Hungary since 1956, with no real framework in which to place this information. The level of detail overwhelms the reader at points. Without a central argument or hypothesis, there is no way to sort through or select from this vast amount of information, and the reader is left to try to draw her or his own conclusions.

Paradoxically, given this problem of atheoretical "information overload," the book is further marred by a kind of naive social science methodology. Specifically, the author provides a wide range of raw quantitative data on the party, state, society and economy throughout the book, but in keeping with the descriptive nature of the work these figures are not grounded in any wider arguments and therefore are of limited value. The author exhibits a fetish for figures, with nearly thirty tables in the book, a number of which are fragmentary—for example, a breakdown of Politburo subject matter from 1967 to 1970. This quantification might initially make the work appear to be methodologically rigorous, but in reality the material becomes reminiscent of early Kremlinology or behavioralism, with the assumption that facts expressed as numbers in and of themselves provide insight. Information, whether qualitative or quantitative, is only as useful as the arguments it supports, but Tókés seems to have forgotten this basic point. In short, Hungary’s Negotiated Revolution will prove to be a vital source of information for those seeking to broaden their understanding of the structure of Communist rule in Hungary and the dynamics of its collapse, but those seeking to grasp some wider context will be on their own.

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This book stands apart from other recent analyses of Poland’s economic development primarily because of its unconventional thesis. Poznanski rejects Bartłomiej Kaminiski’s claim (The Collapse of State Socialism: The Case of Poland [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991]) that reforms undertaken by the previous Communist governments represented merely half-hearted attempts to preserve the core of the state-socialist system and resulted in a highly inefficient hybrid economy. Unlike most other works on the subject (for instance Ben Slay, The Polish Economy [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994]), this study views Edward Gierek’s investment and trade policies during the 1970s not as a disaster but rather as a first step in a long process of dismantling state socialism. Also, in contrast to most analyses of East European transitions (such as Leszek Balcerowicz’s Socialism, Capitalism, Transformation [Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995]), Poznanski does not believe that after 1989 Poland experienced a truly radical change from state socialism to market capitalism. Instead, he proposes an evolutionary explanation that reveals significant continuities between the types of economic crises and reforms generated under the Marxist-Leninist regimes of the 1970s and 1980s, and those carried out by their post-Communist successors during the 1990s.

The book deserves high praise for its perceptive analysis of investment strategies, trade policies and institutional changes of the Polish state socialist economy between 1970 and 1989. Poznanski argues convincingly that the last two decades of Communist rule cannot
be considered simply as a string of economic failures and warns us against "neoliberal" fascination with the rapid transition to capitalism. In doing so, he supplies enough empirical evidence to prove the merit of a detailed state-centered analysis of economic and political transitions in the former Soviet bloc. His study clearly demonstrates the significance of individual reformers, policy legacies, and the political context in determining the course of the Polish economy. Careful attention to political factors is noteworthy, especially in a book written by an economist. Still, after reading the whole text, one gets an impression that the author overstates his case. For example, Poznanski devotes an unnecessarily long section to polemics against the defunct "totalitarian paradigm." He also frequently omits crucial evidence that could possibly challenge the purity of his evolutionary model. Furthermore, while focusing mainly on market-oriented policies and ideas of the Communist reformers, Poznanski fails to recognize other important continuities of the Polish "protracted transition" that could have actually reinforced the main theoretical argument of the book.

At the beginning of his study Poznanski constructs his main thesis in opposition to the "totalitarian model." In general, this kind of argument appears somewhat redundant since the large majority of scholars of Communist systems abandoned this model a long time ago (in the late 1960s and 1970s) in favor of other, less rigid approaches. In particular, his definition of totalitarianism lacks precision. If he means by it the Stalinist type of command economy and extreme centralization of the policy-making mechanism, it could be hard to justify the choice of 1970, instead of 1956, as the beginning of the evolution from state socialism to free market capitalism in Poland.

Moreover, Poznanski's account of Gierek's investment strategy tends to overestimate the successes and ignore many spectacular failures of this regime. For instance, he does not discuss the problem of the low quality of imported technologies, the chronic underdevelopment of the domestic service sector, the regime's weakness for grandiose and expensive modernization projects, and a pervasive bias against private ownership in all sectors of the economy (not only in agriculture) during the 1970s. In his discussion of the period following martial law Poznanski also minimizes the role of the conservative faction within the Communist Party, represented, for instance, by the leader of the official trade unions Alfred Miodowicz, who successfully blocked many reform initiatives until late 1988. These and other similar weaknesses in this book could have been avoided with the help of newly available documents and materials that shed more light on the actions and policies of both Communist and post-Communist reformers. For instance, the published minutes of the Politburo of the Communist Party from early 1980 (Aneks, London, 1992) directly contradict Poznanski's claim that the Gierek regime was in control of the situation and "was not simply driven by events."

The final section of the book stresses the continuity between the last Communist government of Mieczysław Rakowski and the first Solidarity cabinet of Tadeusz Mazowiecki. However, Poznanski gives Rakowski most of the credit for pushing the market reforms forward, while blaming Mazowiecki for an "ultraliberal" or even "libertarian" attitude, which contributed to the further decay of state power in Poland (p. 274). Such claims, based on highly incomplete evidence, are a result of a lack of attention to the significance of the total package of economic and social policy reforms initiated by the non-Communist governments during the first years of transition. For the same reason the book also minimizes significant continuities in policy between the Solidarity-based governments and the left-