributor, Sergei Kudryashov, has always been an indispensable guide to Moscow archives. Vital too are the findings and analyses of Mark Kramer (Harvard).

Poland under Communism was largely written during a Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship and Study Leave extension funding from the British Arts and Humanities Research Council. The author gratefully acknowledges their generous assistance. He has also learned much from the other seventy-four contributors to the forthcoming three-volume *Cambridge History of the Cold War* being edited by Mel Leffler (Virginia) and Arne Westad (LSE).

Amongst many colleagues, Zbigniew Pełczyński (Oxford) has been encouraging throughout the project. The School of History at UEA has proved a happy home. Thanks are due to Michael Watson, my commissioning editor at CUP, and all his staff, especially Leigh Mueller. Quiet places to write were provided by Selima Hill in Lyme Regis, and by Joyce Divers and Willy Bulow in north Norwich. Thanks also to founder members of the Friday Club: Dave Corker, Ali Harvey, Ken Kennard and Andy Patmore. My main debts are to Alice and the dedicatees.

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Abbreviations

AAN	Archive of Modern Acts
AFL/CIO	American Federation of Labor / Congress of Industrial Organisations
AK	Home Army
CC	Soviet Central Committee
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CPSU	Soviet Communist Party
CRZZ	Central Council of Trade Unions
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DDR	German Democratic Republic
DiP	'Experience and the Future' (Discussion Club)
FNU	Front of National Unity
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KBW	Polish Internal Security Corps
KIK	Clubs of Catholic Intelligentsia
KKP	National Coordinating Commission (of Solidarity)
KKW	National Executive Committee (of Solidarity)
KOK	National Defence Committee
KOR	Committee for the Defence of Workers
KPN	Confederation of Independent Poland
KPP	Poland's Communist Party (pre-war)
KSS	Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR)
KUL	Catholic University of Lublin
MKS	Interfactory Strike Committee
MKZ	Interfactory Founding Committee
MSW	Ministry of Internal Affairs
NIK	Supreme Control Commission
NKVD	Soviet secret police
NSA	National Security Archive
NSC	National Security Council
NSZZ	Independent self-governing trade union (Solidarity)
NZS	Independent students union

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OPZZ	Official trade unions
ORMO	Voluntary reserve of the civic militia
PAP	Polish Press Agency
POP	Basic party organisation
PPN	Polish League for Independence
PPR	Polish Workers' Party
PPS	Polish Socialist Party
PRON	Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth
PSL	Peasants' Party
PZPR	Polish United Workers' Party
RAPP	Russian Association of Proletarian Writers
RFE	Radio Free Europe
ROPCiO	Movement for the Defence of Human and Civic Rights
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic
SB	Security Service
SDKPiL	Social-Democratic Party of the Congress Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania
SKS	Students' Solidarity Committee
TRS	Provisional Council of Solidarity
UB	Secret police
UNRRA	UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
WRN	Provincial People's Council
ZiSPO	Stalin Factory in Poznán
ZLP	Polish Writers' Union
ZMP	Polish Youth Union
ZMS	Communist Youth Organisation
ZOMO	Motorised Units of Civil Militia (riot police)
ZSL	United Peasants' Party

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