

(Free) Poland's New Capitalism

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Jane Hardy

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Jane Hardy : Poland's New Capitalism before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Poland's New Capitalism:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The Self-Destruction of a Country By R. L. Huff British author Jane Hardy, a longtime student of Polish and East-Central Europe, has done a short but masterful job outlining the auto-destruction of the "New (but hardly improved) Poland" of post-1989. Her premise is that Poland, like all the region, was sold a bill of goods by Western governments, advisors, and banks for which the average citizen is still paying

heavily in the form of depressed wages, high unemployment, gutted social benefits and basic services. It amounted, in fact, to a new "revolution from abroad" (to use Polish historian Jan Gross' phrase) every bit as decimating and dislocating as the Soviet takeover of 1944. The tragedy here, however, is that it was a mugging aided and abetted by its chief victim, the Polish working class. Is it still rape when the victim consents? That tricky moral and legal pitfall is the West's excuse for shrugging off the carnage and shame left behind, as the chief perpetrator, Jeffrey Sachs, has done ever since. Fortunately, Jane Hardy shows that Polish workers are not exactly as clueless as this suggests. A new generation is not so easily manipulated by the false equation of social benefit = communism = Katyn Massacre. There has been pushback, while Europe in general seems destined to follow the "Polish path" down the neo-liberal drain. The book itself can be academic, but is a readable, short overview. I would wish for a more in-depth focus for every chapter. But for those interested in post-1989 central-east Europe, and wish an antidote to the gladhanding "Western consensus" of the "fall of Communism" and "rebirth of democracy" therein, it's a good introduction well worth the reading.

5 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Useful study of the effects of the counter-revolution in Poland. By William Podmore. Poland's real national income grew by 76 per cent between 1947 and 1950; farm and industrial output more than doubled. Between 1946 and 1955, 1.8 million people moved from the countryside to jobs in the cities. Between 1960 and 1970, real wages grew by 1.8 per cent a year. Between 1971 and 1975, industrial output grew by 10 per cent a year. Pretty good, far better than anything achieved since the 1989 counter-revolution, which the author calls the 'transformation'. After the counter-revolution, the EU, led, as usual, by the European Round Table of Industrialists (the CEOs of Europe's biggest firms), imposed its 'shock therapy': welfare cuts, privatisation, deregulation and ever more labour market 'flexibility'. It enforced lower wages, job insecurity, more job losses and the destruction of services. Join the EU - cut wages and welfare. So capitalism came to Poland. The result? More poverty, more unequal incomes, and the lowest spending on social transfers in Europe and the second lowest health spending. Foreign investors cherry-picked the most profitable firms, stripped their assets, paid lower wages and imposed awful conditions of work. Abortion was made illegal in 1993. 30 per cent of health care jobs were destroyed between 1995 and 2003. Poland now has the fewest doctors in the EU per 100,000 people. Between 1989 and 2003 the number of nurseries fell by a third and three-quarters of the country's child care centres closed. There were 1,553 in 1989; by 2006, just 371 for 38 million people. Since 1991 Poland has never had less than 10.3 per cent unemployment. In 2004 it was 20 per cent and youth unemployment was 40 per cent. In 2007, its unemployment was the second highest in the EU (Slovakia had 11.3 per cent). Another two million are 'self-employed'. So Poland exports its unemployment, losing its well-educated and skilled young people. Two million Poles have emigrated since 2004, 700,000-1,000,000 of them to Britain. The employers use migrants to rack up the rate of exploitation through lower wages. 18 per cent of London's rough sleepers are from Central and Eastern Europe.

Poland was central to the historic changes that took place across Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War. It is the largest economy in the region, and was at the forefront of opposition to communism, with the rise of Solidarity in the 1980s. This book explores the way that neoliberal policies have formed the basis of transformation, championed by both post-communist and post-Solidarity governments. Jane Hardy provides a rigorous assessment of the impact of these policies on everyday lives and Poland's place in the European and global economy. These are firmly set in the context of the complex and dynamic political economy of the country. The role of capital in the form of transnational corporations and foreign direct investment is central to the analysis. The revival of trade unions and growth of new social movements are explored as they challenge Poland's new capitalism. No other book studies Poland's recent history in such depth. This book will be a key text for students of political economy, international relations, social movements and labour studies.

"[This volume is a pleasure to read. It will likely generate lively discussion in courses that focus on the transformation from socialism to capitalism; address women's role in economic and political life; examine the impact of globalization/global integration; or analyze the changing nature of work and welfare." --CHOICE