

SELF-MANAGEMENT IN POLAND SINCE MARTIAL LAW

*David C. HOLLAND**

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the fate of the Polish workers' councils after the suppression of Solidarity. Although suspended and then systematically re-established from above, these bodies continue to show signs of vitality and independence. A significant minority of them today provide one of the very few areas of Polish public life where former Solidarity activists can engage in open, legal activity and negotiate at least with local levels of the Party authorities and of economic management.

The economic reform has hitherto had only a minor impact on the functioning of the economy, leaving little room for the councils to operate as economic agents. Nevertheless, efforts to create giant new industrial combines, cancelling out room for workers' self-management to function, have so far been successfully resisted by the councils.

The paper traces government measures cautiously to re-activate the councils within the larger context of the economic reform. It continues by assessing the response of the political opposition to these moves and outlines the vigorous debates as to what the appropriate response should be. The paper then considers what the conditions governing the operation of the councils are and concludes with speculative prognoses as to the future of the workers' councils.

(i) INTRODUCTION

Three times in the post-war history of Poland (in 1945, 1956, and 1981) programmes of workers' self-management have been advanced. On each occasion this has been associated with deep-seated political, social and economic crisis. The idea has represented simultaneously a method of broadening the political base of the regime and a programmatic alternative to Stalinist methods and to the centralized command

* European University Institute, Badia Fiesolana, Firenze, Italy.

economy. It has also been associated with de-centralizing, market-oriented economic reform.

In 1944—45, workers' councils were spontaneously established to maintain production and defend plant in a situation of political vacuum, in which owners or German Occupation administrators had fled before the approach of the Red Army. The provisional communist authorities were happy to grasp at a much-needed source of legitimacy. The councils operated in the undogmatic framework of the first Three Year Plan, which guided reconstruction without excessive centralization and encouraged de-centralized and private initiative. It could be regarded as a forerunner of later projects of "market socialism." The councils did not survive the period of economic and political pluralism of 1945—47, and with the onset of the Cold War and the imposition of Stalinist political and economic methods, they were integrated into the centralized and commandist trade union structures.

In 1956 the renewed emergence of workers' councils played a key role in the crisis of transition to post-Stalin conditions. A programme of economic reform centering upon the introduction of a market mechanism, parametric planning and devolvement of much decision-making to enterprise level was elaborated, within which plant level workers' participation could have functioned.

The opportunity to introduce this major reform then, when the government enjoyed a level of popular support unequalled before or since, was sadly wasted. The recommendations of the Economic Reform Council were ignored and the workers' councils were neutralized by integration into the Conferences of Workers Self-Management. These included various social and political organizations under Party control and played chiefly a transmission belt role. By 1980, there were reportedly only five workers' councils surviving in Poland.

In 1981 a programme of workers' self-management was espoused both by the Government and by sections of the Solidarity movement and eventually by its leadership. Solidarity defended the concept of the "social enterprise", which was to give sweeping management powers to enterprise workers' councils, including the right to appoint managerial personnel, so destroying the *nomenklatura* system of Party nomination to all significant official positions. This concept was developed at the Solidarity congress into a broader one embracing the whole of society: the "Self-Managing Republic."

After protracted negotiations, in the midst of a fierce propaganda struggle and efforts by all parties to determine the course of events by pressing ahead with the establishment of workers' councils by their own supporters and according to their own conceptions, without a clear legal framework in which they could operate, definitive legislation was eventually passed in September 1981. Although fiercely criticized by Solidarity supporters, who called for a national referendum on whether the legislation should be amended in a radical direction, the laws on self-management and the state enterprise passed in 1981 represented a qualitative innovation of major proportions. The context in which this legislation was to be implemented however was transformed by the imposition of martial law at the end of 1981.

Self-management bodies, like Solidarity, were "suspended" by the martial law regulations imposed, from 13 December 1981. All their powers were transferred to enterprise directors and to the military commissars. The legal immunities (from dismissal for example) enjoyed by members of workers' councils were removed. Self-management activists generally escaped internment, but many of them lost their jobs or encountered other difficulties.

Unlike Solidarity however, the self-management project has remained not only a programmatic idea of the opposition, but also a central strut in the authorities' programme of "normalization" and reform.

In the siege economy conditions of 1982, with chronic scarcity and consequent rationing of raw materials by the central authorities, circumstances were not auspicious for the extension of enterprise level decisionmaking or the creation of space for the functioning of workers' self-management bodies. (1) Prospects were made even bleaker by the intense political polarization prevailing in the country in the months following the imposition of martial law.

With the revival of production and a marked improvement in supplies to the consumer market in 1983—85, both objective economic and subjective political conditions improved for the workers' councils. As the period of large demonstrations and calls for a general strike receded, independent public opinion was forced to weigh up carefully the pros and cons of participation in such institutions.

The aim of this paper is to trace the course of the government's moves to re-activate the self-management bodies, the response to these moves and future prospects in this area. The heady utopian demands of 1981 for the reconstruction of the whole of society on democratic and self-managing lines have given way to much more restricted possibilities. As former members of the Gdansk area Self-Managements' Co-ordinating Committee wrote in 1984:

"Most of all the present situation has deprived the self-managements of their natural social base — popular activity, responsiveness by people to public affairs and faith on their part in the possibility of positive change."

Nevertheless these self-management activists from the Solidarity period went on to write:

"But even today, when it is easy to level charges of collaboration, self-management activity has real value. Many people have adopted it as their field of public work and this is one reason why self-management is one of the least compromised of institutions. The question of workers' self-management is then still in play in Poland." (2)

Since such grounds for very cautious optimism exist, it is clearly worth subjecting them to critical examination.

(ii) THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME

Senior official spokesmen, from Jaruzelski downwards, have repeatedly categorically reaffirmed the Government's commitment to

the economic reform and to the role of self-management within it, asserting that there was to be "no turning back." (3) What has been called "the long history of the short reform" in Poland however gives substantial reasons for doubting the most categorically phrased commitment. At least, as one senior official economist, Jozef Pajestka, has remarked, the current reform has lasted longer than any earlier attempt without being "thrown on the rubbish heap." (4) Pajestka also pointed however to the characteristic "softness" of the Polish legal order, i. e. the readiness with which statutory provisions succumb to the exigencies of everyday decisionmaking and are thrust to one side and rendered inoperative.

In tracing the course of official policy-making towards the workers' councils therefore, it is necessary to pay more attention to the pragmatic policy-making that shapes reality than to formal declarations.

Policy is conditioned by the pressures of the deep economic crisis, which do not favour the delegation of powers from the centre. Moreover sections of the economic apparatus and the Party are liable to be hostile to a reform reducing their importance. Political differences and personal rivalries in the senior echelons of government may also condition the evolution of policy. It is difficult to do more than speculate on the relative influence of such factors. Hence attention here is directed to the practical policy outcome.

In purely formal terms, the legislation defining the role of the workers' councils confers substantial powers upon them. This is owing to the peculiar circumstances in which this legislation was born. Despite the weaknesses highlighted by its critics, the laws on self-management and the state enterprise that emerged from the cliff-hanging negotiations with Solidarity in September 1981 theoretically places these bodies in a rather strong position.

For example Article 1, clause 2 states that:

"The workers' self-management of state enterprises has the right to take decisions in important enterprise affairs, to express opinions, take initiatives, put forward recommendations and exercise control over the enterprise's activities."

Article 37, clause 2 states that:

"The Director of an enterprise carries out the resolutions of the workers' council relative to the enterprise's activities."

Article 38:

"The Director of an enterprise is responsible before the workers for the proper conduct of the enterprise."

Article 40:

"The workers' council has the right to block the execution of the decision of the Director if it is contrary to a council decision... taken without consideration of the council's opinion... or without a resolution by the council." (5)

In practice the strength of a workers' council's position will depend on a variety of factors making up the balance of forces in a local institutional political sense. Nevertheless it is significant that post-martial-law-Poland has inherited a piece of legislation hammered out during a period of intense social confrontation, which embodies

concessions which the authorities might well have preferred to avoid. These include the right of some enterprise councils to elect their Directors after a competitive selection procedure and the absence of any element of co-optation onto the councils of "representatives of social and political organizations", who would effectively be Party nominees. Elections to the workers' councils lack any of the elaborate screening and control mechanisms built into the procedures for local government and parliamentary elections. At least on paper the self-management law of 25 September 1981 compares very favourably with Western equivalents such as German worker directors, or the proposed EEC directive on employee consultation, currently making very slow progress. It is also much more ambitious than the recent self-management measures adopted in Hungary (though it is interesting to note that these include the qualified right of some work-forces to participate in the selection of directors) (6).

The legal and political conditions currently prevailing in Poland do not permit more than a "workers' participation" model — possibilities of authentic workers' control have been foreclosed. However, the strong legal position of the workers' councils has meant that although the authorities have constantly reiterated their determination to press ahead with an economic reform based on the "three S's" — enterprise autonomy, self-financing and self-management — on the basis of the 1981 legislation, they have felt it necessary to move with great caution in re-activating the workers' councils and for a time formally suspended various provisions of the 1981 legislation. Indications that such suspension of powers would be replaced by formal amendment of the self-management legislation of 1981 evoked widespread protest from the workers' councils and has not yet taken place. (7)

The same decree that suspended the operation of the workers' councils included provision for Ministers to nominate enterprises in which self-management activity might resume, if the situation in an enterprise justified such a decision (8).

In March 1982 a very few self-managements were re-activated. They were however denied the right to elect their Directors, to conduct referenda or call general meetings of the work-force. The government also retained the right to suspend entire self-managements if they acted contrary to the law or to "fundamental social interests;" — a very wide discretionary catch-phrase.

By the beginning of July, 147 requests from enterprise Directors had been forwarded to Ministries to re-activate self-managements. Sixteen had been approved. By 20 August, 560 requests had been forwarded and 175 approved (9). In the last quarter of the year the pace quickened. By the end of the year, 3,620 decisions to revive self-managements had been taken, from a possible total of 6,500 enterprises where self-managements could exist (10).

Research into the activities of these councils however, showed that they engaged only in extremely limited activities (11). Moreover there were cases of re-activated self-managements dissolving themselves until such time as conditions permitted "authentic" activity (12).

The authorities consistently stressed that the suspension of the full powers of the workers' self-managements was a strictly temporary

measure. In May 1982 the Politburo report to the Central Committee stressed:

"the fundamental significance of renewing the activities of workers' self-management, even in the period of the state of war." (13)

At this stage the authorities were engaged in carefully winnowing out those enterprises where the situation appeared to be sufficiently under control to permit the re-activation of the workers' councils. The Slupsk Voivodship Party Committee for example carried out research in all the enterprises in its area to identify those where:

"the political, economic and organizational conditions exist for the appointment of workers' self-managements and where guarantees exist that their activities will be in accord with social norms and principles." (14)

This step-by-step approach was continued in the regulations governing the period of „suspended” martial law, issued in December 1982 (15), with a full re-activation of self-management bodies envisaged for April 1983. Even after the completion of this process however, some important plants where the political situation was judged to be unsafe were not permitted to establish workers' councils. In mid—1985 these included the Ursus plant, WSK Okedie and ZK Polcolor in Warsaw and the Refinery in Gdansk. This was said to be owing to the „immaturity of the social and political conditions” in these plants (16).

Where self-management was re-established, this was under continued restrictions such as provision for its suspension for a period of six months if its activities were considered to be in violation of the law or the social interest. The Council of Ministers also produced a list of 1,371 enterprises of „basic national importance” (some of which were categories of enterprise) in which the state retained power of appointment over the Director.

This was an outcome of the legislative compromise with Solidarity in 1981, whereby this power of appointment was conceded to the workers' councils in all enterprises except those determined to fall into this category. A list of only 200 such enterprises was in fact provisionally agreed to by the Government at the end of 1981. The list produced by the Council of Ministers far exceeded the intentions of the Solidarity negotiators who had had in mind enterprises in the armaments industry, the railways, the banks and other such sensitive areas. Moreover the list was imposed unilaterally rather than as a product of the agreed „consultations”, martial law having eliminated the other partner for such negotiations.

The sweeping character of this restriction can be judged from the fact that in 1983, 500 of the biggest Polish producers, many of whom would have figured on the „reserved list”, produced two thirds of the national product in terms of sales value (17). To this list were added enterprises formerly under military administration or carrying out „special tasks”. In these the right of workers' councils to sustain objections to management decisions was suspended (18).

These restrictions were extended until 1985 under the provisions enacted for the period of emergence from the crisis with the formal

ending of martial law in July 1983 (19). Efforts to extend them further were rejected and in formal terms the self-managements now enjoy all the powers conferred upon them by the 1981 law. This is however, in an inimical environment — an economy which essentially retains its centralized features.

At the same time as maintaining this programme of gradual reestablishment of the workers' councils, the authorities made it abundantly clear in the official press that the model of self-management they were promoting had nothing in common with the proposals put forward under the aegis of Solidarity in 1981 and still maintained by the political Opposition. These were characterized as a farrago of utopianism; a „people's capitalism” screening ambitions to overthrow socialism by means of „group ownership”. (20) The government's programme on the other hand was represented as the resolute implementation of the line adopted at the IXth Congress in 1981, calculated to strengthen socialist democracy and correct the distortions that had given rise to the workers' protest in 1980.

The theoretical framework within which this programme was developed provided some grounds for fears that a corporatist, authoritarian model was being aimed for, in which a facade of democratic participation would be preserved and a broader layer of people co-opted into collaboration with the authorities, so stabilizing the political base of the regime.

For example Barbara Zawadzka in her book *Pozycja Ustrojowa Smorazadu w Panstwie Socjalistycznym* asserts:

„We already have many forms of self-management. There is self-management which associates people at work (employee self-management in the enterprise, the occupational self-management of individual farmers, artisan self-management, the self-management of professional groups like advocates, legal counsellors and academics). There is territorial self-management, on a local level, associating people on the basis of a common place of abode — in villages, parishes, gminy or Voivodships. We also have co-operatives self-management, consumers' self-management...” (21).

This is quite a good example of official doctrine in the area. To equate the relatively democratically constituted workers' councils or elected University councils (before the provisions for University self-management were drastically restricted in 1985), with the carefully controlled fiction of democratic local government suggests a perspective of gradual assimilation and extinction of the independent character still retained by some of the workers' councils.

Indeed at a regional and national level, representation of the workers' councils has been minimized and carefully regulated. Nothing has been heard of the proposal floated in one of the government reform proposals in 1981 and enthusiastically greeted by independent opinion, for a second chamber of the Sejm in which self-management representatives would be seated. Care over the self-managements is entrusted by the 1981 legislation to the Sejm and a standing Sejm Commission maintains activity in this area. Regional support for the self-managements is supposedly provided by regional caucuses of

Sejm deputies and commissions established alongside the Voivodship People's Councils (22). This is very much regulation from above and is a far cry from the 25 regional co-ordinating committees and the national federation spontaneously established by workers' councils in 1981.

It was made very clear in the first weeks of martial law that continued activity by these bodies would not be tolerated (23). Phrases such as „civil mutiny” and „illegal organizations” were bandied about in the Sejm Commission session which discussed these organizations.

Article 35 of the 1981 law on self-management in fact enshrines the right of self-management bodies to form co-operative links with one another.

The government's approach however has been to draw the line firmly against such spontaneous initiatives from below, presumably in order to prevent such platforms being exploited by the political opposition.

By way of example a national rally of self-management activists was called in Warsaw in April 1984. It was addressed by Jaruzelski and attended by all the official luminaries responsible for the economic reform and for the workers' councils. Significantly however, only about 300 workers' councils representatives were invited — a very small number given the number of workers' councils supposedly in operation at this time (24). Invitations were not sent to active councils in important enterprises the political composition of which was considered suspect, such as the Warsaw Steel Works.

It was entirely in line with this approach that an attempt by the workers' council at the Elana textile factory in Torun to call a national meeting of workers' council activists to prepare for the full re-activation of the self-managements in April 1984 was firmly squashed (25). This sort of initiative was perceived as a challenge to the authority of the state.

The government's approach then has been to confine the „democratic” aspect of the re-activation of the workers' councils firmly to enterprise level. A return to the conception of the „mobilizing,” „transmission belt” conception, which dominated the activity of the pre-1980 Conferences of Workers' Self-Management cannot be excluded.

„The basic task of self-management is to promote efficiency,” remarked Gabnielski, the Director of the Central Committee Social-Professional Dept. at a Party School in May 1985. He did not choose to emphasize the representative character of workers' self-management. (26).

Reporting the progress of the reform at the end of 1984, information submitted to the Sejm indicated that self-managements existed in 87% of plants empowered to have them, in 6,403 enterprises, embracing 5.5 million workers and involving 133,000 people in the activity of workers' councils, 55% of whom were manual workers. (27).

One well-informed adviser to a leading workers' council estimated that perhaps only 10% of these councils were able to engage in authentic independent activity (28). The inference is that in many plants the council has been established „from above” as a result of Party or management initiative and has aroused scant interest in the work-

-force. The question of workers' attitudes to the councils is discussed further below in section (iv).

Government reports have acknowledged that difficulties persist in defining the areas of responsibility of Council and Director respectively (cf. note 27). Disputes had arisen over failures to acknowledge the powers of the councils in questions such as the merger and division of enterprises and the appointment of Directors without the legally obligatory process of competitive selection. GUS however reported only 104 disputes, of which 34 had reached the courts. Such a small number of councils standing their ground in the clashes of interest that inevitably are associated with such a massive process of re-organization and alteration in management structures as is ostensibly involved in the reform, may be taken as an indication of the councils' weakness.

Reports in the official press do however indicate that the government does not have it all its own way in the councils. Members of the Sejm Commission on self-management have complained about these bodies enacting unjustified wage increases (though enterprise managements may be as responsible as councils here) and of long-running disputes lasting for months (29).

One strategy that may be employed by the authorities in order to restrict further the independence of the councils is to expand the role of the official trade union organizations at the expense of the councils. Indications that the trade unions were pressing for control of enterprise social, welfare and housing funds under the control of the councils have been confirmed by amendments to the trade union law which have established the unions' right of veto in decisions in this important area of traditional patronage at factory floor level (30).

Similarly the 1984 wages law entrenched the right of the trade unions to conclude agreements with management regardless of how many workers they may represent in a plant (31). The continuing weakness of the trade unions and indications that a strong workers' council is likely to correlate with a weaker than average trade union imply that such a transition from „society's" organization — the workers' council, to the Party's — the trade unions, will not be effected without a tussle (32).

Detailed information is not available at the time of writing on the extent to which pressure may have been applied to eliminate troublesome activists in the elections of workers councils to a new term of office in the course of 1985. In the 40% of elections that had taken place by May 1985 however, 60% of the composition of the councils concerned had changed (33). This would indicate if not pressure, at least a substantial drop-out rate. Official pressure is not implausible and since this would in reality constitute pressure upon the most active and independent workers councils it would reduce their chance of retaining more than a formal identity in the future and reduce also the chances of success for the economic reform of which the self-management project is a pillar.

The Government's commitment to the economic reform package was reiterated at a special party conference on the issue held in Poznan at the end of May 1985, at which the irreversibility of the

processes under way was stressed. The spectre of enterprise bankruptcies was conjured up. Nevertheless, in a survey held in 1985, only 24% of managers considered that enterprise autonomy existed. A slightly larger number, 31%, thought that „self-management” had been established. Despite the favourable climate supposedly initiated by the arrival of the Gorbachev leadership on the scene, there is therefore every reason to think that the reform is making at best, slow progress. (34)

The authorities' policy towards the workers' councils is caught in a contradiction. The slim base of support on which the government rests in Polish society, seems to a large extent from precisely that narrow stratum of economic managers and ministry officials whose interests would be most directly affected by a genuinely de-centralizing reform. Whilst the centre needs co-operation in the enterprises if it is to revive the Polish economy, it is constrained by the need to keep a tight political rein on developments. The self-managements can play a role in strengthening the hands of enterprise managers seeking increased autonomy, but in doing so may be reduced to screens for managerial manoeuvres, rather than authentic expressions of economic democracy.

Moreover, the general lack of belief on the part of Polish managers in the durability of the reform (35), appeared to be being borne out by developments towards the end 1985, which indicated a major shift of policy towards the creation of huge sectoral industrial corporations. This initiative displayed a characteristic disregard for the detailed provisions of the law (36) and threatened to wipe out any room for enterprise level self-management.

The first of these giant combines, embracing the entire iron and steel sector, was in the process of creation when it was blocked by vocal opposition from the workers' councils and academic experts. (37) This incident is symptomatic of both the continuing vitality of the pro-reform forces and of the obstacles facing them.

(iii) THE ATTITUDE OF THE OPPOSITION

The attitude of the political opposition to self-management has undergone a marked change since martial law. Initial accusations that work in self-management institutions was tantamount to collaboration with the authorities, have given way to ever more frequent and explicit calls to make maximum use of this opportunity for legal activity in the public sphere.

It may be argued that this change of orientation is a consequence of the opposition's weakness and this would be at least partially true. The period of mass agitation has certainly long been over. This has been underlined in the course of 1986 by the arrest of leading underground leaders such as Zbigniew Bujak. Whilst the opposition no longer has serious structures at regional or national level however, it continues to make its presence felt in the form of a clandestine opposition press unprecedented in scale anywhere in Eastern Europe (38).

The moral authority of the opposition also remains substantial and it is therefore a significant factor in the willingness of genuinely representative worker activists to engage in self-management activity, whether the opposition regards such work as potentially constructive or as an act of betrayal.

The opposition with very few exceptions (39) continues to adhere to the programmatic goal of Solidarity, a through-going democratization of social and economic life, embodied in the slogan „the Self-Managing Republic”. The union strongly supported de-centralizing economic reform in 1981 and campaigned in support of the draft bill on self-management produced by the „Network of leading Solidarity Enterprises.”

The union was initially very loath to abandon a position of „pure trade unionism” and to risk taking responsibility for the economic crisis by involving itself in negotiations over economic reform or by participating in workers' self-management schemes. It was the urgency of the crisis and the spontaneous involvement of Solidarity members setting up workers' councils that forced a modification of this attitude.

However, Solidarity was unable to agree upon how to implement such a programme of economic reform. At its Congress in 1981 three reform models were advanced, ranging from classical liberalism to a Langan type de-centralization reserving macro-economic powers to the centre. In combination with the union's opposition to price increases, without delivery of a satisfactory economic reform, this uncertainty hampered the possibilities of a deal being reached with the authorities in 1981. The attention of both the Solidarity leadership and many union members centered more upon the politically controversial issue of transferring the authorities' monopoly over managerial appointments to the workers' councils than upon the model of economic reform.

The shift to a positive attitude to the workers' councils by the opposition since martial law has also been in part dictated by an awareness that they can be used as instruments of political activity, or para-trade unions, more than by any belief in the possibility of the economic reform actually being realized, with an important role for workers' self-management.

The re-activation of self-management structures has presented the opposition with both problems and opportunities. An early and persistent response to the self-management initiatives of the regime was suspicion and outright rejection coupled with calls for a boycott. This is most clearly expressed in the Underground Solidarity leadership's statement on the re-activation of self-management structures issued in August 1982:

„Self-management under the state of war only creates an illusory possibility of authentic collective activity. In reality what is happening here is a repeat of the KSR manoeuvre of 1958.” (40)

The statement goes on to argue that self-management structures assist the authorities in implementing unpopular measures, create an illusion of consultation with society, facilitate the shifting of responsibility for the disastrous economic situation and widen the circle of people collaborating with the authorities, so bolstering the *nomenkla-*

tura and engaging society in a wholly imaginary reform. It concludes that:

„Workers' councils elected before December 1981 should undertake activity only if this is endorsed by a referendum of the workforce.”

This sceptical attitude was reflected in a multitude of articles in the Underground press in mid-1982. It was widely observed that talk of enterprise autonomy in conditions of chronically scarce raw materials was nonsense. The Bialystok region group of „The Network” in its publication *Nasz Samorząd* (Our Selfmanagement) in August 1982 argued that hitherto under the reform the administrative centre had strengthened its position. The inevitable centralization of resource allocation decisions had produced an „El Dorado of the Centre.” The new supposedly voluntary „industrial associations” (*zrzeszenie*) were almost invariably the old „industry boards” (*zjednoczenie*) under a new name, with the old Director or his Deputy in charge.

„Only the names recall what we struggled for,” concluded the Network group.

Progressively however, a debate developed on the possibility of participation in the self-management structures. A particular full debate seems to have taken place in the Krakow area. In the months of March to June 1982 soundings were taken in the Krakow plants which indicated a willingness to enter the self-management organs under certain conditions. A document produced in this period, summarizing a discussion in which activists from five plants in the Krakow area took part, very cautiously acknowledges that as the only legal means of workers' representation the self-managements should not be dismissed out of hand.

The tendency towards participation was boosted by a revision of the position of the underground leadership, which in its programmatic statement *Dzis* (Today) published in January 1983, supported participation in self-management structures where:

„The possibility exists of making them serve the defence of workers' conditions and making them act as a defence against repression.”

This move elicited significant support. „Kronika Malopolska” argued in February 1983 that the self-management structures provided a front of struggle, especially for the majority of workers unable to take part in clandestine activity. A firm decision was needed on a plant-wide basis to exchange a policy of boycott for one of active participation. Boycott abandoned the field without a struggle. A range of positive measures was suggested. Activists could attempt to set up legal self-management papers and use plant public address systems; publicly question decisions of management and government; refuse to participate in matters decided without consultation, or in propaganda offensives such as „the battle against speculation;” organize referenda on important questions and torpedo attempts by the authorities to legitimize their own decisions. All possibilities for strengthening the links between the workers in an enterprise and between workers in different enterprises should be utilized.

To this end the contacting of self-management organizations in other plants, the organization of visits, conferences and joint sessions is suggested. Self-management activists should set up their own problem-solving commissions and make direct approaches to sympathetic academic circles. In short all possibilities for legal activity should be exploited. The forum of self-management structures should be used to raise demands for the release of imprisoned enterprise workers and the reinstatement of sacked work-mates.

This positive and combative approach was reflected elsewhere in the Underground press *Robotnik* argued in February 1983 that the tendency of Solidarity militants to view entry into the self-management structures as tantamount to collaboration, should be resisted. Self-managements should not be equated with the regime's tame trade unions or the „Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth,” since they were a democratic conception properly belonging to the rank and file. It was argued that since economic reform was being reduced to a matter of pricing policy and enterprise autonomy remained a fiction, self-management could not have any real impact on economic performance. It might however be possible to use it as an instrument for defending workers' interests, in pressing for improvements in wages and bonus levels. Other paper produced in Warsaw and Lublin printed forceful arguments for „going-into” the self-managements, exploiting any space for legal public activity and supporting the economic reform. (41)

The opposing position was also however maintained. Underground bulletins, some of which display a noticeable flavour of the factory floor, continued during 1983 to voice calls for boycott and to reflect an intense scepticism among worker activists about the value of the positive approach advocated by some leading Underground circles.

„From the Life of the Pseudo Self-management,” a broad-sheet from the Warski ship-yards, pours scorn upon the efforts of those canvassing for the reactivation of self-management. It describes ill-attended departmental meetings, with half those present drawn from managerial levels and the reluctance of all but a handful of workers to have anything to do with such activity.

The underground paper *Hutnik*, based in the Lenin steel-works in Krakow, reported in March 1983 the procedures of intimidation and manipulation attending the organization of the preliminary electoral commission to supervise the election of a new workers' council. Those drawn into the activity were characterized as management narks and layabouts. In June a letter from the same plant mocked the elections to the council and the climate of apathy in which they took place.

Calls for a boycott were reiterated in the Warsaw paper *Sektor*, and *Tygodnik Wojenny* in May reported the manoeuvres of management in one plant to set up a tame self-management body via its collaborators, preparing the way with a nominated „advisory council”.

„All those people with any authority amongst the work-force and the greater part of the workers themselves have refused to take part in the work of appointing a facade of self-management.” asserted the well-known paper. (42)

A personal interview with a self-management activist from the Solidarity period, conducted in Gdansk in 1984, bore out these asser-

tions. He recalled being called to the Director's office and ordered to set about establishing a new self-management. He reported this to a meeting of the work-force who angrily rejected the proposal.

Nevertheless the tendency to exploit the self-management bodies as quasi trade-unions gathered force and there is evidence that the strategy met with some success. Straws in the wind were two statements by Walesa in December 1983 and April 1984. In December Walesa asserted:

„Workers' self-management is a complex problem. There are enterprises where self-management functions well and fights for the rights of the workers, but there are also others where the workers allow themselves to be manipulated. There are also many enterprises where the workers, who have no hope, do not want self-management at all. However self-management must have a place in any reformed political system. The workers themselves must decide whether conditions in their enterprise permit the creation of self-management bodies." (43)

In April Walesa spelled it out even more explicitly. Arguing for independent activity as far as the law permitted, he argued:

„One such field may be workers' self-management in industrial enterprises. One should have no illusions that present self-managements can play a role similar to the one we expected in 1981, or be the real administrators of the work-place and the driving force of the reform. But this area cannot be resigned. However self-management is not something that can be simply given to us: it is an institution liberated by the engagement of thousands of people. It may be regarded as one of the authentic social forms that emerged from before 13 December and some elements of this authenticity have been preserved until now. We can certainly find self-managements which have been incapacitated or wound up like clockwork and I know that they belong to the world of fiction. Alongside them post-August groups of activists still continue, enjoying authority amongst the workers and defending their independence. Such self-managements should be supported. How else can workers learn how to run economic units and undertake initiatives, or establish features of a real perspective of full self-management which will be necessary if better forms of administration appear in Poland?" (44)

Other indications were provided by the re-establishment of the self-management oriented *Network*, reported in January 1984 (45) and the appearance of a major article in the leading Warsaw underground paper *Tygodnik Mazowsze* in May 1984 by an anonymous member of a Warsaw workers' council, in which he defends a strategy of militant trade unionism, employing the vehicle of the self-managements.

„For me self-management is a form of legal political opposition. . . self-management perceived in this way can become an independent enclave, a wedge. . ."

The author quoted a successful strike against victimization supported by the workers' council in the enterprise. In another instance:

„In the elections to the workers' council the whole former factory commission of Solidarity stood — and were elected. The management once more has to negotiate with X or Y representing the workers, but now not as representatives of Solidarity, but of the self-management." (46)

Informal discussions with Warsaw self-management activists confirmed that there are a number of well-known instances where a situation has arisen similar to the one described above by the anonymous writer in *Tygodnik Mazowsze*. (47) Attendance at a session of the workers' council of the Warsaw Steel Works confirmed an impression of a strangely trade unionist flavour to proceedings.

An interview with Henryk Wujec, a member of the Warsaw leadership of Solidarity in 1981, which appeared at the beginning of 1985 in *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, not only gave authoritative further support to this „trade unionist" attitude to the councils, but also argued strongly that wherever possible their powers for economic administration should be exercised:

„People who get elected to self-management councils are experienced, know their factories, and can help to remove some obvious absurdities, without impinging on macro-economic decisions, on which we have no influence ... Workers' councils provide an opportunity to test what scope there is for action within individual factories." (48)

Wujec's argument is an important one, since it seems likely to reflect mainstream opinion in the Opposition. Without abandoning the clandestine Solidarity factory commissions, he argues for a highly positive intervention in the workers' councils. He corroborates the impression, quoted earlier, that perhaps 10% of the councils could be considered by independent opinion to be „genuine".

At the time of writing, the latest material available from the Polish Opposition, the comprehensive Solidarity document, „The Poland Report: Five Years Since August," further endorses the picture sketched above:

„A few hundred of the councils at least then, have remained faithful to the idea of self-management from 1981, despite pressure and repression." (p. 67).

The Report calls for strong support for the workers' councils in their efforts to defend their autonomy from its progressive corrosion by administrative action.

In this situation, even if self-managements cannot fulfill their intended functions of economic management, they may play a useful role as a safety valve. Management may be willing to work with them since it may well be useful to it to have a genuinely representative body to deal with. From the point of view of the Opposition, the prospect exists of maintaining, in positions of public responsibility, trusted independent workers' leaders, perhaps until the next political crisis erupts in the apparently endless cycle that grips Polish political life.

(iv) FACTORS CONDITIONING THE FUNCTIONING OF THE WORKER'S COUNCILS

(a) *The Reform*

Polish economic management has been characterized by repeated outbreaks of „reform fever”, which the administrative apparatus has displayed a resilient capacity to withstand, reverting after a period to traditional command-distribution techniques. A general assessment of the current phase of „the long history of the short reform” is outside the scope of this paper. The scope afforded to the self-management bodies is however closely linked to questions such as the degree of enterprise autonomy possible within the framework of the reform. Some observations are therefore required.

There are indications that the level of enterprise autonomy is significantly higher than it was in the 1970s, but little evidence that a qualitative shift has taken place. Indeed official literature acknowledges as much. In the report on the reform submitted to the Sejm in July 1985 for example it is asserted that whilst the reform has succeeded in mobilizing some unused resources, it has not achieved a qualitative effect on economic life. (49).

The degree of enterprise autonomy initially granted by the reform shows signs of progressive restriction, generally by *extra-legal* methods, with the help of executive regulations and amendments to the law. Controls over price fixing; the disposition of the profit; over the distribution of raw materials; the level of employment and a general restriction of room for manoeuvre by the management of enterprises in the quantity and structure of production and in reacting to market signals, all combine to frustrate the radical marketising thrust of the original conception of the reform. Substantive re-centralization into new industrial combines also seems to be on the agenda, as mentioned earlier.

A significant pointer is the increase in the size of the central administrative apparatus. It diminished by one third in 1980—82 but in 1984 relative to 1983 it had increased once more by 73% (50). This would indicate a marked return to manual steering of the economy.

Research into the structure of the new „associated” enterprises, which have displaced the old „industrial board” system, indicates that the structure of production has not greatly altered. Most associations were established in the first half of 1982. Enterprises had therefore no opportunity to test their autonomy and the habits of the old structures were transferred smoothly into the new. Research conducted in 1984 confirmed:

„the monopolistic tendency in the creation of associations, especially as concerns their branch character.”

“... associations acted as intermediaries between the founding organ and the enterprise (the traditional function of the industry board).” (51)

An anti-monopoly bill produced by Groups II and X of the Commission on Economic Reform remains unpublished.

The self-managements in enterprises do send representatives to the association governing bodies, but their contribution there would appear to be generally minimal. There are exceptions to this situation. Apparently on occasion, the opportunity provided by the Association for councils in different enterprises to meet and concert their interventions is exploited: the Poland Report quotes the electrical association „Unitra” as a successful example of this practice. (p.66). This must however be treated as an exception rather than a general rule.

This question touches upon the capacity of the workers' councils to participate effectively in the formulation of annual and five year plans, for which their consent is legally obligatory. If decisions are taken above the level of the enterprise it is difficult to see how the workers' councils can participate. The absence of working horizontal or vertical links between the workers' councils was commented upon earlier. The two principal lessons which self-management activists drew from the 1956—58 experience were the necessity for an independent social force to guarantee a climate in which they could operate and the need for regional, industrial and national co-ordination between the workers' councils. Both these conditions are missing.

Proposals for the allocation of investment funds by a banking system responsive to some kind of market mechanism also remain at an embryonic — or still-born — stage. (52) The same is true of possibilities for enterprises to raise capital themselves by some regulated system of securities, bonds and shares.

The connection between profits and wages on the one hand and worker productivity and the economic results of the enterprise on the other, remains extremely weak, owing to a continued reliance on „soft” financing and the exploitation of loop-holes in regulations through pressure group bargaining policies. Wage rises may be more easily obtained by lobbying to obtain exemption from the operation of the PFAZ (Payroll Tax) than by activity on the part of the self-management to improve efficiency. This undermines the rationale of workers' self-management in autonomous economic units.

The ability of enterprises to set their own prices varies from sector to sector. Central monitoring and regulation of pricing persists in the face of the political sensitivity of price increases and the need to restrain monopolistic exploitation of pricing power by enterprises. In 1984, 45% of prices were fixed outside the enterprise — the same proportion as in 1974. The so-called „contractual prices” (*ceny umowne*) tend moreover to be administratively imposed from above and are based on costs rather than market considerations. (53).

A supply situation which encourages administrative rationing from centre is a further major barrier to enterprise autonomy. A study of 49 enterprises in 1984 revealed that their supply difficulties had not significantly eased in comparison with 1983 and even with 1982. Enterprises continued to regard the acquisition of supplies, fuel and foreign exchange as their most important problem. (54). Although the supply situation clearly has improved since the desperate period of martial law, this improvement does not seem to have been used to widen market relations and provide a context in which enterprise autonomy would be viable.

The chronic condition of uncertainty as new bureaucratic regulations supersede old ones and create a climate in which very few can have faith in the *durability* of stable reformed conditions, is one of the most important factors subverting the reform. In the three years following its introduction, 330 laws relating to the functioning of the economic system were introduced and 12,000 legal acts of lower status, including 8,000 by the Ministry of Finance alone. (55). These constitute a labyrinth for specialists and provide strong incentives for the reduction of bureaucratic-political risks (rather than strictly economic ones) by the concealment of reserves.

The general economic framework within which the workers' councils must operate is not therefore favourable — essential elements in the environment of marketization and decentralization in which they were intended to operate, are still lacking. The central paradox of reform in East European conditions can be seen at work here. Only a grave political and/or economic crisis will force the implementation of reform, but such crisis conditions are precisely those *least* suitable for the centre to abdicate its powers of intervention and control.

(b) *Self-management in the Enterprise*

The possibilities open to a workers' council will depend upon the particular situation of the enterprise — upon factors such as its size, location and economic importance. An enterprise director who is also a local potentate, owing to the significance of his firm in the local economy, or because of his Party position, may be in a position to give a freer rein to „his” workers' council. A large enterprise situated in an urban centre such as Warsaw, Poznan or Krakow, will be able to draw upon the support of „expert” independent legal or economic advice from the local academic community — an option denied to an enterprise in a more obscure location.

Size may also bring its problems as a large complex organization affords more possibilities of conflict. There is some evidence that the quality of the activity of workers' councils correlates negatively with the size of the enterprise in which they are situated (56). It is for political rather than technical reasons that the remaining „citadels” of workers' self-management in Poland are in large important enterprises, where the strength of the work-force has to be reckoned with. Political tussles between management and councils in such enterprises can often be detected in long drawn-out disputes over the wording or interpretation of self-management statutes. (57).

Clashes of interest groups in the enterprise (over pay differentials between manual workers, technical staff and junior managerial personnel for example) may however, help *enhance* a workers' council's position as a forum for competing interests to resolve their differences. It may equally pose a threat to the representative character of the council, if groups of specialists and technical workers perceive it primarily as a vehicle for promoting technical progress and the professional advance of skilled groups.

A major factor in the authority deployed by the council amongst the work-force is whether it was established in 1981, when the self-management movement had a spontaneous and mass character. Councils cited as strong and effective generally display a continuity of personnel from 1981. This situation applies to only a minority of councils as repression and demoralization following martial law effectively stifled the work of many of the self-managements.

Thus whilst management has sometimes insisted on new elections when self-managements were revived in 1983, such demands have not always been successful. In the Elana Textile Works for example, a long running struggle between the workers' council and the Director began when he tried and failed to get a new council elected in 1983. The dispute with this „Solidarity” council appears to have ended in victory for the council in May 1985 with the resignation of the Director. (58). This dispute was particularly ironic since the Director was actually originally nominated by the council.

A significant minority of "1981" councils did then survive and have retained the confidence to act independently. Out of 36 self-managements in enterprises which had workers' councils before 13 December 1981 in the Lodz area, 12 had been restored unchanged in composition by 1983. Nineteen had undergone fundamental changes and five relatively minor alterations in composition (59). This survival rate of one third however masks a significant casualty rate amongst "1981" councils — i. e. those where *no* self-management has been reinstated to date. These seem to number about a thousand — a very substantial proportion of all the self-managements existing. (60)

Academics monitoring the workers' councils in the Lodz area felt that the proportion of new personnel was very high (61). Such newcomers will inevitably be less confident, less experienced and enjoy less authority amongst the work-force than veterans of the 1980—81 period. Enterprise directors surveyed in the Lodz area by *Zycie Gospodarcze* evaluated their workers' councils as in the main passive. 20% were evaluated as active, but avoiding responsibility. This picture would be consonant with the quasi-trade unionist approach) (62).

Survey evidence on the attitude of work-forces to self-managements shows significant, but minority support for them. Research conducted in the first half of 1983, identified a quarter to a fifth of workers who supported the existing self-management structures (63). 1984 research identified 41% of employees questioned who wanted to influence enterprise decisions through the workers' council or other self-management structures (as opposed to 7.4% through the trade unions and 6.1% through "political organizations"). (64)

Even in the Warsaw Steel Works however, results from research conducted by the Sociology Dept. of Warsaw University in 1985, indicated that amongst young workers (under 25s) support for self-management fell to negligible levels. 7.5% of such young workers considered the wide development of self-management as the most desirable feature for future social development, whilst for 15% it was the *least desired* feature!

Support rose in older age groups and it is significant in this regard that 90% of all workers' council activists are over 30 years old.

Nevertheless in the Warsaw Steel Works 61% of the workers asserted that the self-management had no influence, whilst 33% thought it had not much influence. (65)

The structure of workers' expectations however seems to have shifted. Two thirds of the workers questioned by Malak (66) expected social welfare activities from their self-managements. The sharpest differential ever recorded between expectations of self-managements and trade unions was in 1981, when 43.7% of those interviewed identified Solidarity as the defender of the workers' interests and 34.5% identified self-management as the instrument to make possible working people's economic management, together with 31.2% who thought self-management should control the economy (67).

Research conducted in a single enterprise in 1981 and again in 1983 confirms this picture of a shift in expectations towards a more trade unionist perspective. In 1981 49% of workers in the enterprise wanted a say in working conditions, 48% in the election of the Director and 32% on the question of new production. In 1983 demands centred on working conditions. 55% wanted a say in them. Only 36% still wanted a say in the election of the Director and 15% on new production (68). This evidence is very limited however and based on a small, "family type" enterprise.

Further more general survey evidence drawn from workers in large industrial concerns has revealed what would seem to be a plausible distinction between workers' attitudes to the *idea* of self-management and to the actual condition and possibilities currently surrounding a workers' council in their enterprise. A widespread belief was found amongst workers that the present self-management institutions had only a temporary character — and this indeed may be a shrewd judgement. (69). But whilst they had little current interest in the self-management institutions, they still thought their powers should be greater than they were. When asked in 1984 how they thought self-management *should* operate ideally in the country as a whole, a sample of workers in large enterprises reiterated the priorities of the Solidarity period (85% for the right of self-management to elect the Director, 55% for a scope for self-management wider than the enterprise, 39% for representation for self-management in the Sejm) (70)

To reinforce this picture, two research projects comparing the influence workers thought various institutions in the work-place *should* have, with the influence they *actually* wielded, have shown that workers will place the self-management body in first or second place in desired importance, but only in fifth place in actual importance. (71).

The ideal priorities that workers ascribed to self-management diverged significantly from what they were actually able to do. Priorities identified by survey were that self-managements should name the Director, fill other management positions, confirm promotions, divide bonuses and awards and fix norms and wages. Only in the last respects did these priorities overlap with the current powers of self-managements.

There is evidence then that Polish workers want self-management, but not that they want *this* self-management. Given the existing situation they look to the workers' councils to play some kind of surrogate

trade union role and to protect their interests in the area of social welfare as far as possible.

(c) Other Constraints

Tight official control of publication is a factor severely inhibiting workers' councils from communicating with the work-force. This is confirmed by the complaints of activists in even "strong" workers' councils, that they are not allowed to run their own bulletins, that what information is disseminated through management-controlled publications is subject to censorship and in many cases regarded with suspicion by the work-force. Access to factory public address systems was infrequent. (72)

The role of the Party in the enterprise is another factor that may threaten the independence of the workers' council. The line of the IXth Congress was that Party members should influence economic organizations only as individual members. The centre of gravity of the Party probably has moved from the work-place to the local environment, owing to the weakening of the Party in the enterprises. The orientation of official policy is however in the opposite direction. At a national Party seminar in Katowice in May 1985 there were repeated calls for Party factory organizations to make vigorous efforts to stand successful candidates in workers' council elections. The Party Secretary from the Gdansk Shipyards boasted that 14 out of the 21 members of the workers' council in the yards were Party members. (73). The general level of success achieved by the Party in penetrating the councils may be judged from the presence in the workers' councils of triple the proportion of Party representation in the work-force as a whole. About half the presidents of workers' councils are Party members. (74)

Constructive relations with the trade unions will affect the authority of the workers' council. Whilst good relations existed with Solidarity, the new trade unions are more likely to be a rival to the workers' council. The new wages legislation introduced in January 1984 enhanced the position of the trade unions and this may indicate a further widening of their role. Research from 1983 from two sources indicates that relations between trade unions and workers' councils were poor. One survey found that three quarters of workers' council members defined relations as only average or bad. Another, concentrating on Presidents of workers' councils found that a quarter of them considered that they had no co-operation with the trade unions (as opposed to only 11% who said they had no co-operation with the Party) (75).

(d) What Can the Councils Do?

Although the partial suspension of the legal powers of the self-managements expired in 1985, it seems clear that they are in no position to exercise these powers to the full. In planning or in personnel policy, the traditional management structure in and above the enterprise

remains much stronger than the workers' councils. Overall, one study shows, three fifths of council resolutions are prepared with the participation of representatives of management (76). The main areas where councils displayed an ability to act independently were *the division of the profit, the establishment of enterprise wage systems, and supervision over social and welfare funds.* (77)

Conditions were especially favourable for workers' councils to elaborate wage structures for their own enterprises in 1984, since there was strong pressure from above to create motivational incentive systems. The self-managements seem to have taken advantage of this opportunity.

The restructuring of an enterprise wage system can indeed be done with common sense and the help of experience. Interference in the plan however requires current data not only about the enterprise, but also about the economic environment as a whole, not to speak of a level of general economic expertise.

In a situation when the councils were dependent upon the Director for information, which was often not forthcoming or provided at the last minute, this kind of activity is likely to be impossible. This is the more the case when plan bargaining continues until the very last minute — or well beyond it! The confirmation of the plan only during the first quarter of its operation is nothing unusual and there have been cases of the enterprise plan only being passed in November of the year to which it applied. (78).

The Councils' powers to approve the plan then, have generally had a ritual character, though there are cases in which workers' councils have attempted to influence the annual plan, or such matters as the enterprises' connection with the industrial association.

Similarly in personnel policy the influence of the self-managements has been extremely weak and does not seem to have been effectively exercised at any level.

In the course of 1983 the councils lost the right to determine the wage and job description of their enterprise directors. (79) Even before this move, very few seem to have been able to exercise an influence in this crucial indicator of the source of authority. For example 46 enterprises were asked whether their workers' council played a decisive role in fixing the Director's wages. In only 3 was this the case. In 14 the workers' council had played no role (80).

In the selection of Directors a similar picture emerges. Three quarters of the councils reviewed by Ruszkowski had never discussed the appointment of the Director. It is the exception rather than the rule that the workers' councils play a prominent role in competitive selection procedures, as laid down by law. In 1982—83, 1,800 Directors were appointed without competitive procedures. The decision by the Chamber of Labour and Social Security of the High Court in December 1983, that enterprise statutes did not have to contain provision for such procedures, opened the door for this legal right to be pushed aside (81).

There are cases of workers' councils competitively selecting their Directors (three out of the forty six surveyed by Kwasniewski and 200 during 1984, in the whole country, according to the Poland Report)

and also of exercising their powers by for example refusing to allow their enterprise to be merged into a larger combine (82). It is difficult to know however whether formal "showcase" proceedings are being conducted with a tame self-management in the first case, or whether other political interest groups in local apparatuses are using the council in the second instance.

There are examples to be found of workers' councils intervening in every-day production matters: illogical production arrangements, the reorganizing of repair facilities, of laborious efforts to reduce the number of administrative staff, and of activities such as the selling off of unused resources, buying in new ones and mobilizing some reserves. Minor investments and innovations have been achieved by many active self-managements. Although significant achievements in the face of the obstacles facing the councils, these remain activities of a second order importance.

The main area of the activity of the councils would appear to be social welfare activity. This covers areas of great concern to workers, such as the allocation of flats built by the enterprise; entitlement to places in enterprise holiday homes; disbursements from hardship funds and so on. More independent workers' councils have disrupted traditional patronage patterns in this area, questioning the allocation of very high proportions of enterprise welfare funds to maintaining prestigious professional sports' facilities for example. The Warsaw Steel Works Council successfully blocked a proposed exchange with East German trade unionists, which would only have been open to the small minority of the work-force who were members of the official trade unions. The FSO workers' council conducted a complete overhaul of the regulations governing disposal of the Housing and Welfare funds and published the new system (83). This kind of activity can legitimize the council in the eyes of the work-force and reinforce its role as a para-trade union.

The degree of the trade unionist stance of a council may be directly related to the participation level of manual workers within it. Council activists at the Warsaw Steel Works attributed the egalitarian and "fighting" stance of their council to the fact that more than 50% of its composition were manual workers. The FSO council by contrast were considered to be more influenced by specialists, engineers and so forth. (84)

A conscious defence of the independence of the council through insistence on its collegial character may be an important factor in preventing its bureaucratization. The President of the Workers' Council at Huta Wąsoszawa stressed this in a personal interview, saying that he had to resist pressures to adopt positions on the council's behalf. This would be in accordance with the old style of running an enterprise, in which a small junta consisting of the Director, the President of the Trade Union Committee, the Party First Secretary and the President of the Workers' Council would often act as the power brokers in an enterprise. (Some of these functions might overlap of course). Jerzy Indraszkiewicz and Jerzy Hausner have commented on the tendency to revert to this style of decision making through meetings of "infor-

mal collectives" in their research on the functioning of councils in the Krakow area. (85)

The above survey of the current position of the Polish workers' councils points to the observation that despite the shattering blow delivered by the imposition of martial law on the independent Polish workers' movement and the negative effects of this (apathy, repression, mutual distrust between worker activists and the authorities) the councils continue to display a significant degree of vitality. Management is not able to use them simply as an instrument of exhortation to higher productivity. They are also able at least to make efforts to monitor and regulate economic privileges formerly disposed of by management. They are imbued with a perceptible and growing trade union character. (86) Their contribution to the economic reform is small but an expansion of activities could not be ruled out if the original radical intentions of the reform were to be maintained. This will depend upon the degree of commitment of all levels of the authorities to deepening the economic reform, although in the light of the developments referred to above, in the direction of the creation of huge new combines, it would seem likely that the authorities' strategic conception has moved decisively away from a reform providing space for the operation of workers' self-management.

Resistance to this kind of development continues to be strong and on occasion able to deflect the authorities' from their chosen course. The Poland Report, summing up the situation observes:

"This... indicates that the statutory self-management organs could and perhaps still can today, with the support even of only a part of the workers and the group of self-management activists, although they are faced with ever more difficult conditions, execute the functions of a real means of social control of authority in the work-place" (p. 69).

The continuing component of authentic representation of the work-force in the councils created the possibility of a development of co-operation and integration, away from the polarized situation of 1981—82. If the authorities do not avail themselves of this opportunity and the mistakes of the past are repeated, then alternatively the continued public activity of trusted workers' leaders may feed into future struggles launched by the Polish workers against the Party-State bureaucracy.

(v) CONCLUSION

In the period dealt with in this paper the far-reaching debates of 1981 over the character of ownership in the economy, social control and economic democracy, together with radical economic reform, have receded into the past.

The scope both for the reform and for workers' self-management within it are now much more limited. The project of "Kadarization" in Poland, which would imply the possibility of de-centralizing economic reform and a relatively liberal regime, founded on a firmly managed political stability, also looks increasingly implausible. Political repres-

sion appears to be gradually increasing, rather than having been surgically applied, so that it could then be dispensed with and the consequent room for manoeuvre utilized.

What then are the possible scenarios for the future role of the Polish workers' councils? (87)

Firstly there is a distinct possibility that they may have no future. A return to fully fledged centralized administrative-directive economic management would leave no role for the workers' councils. If this were to happen their remaining independence would be crushed and their organizational structures neglected and allowed to fall into desuetude as happened in the 1970s with the KSR Conferences for Workers' Self-management. This would run entirely counter to the professed intentions of the central authorities. However given the pronounced distrust of middle levels of the economic and party apparatus towards the councils (88) and the past record of co-optation and bureaucratization of such bodies (89) it is not an improbable scenario.

Secondly, there is the possibility that a limited but genuine degree of autonomy will be conceded to the enterprises, but that this will remain heavily qualified, preserving the pattern of lobbying and pressure group politics. In this scenario the self-managements will probably become instruments in bureaucratic bargaining between levels of the economic apparatus. Such a system would aim to recruit the most active workers to the structure of authority. Technicians, specialists and low-level foremen would be able to use the self-management structures to promote their own interests. The management would use the legitimating stamp of the workers' council to justify its decision to the workers. This scenario is more probable than the first one, but might also serve as a stage in transition to the first alternative.

Thirdly, there is a slim possibility that the dominance of economic liberals in the central administration may hold open the field for the future growth of activity by the workers' councils. This would suppose that the economic reform as advertised by the authorities would actually be progressively implemented. This would make possible the return to social activity of many of the broader layer of skilled workers who were mobilized by the self-management movement in 1981. Their desire to rid their work-places of the waste and nonsense of bureaucratic production relations could be harnessed as a powerful engine to promote the reform. The backing of the new leadership in the Kremlin for economic reform moves and the strengthening of the Januzelski leadership in the Autumn of 1985 against some of its "hard-line" critics would seem to materially strengthen the hands of the reformers. Recent policy moves do not however seem to be consonant with this picture.

Finally it should be observed that there is strong evidence to believe that the *idea* of economic democracy and workers' control is deeply rooted in the Polish working population. Although a minority of workers support the existing self-management organizations in the concrete circumstances of post martial law Poland, survey evidence from 1980, 1981 and 1983 and 1985 shows that an overwhelming majority of Polish workers are responsive to the idea of what they conceive to be authentic workers' self-management (as opposed to what they

actually get). (90) However utopian such conceptions may be, this would imply that in any future social and political crisis erupting in Poland, the notion of workers' self-management will once more come to the fore.

The Hungarian socialist oppositionists Heller, Feher and Markus have commented on the eruptions of social conflict in Eastern Europe and in Poland in particular which have provided the context for the emergence of workers' councils and self-management programmes as follows:

The supreme type of all possible conflicts is rebellion as an expression of need for collective autonomy, as was perfectly visible during the Polish August and has been ever since. This is a struggle for the economic, social and political autonomy of social groups, for workers' control over factory affairs, a nuclear form of self-management movement, an explicit need for trade unions, outbursts of the universal need for self-organization and coalition." (91)

This paper broadly supports their view in the belief that the question of self-management will not go away, however many false starts it is subjected to.

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NOTES

(1) Although the gravity of the crisis was so extreme as to produce a perverse effect of enforcing local decision-making in conditions other than those envisaged by the reformers. I am grateful to Prof. D. M. Nuti for pointing this out to me.

(2) Workers' Councils in Poland 1980—81. — The Example of Gdansk. Unpublished Manuscript. 1984. Janusz Sopocki and Janek Janko.

(3) *Zycie Gospodarcze* 9/6/85 No. 23. Trzy S Po Trzech Latach. At a two-day Party seminar on self-management, Jaruzelski reiterated the Party's commitment to it. Barcikowski affirmed that there was "no going back".

(4) *Zycie Gospodarcze* 15/9/85 No. 37. O Reformie Po Trzech Latach. Jozef Pajestka.

(5) *Dziennik Ustaw* 1981. No. 24 Items 122 and 123.

(6) Bulletin of the European Communities/Supplement 3/80. Employee Information and Consultation Procedures. The Hungarian system introduced as of 1/1/85. is detailed in Paul Marer ("Economic Reform in Hungary: From Central Planning to Regulated Market" / Selected Papers of the Joint Economic Committee of the US Congress) East European Economies Slow Growth in the 1980's (vol. 3) Country Studies in Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia (March 28 1986) Washington DC 1986) US Govt. Printing Office.

(7) *Zycie Gospodarcze* 16/6/85 No. 24. Nie Tak Samorząd Straszny. Irena Dryll records protests from workers' councils from many areas of

the country in defence of the existing legislation. This was in response to interventions such as that of J. Barecki, the President of the Sejm Commission on Self-Management at the XVIII plenum of the Central Committee in December 1984, when he called for amendment of the self-management especially article 1, defining the independence of self-management from state administrative organs and social, political and trade union organizations. Cited by Raport Polska op. cit. p. 70.

(8) Dziennik Ustaw 1981. №. 32 Item 185.

(9) Raport o wdrażaniu reformy gospodarczej w pierwszym półroczym 1982r. Warsaw 1982, p. 32.

(10) Raport o wdrażaniu i skutkach reformy gospodarczej w 1982 r. Warsaw 1983, p. 41.

(11) B. Blaszczyk, Raport Przejściowy z Badan. Zmiany Procesu Planowania w Przedsiębiorstwie w 1982r. Instytut Organizacji Zarządzania i Doskonalenia Kadr. Warsaw 1982. Duplicated. p. 49.

(12) J. Jermakowicz. Samorząd Pracowniczy, Nadzieje i Niespełnienie. Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza 1983, p. 41.

(13) Życie Warszawy 5/6/82.

(14) Dziennik Ludowy 5/6/82. Krok w kierunku zaktualizowania Samorządów, Michał Kierczyński.

(15) J. Grzybczak/Odrodzenie no. 32 1985. Druge "S" — Samorządność. Cited by Jerzy Osiatynski, Włodzimierz Pankow, Michał Federowicz. Samorząd W Gospodarce Polskiej 1981—85. Duplicated. Warsaw 1985. Polskie Towarzystwo Socjologiczne. Oddział Warszawski. p. 42.

(16) Ustawa z dnia 18 Grudnia 1982r. o szczególnej regulacji prawnej w okresie zawieszenia stanu wojennego. Rzeczpospolita No. 290 1982.

(17) M. Misiak. Piecsetka i otoczenie. Zarządzanie No. 13 1985 cited in Osiatynski et al. op. cit. P. 73. The same authors cite a separate study using different criteria which indicated that 781 enterprises in 1983 produced 57.7% of Polish industrial production. T. Oldakowski. Jeden Wielki Znak Zapytania. Życie Gospodarcze No. 23 1983.

(18) Dziennik Ustaw No. 9 1983 Item 47.

(19) Ustawa z dnia 21 lipca 1983r. o szczególnej regulacji prawnej w okresie przezwycizania kryzysu społeczno-ekonomicznego. Dziennik Ustaw no. 39 item 176 1983.

(20) c. f. Nowe Drogi I/1983 "Koncepcje Opozycji Antysocjalistycznej w Polsce" by Margorzata Dabrowa Szefler and Henryk Patadzewski; "Gospodarka w Sieci" by Henryk Zawira, Głos Robotniczy 15/3/82; "Związki Zawodowe i Samorządność" Polityka 25/6/83.

(21) Quoted in "Sens Samorządności" by Ryszard Kazimierska, Życie Warszawy 12/9/84. For similar treatment of semi-fictitious self-management bodies c. f. Anna Turska, Samorządność Osiedlowa, Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw 1982.

(22) This was written before the amendment of the law dealing with academic affairs, which sharply reduced the legal autonomy of the Universities.

(23) Gospodarz zakładu pracy. Poselka pomoc dla działaczy, Rzeczpospolita No. 64, 1983.

(24) Kiedy ma trzeciego "S", Ryszard Kazimierska, Życie Warszawy 20/1/82.

(25) Trybuna Ludu 10/4/84, Wspolodpowiedzalni za gospodarke, M. Wieczorek and T. Szymanski.

(26) Self-Management: Just Who's in Charge?, Agnieszka Wroblewska, Przegląd Techniczny No. 23 3/6/84. Translated by the Polish News Bulletin of the British and American Embassies. 29/6/84.

(27) Zycie Gospodarcze 18/8/85 No. 33. Portret Samorzadu. Irena Dryll. In August 1984, a government commission claimed that 78% of enterprises (6,123 of 7,813) had self-management bodies in operation, concentrating the activity of 128,700 people, mainly through the workers' councils themselves. Raport o reformie gospodarczej, Rzeczpospolita, Warsaw, August 1984.

(28) Tomasz Jezioranski. Partia a Samorzad. Zycie Gospodarcze 12/5/85 No. 19.

(29) An adviser to the Huta Warszawa workers' council in a personal interview.

(30) Zycie Warszawy 11/10/84, Co sie dzieje z trzecim "S".

(31) c. f. Poland's New Unions Challenge for Welfare Funds by Christopher Bobinski, Financial Times 12/6/84. The new trade union law: Ustawa z dnia 24 lipca 1985 r. o zmianie ustawy o zwiiazkach zawodowych i niektórych innych ustaw okreslajacych uprawnienia zwiiazkow zawodowych. Dziennik Ustaw 1985 No. 35 poz. 162.

(32) The wages law: Ustawa z dnia 26 stycznia 1984r. o zasadach tworzenia zakladowych systemow wynagrodzenia. Dziennik Ustaw 1984 No. 5 poz. 25.

(33) The pressure to expand the role of the trade unions and their weakness where a strong council is in place is noted by Pawel Ruszkowski, Poszly Konie Po Betonie, Polityka No. 15 14/4/84. Trade union strength in Huta Warszawa and the FSC car plant, in both of which there are strong councils, was estimated by council activists in personal interviews at around 10% (at the end of 1984) well below the national average of 15—16%.

(34) Reported by Roman Grzeborz, an enterprise Director in Katowice at a national Party seminar with 300 participants on self-management in Katowice in May 1985. Zycie Gospodarcze 12/5/85 No. 19. Partia a Samorzad. Tomasz Jezioranski.

(35) Quarterly Economic Review of Poland, Economist Intelligence Unit, No. 3, 1985. p. 11.

(36) c. f. the legal opinion drafted by Bronislaw Ziemianin in the Zycie Gospodarcze supplement Samorzad i Zycie 6/10/85 No. 40, rejecting the draft document defining the powers of the new Wspolnoty Przedsiębiorstw Hutnictwa Zelaza i Stali as inconsonant with the law.

(37) Ibid. Rady Pracownicze Decyduja. The Boleslaw Bierut Steel Works for example categorically rejected adherence to the new combine. Pawel Ruszkowski in Wspolnota czyli Monopol denounced the ultimata delivered to enterprise managements and workers' councils to join the new combine.

(38) The Paris based Biuletyn Informacyjny is probably the best Western source for reprints from the Underground press, together with the London Uncensored Polish News Bulletin. For a survey of the Underground press see Poland's Underground Press by Anna Sabat-Swidlicka, Radio Free Europe RAD Background Report 168 (Poland) 18/7/83.

(39) Such as the Niepodleglosc group.

(40) TTK statement on the Reactivation of Self-Managements, *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, Paris 25/8/82. KSR = Conference of Workers' Self-Management: the collegiate body incorporating representatives of social and political organizations which took over most of the functions of the workers' councils in 1958.

(41) *Wiadomosci* No. 53 26/1/83, *Solidarnosc* Region Mazowsze; Informator No. 55 4/3/83 Lublin.

(42) *Sektor* No. 18 25/1/83 Warsaw.

(43) *Walesa* Issues Programme Statement, Labour Focus On Eastern Europe, Winter 1984.

(44) Text from *Robotnik* No. 55 9/4/84 "B" Edition.

(45) *Tygodnik Mazowsze* 73 5/1/84 Reportedly representatives of Huta Lenina, Huta Katowice, the Wujek mine and the Swidnik plant in Lublin formed the founding group. The underground leader Zbigniew Janus, originally from the Ursus tractor factory was associated with the move.

(46) *Tygodnik Mazowsze* No. 90 31/5/84(37).

(47) Huta Warszawa, the Elana textile plant in Torun, Polmor near Gdansk and the FSO car factory were mentioned.

(48) *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, Summer 1985 vol. 8 no. 5, *Self-Management and Solidarity* — Interview with Henry K. Wujec. P. 23. See also the *Financial Times* report cited in *Januzelski* Back on the Defensive by Oliver MacDonald, which quotes a government survey referring to 30 enterprises where the Party organizations were considered to be under pressure from workers' councils, c. f. also an interview with "Jan Hartman" a self-management activist in *Autogestions* No. 15, March 1984 which supports the view that: "workers' councils are much more instruments of struggle than management instruments".

(49) *Ocena Reformy*. Irena Dryll. *Zycie Gospodarcze* 11/8/85 no. 32. Describes the debate on the joint report of the Sejm Commission on the Reform and the Budget and Finance Committee.

(50) Grzyczak op. cit. cited by Osiatynski et al op. cit. p. 47.

(51) *Zrzeszenie Przedsiębiorstw Państwowych*, Anna Fornalczyk, Lodz 1984, Duplicated.

(52) *Funkcja Pienadza w rozmieszczeniu zasobow kapitalowych w gospodarce polskiej*, J. Goscinski, duplicated 1984.

(53) Osiatynski et. al. op. cit. p. 12.

(54) *Bariera Zaopatrzenia a Skuteczność Reformy*. Henryk Bartczyk. *Zycie Gospodarcze* 22/9/85 no. 38.

These enterprises reported comparing their 1984 supply position with that of 1983. that from domestic supplies for: 13% the situation had improved; 63% it was much the same and for 21% the situation had deteriorated. From foreign supplies for 13% the situation had improved; for 38% it was the same and for 49% it had worsened.

(55) T. Jezioranski. *Gaszcz*. *Zycie Gospodarcze* no. 29 1985. Cited by Osiatynski et al. op. cit. P. 58.

(56) *Samorząd Pracowniczy i Związki Zawodowe*, Jacek Kwasniewski, Lodz 1983, duplicated.

(57) *Samorząd Pracowniczy: Współczesność i Przyszłość*, Warsaw 1984, duplicated.

(58) *Za Wczesnie na Działkę*. Sławomir Lipinski. *Zycie Gospodarcze* 26/5/85. no. 21. In this report the council is credited with significant achieve-

vements but charged with occupying itself with resolutions of a "non-economic character" which could only damage self-management. This rather politicized council had struggled to keep control over the allocation of enterprise housing in its own hands and defended its right to fix the salaries of managerial staff by taking its disputes with the Director to court.

(59) Kwasniewski op. cit.

(60) T. B. Jaworski. *Blaski i cienie procesow uspolecznienie zarzadzania* (referat na konferencje IOZiDK, Warsaw Feb. 1985. Cited by Osiatynski et al. op. cit. P. 49.

(61) Prof. Jolanta Kulpinska and the TNOiK group in personal interviews.

(62) *Lodzcy Direktorzy*, *Zycie Gospodarcze* No. 3 15/1/84.

(63) *Co o nim mowia*, Z. Malak, *Polityka* 30/7/81.

(64) *Motywacje w przedsiebiorstwie przemyslowym. Wyniki badan i kierunki postepowania*, IOPM 1984. Cited by Zukowski (1) p. 28 "Upadek Ral Robotniczgoh"

(65) *Raport Polska: 5 Lat Po Sierpniu* P. 67, for both the Warsaw University research and the official data on the age structure of council participants.

(66) Malak op. cit.

(67) *Potrzeby i interesy w gospodarce*, p. 35, duplicated. Cited by Zukowski op. cit. p. 28.

(68) *The Evolution of Participation in Enterprise Management 1981—83*, T. Zukowski (2), unpublished manuscript.

(69) V. Biederman, E. Kosel, E. Kowalska, R. Markowski. *Wybrane Problemy Wspoldzialania Organizacji Spoleczno-Politycznych, Samorzadu i Direkcji w Przesiebiorstwach Przemyslowych*. November 1984. Instytut Przemyslu Maszynowego. Warsaw. Cited by Osiatynski et al op. cit. P. 61.

(70) *Ibid*. The survey material is from *Opinia Srodowisk Przemyslowch o Samorządzie Zalogi*. March 1984. CBOS Warsaw.

(71) Self-management is put in first place by research conducted by M. Jarosz. *Samorząd Pracownikow w Opiniach Zalog*, PTE Lublin, May 1984. and in second place in the research by V. Biederman et. al. op. cit. Both cited by *Raport Polska* op. cit. p. 69.

(72) *Kto sie boi samorzadu czyli w oplotach reformy*, P. Ruzzkowski. Text of introduction to Warsaw PTE seminar on self-management 24/11/83.

(73) *Partia a Samorząd*. Tomasz Jezioranski. *Zycie Gospodarcze* 12/5/85.

(74) Osiatynski et al. op. cit. P. 49.

(75) (i) *Nie wszyscy sie zniechecili*, D. Frey, *Odrodzenie* No. 9 13/12/83.

(ii) Report to TNOiK conference in Krakow, W Krakowie O Samorządzie Pracowniczym, *Zycie Gospodarcze* No. 266, 24/6/84. no. 19. Cited by Zukowski (1) op. cit.

(76) P. Ruzzkowski. *Samorząd Pracowniczy w Przesiebiorstwach Panstwowych*. CBOS Warsaw May 1985. Cited by Osiatynski et al. op. cit. p. 50.

(77) *Ibid*. Out of the enterprises discussed by Ruzzkowski 43% prepared their own project for the division of the profit, 16% insisted on substituting a plan of their own for the management's and 23% amended the Director's proposals.

(78) M. Diatlowicka, Funkcjonowanie Samorządów Pracowniczych w Reformie Gospodarczej. Instytut Ekonomiki Rolnictwa i Gospodarki Żywnościowej, Warsaw December 1984. Cited by Osiatynski et al. op. cit. P. 52.

(79) In Article 34 of the special regulations for exit from the crisis published on 27/7/83. c. f. note 19 above for full citation. The system of evaluating Directors' work also tends to make them independent of the councils.

(80) Kwasniewski op. cit.

(81) Dopiero teraz są watpliwości, *Zycie Gospodarcze* No. 3 15/1/84, M. Kowalski.

(82) No Go Without Council Consent. Ministerial Proposal to Merge 20 Autonomous Enterprises Into a Combine Thwarted by Workers' Council, Party, Branch and Trade Union, *Zycie Gospodarcze* No. 31 29/7/84, translated by Polish News Bulletin 7/8/84.

(83) Regulaminy Zakładowej Funduszu Socjalnego i Mieszkanowiej, FSO Warsaw 1984.

(84) Personal interview with the enterprise sociologist at Huta Warszawa, for this and the above information from the FSO.

(85) W Krakowie O Samorządzie Pracowniczym, *Zycie Gospodarcze* 24/6/84.

(86) See for example the documentation of efforts to monitor and regulate management behaviour in *Uchwały i dokumenty Organów Samorządu Pracowniczego i Kadencji 1983—85*, FSO Warsaw January 1984.

(87) The points made below are heavily reliant on the concise presentation by T. Zukowski. *Nadzieja w Samorządności/Zarządzanie* No. 5 1984.

(88) A theme developed at length by Ruszkowski in *Kto się boi* op. cit.

(89) A procedure theorized as a conscious manipulative process by Jan Morawski, *System Władzy: Kryzys i reprodukcja struktur*, *Krytyka* 15 1983.

(90) *Polacy 80 and Polacy Jesien 81* IFIS Pan; Malak op. cit.; Jarosz op. cit.; Biederman et. al. op. cit.

(91) *Dictatorship Over Needs*. Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller and Gyorgy Markus. Basil Blackwell Oxford 1983. P. 286.

SAMOUPRAVLJANJE U POLJSKOJ POSLE UVOĐENJA VANREDNOG STANJA

D. C. HOLLAND

Re z i m e

U članku je opisana sudbina radničkih saveta posle obustave rada Solidarnosti. Mada suspendovani, a zatim ponovo oformljeni odozgo, ovi organi i dalje pokazuju znake vitalnosti i nezavisnosti. I mada su mali po broju, oni su ipak veoma značajni, jer predstavljaju skoro jedinu oblast u poljskom društvenom životu gde nekadašnja angažovanja Solidarnosti mogu da se ispolje javno i učestvuju u raznim zakonitim ak-

tivnostima, kao i da pregovaraju sa partijskim rukovodstvom i privrednicima barem na nivou opštine.

Zbog toga je ekonomska reforma imala minimalan uticaj na funkcionisanje privrede, ostavljajući malo prostora radničkim savetima da deluju kao privredni subjekti. Ipak, naponi da se stvore novi gigantski industrijski kombinati, u kojima je otklonjena mogućnost funkcionisanja radničkog samoupravljanja, nisu naišli na podršku od strane radničkih saveta već su im se oni do sada uspešno suprotstavljali.

U članku se posmatra razvoj vladinih mera koje nagoveštavaju ponovno aktiviranje saveta u kontekstu privredne reforme. Takođe u članku se analizira reagovanje političke opozicije na ove poteze i u glavnim crtama izložene su vrlo žive diskusije na kojima se raspravljalo o tome kakvo reagovanje bi trebalo da bude. Raspravlja se o uslovima koji utiču na rad saveta i u zaključku se procenjuju njihove perspektive u budućnosti.