

THE FIRST FULL SHELVES: GROCERY SHOPPING AND POLISH PURSUITS OF
NORMALITY AFTER COMMUNISM, 1990-1994

LEAH VALTIN-ERWIN

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Curriculum in
Global Studies.

Chapel Hill
2017

Approved by:

Chad Bryant

Donald J. Raleigh

Ewa Wampuszyc

© 2017
Leah Valtin-Erwin
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

Leah Valtin-Erwin: The First Full Shelves: Grocery Shopping and Polish Pursuits of Normality
After Communism
(Under the direction of Chad Bryant)

This thesis uses newspaper coverage to examine shopper interactions with the first Western-style supermarket in Poland after the end of communism, the two BILLA shops in Warsaw. I frame these interactions in terms of three pursuits of everyday normality after communism: the rejection of a communist normality, the pursuit of a normality perceived to exist in the West, and the pursuit of a normality that was responsive to the unique conditions of post-communist transformation itself. In contrast to prevailing narratives of early post-communism, wherein consumers watched as shock therapy reform and Western-style privatization was implemented, I argue that, in these pursuits, consumers attempted to actively negotiate a particular shopper experience as they tried to construct an everyday that suited their priorities. Although the Western supermarket model eventually prevailed, grocery shopping in early post-communism was subject to considerable pushback from shoppers, offering clearer insight into how the post-communist consumer understood their present.

For my mother, with whom I went grocery shopping in Bucharest one cold winter's evening four
years ago.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With profound gratitude, I thank my committee, who supported, challenged, and guided me through this process with patience and wisdom. Above all, my thanks goes to Chad Bryant for his mentorship and unwavering encouragement over the last two years.

Lastly, I thank Forrest Jackson for his copy-editing and critique, as well as his unending support as I conceived of, researched, and wrote this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	2
PURSuing AN ANTI-COMMUNIST NORMALITY.....	12
PURSuing A WESTERN NORMALITY.....	21
PURSuing A POST-COMMUNIST NORMALITY.....	31
CONCLUSION.....	41

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Shoppers outside the Chełmska BILLA.....	1
Figure 2: BILLA's storefront advertisements.....	14
Figure 3: Gazeta Wyborcza cartoon, March 1990.....	18
Figure 4: Opening day at the Chełmska BILLA.....	26
Figure 5: A customer perusing BILLA's prepackaged food section.....	36
Figure 6: The Chełmska BILLA building, rebranded as ELEA in 2001.....	43
Figure 7: The Ostrobramska BILLA shortly before demolition.....	47

INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: Shoppers outside the Chelmska BILLA

On Fridays and Saturdays, as an article in a Warsaw daily reported, shoppers had to wait in line outside the stores.¹ Inside, rows of overflowing shelves stocked with goods from all over Europe awaited them, but in 1992, the BILLA supermarket on Ostrobramska Street did not have enough carts to go around. The irony of standing in line outside a supermarket two years after the end communism was undoubtedly not lost upon the shoppers. After all, lengthy lines were a permanent fixture of the communist grocery store, where a clerk offered a meager

¹ "Będzie Następna Billa," *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Feb 23, 1991.

assortment of goods from behind a counter while shoppers waited in seemingly endless lines both inside the shop and on the sidewalk outside. By 1992, however, self-service aisles, speedy computerized cash registers, and American-sized shopping carts had begun to replace clerks, counters, and mesh bags.² Shoppers could roam through aisles of fully stocked shelves, filling their carts with everything from Israeli beer to German hand lotion. To get such a cart, however, one still had to stand in line.

After Solidarity, the Polish trade union movement for social change, successfully negotiated the end of communist party rule, Poland embarked on an extended process of economic and political transformation. In the realm of grocery shopping, that process included the introduction of the Western-style supermarket, pioneered in Poland by the Austrian company BILLA. BILLA, founded by Austrian merchandise trader Karl Wlaschek in 1953, was already a well-known discount retailer in Austria, Germany, and several other Western European countries. Indeed, Wlaschek's business was so successful that, by the end of his life, he was one of the five richest men in Austria. The name is a portmanteau of the German words for "billig," meaning inexpensive, and "laden," meaning shop. Operated in Poland as BILLA-Polen, BILLA was part of an "initial small group of pioneering firms that invested in Central European countries" in the early 1990s.³ Poland was the chain's first venture into the former Bloc. In its approach to post-communist markets, BILLA conformed to the "widely held view" that the East and Central European markets would be "unquestioningly receptive to

² Mesh or net bags were a constant accessory, kept in every communist-era woman's handbag just in case they ran across a shop with renewed stock or an unusually small line.

³ Dawson and Mukoyama, *Global Strategies in Retailing: Asian and European Experiences*, 12.

the simple transfer of existing retail practice" and therefore gave minimal attention to the "peculiarities of local consumer demand and behaviour."⁴

The first eleven months of 1990 before BILLA opened, or even the entire forty years of communism, if we are to believe it was universally understood as a temporary historical aberration, had built these moments up for the Polish people. What, then, did the arrival of the Western-style supermarket model mean for the post-communist Polish grocery shopper and his or her relationship to consumption? What did Polish consumers' expect of post-communist grocery shopping, and to what extent were those expectations either fulfilled or disappointed?

An examination of consumer interactions with the shopping experience offered at BILLA reveals paradoxes that complicated Polish expectations of post-communism. Electronic check-out systems, which by the 1990s were used in most Western supermarkets, proved efficient but untrustworthy. Abundantly stocked shelves, so different from those in communist-era shops, both empowered and overwhelmed shoppers. Shoppers were reluctant to shop on the weekly, rather than daily, basis that supermarkets far from city centers encouraged. Early interactions with the post-communist everyday thus reveal neither complete dismissal of the past nor full embrace of a Western-style future, but selective participation in consumption experience characteristic of both paths, guided by the realities of navigating the unique circumstances of the present.

Throughout the early years of post-communism in which this work is situated, concurrent elements of enthusiasm, reluctance, and outright criticism characterized Polish consumer interactions with the post-communist supermarket model. I argue that these features

⁴ Ibid.

of post-communist life were the result of both the intrinsic growing pains of capitalist reform and conspicuous continuities in consumer mentalities between the communist and post-communist periods. As I will show through the use of the prominent Warsaw daily *Gazeta Stołeczna*'s coverage of the supermarket's debut in Poland, BILLA and other international retailers' aforementioned expectations that "a strong domestic format could be transferred with relatively little adaptation" to the post-communist market proved unrealistic when communist-era habits and preferences failed to disappear overnight.⁵ Furthermore, as politicians implemented the rapid model of privatization and economic liberalization known colloquially as "shock therapy," consumers encountered practical and ethical deterrents from participating in the Western-style consumption behaviors that BILLA encouraged.

To illuminate the key dynamics at play in the post-communist consumer experience, I emphasize the influence of the enduring Polish perception that four decades of communist rule constituted an aberration to Poland's rightful historical path as an independent and prosperous European nation, a perception that helped make Poland "the site of the most sustained and articulate resistance to state communism anywhere in the world."⁶ In the post-communist period, politicians and their constituents alike framed the transformation as a process of restoring what they termed "normalcy" to a society reeling from an "abnormal" deviation under

⁵ John A. Dawson and Masao Mukoyama, *Global Strategies in Retailing: Asian and European Experiences* (London: Routledge, 2014), 12.

⁶ Padraic Kenney, "The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland," *American Historical Review* (April 1999): 399.

communism.⁷ This perception extended to the realm of the everyday, where transformation was intended to take place as comprehensively as in the political and economic realms.

In the specific case of grocery shopping, BILLA opened and operated as simultaneously the first supermarket after the end of communism, the first Western-style supermarket in Poland, and the first grocery retailing institution of Polish post-communism. In their interactions with BILLA, consumers articulated and enacted certain priorities and concerns that I argue indicate three concurrent pursuits of normality that intersected with these contributions that BILLA made to the Polish everyday in the period immediately following 1989. The first, the rejection of experiences specific to communist-era life, what I term the pursuit of an anti-communist normality, was central to Polish visions of life after communism. The second pursuit designated an alternative to communist-era experiences by centering norms of living perceived to exist in the West; in other words, a Western normality. Finally, Poles confronted and negotiated the unique setting of shock therapy reform to construct a third pursuit, toward a post-communist normality, framed around the questions generated by the peculiarities of that context. Based on the interplay between the post-communist Polish grocery shopper and the consumer experience offered at BILLA, I contend that everyday life in post-communism was as much a space for the enactment and expression of post-communist priorities, conceived here in terms of pursuing envisioned normalities, as the political and economic arenas.

It is critical to situate this assertion, as well as any discussion of the post-communist everyday, in the context of broader literature on the transformation process. Following prolific

⁷ Milada A. Vachudova and Timothy Snyder, "Are Transitions Transitory? Two Types of Political Change in Eastern Europe Since 1989," *East European Politics & Societies* 11, no. 1 (December 1996) 1.

academic output on the subject of 1989 and the anti-communist revolutions, political scientists produced the early literature on post-communism. These scholars found Poland and its immediate neighbors "propitious venues for testing theories of regime change, institutional design, and the political economy of transition," particularly in contrast to Central Asia and the Balkans.⁸ This literature emphasized the unprecedented and difficult nature of "build[ing] capitalism under conditions of political democracy" and amid a pervasive communist legacy.⁹ Macrohistories of the continent, including those by Konrad Jarausch and Tony Judt, among others, have dealt with the period in concluding chapters, each author grappling with the task of whether to include post-communism in a narrative of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Jarausch argues that the process of transformation "was so complicated because Eastern Europe...had rather taken a different path of development, which its citizens subsequently rejected because they preferred the Western way of life."¹¹ In *The Burdens of Freedom: Eastern Europe since 1989*, published in 2006, Padraic Kenney presents a narrative of post-communist Europe wherein East and Central Europeans are "no doubt ... better off than they were before 1989" while also emphasizing "the failures of the post-communist era," from numerous economic crises to the violent breakup of Yugoslavia.¹² The recent volume by German historian Philipp

⁸ Charles King, *Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the End of Eastern Europe* (Oxford University Press, 2010): 152.

⁹ Mitchell A. Orenstein, *Out of the Red: Building Capitalism and Democracy in Postcommunist Europe* (University of Michigan Press, 2006), 2.

¹⁰ Konrad Hugo Jarausch, *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*; Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*; See also Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: the Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (Abacus, 2011); Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (Penguin Books, 2008); and Richard Vinen, *A History in Fragments* (Da Capo Press, 2000).

¹¹ Konrad Hugo Jarausch, *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton University Press, 2016), 697.

¹² Padraic Kenney, *The Burdens of Freedom: Eastern Europe since 1989* (Zed Books, 2013), 2.

Ther, *Europe Since 1989: A History*, published in English a decade after Kenney's book, argues that neoliberal reform, which ultimately won out over any proposed alternatives for post-communist transformation, found greatest success in Poland due to the country's exposure to capitalist models prior to 1989.¹³ Literature produced by historians and political scientists, seeking to explain the uncertainty and frustration that characterized post-communist societies, has examined the period primarily from a macro perspective, emphasizing the impact that massive political, institutional, and economic change had on ordinary people.¹⁴

Anthropology, in turn, made significant contributions to our understanding of how these structural changes played out on the ground. Katherine Verdery, one of the first to do anthropological research in communist Eastern Europe, describes post-communism as a "process of growing a new skin," arguing in her groundbreaking 1996 book that many elements of transformation were "suspended ... in a state of ambiguity" between communist and Western neoliberal models as ordinary people and leaders alike questioned aspects of reform.¹⁵ Elizabeth Dunn's prize-winning ethnography of a Polish baby food factory, published in 2004, argues that while "the designers of postsocialist economic reform believed the people of Poland were essentially the same as people in Western capitalist countries," fundamental

¹³ Philipp Ther, *Europe since 1989: A History* (Princeton University Press, 2016)

¹⁴ Many of those interested in post-communist popular disillusionment have been motivated by the desire to explain the appearance of nostalgia for communist-era experiences. For a comprehensive look at nostalgia for communism, see Mariâ Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille's *Post-communist Nostalgia* (Berghahn Books, 2012). I choose to use sources written at the time, thus eliminating the pitfalls of examining memories potentially made less reliable by such nostalgia. That being said, I give some attention to present-day recollections of shopping at BILLA in my conclusion in order to emphasize the supermarket's lasting significance for those who experienced early post-communism.

¹⁵ Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 229-230.

changes in popular mentalities were necessary for transformation to take place.¹⁶ Dunn, Verdery, and others have shown that the unique character of the early post-communist everyday can, in part, be found in the interactions between East and Central Europeans and the institutions of the forming post-communist landscape. My argument builds upon this work by asserting that Polish consumers attempted to pursue a particular post-communist everyday through their interactions with the consumer experience at BILLA and other foreign retailers. In doing so, I show that even in Poland, where programmatic shock therapy reform was implemented more rapidly than anywhere else in the former Eastern Bloc, early post-communism was perceived as a space for active negotiation and adaptation as well as top-down implementation.

To illustrate consumer interactions with the consumer experience at BILLA, I draw on articles published in Warsaw new daily *Gazeta Stołeczna* throughout BILLA's tenure in Poland. As the Warsaw supplement to *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the first legal opposition newspaper published in Poland following the establishment of communist rule, *Stołeczna* effectively became a guide to post-communism for the urban, educated Polish consumer. Throughout the communist period, official newspapers served as a vehicle for the state to communicate political and social priorities to its constituents on a daily basis. Those inclined to toe the party line in their everyday lives looked to the newspaper for information about the priorities of the state. After the communists' near-absolute loss of legitimacy in late communism and subsequent collapse in 1989, Polish people looked elsewhere for such guidance.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Dunn, *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor* (Cornell University Press, 2015), 3.

Founded by Solidarity leaders, *Gazeta Wyborcza* emerged from underground publications devoted to democratic opposition and maintained by the leaders of the opposition movement, giving it particular credibility as an authority on Poland's future after communism. Though its first edition, published in May 1989, emphasized its "close relationship with Solidarity," by September 1990 *Wyborcza* had become independent, explicitly prioritizing "openness to representatives of almost all political, ideological, and cultural ideas."¹⁷ This would have encouraged readers to read its coverage as objective and nonpartisan, albeit decidedly non-communist. *Wyborcza* narrated and reacted to the events and changes of early post-communism for the public and I would contend that, for many Poles, this narration replaced the previously incontestable rhetoric put forth by the communist newspaper since the late 1940s. The newspaper's popularity – in 1994, copies sold hovered just under half a million, higher than its readership today and the highest in the country at the time – indicates that *Wyborcza*'s voice was among the loudest in the post-communist arena. Its very inception made *Wyborcza* the best example of a distinctly post-communist newspaper and thus ideal source material for this study. As prominent dissident and *Wyborcza*'s first editor-in-chief Adam Michnik wrote, *Wyborcza* is "as old as Polish democracy," or at least the post-communist version; its position on the enormous changes to Polish life was one of credibility as far as its readers were concerned.¹⁸

As the dominant media voices of the era, *Wyborcza* and *Stołeczna* illuminate both initial reactions to BILLA and the Western supermarket model and consumer interactions with that

¹⁷ Katarzyna Pokorna-Ignatowicz, *The Polish Media System: 1989-2011* (AFM Publishing House, 2012), 58.

¹⁸ Adam Michnik and Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *In Search of Lost Meaning: The New Eastern Europe* (University of California Press, 2011), 20.

model as time went on. *Stołeczna*'s coverage of the BILLA shops' opening, daily operations, responses to consumer demand, and so forth were not confined to a consumer section of the daily paper, appearing at various points as front page stories, updates on market reform efforts, and editorials. At times, *Stołeczna* also took on the role of protector of the post-communist consumer, alerting them to BILLA's capitalist marketing ploys, inconsistencies in the supermarket model, and other aspects of Western-style consumption to which they were unaccustomed. Meanwhile, consumers wrote to *Stołeczna* to praise or complain about their encounters with BILLA on several occasions, evincing the centrality of the consumer experience to the broader encounter with post-communist transformation. Regrettably, while the number of daily shoppers is noted, the sources do not reveal other demographics of the people who shopped at BILLA; whether a particular gender, socioeconomic class, or age group characterized BILLA's patrons remains elusive. Similarly, I did not have access to BILLA's perspective, which might be found in company archival material regarding the chain's strategy in post-communist markets. The study therefore centers its analysis on the interplay between post-communist shoppers, defined as whoever shopped at BILLA, and the consumer experience that BILLA offered.

Narratives of communist-era grocery shopping and the paradoxes it involved have long served scholars as rhetorically useful encapsulations of larger economic, societal, and political phenomena: widespread material shortage, increasing consumer creativity, and inabilities of the communist state to fulfill certain needs in its constituency.¹⁹ Adapting this approach, I use

¹⁹ For the Polish case, see Małgorzata Mazurek's "Keeping it Close to Home: Resourcefulness and Scarcity in Late Socialist and Post-Socialist Poland," in Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger's *Communism Unwrapped. Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012).

consumption as a case study in post-communism, where past experiences as communist-era consumers, along with expectations of a desired normality that those experiences engendered, framed popular interactions with the transformation process. I conclude with several thoughts on the relationship between early post-communism and the present period, tracing BILLA's departure from Polish retailing, beginning with the introduction of the considerably larger shops of the hypermarket model in 1994, to the consumer concerns of today.

PURSuing AN ANTI-COMMUNIST NORMALITY

At 10 a.m. on December 21, 1990, the first Western-style supermarket in Poland opened at 75 Ostrobramska Street in Warsaw's Praga-Południe district.²⁰ The timing was strategic, as "the Christmas season in Polish culture is the most important food-shopping period of the year, a time of preparation for ceremonial meals and entertainment of guests."²¹ The Ostrobramska BILLA was set back from the road, an enormous parking lot stretching out in front of it. The building it occupied had been built in the 1960s and had once served as the staff cafeteria for Przemysłowego Centrum Optyki, an electronics manufacturer based in Warsaw, but had stood vacant for several years.²² The area behind the renovated building was empty apart from a city water channel and a large wetland area.²³ Throughout the year, local residents in nearby apartments had watched from their windows as the abandoned building was transformed into a supermarket. Undeterred by the Warsaw winter, they crowded outside the shop's doors on that Friday morning in December, excited to see what their shopping trips in the much-anticipated aftermath of communism were going to look like.

²⁰ "Tanie Lady," *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Dec. 12, 1990.

²¹ Kenney, "The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland," 408.

²² Paweł Nosowski, "Zdewastowana hala po dawnym supermarkecie Billa," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Aug. 2, 2002.

²³ "W grudniu 1990 r. przy ul. Ostrobramskiej austriacka firma BILLA otworzyła w Warszawie swój pierwszy supermarket. Może ktoś powiedzieć gdzie dokładnie znajdował się ten sklep?" *Tvoja Praga. Facebook.com*.

In the first year after the end of communism, Poles, like their neighbors in other post-communist countries, expressed an ambition to restore normality to their everyday life.²⁴ The abolition of the communist political system and its impact on the everyday was the most immediate priority; in other words, consumers sought an anti-communist normality. In the realm of grocery shopping, the creation of an anti-communist normality involved ridding the consumer experience of material shortage, reliance on a grocery clerk, time wasted in lines both in and outside the shop, and the system of ration cards used to purchase goods. BILLA contributed to replacing the consumer experiences intrinsic to communism by introducing material abundance, the self-service model, increased efficiency, and price differentiation by brand.

Perhaps the most dramatic, and certainly the most eagerly anticipated, change in grocery retailing was simply the availability of a large number and range of products on a consistent basis, what I term material abundance. "Omnipresent shortages," both real and manufactured by the state for greater control, characterized communist-era consumption.²⁵ While economic growth in the 1960s had led to increased refrigerator ownership and access to grocery items to fill them with, by the summer of 1981, material shortage had worsened and there were "reports of meat lines several days long."²⁶ By the late 1980s, shops across Poland began to run out of even the bare necessities. In contrast, BILLA operated without the

²⁴ I. G. Gross, "Post-communist Resentment, or the Rewriting of Polish History," *East European Politics & Societies* 6, no. 2 (1992): 141-51.

²⁵ Małgorzata Mazurek, "Keeping it Close to Home: Resourcefulness and Scarcity in Late Socialist and Post-Socialist Poland," in *Communism Unwrapped. Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, ed. Paulina Bren, Mary Neuburger (Oxford University Press, 2012), 298.

²⁶ Kenney, "The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland," 418.

constraints of a command economy and with the added benefit of importing much of its stock from across Europe. Its storefronts and billboards featured images of happy shoppers carrying bags brimming with fruit and bread, inviting its customers to take part in capitalist-style consumption of materially abundant store offerings inside the shop (Figure 2.) *Stołeczna* reported that readers praised BILLA for having everything one would need for a week's worth of shopping; Polish consumers could finally shop from full shelves.²⁷



Figure 2: BILLA's storefront advertisements

BILLA was further differentiated from its many of its communist-era predecessors by the self-service shopping model that the chain utilized. *Stołeczna* labeled the Ostrobramska

²⁷ "Billa w Porywach Droższa," *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Oct. 23, 1991.

BILLA “the first supermarket in Poland.”²⁸ The English word “supermarket” originates in the U.S. as “super market”, defined by the Oxford English dictionary as “a large store, typically one of a chain, selling a wide range of food and groceries as well as household goods and other products.”²⁹ In Polish, the word “supermarket” is similarly used to differentiate from a “grocery store,” the dominant communist-era shop type. Most importantly, “supermarket” in both languages connotes a self-service shopping experience as opposed to one negotiated with a shop attendant behind a counter.³⁰ The Warsaw Supersam, the first self-service supermarket in Poland, opened in 1962 and found its name by combining the Polish word “samoobsługa,” meaning self-service, and the English word “supermarket”. Interestingly, the term “supermarket” was introduced into popular usage only after “supersam” had become widespread, according to Polish scholar Yvonne Grabowski.³¹

BILLA, an early leader in the implementation of self-service systems in food retailing in Europe, initiated what would become an enormous change in the dominant grocery store set-up in Poland.³² While self-service shops existed during communism, the limited number of brand options available essentially nullified their utility. A clerk behind a counter was largely adequate when one did not have options to browse and compare. Instead, “staff hand[ed] over

²⁸ “Zakupy na cały tydzień,” *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Jan. 6, 1993.

²⁹ Oxford Dictionaries, s.v. “Supermarket.”

³⁰ Defining characteristics, OED notes, included “that one selected the goods rather than being attended to by a member of staff.” Ibid.

³¹ Yvonne Grabowski, “Recent English Loanwords in the Polish Language,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, no. 1 (1971): 70.

³² “Geschichte | BILLA.” BILLA Sagt Mein Hausverstand. March 19, 2018. https://www.billa.at/Footer_Nav_Seiten/Geschichte/dd_bi_channelpage.aspx

goods as customers requested them,” usually from behind a counter that offered little opportunity for browsing.³³ The self-service model thus presented a drastic change to the consumer experience. One could browse the shelves endlessly, comparing products to ensure that the one eventually purchased was best suited to the individual shopper’s priorities.

The self-service model had drawbacks for the post-communist shopper, however, particularly in the lonely, atomized shopping experience it engendered. When communist-era shortage worsened, Poles had turned to hoarding and bartering on the black market for even the goods that the state-run shops were allowed to sell, causing an “explosion of the unofficial economy in the 1980s.”³⁴ As historian Małgorzata Mazurek explains, “coping with shortages was most often addressed through tightly-knit social circles.”³⁵ It was thus typical under communism “for consumer practices to be a collective familiar experience.”³⁶ Polish shoppers after communism, however, were left to wander the aisles alone and occasionally found themselves overwhelmed by shelves stocked with a dozen brands of laundry detergent or beer.

³⁷ The supermarket model did encourage employees to offer help and advice to patrons but, as BILLA boasted, their “state-of-the-art equipment and ... computer system” allowed them to reduce the number of people employed to only twenty, not enough to assist the 2,500 shoppers

³³ “About a Typical Grocery Shop in Poland.” Grocery Shopping in Poland.
<https://polish-dictionary.com/poland-grocery-shopping>.

³⁴ Mazurek, “Keeping it Close to Home: Resourcefulness and Scarcity in Late Socialist and Post-Socialist Poland,” 299.

³⁵ Mazurek, “Keeping it Close to Home: Resourcefulness and Scarcity in Late Socialist and Post-Socialist Poland,” 297.

³⁶ Lisa Pope Fischer, *Symbolic Traces of Communist Legacy in Post-socialist Hungary: Experiences of a Generation That Lived during the Socialist Era* (Brill, 2016), 54.

³⁷ “Pierwszy dzień Billi,” *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Oct. 10, 1992.

visiting BILLA each day.³⁸ Meanwhile, BILLA instructed cashiers to be friendly and helpful to customers, as per the “customer first” motto that dominated Western retailing, but Polish shoppers were equally vexed by the attention of the check-out clerks as they were by navigating long store aisles unassisted. Even before the Ostrobramska BILLA opened, *Gazeta Wyborcza* published a cartoon illustrating this perplexing new relationship between check-out clerk and client, reflecting considerable skepticism on the part of Polish shoppers when it came to this aspect of shopping after communism (Figure 3).

³⁸ “Tanie Lady.”



Being alone while shopping also meant sole responsibility for remembering that brand assortment meant price differentiation. BILLA's stock included substantial differences in product pricing; it was worth a price-conscious shopper's while to compare product prices.³⁹ Yet price comparison was largely absent from the post-communist shopper's wheelhouse, as most had grown accustomed to the single-brand offerings and ration card system of the communist-era. "*Kombinowanie*, that is, searching out gaps, loopholes, and semilegal solutions within the official distribution system" was replaced by the similarly complex activity of navigating shelves of vastly different numbers on price tags for what appeared to be same

³⁹ "Tajna Billa," *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Nov. 3, 1993.

products in different packaging.⁴⁰ One article, concerned about rising prices and consumer vulnerability at BILLA, reminded readers to compare, or even just remember to look at, prices when shopping.⁴¹ Shoppers came armed only with their wallets and had to adapt to a system where the same product might be priced differently depending on its brand.

Many envisioned normality as life without the everyday hassles of communist life, an area in which BILLA contributed to major strides and received considerable praise in *Stołeczna*. The long lines outside shops, in particular the butchers' shops where goods were the most scarce, were perhaps the most notorious image of communist-era challenges.

Post-communism would eliminate shortage as the cause of the lines, while BILLA's state-of-the-art computer system, meant to allow shoppers to check quantity and availability of products, would limit the amount of time wasted looking for any goods that were not in stock.⁴² In turn, the clerk-counter set up during communism made long lines likely even if desired goods happened to be in stock, as there was usually only one person adding up the bill. The Ostrobramska BILLA housed eight computerized cash registers, manned by clerks trained in Austria, dramatically speeding up the check-out process as well.⁴³ However, as *Stołeczna* noted, BILLA's popularity soon resulted in the return of the grocery store line. With a daily intake of roughly 2,500 customers, BILLA did not have enough shopping carts, ironically leaving shoppers to wait in line outside the shop.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Mazurek, "Keeping it Close to Home: Resourcefulness and Scarcity in Late Socialist and Post-Socialist Poland," 306.

⁴¹ "Billa w Porywach Droższa."

⁴² "Tanie Lady."

⁴³ "Tanie Lady."; "Będzie Następna Billa."

⁴⁴ "Będzie Następna Billa."

In a 1997 analysis of foreign retailing in Poland, the Polish Institute of Home Market and Consumption stressed that, when it came to the early, relatively small chains like BILLA, which at its height had only twenty-five stores in Poland, their "numbers belied their importance."⁴⁵ BILLA was the urban Polish consumer's first opportunity to shop the mythologized aisles of the Western-style supermarket, leaving the bare shelves of communism behind in the dust of their shopping carts. Yet the way that consumers navigated those aisles also tells us something about the stickiness of communist-era preferences, even in areas where consumers seemed determined to cast off that legacy.

⁴⁵ Dawson and Mukoyama, *Global Strategies in Retailing: Asian and European Experiences*, 12.

PURSUING A WESTERN NORMALITY

Many accounts of the Ostrobramska BILLA refer to it specifically as the first “Western-style” supermarket in Poland.⁴⁶ Indeed, as *Stołeczna* reported, BILLA “[sold] in a modern way, fully utilizing the Western European experience.”⁴⁷ Browsing its aisles constituted a decisively Western consumer activity as well as an anti-communist one. As BILLA’s patrons sought to create and inhabit an alternative to the communist-era shopping experience, the West and its consumer culture provided an example of a second, largely complementary normality desired by Polish consumers. Polish aspirations to experience living norms perceived to exist in the West brought shoppers to BILLA as soon as it opened. Once inside, consumers immediately encountered aspects of the BILLA experience with distinctly Western characteristics, namely shop location, brand assortment, shop size, and the frequency with which BILLA’s consumers were expected to shop.

In the same way that many viewed transition to democracy as a restoration of political priorities, many Poles understood living norms they perceived to exist in the West as deserved but temporarily lost in the Polish everyday. People in the Bloc “were well-aware of suburban middle-class culture elsewhere” and resented perceived relative deprivation in their own countries.⁴⁸ State propaganda played a crucial role in supplying Poles with depictions of

⁴⁶ “W grudniu 1990 r. przy ...” *Twoja Praga, Facebook.com*.

⁴⁷ “Zakupy na cały tydzień.”

⁴⁸ Krisztina Fehérváry, “American Kitchens, Luxury Bathrooms, and the Search for a ‘Normal’ Life in Postsocialist Hungary,” *Ethnos* (January, 2002): 19.

Western life. These depictions were by no means unilaterally malevolent. In some cases, the communist government “tried to ingratiate itself with the population further by giving it a window on the Western world in the form of movies and television.”⁴⁹ Of course, communist regimes “which allowed their populations to be exposed to images of Western living standards were doing themselves a major disservice” in the long run, because people were not satisfied by images of otherwise unattainable material prosperity.⁵⁰ That being said, Polish consumers had greater material access than present-day recollection might lead one to believe, even looking beyond the black market offerings. By the mid-1970s, the government had installed two hard currency shop chains, called Pewex and Baltona, which sold Western groceries like Coca-Cola and Hershey’s chocolate alongside Levi jeans and color TV sets. If Pewex didn’t have what one was looking for, care packages from diasporic communities in the West provided yet another avenue for the acquisition of Western consumer goods.⁵¹ These communist-era experiences created a “mythologized West typified by affluence” with which Poles constructed their desired normality in post-communism.⁵²

When the borders first opened in 1989, Polish shoppers flocked westward, spending cash they had stowed away when there was nothing to buy.⁵³ Geographic proximity (the

⁴⁹ Holli A. Semetko and Margaret Scammell, *The Sage Handbook of Political Communication*, (Sage Publications, 2012), 451.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 452.

⁵¹ Anna D. Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission: Polish Post War Diaspora in the United States, 1939-1956*, (Central Connecticut State University, 2001), n.p.

⁵² Marysia Galbraith, ““We Just Want to Live Normally”: Intersecting Discourses of Public, Private, Poland, and the West,” *Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe* (March 2003): 5.

⁵³ Kenney, *The Burdens of Freedom: Eastern Europe since 1989*, 17.

Austrian border is less than seven hours by car from Warsaw) made Austria, along with West Germany and France, a primary target of the early post-communist shopper, thus exposing Poles to BILLA early on. The desired Western normality was no longer based on perceptions of Western norms, but on actual interactions with shops in the West that largely confirmed the sense of material deprivation Poles had experienced during communism. Of course, geography limited exposure to Poles with cars or access to long-distance transportation. Once BILLA came to Warsaw, however, all Polish shoppers could theoretically travel westward simply by walking into a warehouse-sized supermarket and through aisles of shelves stocked with Western brands. The impact of BILLA and others like it was such that “cross-border shopping flows decreased” after the initial spike in Polish shoppers traveling westward to access “the range of goods on offer.”⁵⁴ Along with IKEA, BILLA was one of the first Western retailers to venture into Poland at all, and was thus associated with the rare opportunity to enjoy Western shopping without traveling abroad. That being said, the Western model dictated that supermarkets such as BILLA be built just outside urban centers, where there was room to accommodate both warehouse-sized supermarkets and the requisite parking lots. By contrast, during communism “a typical urban area in Poland [was] served by a comparatively large number of relatively small stores, conveniently located near consumers’ places of residence,” in part related to a “low level of private automobile ownership in Poland.”⁵⁵ The Ostrobramska BILLA was installed some distance from the city center, surrounded by community gardens

⁵⁴ D. Hall, M. Smith, and B. Marciszweska, *Tourism in the New Europe: The Challenges and Opportunities of EU Enlargement* (CABI Pub, 2006), 98.

⁵⁵ Naresh K Malhotra, *Proceedings of the 1986 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference* (Springer, 2015), 102.

and residential neighborhoods, which did not account for the relatively low level of car ownership in post-communist Poland and thus left many curious shoppers with little opportunity to join the fun.

Brand assortment constituted a major constituent part of Polish visions of normality according to perceived norms of Western living. Where material abundance replaced communist-era shortage, assortment within that abundance was a decidedly Western experience that consumers were eager to have. BILLA delivered on this front, and in early coverage of the first BILLA shop, *Stołeczna* reassured potential shoppers that they would be able to buy all the grocery products available to the Austrian chain's customers in Western Europe.⁵⁶ The Western corporations that invested in post-communist Poland helped to develop the first major advertising industry in post-communist Poland as they worked to "build awareness and demand for their products."⁵⁷ The contents of these advertisements, which featured new grocery items including Western-brand products such as laundry detergent and shampoo, helped Polish consumers identify material elements of Western life that they wanted to introduce to their own post-communist lives. By February 1991, BILLA had become well-known in Warsaw for its wide assortment of grocery, cosmetic, household cleaning, and other goods. Its shelves carried over 250 brands and the chain reportedly planned to expand its holdings to 800 brands with the opening of the second store.⁵⁸ BILLA sold beer from all over the world: Polish Okocim, Slovak Zlatý Bažant and Radegast, Danish Carlsberg, and Israeli

⁵⁶ "Tanie Lady."

⁵⁷ Emmanuel C Alozie, *Advertising in Developing and Emerging Countries: The Economic, Political and Social Context* (Taylor and Francis, 2016), 207.

⁵⁸ "Będzie Następna Billa."

Maccabee.⁵⁹ An extensive assortment of bread, at least twenty varieties including Sunflower, Soybean, Soya, and French, is also mentioned in news coverage.⁶⁰

Necessary to house such an exhaustive range of goods, and perhaps most novel to post-communist shoppers, was the sheer size of the BILLA shops. News coverage of both Warsaw BILLA shops notes the size in square meters. At 2,500 square meters, the Ostrobramska shop was a relatively large grocery store by Polish standards.⁶¹ Though less than half the size of its predecessor at 1,200 square meters, the installation of Warsaw's second BILLA in October 1992, on the corner of Chełmska street and Cherniakowska streets, still garnered interest. The Chełmska BILLA filled an enormous hall in a defunct trolleybus depot which, after several decades in Warsaw's transit system, had become a clearinghouse for discontinued buses.⁶² That a grocery store could possibly fill such an enormous space intrigued Polish shoppers; on opening day, the line to get inside took over an hour and many of the people waiting in it reportedly came only out of curiosity (Figure 4).⁶³

⁵⁹ "Zakupy na cały tydzień."

⁶⁰ "Pierwszy dzień Billi."

⁶¹ "Tanie Lady."

⁶² "Supermarket w zajezdni," *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Sept. 7, 1992.

⁶³ "Pierwszy dzień Billi."

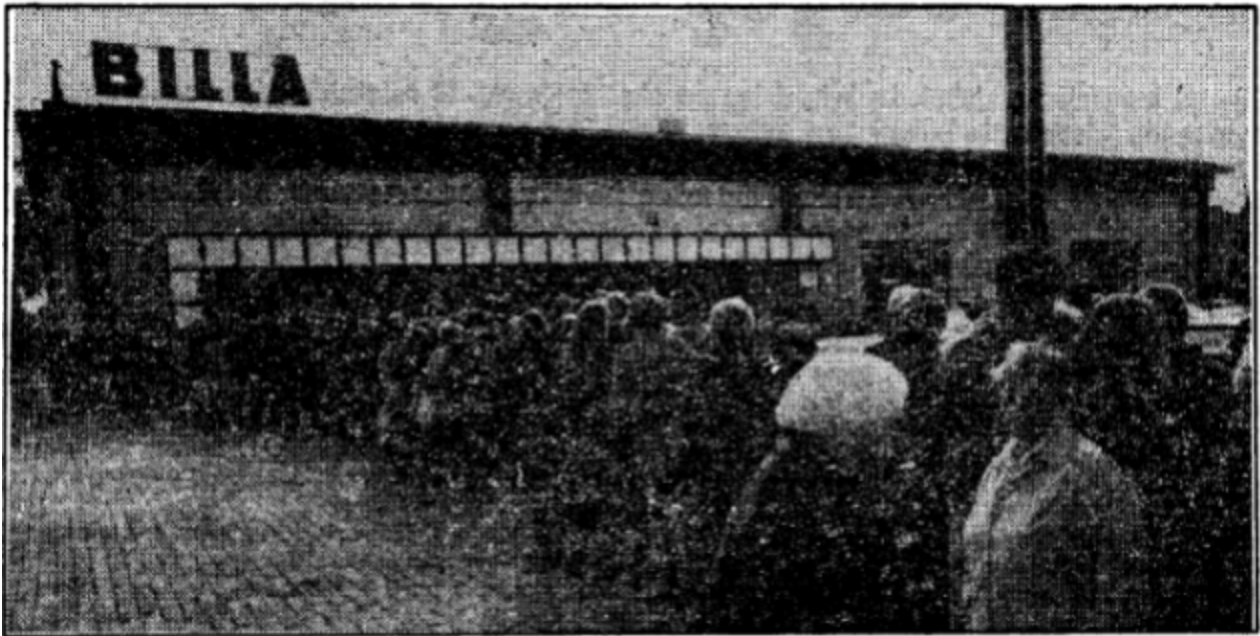


Figure 4: Opening day at the Chelmska BILLA

By Western standards, the Warsaw BILLAs were actually relatively small. Indeed, local Jerzy Mądry, on the Praga-Południe Facebook page, remembers the Ostrobramska BILLA as "tiny and dingy" in comparison with the shiny and gargantuan hypermarkets of today's Poland.

⁶⁴ More diplomatically, *Wyborcza* journalist Jerzy S. Majewski called the BILLA shops "modest" relative to the behemoth malls that followed.⁶⁵ The Warsaw BILLAs fell somewhere between the supermarket and hypermarket categories, a dichotomy that had been forming throughout Western Europe since the early 1960s. The European hypermarket, defined by self-service shopping and a surface area greater than 2,500 square meters, first appeared in Belgium in 1961, with three shops "measuring between 3,300 and 9,100" square meters.⁶⁶ Followed soon thereafter by the better known Carrefour hypermarket at

⁶⁴ "W grudniu 1990 r. przy ..." *Twoja Praga, Facebook.com*.

⁶⁵ Dariusz Bartoszewicz, Jerzy S. Majewski, Jarosław Osowski, and Maciej Nowak "25 lat obserwujemy Warszawę. Miasto się zmienia, a zapiekanki zostają," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Jan. 12, 2015.

⁶⁶ Jean-Pierre Grimmeau, "A Forgotten Anniversary: The First European Hypermarkets Open In Brussels In 1961," *Brussels Studies* (June 2013): 1162.

Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois near Paris, the model drew from American discount department stores, such as the extremely successful Wal-Mart, and offered European shoppers the opportunity to buy more than just groceries on their shopping trips. Compared to communist-era shops, however, BILLA seemed an impossible vortex and they were alone in navigating the maze. Shelves stretched out before them, stocked with hundreds of different brands. Thankfully, as one article noted, BILLA's goods were always kept in the same place in every store.⁶⁷

Adding to the vortex was the supermarket model's inclusion of non-grocery items on store shelves. Goods such as toilet paper, diapers, and paper towels are all listed in *Stołeczna* as worth buying at BILLA in terms of price competitiveness.⁶⁸ Other non-grocery goods on BILLA's shelves included children's toys, household cleaners, cosmetics, bed linens, books, and T-shirts.⁶⁹ The Western supermarket strategy of stocking non-food products appeared alongside self-service shopping as part of an effort to "[increase] the scope of their merchandise offerings" and thereby compete with the enormously successful department store model.⁷⁰ In practice, this distinctly Western model has also contributed to the increase in bulk shopping, wherein shoppers buy and store (in their Western-sized refrigerators) larger quantities of goods.⁷¹ The BILLA shops were organized accordingly, with accommodations for weary shoppers in the process of accumulating large hauls. In the shop's "bar" one could recuperate while sipping

⁶⁷ "Zakupy na cały tydzień."

⁶⁸ "Billa w Porywach Droższa."

⁶⁹ "Billa, czyli mięsny raj," *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Oct. 8, 1992.

⁷⁰ Dennis Lock, *The Gower Handbook of Management* (Gower, 1998), 528.

⁷¹ Lock, *The Gower Handbook of Management*, 528.

coffee or freshly squeezed juice.⁷² The Chełmska shop also had a toilet, a convenience emphasized in *Stołeczna*'s coverage.⁷³

The inclusion of non-grocery items theoretically allowed shoppers to limit their shopping trips to a single store, rather than trekking all over Warsaw to get vegetables from the greengrocer, meat from the butcher, and rolls from the baker.⁷⁴ The communist-era Polish grocery shopper had "to visit a half-dozen stores to complete the purchases for one day's meals."⁷⁵ As a cashier at the Chełmska store told *Stołeczna*, the Western model in which BILLA operated was "focused on the customer doing big shopping once a week."⁷⁶ Some embraced the weekly shopping model and heading to BILLA on a Sunday after church became a regular event. Despite widespread praise for the range of goods available at BILLA, however, for some customers, assortment in both brand and product type offered more novelty than utility or convenience. One couple from Czerniaków, the neighborhood where the Chełmska BILLA was located, told a journalist that they visited BILLA *codziennie* (everyday).⁷⁷ Perhaps they were merely enthusiastic, but it seems more likely that this couple simply held on to practices of the recent past, shopping repeatedly throughout the week for what they needed on a particular day. Similarly, of the large number of people that came to the opening of

⁷² "Billa, czyli mięsny raj."

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ "Billa w Porywach Droższa."

⁷⁵ Kenney, "The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland," 413.

⁷⁶ "Pierwszy dzień Billi."

⁷⁷ Anna Krężlewicz, "Dawne supermarkety Billa przechodzą metamorfozę" *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Oct. 17, 2002.

the second BILLA, few were reported as leaving with full shopping bags despite the wide range of goods available.⁷⁸ Habitual traits proved harder to transform than environmental features, illustrated here by consumer hesitance to fully embrace the Western model even when the institutions of post-communism encouraged doing so.

The West and the normality perceived to exist there served as a crucial component of Polish visions of post-communist life. In fact, the desire to achieve a normality in post-communism that resembled Western life was felt throughout the Eastern Bloc. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman explain that "talk about ... western standards of normalcy" prevailed as "popular themes under public discussion" in post-communist Germany.⁷⁹ Gerald W. Creed describes villagers in post-communist Bulgaria who "complained about being 'behind' the rest of Europe" in post-communism and continued to "[express] desires for a 'normal life' ... convey[ing] acceptance of a generic Western version" of normality in the modern world.⁸⁰ This echoes communist-era discourse, most notably elucidated by Czech writer Milan Kundera, that the Central European countries had been forcibly taken from their rightful place in Europe. In post-communism, they sought to rejoin Europe, politically and culturally and, in the minds of Poles, this seemed partly achievable through the enactment of perceived Western living norms alongside the rejection of communist experiences. That said, the normality that Poles desired existed in "an idealized realm of domestic harmony, economic prosperity and individual and

⁷⁸ "Pierwszy dzień Billi."

⁷⁹ Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *Reproducing Gender Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 122.

⁸⁰ Gerald W. Creed, *Masquerade and Postsocialism: Ritual and Cultural Dispossession in Bulgaria* (Indiana University Press, 2011), 206.

national liberty” and few changes were embraced without question or, in some cases, pushback.⁸¹

⁸¹ Galbraith, ““We Just Want to Live Normally”: Intersecting Discourses of Public, Private, Poland, and the West,” 4.

PURSUING A POST-COMMUNIST NORMALITY

“Not everything” was as promised, wrote *Stołeczna* less than a year after opening day, a statement that perhaps rang true about post-communist life in general as well as the BILLA experience.⁸² By way of example, *Stołeczna* reported that BILLA was not, despite its claims, the most affordable option when it came to certain products, such as “vitamin C juice” and “olive-stuffed peppers,” which could be procured for considerably less elsewhere if the shopper was so inclined.⁸³ Later articles cited similar inconsistencies between promises and reality at BILLA. One warned customers to be skeptical of the shop’s modern technology and careful to check expiration dates. Another, citing complaints from *Stołeczna*’s readership, criticised BILLA for never fulfilling its promise to stock Polish-made goods in equal proportion with imported products, though consumers admitted that they enjoyed buying seasonal food year-round at BILLA as made possible by said imports.

The complicated reality of post-communist transformation, implemented in Poland by way of the infamous shock therapy method of rapid privatization, made for another set of interactions with the institutions that made up the post-communist retail landscape. These interactions cannot be understood as products of either anti-communist or pro-Western changes. Instead, they reveal a third pursuit of normality characterized by the peculiarities of post-communism itself. Polish grocery shoppers’ interactions with the BILLA experience in

⁸² “Billa w Porywach Drożdża.”

⁸³ Ibid.

reflect a pursuit of normality characterized by the post-communist context of shock therapy reform: affordability, health and product safety, and the effects of foreign imports on local agriculture.

Much like the anti-communist issue of price differentiation and the comparison it necessitated, the new relevance of the actual numbers on price tags came as somewhat of a surprise to the post-communist consumer. Price had rarely featured among communist-era consumer priorities; the state-distributed ration card system, coupled with material shortage, made actual prices less important to Polish shoppers than in Western economies. Speaking about the subject of one ethnographic interview, Małgorzata Mazurek explains how “the supply crisis had the peculiar result of changing what had been a constant obstacle for his family—lack of money—into an issue of no importance.”⁸⁴ During the last decade of communism, dramatic “hyperinflation obliterated the population's zloty savings and reduced real incomes ... to the equivalent of less than fifty dollars a month,” making cash a less often traded commodity than products or services.⁸⁵ Indeed, “for many employees, access to scarce goods meant more than wages,” because they could be used for bartering on the black market much more effectively than cash.⁸⁶ Thus, in the months immediately following 1989, Poles actually had remaining “cash reserves which they had not entrusted to communist banks” and with which they began the early days of Western-style grocery shopping.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Mazurek, “Keeping it Close to Home: Resourcefulness and Scarcity in Late Socialist and Post-Socialist Poland,” 313.

⁸⁵ Ther, *Europe since 1989: A History*, 7.

⁸⁶ Mazurek, “Keeping it Close to Home: Resourcefulness and Scarcity in Late Socialist and Post-Socialist Poland,” 310.

⁸⁷ Kenney, *The Burdens of Freedom: Eastern Europe since 1989*, 17.

Once the command economy disappeared, however, grocery costs skyrocketed and Western products like the majority of those offered at BILLA were the most expensive of all. For many, the consumer paradox of the 1990s held that store shelves were full but no one had money to buy the goods in stock. In 1994, a *New York Times* poll on “hopes and attitudes” in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland found that “people were confronting their new freedom with some trepidation,” largely due to “economic uncertainty.”⁸⁸ Financial worries, which had certainly not been part of the vision of capitalism constructed during communism, made actual participation in the activities of capitalist life, most pertinently consumption, exasperating and dissatisfying. Inflation and unemployment grew steadily worse, the latter reaching sixteen percent in Poland by 1994, the highest of the four Visegrád Group countries at the time.⁸⁹ Price had, suddenly and with little anticipation, become a key concern of the post-communist grocery shopper.

This is reflected in *Stoleczna*’s coverage of BILLA’s pricing and marketing techniques, in which the newspaper acts as protector of the naive shopper with a post-communist wallet. Before BILLA even opened, *Stoleczna* made sure to present potential shoppers with the shop’s pricing on individual goods including juice and soda, both bottled and in cartons, butter, packages of “Wiener Kaffee” and hot chocolate, and dish soap.⁹⁰ Soon after the second Warsaw BILLA opened its doors, *Stoleczna* exposed the chain’s fictitious claim to being the cheapest game in town. Playing watchdog for its readership, the 1991 article “Billa w

⁸⁸ Craig Whitney, “Eastern Europe, Post Communism: Five Years Later -- A Special Report; East Europe’s Hard Path to New Day,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 30, 1994.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ “Tanie Lady.”

Porywach Droższa” (“BILLA, at times, more expensive”) warns shoppers to be wary of shopping only at BILLA, noting that some products actually cost more than at other shops. It lists several examples: at BILLA, a liter of Vitamin C juice was priced at fifteen thousand zlotys while, at Pewex, one of the communist-era hard currency shops that lasted into post-communism, the same juice cost only 12 thousand zlotys (the numbers themselves reflect the massive inflation of Polish currency in the early 1990s).⁹¹ From grocery staples to home goods, the Austrian chain primarily stocked Western brands, which were judged too expensive even by Polish consumer standards, who fared relatively well compared to others in the post-communist region.⁹²

As concerns about financial stability increased, suspicion and resentment toward capitalist-style marketing ploys emerged as shoppers searched for an everyday that satisfied both idealistic and practical priorities. The Chełmska Street BILLA initially marketed its goods at promotional prices that ended abruptly a month after the store opened, surprising and angering shoppers and journalists alike.⁹³ Ninety-nine cent “psychological pricing,” wherein goods are priced just under whole numbers to give the impression of a lower price point, featured prominently in BILLA shops and confused Polish shoppers. One *Stołeczna* article warned its readers to be wary of such pricing, clarifying that such prices are meant to trick shoppers.⁹⁴ Similar concerns materialized regarding the electronic check-out system; an article

⁹¹ “Billa w Porywach Droższa.”

⁹² “Zakupy na cały tydzień.”

⁹³ “Billa, czyli mięsny raj.”

⁹⁴ “Zakupy na cały tydzień.”

reported that, according to an annoyed shopper, the prices listed on the shelves at BILLA did not correspond with prices at checkout.⁹⁵ Upon further investigation, the shopper was told that prices on the shelves were outdated, further vexing the price-conscious customer. *Stołeczna* interviewed the manager of the shop in question, the BILLA on Chełmska Street, who told journalist Janina Blikowska that shop workers have only an hour each morning to change prices and often didn't manage to do so.⁹⁶ *Stołeczna*, siding with the shopper, called the manager's explanation "absurd," explaining that because the price of the product frequently determined its selection, consistency and accuracy are necessary elements in any shop's organization.⁹⁷ BILLA, which after all had operated successfully in capitalist Western Europe for several decades, did offer options for price-conscious shoppers. In the produce department, for example, BILLA stocked both prepackaged and fresh produce, and a nearby cash register allowed shoppers to weigh fresh produce before check-out and determine how much they would pay.⁹⁸

Stołeczna coverage also indicates growing concern amongst post-communist shoppers about whether anything actually provided incentive for BILLA to guarantee high-quality goods, another unexpected symptom of capitalist-style retailing. Polish consumer attention turned to health and product safety as their shopping carts filled with unfamiliar brands. Most BILLA goods, imported from Germany and Austria, were labeled only in German, obscuring desired information like ingredients. Frozen and prepared foods in abundantly stocked freezers

⁹⁵ "Tajna Billa."

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Billa, czyli mięsny raj."

also grew in popularity, but all came with the caveat of considerably less information garnered pre-purchase about the components of one's dinner (Figure 5).⁹⁹ The electronic check-out system, though efficient, did little to reassure customers. In 1993, *Stołeczna* skeptically reported that, after some questioning, employees at BILLA claimed that their computerized system "guarantees the safety of the articles sold" by automatically checking expiration dates.¹⁰⁰ A year later, however, *Stołeczna*'s suspicions were confirmed, and the newspaper reported that the Chełmska Street BILLA's managers were being fined for selling expired baby food products.¹⁰¹



Figure 5: A customer perusing BILLA's prepackaged food section

⁹⁹ "Nie wiedzą, co sprzedają," *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Sept. 5-6, 1992.

¹⁰⁰ "Zakupy na cały tydzień."

¹⁰¹ "Nielegalne odżywki," *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Feb 15, 1994

The chain's onsite meat processing comprised one element of BILLA's operation that customers actually applauded. The Chełmska Street BILLA housed a butcher and cured its meat in the warehouse behind the shop.¹⁰² The article describing the second Warsaw BILLA's opening is entitled "Billa, czyli mięsny raj" ("BILLA, in other words a meat paradise.")¹⁰³ The Chełmska Street BILLA reportedly stocked over 500 meat products.¹⁰⁴ The shop also offered trays of prepared meat with various sauces ready to be put in the oven or on the grill. In keeping with consumer concerns about price, that the shop slaughtered and cured all that it sold allowed BILLA to keep its meat prices the lowest in town.¹⁰⁵ *Stołeczna* listed BILLA's prices for pork shoulder, bacon, pork liver, beef, schnitzel, pork chops, and pork tenderloin, and encouraged shoppers with large families to buy portions of two kilograms or more because prices per kilogram were considerably lower than for smaller packages.¹⁰⁶ Here, *Stołeczna* both advocates the Western-style bulk shopping trip and addresses post-communist price consciousness.

Meat, however, was one of very few products that BILLA sourced locally. In January 1993, *Stołeczna* reported that seventy percent of BILLA's goods were imported.¹⁰⁷ The importation of food products allowed seasonal limitations to essentially disappear from the Polish grocery retail sector. This represented an enormous change to shopping in the previous period, when one bad harvest could lead to country-wide shortage. As one author wrote of her

¹⁰² "Billa, czyli mięsny raj."

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ "Zakupy na cały tydzień."

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ "Zakupy na cały tydzień."

childhood in communist Poland, one “couldn't just walk into a grocery store any time of the year and pick up two or three heads of lettuce.”¹⁰⁸ At BILLA, one could do so, pairing lettuce with bananas or fresh fish all in a single weekly shopping trip. Shoppers were “astonished by the aisles of fresh, cellophane-wrapped vegetables” sourced from farms all over Europe and shipped to Warsaw.¹⁰⁹

Despite initial enthusiasm, however, the priority BILLA gave to imported goods was not matched by Polish consumers as the years progressed. Several articles throughout the early 1990s lamented that so few of BILLA's goods were Polish-made. One article noted that while BILLA claimed to be committed to selling as many Polish products as possible, many local goods did not meet the basic requirements for sale. For example, the requirement that goods be packaged and hermetically sealed eliminated Polish products like “cold cuts and cheese,” leaving the customer to either buy unfamiliar foreign equivalents or head to a second store if they still wanted to shop locally. BILLA had deemed most local products inadequate in terms of quality control, instead importing the same goods it sold in its stores in Western Europe.¹¹⁰ Besides Hortex, Wedel, and Goplana, Polish companies with whom BILLA did have contracts, few domestic manufacturers used barcodes on their packaging, which Billa required because the registers used electronic readers and store books were computerized.¹¹¹ Indeed, shoppers complained that the absence of bar codes on the labels of Polish products that did

¹⁰⁸ Marianna Olszewska Heberle, *Polish Cooking* (Berkley, 2005), 53.

¹⁰⁹ Tom Hundley, “Poland Has Become Hypermarket Nation,” *The Chicago Tribune*, June 24, 2001.

¹¹⁰ “Zakupy na cały tydzień.”

¹¹¹ “Billa, czyli mięsny raj.”

make it into the store made checkout more difficult and time-consuming.¹¹² At the same time, Polish goods, *Stołeczna* reported, were considerably cheaper than their Western counterparts and thus preferred by price-conscious Polish shoppers, comprising fifty percent of BILLA's product sales despite being a minority in terms of goods sold.¹¹³ In place of Polish goods on store shelves, processed foods made possible by Western technology were introduced to the Polish market for the first time. Some of these goods became quite popular; the introduction of Western-style margarine, for example, led butter consumption to drop by half between 1988 and 1996.¹¹⁴ By 1996, the "shops and supermarkets were full of products unknown during the previous regime."¹¹⁵

The pursuit of normality under the particular conditions of post-communism perhaps best exemplifies the paradoxes of the period. Polish shoppers wanted access to Western brands, but at affordable price points. Throughout the region, financial inequality grew, but the theoretically equalizing model of communism, having been so thoroughly discredited, certainly did not appeal to consumers as they negotiated the challenges of a transforming society and culture. Some consumers simply wanted Western brands to be sold next to Polish brands, but the restrictions that came with operating an international chain such as BILLA made this demand difficult for retailers to fulfill. Meanwhile, Poles expressed broader fears that a Western model was being implemented at the expense, rather than the nourishment, of Polishness.

¹¹² "Zakupy na cały tydzień."

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Michał Sznajder and Benjamin Senauer, "The Changing Polish Food Consumer," Working Paper, *The Retail Food Industry Center*, 1998.

¹¹⁵ "Frozen foods gain slowly but surely as market economy reality takes shape." *The Free Library*, 1996.

Indeed, contrary to the enduring binary of communist and capitalist models that dominated Cold War-era discourse, in the early post-communist era “some hoped that a ‘third way’ between communism and capitalism could be found.”¹¹⁶ By the end of the decade, those hopes had not been realized. However, in the pursuit of a normality amid the peculiarities of shock therapy-style post-communist reform, one can clearly observe consumer efforts to actively negotiate their own trajectory.

¹¹⁶ Kenney, *The Burdens of Freedom: Eastern Europe since 1989*, 16.

CONCLUSION

The events of the early 1990s, and in particular the major firsts like the opening of the first Western-style supermarket, linger in people's minds due to the heightened awareness of the momentous political context that accompanied them. The questions this work has attempted to answer by drawing on live coverage of BILLA's tenure in Poland are given even greater color by these present-day recollections. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the end of communism gave Warsaw journalists considerable fodder for rose-tinted essays on early post-communism. In 2015, journalist Natalia Bet published a nostalgic survey of Warsaw grocery shopping as it existed twenty-five years earlier, remembering BILLA, HIT and the other Western retail investors of the early 1990s as "a breath of a better world."¹¹⁷ An unnamed Varsovian she interviewed agreed, describing his first trip to BILLA as having been "like a visit to another planet."¹¹⁸ Strikingly, Bet's memories of early trips to BILLA emphasize not groceries, but scented pens and colored notebooks.¹¹⁹ Of their own coverage of the Ostrobramska BILLA's first day, in 2010 *Wyborcza* itself wrote fondly of the once-novel Wiener Kaffee packaged coffee, whose price they had listed in the 1990 article, and asked: "who else drank it and remembers?"¹²⁰ On a Facebook page for Ostrobramska locals, Varsovian Joanna

¹¹⁷ Natalia Bet, "Tak robiło się zakupy 25 lat temu w Warszawie. Pamiętacie pierwszą Biedronkę?" *Metro Warszawa*, Dec. 16, 2015.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ "Wydarzenia, które zmieniły miasto: 'Spieprzaj, dziadu,'" *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Jan. 14, 2010.

Tomaszewska-Kołyško remembered opening day: “the entire Ostrobramska community made pilgrimages to BILLA ... the characteristic yellow and red advertisements scattered on lawns, sidewalks ... and the wind blew them onto the trees.”¹²¹ On the same page, non-Varsovian Iza Klat recalled traveling from Łódź with her parents to see the “Western miracle” that was the Ostrobramska BILLA while one contributor, Jaczewski Pawel, wrote that the taste of BILLA gummy candy, likely German Haribo, “I will not forget.”¹²²

The German corporation REWE purchased BILLA-Polen in 1996, but, as REWE’s former chief executive told *Lebensmittel Zeitung* in 2009, Poland in the late 1990s and early 2000s was quickly becoming “overstored.”¹²³ The larger hypermarkets, which entered Poland as part of a larger wave of foreign retail investment in 1994, quickly overtook supermarkets such as BILLA. Hypermarkets, “the hangar-size superstores that sell everything from groceries to kitchen sinks,” were cited as an example of Poland’s ability to appeal to Western investors and become integrated into the economy of the West and thus found even less middle-ground between East and West European-style consumption than BILLA.¹²⁴ In 2001, REWE sold a dozen BILLA stores to French retailer Auchan, who marketed the shops under the name ELEA (Figure 6). In 2002, *Wyborcza* journalist Anna Krężlewicz declared BILLA to have “decisively disappeared from the Warsaw landscape.”¹²⁵ Then, in 2006, REWE tried one last time, announcing plans to bring the well-known BILLA shops back to the Polish market with

¹²¹ “W grudniu 1990 r. przy ... ” *Twoja Praga, Facebook.com*.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ “Rewe Sells Billa Supermarkets in Poland,” *Germanretailblogcom News*, Aug 10, 2009.

¹²⁴ Hundley, “Poland Has Become Hypermarket Nation.”

¹²⁵ Krężlewicz, “Dawne supermarkety Billa przechodzą metamorfozę.”

seventy new shops in small cities across Poland. This new BILLA, abandoning the hypermarket-dominated urban centers in favor of cities with populations under 50,000, was comprised of “small, residential” shops located “close to home” where shoppers could conduct their “daily shopping,” which remained the preferred schedule of the Polish shopper.¹²⁶ Moving to smaller cities made little difference, however, and by 2009, Rewe had “thrown in the towel” completely and sold its remaining Billa stores to French hypermarket chain E. Leclerc.¹²⁷



Figure 6: The Chelmska BILLA building, rebranded as ELEA in 2001

¹²⁶ Tomasz Boguszewicz, "Sieć Billa wraca do Polski i celuje w małe miasta," *Życie Warszawy*, Aug. 16, 2006.

¹²⁷ "Rewe Sells Billa Supermarkets in Poland."

By traipsing through the story of Poland's first Western-style supermarkets, we can more clearly visualize post-communism, a period characterized by East and Central European pursuits of an anti-communist, Western, stable, and in many cases, familiar life. The victory felt in 1989 was cemented in 2004 with Poland's accession to the European Union, political confirmation that Poland had achieved normality. In the November/December 2014 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman said of Poland and many of its post-communist neighbors: "they have become normal countries -- and, in some ways, better than normal."¹²⁸

Yet the perception of normality persists among Poles across the generational spectrum. Most Poles had believed that, just as "the Polish economy would resume its place on the path to capitalist development," so too would the everyday return to normality as they had envisioned it.¹²⁹ Instead, the road to Western-style capitalism and the everyday that was expected to accompany it, whether the rightful and inevitable path of the Polish people or simply one alternative to communism, involved considerable negotiating, as the interactions described above reveal. In part, this can be attributed to growing skepticism with regard to the role of the West in post-communist Poland. In the early 1990s, many wrote of BILLA as the "foreigner's favorite," because at the time was built, it was the only "genuinely Western" shop in Poland and therefore attracted West European tourists who, like Western retailers, came to the post-communist region en masse in the early 1990s.¹³⁰ Today, Western corporations and

¹²⁸ Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman, "A Normal Country." *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 2 (2004): 20.

¹²⁹ Dunn, *Privatizing Poland: baby food, big business, and the remaking of the Polish working class*, 3.

¹³⁰ Piotr Międzyński, "Francuski E. Leclerc kupuje sieć supermarketów BILLA," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Aug. 3, 2009.

investors were and are subject to heavy criticism in Poland. Entrepreneurial Poles who took over the state-run shops in the early post-communist period lament that “predatory pricing and unfair labor practices” used by the foreign companies drove them out of business.¹³¹

"Long-standing private farms had to face devastating competition from highly productive Western farms," severely weakening the Polish agricultural industry and making local goods unattainable.¹³² Popular support for local and domestic businesses continues to grow. Many Poles today point to the European Union as yet another imposition of foreign power, like the Soviet Union, limiting Polish access to normality by restricting independent domestic progress.

As far as supermarkets and grocery shopping are concerned, to many people, the uniformity of communism seems to have given way only to the uniformity of a consumerist age, wherein West European hypermarkets dominate the Polish retail sphere leaving little room for smaller domestic grocery retailers to capitalize on a privatized market. Whereas the grocery retailing arena saw constant change throughout early post-communism as communist shops transformed into BILLA and its compatriots, and then from supermarkets to hypermarkets and wholesalers, the contemporary period seems dull and static by comparison. In the summer of 2017, newly elected French President Emmanuel Macron accused Poles of treating the European Union like a “supermarket,” preying on economic opportunities in West European cities with little respect for Union values. In response, then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Development and Finance Mateusz Morawiecki fired back: “It’s true that there are many Polish drivers in the car parks of Paris or Amsterdam. But on the streets of Kraków,

¹³¹ Hundley, "Poland Has Become Hypermarket Nation."

¹³² Tibor Iván Berend. *Central and Eastern Europe: 1944-1993 ; Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 344.

Koszalin, or Suwałki, there are also many French supermarkets, Dutch banks, or German media. We can willingly switch — but I don't know if they would like to.”¹³³

Of the Ostrobramska and Chełmska BILLAs, “all that remains are old photographs.”¹³⁴ The warehouse where the Ostrobramska BILLA operated, now demolished, was soon overshadowed by the enormous Promenade shopping mall, developed by Dutch businessman Dion L.J. Heijmans and built in front of BILLA in the mid-90s (Figure 7). The bus depot where Warsaw's second BILLA had stood was “liquidated” in April 2006; the site is now “empty and overgrown.”¹³⁵ Polish post-communism, as Padraic Kenney writes, “almost certainly [came] to an end” with Poland's successful accession to the European Union.¹³⁶ Ambitions of rejecting communism and rejoining a mythologized Europe seem largely to have been realized, arguably made possible at the everyday level by participation in the consumer rituals of the West. Today, anti-Westernism and nostalgia for the early years of transformation are increasingly prevalent among those who lived through the early 1990s. Indeed, that the Western model eventually prevailed does not necessarily mean that it was inevitable or even desired, and recent popular interest in the post-1989 moment of possibility reflects that. Nevertheless, in the pursuit of certain normalities amid the transformation process, we can observe an effort by consumers and the news media tasked with representing them to critique their present and, by extension, to pursue a particular everyday that matched their priorities in

¹³³ James Shotter and Evon Huber, “Poland hits back at Macron's ‘supermarket’ jibe,” *Financial Times*, July 1, 2017.

¹³⁴ Bet, “Tak robiło się zakupy 25 lat temu w Warszawie. Pamiętacie pierwszą Biedronkę?”

¹³⁵ Paweł Malarz, “Zajezdnia Chełmska,” *Omni-Bus.Eu*, 2017.

¹³⁶ Kenney, *The Burdens of Freedom: Eastern Europe since 1989*, 2.

one of the first truly post-communist settings.



Figure 7: The Ostrobramska BILLA shortly before demolition

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published Primary Sources

Bet, Natalia. "Tak robiło się zakupy 25 lat temu w Warszawie. Pamiętacie pierwszą Biedronkę?" *Metro Warszawa*, Dec. 16, 2015.

"Będzie Następna Billa." *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Feb. 23, 1991.

"Billa, czyli mięsny raj." *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Oct. 8, 1992.

"Billa w Porywach Droższa." *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Oct 23, 1991.

Boguszewicz, Tomasz. "Sieć Billa wraca do Polski i celuje w małe miasta," *Życie Warszawy*, Aug. 16, 2006.

Krężlewicz, Anna. "Dawne supermarkety Billa przechodzą metamorfozę." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Oct. 17, 2002.

"Geschichte | BILLA." *Billa.At*. Accessed November 1, 2017.
https://www.billa.at/Footer_Nav_Seiten/Geschichte/dd_bi_channelpage.aspx.

"Grocery Shopping In Poland." *Polish-Dictionary.com*. Accessed November 1, 2017.
<https://polish-dictionary.com/poland-grocery-shopping>.

Malarz, Paweł. "Zajeżdźnia Chełmska." *Omni-Bus.Eu*. 2017. Accessed November 1 2017.
http://www.omni-bus.eu/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=962&Itemid=53.

Miączyński, Piotr. "Francuski E. Leclerc kupuje sieć supermarketów BILLA." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Aug. 3, 2009.

Nosowski, Paweł. "Zdewastowana hala po dawnym supermarkecie Billa." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Aug. 2, 2002.

"Pierwszy dzień Billi." *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Oct. 10, 1992.

"Rewe Sells Billa Supermarkets in Poland." *Germanretailblogcom News*, Aug 10, 2009.
Accessed May 27, 2017.

Shotter, James and Evon Huber. "Poland hits back at Macron's 'supermarket' jibe." *Financial Times*. July 1, 2017.

"Supermarket w zajeżdźni." *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Sept. 7, 1992.

“Tanie Lady.” *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Dec. 12, 1990.

“W grudniu 1990 r. przy ul. Ostrobramskiej austriacka firma BILLA otworzyła w Warszawie swój pierwszy supermarket. Może ktoś powiedzieć gdzie dokładnie znajdował się ten sklep?” *Twoja Praga. Facebook.com*. Last modified February 5, 2014. Accessed October 7, 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/180150901995700/photos/a.336721293005326.86656.180150901995700/736184363059015/?type=3&theater>

“Wydarzenia, które zmieniły miasto: ‘Spieprzaj, dziadu.’” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Jan. 14, 2010.

“Zakupy na cały tydzień.” *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Jan. 6, 1993.

Figures

Figure 1: Kamiński, Sławomir. “Tak robiło się zakupy 25 lat temu w Warszawie. Pamiętacie pierwszą Biedronkę?” *Metro Warszawa*, Dec. 16, 2015.

Figure 2: Kamiński, Sławomir. “Tak robiło się zakupy 25 lat temu w Warszawie. Pamiętacie pierwszą Biedronkę?” *Metro Warszawa*, Dec. 16, 2015.

Figure 3: Gawłowski, Jacek. “Od Supersamu ... do supermarketu.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 30, 1990.

Figure 4: Artys, Kuba. “Pierwszy dzień Billi.” *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Oct. 10, 1992.

Figure 5: Artys, Kuba. “Billa, czyli mięsny raj.” *Gazeta Stołeczna*, Oct. 8, 1992.

Figure 6: “Chełmska, Zajezdnia Autobusowa” *Czarnota.Org*. 2017. Accessed May 27 2017. <http://czarnota.org/gallery/displayimage.php?pid=7671>.

Figure 7: “W grudniu 1990 r. przy ul. Ostrobramskiej austriacka firma BILLA otworzyła w Warszawie swój pierwszy supermarket. Może ktoś powiedzieć gdzie dokładnie znajdował się ten sklep?” *Twoja Praga. Facebook.com*. Last modified February 5, 2014. Accessed October 7, 2017.

<https://www.facebook.com/180150901995700/photos/a.336721293005326.86656.180150901995700/736184363059015/?type=3&theater>

Secondary Sources

Alozie, Emmanuel C. *Advertising in Developing and Emerging Countries: The Economic, Political and Social Context*. Farnham: Gower, 2011.

Berend, Tibor Iván. *Central and Eastern Europe: 1944-1993 ; Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery*. Cambridge, 2010.

Creed, Gerald W. *Masquerade and Postsocialism: Ritual and Cultural Dispossession in Bulgaria*. Indiana University Press, 2011.

Dawson, John A., and Masao Mukoyama. *Global Strategies in Retailing: Asian and European Experiences*. Routledge, 2014.

Dunn, Elizabeth C. *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of the Polish Working Class*. Cornell University Press, 2004.

Fischer, Lisa Pope. *Symbolic Traces of Communist Legacy in Post-socialist Hungary: Experiences of a Generation That Lived during the Socialist Era*. Brill, 2016.

Fehérvári, Krisztina. "American Kitchens, Luxury Bathrooms, and the Search for a 'Normal' Life in Postsocialist Hungary." *Ethnos* 67, no. 3 (2002): 369-400.

"Frozen foods gain slowly but surely as market economy reality takes shape." *The Free Library: E.W. Williams Publications, Inc*, 1996.

Gal, Susan and Gail Kligman. *Reproducing Gender Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism*. Princeton University Press, 2000.

Galbraith, Marysia. "'We Just Want to Live Normally': Intersecting Discourses of Public, Private, Poland, and the West." *Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe* 3, no. 1 (2003): 2-13.

Grabowski, Yvonne. "Recent English Loanwords in the Polish Language." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 13, no. 1 (1971): 65-71.

Grimmeau, Jean-Pierre. "A Forgotten Anniversary: The First European Hypermarkets Open In Brussels In 1961." *Brussels Studies*, (2013): 1162.

Hall, D., M. Smith, and B. Marciszweska. *Tourism in the New Europe: The Challenges and Opportunities of EU Enlargement*. CABI Publishing, 2006.

Heberle, Marianna Olszewska. *Polish Cooking*. Berkeley, 2005.

Hundley, Tom. "Poland Has Become Hypermarket Nation." *Tribunedigital-chicagotribune*. The Chicago Tribune, June 24, 2001. Accessed May 15 2017.

Jarausch, Konrad Hugo. *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton University Press, 2016.

Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann Anna D. *The Exile Mission: Polish Post War Diaspora in the United States, 1939-1956*. The Polish Studies Program, Central Connecticut State University, 2001.

Kenney, Padraic. *The Burdens of Freedom: Eastern Europe since 1989*. Zed Books, 2013.

Kenney, Padraic. "The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland." *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (1999): 399-425.

- King, Charles. *Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the End of Eastern Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Krygier, Martin. *Civil Passions: Selected Writings*. Melbourne: Black, 2005.
- Lock, Dennis. *The Gower Handbook of Management*. Gower, 1998.
- Malhotra, Naresh K. *Proceedings of the 1986 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference*. Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Springer, 2015.
- Mazurek, Małgorzata, "Keeping it Close to Home: Resourcefulness and Scarcity in Late Socialist and Post-Socialist Poland." In *Communism Unwrapped. Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, edited by Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Michnik, Adam, and Irena Grudzińska-Gross. *In Search of Lost Meaning: The New Eastern Europe*. University of California Press, 2011.
- Orenstein, Mitchell A. *Out of the Red: Building Capitalism and Democracy in Postcommunist Europe*. University of Michigan Press, 2006.
- Pokorna-Ignatowicz, Katarzyna. *The Polish Media System: 1989-2011*. Krakowskie Towarzystwo Edukacyjne - Oficyna Wydawnicza Akademii Im. Andrzeja Frycza Modrzewskiego, 2012.
- Semetko, Holli A., and Margaret Scammell. *The Sage Handbook of Political Communication*. Londra: Sage, 2012.
- Shleifer, Andrei, and Daniel Treisman. "A Normal Country." *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 2 (2004).
- Sznajder, Michał and Benjamin Senauer. "The Changing Polish Food Consumer." Working Paper, *The Retail Food Industry Center*, University of Minnesota, 1998.
- Ther, Philipp. *Europe since 1989: A History*. Princeton University Press, 2016.
- Vachudova, Milada A., and Timothy Snyder. "Are Transitions Transitory? Two Types of Political Change in Eastern Europe Since 1989." *East European Politics & Societies* 11, no. 1 (1996): 1-35.
- Verdery, Katherine. *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Whitney, Craig. "Eastern Europe, Post Communism: Five Years Later -- A Special Report; East Europe's Hard Path to New Day." *The New York Times* (1994)