



Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950

Padraic Kenney

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The first book to examine the communist takeover in Poland from the bottom up, and the first to use archives opened in 1989, *Rebuilding Poland* provides a radically new interpretation of the communist experience. Padraic Kenney argues that the postwar takeover was also a social revolution, in which workers expressed their hopes for dramatic social change and influenced the evolution and eventual downfall of the communist regime. Kenney compares Łódź, Poland's largest manufacturing center, and Wrocław, a city rebuilt as Polish upon the ruins of wartime destruction. His account of dramatic strikes in the textile mills of Łódź shows how workers resisted the communist party's encroachment on factory terrain and its infringements of worker dignity. The contrasting absence of labor conflict among migrants in the frontier city of Wrocław holds important clues to the nature of stalinism in Poland: communist power was strongest where workers lacked organizational ties or cultural roots. In the collective reaction of workers in Łódź and the individualism of those in Wrocław, Kenney locates the beginnings of the end of the communist regime. Losing the battle for worker identity, the communists placed their hopes in labor competition, which ultimately left the regime hostage to a resistant work force and an overextended economy incapable of reform.

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