Terrifyingly Normal Authoritarian Bureaucracies: Intra-Agency Reform and Secret Police Surveillance Capacity in Socialist Poland

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Abstract

Coercive institutions are essential components of authoritarian states and contribute to regime durability. However, variation in the internal structures of these institutions remains relatively unexplored. I argue that frequent intra-agency reforms of coercive institutions shape the incentives and constraints facing individual bureaucrats. Increases in the number of units within an agency responsible for the same task generate competition for successful outcomes on tangible, observable indicators, such as the registration of collaborators who provide information on the opposition. I test this argument using a research design which exploits an exogenous shock to the organization of the state security apparatus caused by an administrative district reform in socialist Poland. I find that areas which saw an increase in the number of regional secret police offices experienced significantly faster growth in the state security's network of secret informants and collaborators. The effects of the reform on the collaborator network were large, even compared to those of mass unrest in 1976, and increasing both through time and with the number of new administrations created. My results suggest that internal structures and reforms of authoritarian bureaucracies deserve greater attention from scholars of autocracy and democratization.

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Introduction

Repression is an essential component of authoritarian state capacity and infrastructural power.[1] However, we know relatively little about sub-national variation in the structure and capacity of coercive institutions tasked with repression.[2] In contrast to explanations of corruption and development, which increasingly focus on variation in state capacity at the regional and agency level (Gingerich, 2013; Bersch, Praça, and Taylor, 2017), coercive agencies are characterized primarily by their number, size and social composition at the center.[3] Important as these features may be, the capacity of coercive institutions is not uniform across space (Hassan, 2017; Thomson, 2017). Furthermore, regimes only rarely change such macro-structures of their coercive institutions. Instead, they use frequent, incremental changes within the agencies to respond to threats and challenges; address inefficiencies in the operation of the secret police; and optimize the capacity and efficacy of their security apparatus. Shifts in the number, function or location of units; lines of reporting and oversight procedures; personnel policies such as those around appointments, promotion and compensation; and standard operating procedures and performance indicators for staff are frequent within the security apparatus, as within any bureaucracy (Moe, 1987, 234). These intra-agency reforms can occur at the national, local or regional level and have significant effects on the nature of repression confronting the opposition.[4] However, these effects are not a function of authoritarian politics per se, but of the "terrifyingly normal" bureaucratic and career incentives of staff working within the agencies (Arendt, 1963, 253).

In this paper, I analyze intra-agency reforms' effects on the surveillance capacity of coer-

[1] Mann (1984), Slater (2010), Svolik (2012b, 9-10), Blaydes (2018), Hassan (2018).

[2] In this paper, I will follow other scholars and use the terms coercive institutions, security apparatus, security service and secret police synonymously. I focus my analysis here on coercive institutions under autocracy, though there could be similarities to analogous agencies under democracy. See, for example, Hammond (2007).

[3] Slater (2010), Bellin (2012), Svolik (2012a), Chestnut-Greitens (2016).

[4] Readers should not that the sorts of intra-agency reforms I study here are seen as very important by historians of coercive institutions. See, for example, Kamiński, Persak, and Gieseke (2009).

cive institutions at the regional level. I argue that an emphasis on these relatively common reforms leads to new theoretical insights into institutional structures of repression under authoritarian regimes, and into the role of bureaucracies in authoritarian governance.[5] Existing theories of coercive institutional design which focus on political threats (Slater, 2010; Chestnut-Greitens, 2016; Blaydes, 2018) or delegation problems between authoritarian elites and their repressive agents (Policzer, 2009; Svolik, 2012a; Hassan, 2017) are incomplete. Responses to threats and principal-agent problems of monitoring and controlling coercive agents are conditioned and exacerbated by dynamics within the security apparatus. Individuals working in coercive institutions have parochial career and institutional interests, but also shape these institutions' capacity, which is of fundamental importance for statehood and regime durability. Variation in these outcomes is therefore not explained solely by the goals of ruling autocrats or intra-elite politics. Specifically, coercive agents seek to maximize institution size and their share of influence and resources within the security apparatus (Niskanen 1971, Wintrobe 1998, 307-329). Because these institutions carry out their work in secret, and the nature and magnitude of opposition to authoritarian regimes are opaque, ruling elites face problems in monitoring the activities and efficacy of their agents.[6] Structures which provide incentives for competition among individuals within the coercive institution will have significant effects on the size and activities of agencies, even when political threats to the regime and relations among elites do not change.

Empirically, I examine the effects of an exogenous shock to the organization of the secret police in socialist Poland. I show that intra-agency reforms associated with this shock caused variation in the surveillance capacity of the agency which was at least as large as that caused by variation in political threats. In 1975, the United Workers' Party (PZPR) regime increased the number of administrative districts (*voivodships*) in the country from 17

[5] My analysis is therefore related to, but distinct from, one in which repressive behavior is the outcome of interest. See Davenport (2007).

[6] Moe (1984, 1987), Kuran (1989), Wintrobe (1998, 20-39).

to 49. This important reform aimed to limit the power of local party officials and was not directed at the organization of the secret police. However, it increased the number of local state security offices which administered the network of secret collaborators—individuals who signed a formal agreement to provide information on the opposition—across the country. I argue that this change in the internal structure of the secret police agency heightened incentives to register informants among local commandants and exacerbated the problem of monitoring these agents' activities in the provinces. Because the new voivodships were imperfectly nested within the old administrative districts, I use the reform to test the effects of an increase in regional offices and commandants on the growth of the agency's secret collaborator network while holding the population and area under surveillance constant. Estimating a series of difference-in-differences models, I find that areas which saw increases in the number of local secret police offices witnessed significantly faster growth in collaborator numbers after 1975; that these effects were substantively large, even when compared to the effects of mass unrest in June 1976; and were increasing through time and with the magnitude of the administrative change.

My findings represent new insights into the determinants of state capacity—and in particular coercive capacity—under dictatorship. Although previous work has examined variation in the professionalization and politicization of the bureaucracy and corruption within states and across agencies (Gingerich, 2013; Bersch, Praça, and Taylor, 2017), relatively few studies have generated empirical and theoretical insights into coercive capacity at these levels of analysis (Hassan, 2017; Thomson, 2017). I also contribute to our knowledge of the role of bureaucracies in authoritarian governance. Previous studies show that legislatures are used for bureaucratic control (Gehlbach and Simpser, 2014; Schuler, 2018) and examine networks and promotion patterns among individual civil servants under dictatorship (Landry, Lü, and Duan, 2017; Teets, 2018; Pierskalla et al., 2018). I introduce a novel emphasis on intra-agency reform as a source of meaningful change within bureaucracies which promises to be

fruitful for studies of other agencies under authoritarian regimes. In particular, this focus on intra-agency reform exposes previously unexplored internal, organizational dynamics of coercive institutions which have important consequences for repression under autocracy. By showing that a change in bureaucratic structures has effects on the surveillance capacity of the Polish state security apparatus which are comparable in size to those of mass unrest, I point to new directions for future research into coercive institutions under authoritarianism.

The rest of this paper proceeds as follows. I lay out a theory of intra-agency reform, contrasting it to previous explanations of variation in coercive institutions. From this theory, I derive three general propositions on the effect of the proliferation of units within a coercive institution on tangible performance indicators. I then go on to link these general propositions to the Polish case and lay out the hypotheses which I test in my subsequent empirical analyses. Finally, I test my hypotheses using a series of difference-in-differences panel models of the number of secret informants in Polish districts.

Intra-Agency Reforms and Coercive Institution Capacity

Authoritarian governments face a well-known dilemma when designing coercive institutions. They endow these agencies with capabilities in repression, the threat or use of physical sanctions against actors perceived as challenging the government (Goldstein, 1978), and in security intelligence, the gathering of information about these actors (Gill, 1994, 6). These capabilities are used to detect, deter and eliminate both mass and elite threats to the regime (Svolik, 2012b; Chestnut-Greitens, 2016). However, by establishing coercive institutions and endowing them with capabilities to eliminate threats, authoritarian regimes also create powerful actors who have the means to challenge their autocratic masters.[7]

[7] Policzer (2009, 6-7), Svolik (2012a, 56), Chestnut-Greitens (2016, 22-23).

This dilemma determines important features of coercive agency design. On the one hand, autocrats facing a more acute threat of mass opposition are more likely to create larger, unitary security agencies whose social composition closely mirrors that of the citizenry at large (Svolik, 2012a; Chestnut-Greitens, 2016; Blaydes, 2018). This allows for more effective intra-organizational cooperation in repression, and facilitates collection of intelligence on opponents among the population. On the other hand, threats to the regime arising from within the ruling elite, including the security forces, are likely to create incentives to divide capabilities across multiple agencies and restrict enlistment to trusted social groups (Chestnut-Greitens, 2016). These fragmented and socially exclusive institutions are expected to be more loyal to the dictator, and more cohesive in applying repression.

Changes in the size, number and social composition of coercive institutions are important. However, they are rare compared to what I call intra-agency reforms: those affecting the number, function or location of units; lines of reporting and oversight procedures; personnel policies such as those around appointments, promotion and compensation; and standard operating procedures and performance indicators for staff.[8] Clearly, changes in any of these areas can be consequential enough to affect the institutional macro-structures discussed above, and warrant the attention of the regime leadership. However, intra-agency reforms are distinct because they occur within a single coercive institution and are primarily directed by the chief executive of the agency or their subordinates, not the ruling elite (even if they are endorsed or approved by elites). These are the measures by which authoritarian regimes continually, incrementally optimize the design of their security apparatus, even while macro-structures of institution size, number and social composition remain relatively stable. Intra-agency reforms do not have direct effects on entire agencies or their leadership. They cause variation in the incentives and constraints facing individual bureaucrats within institutions, and have the potential to cause indirect, but significant, changes in the characteristics and

[8] See, for example, Moe (1987, 234).

behavior of entire agencies, and therefore patterns of repression and opposition.

Intra-institutional reforms carried out by repressive agents can, but do not always, follow their elite principals' goals and the priorities handed down to agencies as a whole. Some changes address shifts in mass threats to the regime, or agencies' perceived inefficiency or ineffectiveness in repressing them. Other changes are used to manipulate elites' control over coercive institutions. In this paper, I do not try to explain intra-agency reforms or speculate on their purposes. I am concerned with their effects. I assume that bureaucrats within coercive institutions are self-interested actors who aim to maximize their prestige, policy influence and the resources at their disposal (Niskanen, 1971, 38-41). These motivations exist at the agency level, even for a force which is under the strict, hierarchical control of the ruling regime. The welfare of a coercive institution has real effects on the influence, prestige and living standards of bureaucrats within it. Individual staff, therefore, face collective incentives to promote the agency's interests as a whole.

However, individual bureaucrats also have narrower, selfish interests in career advancement and prestige.[9] In order to achieve promotion, greater compensation and privileges, or simply to retain their positions and avoid sanctions from superiors, employees in coercive institutions respond to the incentives and constraints provided by their position in the bureaucracy. Individual coercive agents' interests are thus not determined only by those of the institution as a whole, but by features of the bureaucracy, such as performance indicators for staff, addressed by intra-agency reform. That bureaucratic incentives and constraints within authoritarian institutions can have dramatic effects on repression was well noted in Arendt's (1963) account of the career of Adolf Eichmann, an officer in the Nazi Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst*, SD), a part of the secret state police or Gestapo. Eichmann was neither an anti-Semite nor a committed Nazi, and joined the SD for opportunistic, careerist

[9] This view of individual bureaucrats is found in early, canonical studies of bureaucracy such as those by Tullock (1965, 16-20, 42-44) and Downs (1967). See also Waterman and Meier (1998, 181-2) and Lü and Landry (2014).

reasons. However, by striving to advance within the bureaucracy, conscientiously and efficiently implementing the directives of his superiors, he gained accolades and was promoted within the ranks of the SD, while making a major contribution to the Nazi genocide in Central and Eastern Europe.

The intra-agency reforms which affect individuals' behavior within coercive institutions are diverse. To link this broad class of institutional changes to the hypotheses I test in this paper, I focus on changes to the number of units and agents within the bureaucracy.[10] Increases in the number of units responsible for the same task within a coercive institution generate incentives for competition among agents for recognition and resources within the institution. Because the number of promotions and the amount of compensation, privileges and resources available within agencies is finite, increasing the number of individuals performing a task increases their incentives to out-perform each other, even if their authoritarian principal's goals remain the same. Furthermore, if there are stable individual-level performance standards within a coercive institution, increases in the number of agents responsible for a given task will mechanically provide incentives for greater output. Because authoritarian elites and the chief executives of coercive institutions can only monitor the behavior their officers with difficulty, successful outcomes on observable tangible indicators of performance will be weighted highly by their superiors in assessing them for rewards or sanctions. This argument leads me to the first general proposition that I test in this paper,

Proposition 1: An increase in the number of units within a coercive agency which are tasked with the same function will be associated with an increase in tangible indicators of unit performance.

Proposition 2: This effect will be increasing in the magnitude of the increase in the number of units within the agency.

[10] Waterman and Meier (1998, 181), Lü and Landry (2014).

The effect of unit proliferation on coercive institution capacity could stabilize at an equilibrium, when incentives for competition among individual coercive agents stabilize, when they know how much effort is expected of them by a principal, or their output meets an acceptable threshold and they reduce effort by satisficing. However, competition among agents can also escalate, and not reach an equilibrium. Chestnut-Greitens (2016, 26) notes, for example, that overlapping competencies among agencies within the security apparatus often leads to ongoing competition and hostility among them. For this reason, I also argue that the effects of unit proliferation within authoritarian coercive institutions are increasing with time. Competition among the individuals in charge of units is likely to escalate after a reform which leads to their proliferation, before reaching an equilibrium. This leads me to the final general proposition which I test in this paper,

Proposition 3: The effect of an increase in the number of units tasked with the same function on tangible performance indicators will be increasing through time.

Administrative District Proliferation and Surveillance Capacity in Socialist Poland

The secret police of the Polish socialist dictatorship, known colloquially as the *Bezpieka*, was explicitly designed to follow the Soviet model.[11] Like its counterparts in the other communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe, it was a large, unified, socially and ideologically homogeneous institution under the control of the dominant Polish United Workers' Party (Kamiński, Persak, and Gieseke, 2009). It penetrated deep into Polish society, using a

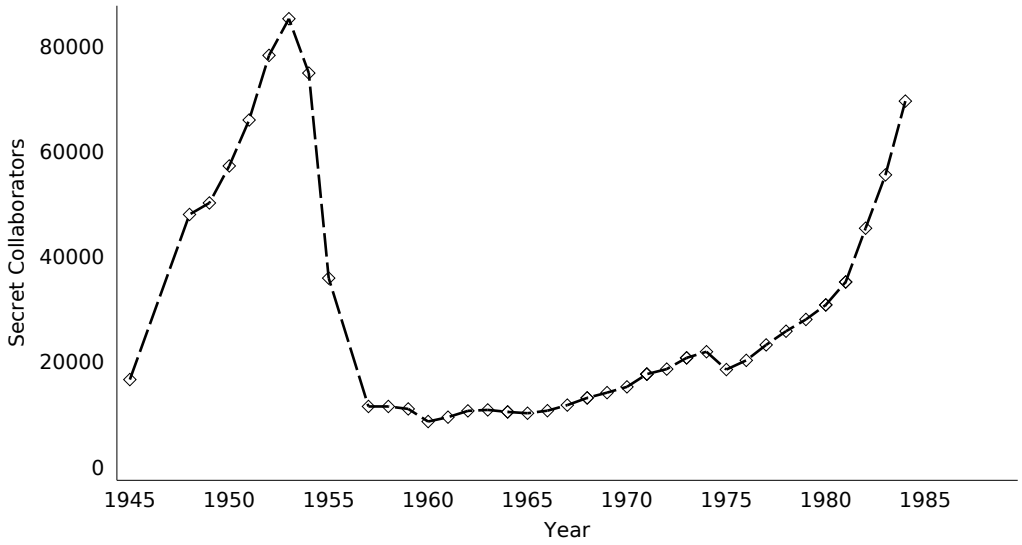
[11] The Polish coercive agency was known as the Department of Public Security, or *Resort Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego (RBP)* from July to December 1944; as the Ministry of Public Security (*Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, MBP*) from 1945 to 1954; as the Committee for Public Security (*Komitet do spraw Bezpieczeństwa Publiczenego, KBP*) from 1954 to 1956; and thereafter as the Security Service (*Służba Bezpieczeństwa, SB*) within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. See Davies (2005, 413-5) and Dudek and Paczkowski (2009).

large network of collaborators and informants, surveillance and postal censorship to detect opposition to the PZPR. It interrogated, tortured, imprisoned and killed these opponents at the behest of the communist regime. The history of the Bezpieka illustrates the capabilities and risks associated with authoritarian coercive institutions. It was tasked with preventing or subduing collective opposition like that which periodically rocked the Polish People's Republic between 1945 and 1989, with violent demonstrations and strikes by workers in Baltic coastal cities leading to the fall of party leader Władysław Gomułka in 1970, for example (Ekiert, 1997). It was also expected to detect and repress rival elites, as it did by establishing a Special Bureau for intra-party repression, purging the PZPR membership and conducting humiliating show trials against leading communists and generals in the early 1950s (Foitzik, 1992; Kersten, 1999). However, individuals within the Bezpieka itself also periodically posed a threat to regime stability. For example, Mieczysław Moczar was Polish Minister of the Interior in charge of the security service from 1964-68. He used his power over the agency and allies in former partisan groups to build an independent power base in the PZPR, becoming a member of the Politburo and mounting an unsuccessful attempt for the party leadership in 1968.[12]

A large network of secret informants and collaborators was an essential component of the Polish Bezpieka. These individuals provided information and assistance to the security services. However, they also served to deter opposition, as "a tool of terror ... producing an aura of fear" among the population (Dudek and Paczkowski, 2009, 304). The Bezpieka targeted collaborator recruitment at leaders in industry, the church, press, schools or universities. Recruitment was often the result of blackmail or intimidation, but individuals' personal convictions and desire to help the state security apparatus played a non-trivial role. War-damaged areas and cities with a history of anticommunist political activity had significantly denser networks than more rural areas in the east (Dudek and Paczkowski, 2009,

[12] Bromke (1969, 121-3), Davies (2005, 441-3), Dudek and Paczkowski (2009, 274).

Figure 1: Aggregate Secret Collaborator Numbers in Poland, 1950-1984



307-313). However, the greatest variation in the number of secret collaborators employed by the Polish state security agency occurred not across space but through time, as I show in Figure 1. This can be divided into three main phases.[13] First, the phase of Stalinist repression between 1945 and the Soviet dictator's death in 1953, when the PPR was governed by Bolesław Bierut, and the coercive agency and number of collaborators grew very quickly. The size of the collaborator network grew at a rate of between 5 and 19 percent per year during this period. Second, the phase of post-Stalinist rule under party leaders Władysław Gomułka and Edward Gierek. During this period, the state security apparatus lost authority and its collaborator network shrank dramatically from its Stalinist heights, before growing at an average rate of only 5% per annum between 1957 and 1979. The administrative district reform of 1975 saw the national collaborator network decline by around 3,500, or 15%. Finally, under the government of General Wojciech Jaruzelski and in the face of growing opposition from the Solidarity movement, the state security apparatus grew its collaborator network swiftly, at a rate of between 14 and 15 percent per annum from 1981-1984. These

[13] See Paczkowski (1999), Dudek and Paczkowski (2009) and Kemp-Welch (2008).

long-run macrodynamics of the secret collaborator network in Poland are best explained by dynamics in national politics, not in differences across regions or intra-agency reform.

Within the Polish security apparatus, and its equivalent agencies across communist East and Central Europe, duplication of units with similar responsibilities was rare. The unified structure of secret police agencies following the Soviet model did not include more than one institution responsible for domestic repression and counter-espionage.[14] As I show for selected units of the Polish apparatus in Figure 2, there was a clear division of labor within the Bezpieka, with very little overlap of responsibilities across units. Secret collaborators were predominantly concentrated in Directorates II-IV, those units tasked with counter-espionage, the protection of the state and the economy, and repressing opposition within the Catholic church. This organization and division of labor in the security apparatus at the center, in Warsaw, was duplicated at the local level (Dudek and Paczkowski, 2009, 263-279). There were, therefore, sections responsible for surveillance, counter-espionage, and all other operational activities in the Bezpieka office of every regional capital across the country. These officers were subordinated to a regional chief and his deputy, but each operational unit followed the same policy directives from their equivalent at the center. This makes sources of variation in the internal structures of the agency across space very rare.

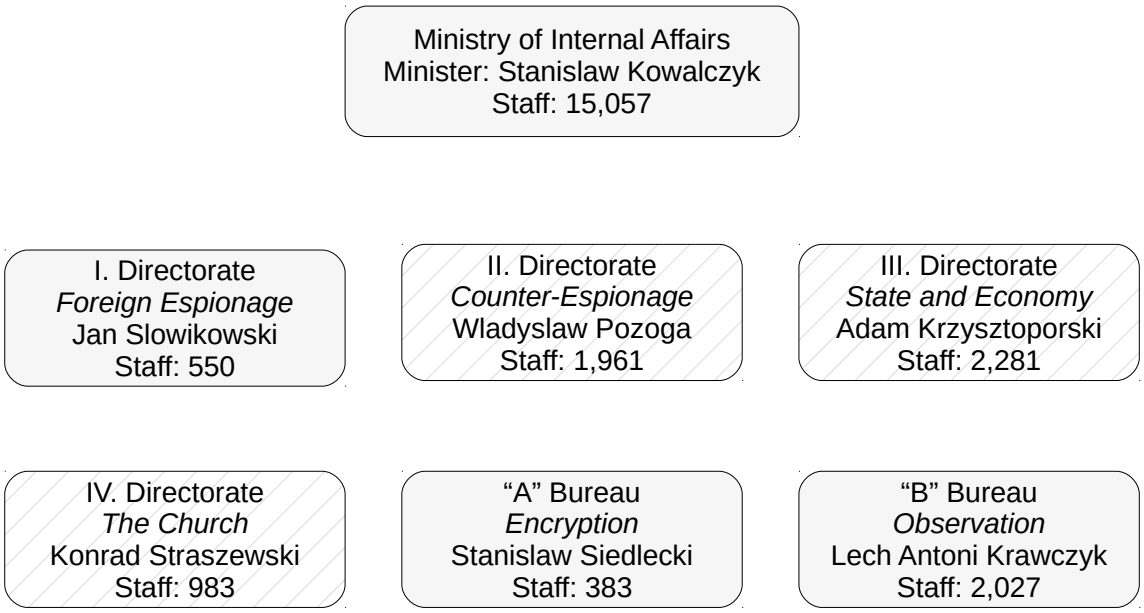
To test the effects of unit proliferation on the surveillance capacity of the Polish coercive institution, I exploit variation in the number of regional offices of the secret police caused by an administrative district reform. In 1975, the Polish government changed the territorial divisions of the country.[15] The three-tier division of 17 districts or voivodships (*województwa*), over 300 *powiaty* and over 4,000 communes (*gromady*) was abolished.[16] It was replaced with

[14] (Kamiński, Persak, and Gieseke, 2009). The one notable exception is Romania after 1965 (Deletant, 2009). The armies of the region also had military intelligence units, but their role in domestic repression and counter-espionage was very limited.

[15] The effective date of the reform was June 1, 1975 (Letowski, 1976, 65).

[16] To prevent confusion, I refer to the pre-reform viovodships as districts or voivodships in the rest of the paper.

Figure 2: Selected Units, Security Service (SB), Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs (MSW), 1975



Units containing significant numbers of secret collaborators are shown with light gray cross-hatching.
Source: Dudek and Paczkowski (2009), Piotrowski (2008, 19, 35-42).

a two-tier administrative structure of 49 smaller voivodships and around 2,500 communes (*gmina*) (Gorzelak, 1992, 481). This reform affected the entire state apparatus including local government and justice, economic planning and management, and the operation of social and youth organizations (Letowski, 1976, 66-7). Importantly, this reform was not directed at the secret police and was not intended to manipulate the organization of the Bezpieka to target the growth of its informant network. Instead, it aimed to disempower regional political elites within the ruling party by dividing the relatively large provincial administrations into much smaller units, thereby increasing the relative power of central party leaders.[17] In fact, some scholars correctly point out that the reform had the unintended effect of creat-

[17] See, for example, Gorzelak (1992, 481), Yoder (2007, 436).

ing administrative chaos, including within the Bezpieka, and caused the agency's informant networks to temporarily contract (Surazska et al., 1996, 442-4).

The proliferation of voivodships in 1975 was associated with a simultaneous reorganization of the state security service within the Ministry of the Interior and a proliferation of regional security commandants, as administrations were established in each new voivodship (Piotrowski, 2006, 2008). Secret collaborator numbers were formally registered at the local level and carefully tracked, either annually or quarterly, by the central office of the institution in Warsaw (Dudek and Paczkowski, 2009; Ruzikowski, 2003). They were a tangible, objective and quantifiable indicator of unit performance within the repressive bureaucracy. Because the 49 smaller voivodships were (imperfectly) nested within their 17 larger predecessors, I match data on the number of commandants and secret collaborators in post-reform voivodships to the pre-1975 districts. This allows me to estimate the effect of a change in the number of regional security organizations and commandants on the growth of the local secret collaborator network while holding the geographic area and population under surveillance constant. Following the general propositions I outline above, I predict that increases in the number of regional units of the secret police tasked with surveillance and repression within a geographic area will be associated with increases in the number of collaborators registered within that area,

Hypothesis 1: Districts which were split through the 1975 administrative reform saw faster growth in the density of their secret collaborator network after the reform.

Hypothesis 2: This effect will be increasing in the magnitude of the increase in the number of administrative units within the district.

Hypothesis 3: The effect of a district split on the growth of the secret collaborator network will be increasing through time.

Research Design

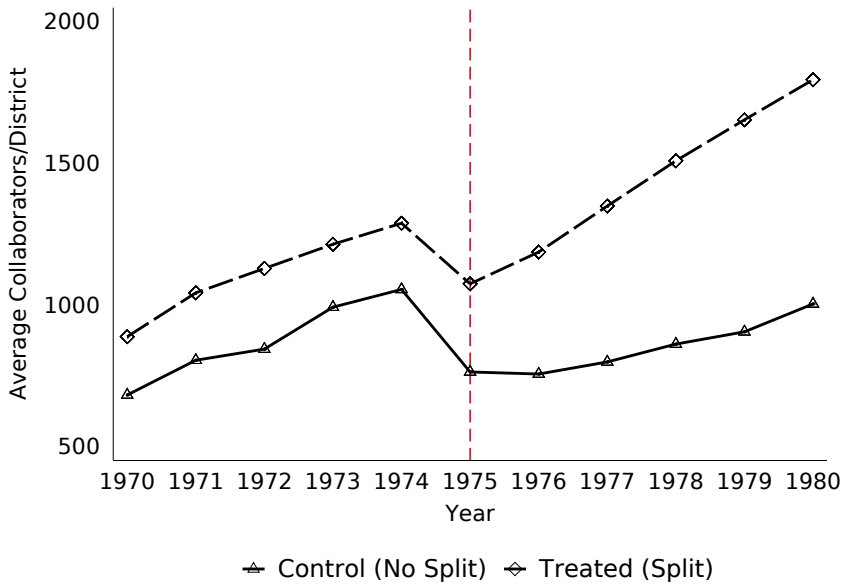
I implement a difference-in-differences research design which models the response of secret collaborator numbers to the division of a voivodship into two or more smaller units with independent secret police administrations. Although some studies have explored the logic of administrative district proliferation under authoritarianism (Grossman and Lewis, 2014) and its effects on the provision of public goods (Grossman, Pierskalla, and Dean, 2017), its consequences for repression have not been analyzed in previous work.

The main assumption which must be met under this approach is that the trends in collaborator numbers across the two groups of voivodships are parallel before the administrative reform. In Figure 3, I show the trends in the average number of collaborators from 1970-1980 for both the voivodships which were split, and those which were not.[18] In both sets of voivodships, average numbers of collaborators were increasing at a very similar rate before the 1975 reform. The number of collaborators grew at an average of 7.4% per annum between 1960 and 1974 in unreformed districts, and 7.6% in reformed areas. There were fewer collaborators in those areas which were not split, which can be attributed to these voivodships' smaller average size. Both sets of districts experienced a sudden decline in collaborator numbers in the year the administrative reform was implemented, and this decline appears to have been somewhat more severe in the untreated areas. However, more striking is the divergence in the trends of average collaborator numbers after the 1975 reform. The treated, or split, areas' collaborator networks grew at 11% per annum between 1975 and 1980, almost double the 5.7% rate observed in those voivodships which were not divided into multiple administrative units with independent secret police administrators.

To estimate the difference in average growth rates in collaborators across the two groups

[18] In Figure 6 in the Appendix I present an identical graph, distinguishing by the magnitude of the voivodship split. Here, the parallel trends assumption also holds, and collaborator numbers increase at a faster rate after the 1975 reform for those areas which were split into more administrative units.

Figure 3: Trends in Secret Collaborator Networks by District Split, 1970-1980



Data: Ruzikowski (2003, 128-129).

of voivodships, I use the following difference-in-differences linear panel regression,

$$\begin{aligned} Collaborators_{i,t} = \beta_1 + \beta_2 DistrictSplit_i + \beta_3 Reform_t \\ + \beta_4 DistrictSplit_i \times Reform_t \\ + \beta_5 Unrest_i + \beta_6 PostUnrest_t \\ + \beta_7 Unrest_i \times PostUnrest_t \\ + \gamma_t + \upsilon_i + \epsilon_i, \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where $y_{i,t}$ is the number of secret collaborators in voivodship i in year t, *District Split* indicates whether the pre-reform voivodship was divided through the reform, $Reform$ is a binary variable which is coded one for all voivodships after 1974, $Unrest$ is a binary indicator of mass opposition to the PZPR regime during the strike wave of June 1976, $PostUnrest$ is a binary indicator coded as one from 1976, γ_t is a year fixed effect, υ_i is a voivodship fixed

effect and ϵ_i is an error term which is clustered by voivodship.

In these models, the estimate of the effect of an increase in the number of regional secret police commandants on the number of informants in a voivodship is the coefficient β_4 on the interaction between *District Split* and the $Reform$ indicator. As Figure 3 suggests, the effect of the 1975 reform on local collaborator networks appears to have varied, and increased, over time. Therefore, in a second set of models I interact the *District Split* variable with a series of dummy variables capturing the number of years since the reform, to allow its effects to vary through time. Further, because the exact nature of the reform varied across voivodships, in some models *District Split* is a binary indicator of any division, while in others it captures the *Split Magnitude*, or the increase in the number of local secret police administrations compared to the pre-reform status quo.

I restrict all my analyses to the period between the conclusion of Stalinist repression in 1956 and the declaration of martial law in 1981. This was a period of relative stability within the Polish security apparatus, and the period surrounding the administrative district reform in 1975 did not include a major shift in the party leadership, its repressive policies or the development of the collaborator network at the national level. In fact, the collaborator network in the mid-1970s is best characterized as growing steadily at a rate of around ten percent per year, an equilibrium which was only briefly punctuated by the administrative district reform in 1975 before returning to its pre-reform trend.

Data

To carry out my analysis and to construct the *District Split* variable, I need first to match post-reform voivodships to the territory of pre-reform administrative districts. I do so using maps by Martí-Henneberg (2005) shown in Figure 8 in the Appendix. This shows the pre-reform voivodships in color, with their boundaries as thin dotted lines and their municipal

centers as bold points. The post-reform administrative units' boundaries are shown as thick solid lines and their municipal centers are shown as smaller points. I match post-reform voivodships to pre-reform units by assigning the new regional municipal administrative centers to their respective pre-reform voivodships. For example, the post-reform voivodship of Elblag on the Baltic coast in northern Poland is matched to the pre-reform unit of Gdansk, because its municipal center lay within the old borders of that voivodship, although part of its territory lay in post-reform Olstyn. This logic of matching follows the location of the new state security organizations, while also prioritizing the largest and most important urban areas, which became the municipal administrative centers hosting the organizations after the reform. It generates the coding presented in Table 1 in the Appendix.

In many cases, the matching of pre- and post-reform voivodships was unproblematic. For example, Zielona Gora on the country's western border was essentially divided in two after 1975, with only a very small overlap between the new unit of Gorzow Wielkopolski and the older voivodship of Szczecin. Similarly, the voivodship of Suwalki in the north-east of Poland was split into three administrative units post-reform, losing only a small rural area to Olsztyn. Three voivodships were not divided at all through the reform and their boundaries remained very similar, for example Opole in the south. In some cases, however, the matching of pre- and post-reform units based on the location of administrative centers was problematic, most notably in the south-east of the country. The new voivodship of Tarnobrzeg was created from almost equal shares of three pre-reform units' territory, and the new unit of Bielsko-Biala was created from equal shares of the Krakow and Katowice voivodships. Because I have less confidence that matching the administrative centers of these areas to their pre-reform voivodships accurately matches the pre-reform and post-reform populations under surveillance, I exclude four south-eastern pre-1975 voivodships Katowice, Kielce, Krakow and Rzeszow from all my analyses.[19]

[19] But I will also present results of my analyses including these voivodships, for completeness.

The 1975 administrative reform affected all but three voivodships, according to my coding. The binary *District Split* variable therefore takes a value of one for all areas except Olsztyn on the Baltic coast, Opole in the south, and Szczecin on the north-western border. These are the control cases for my analysis, and contribute 66 (20%) of the maximum 336 observations included in my models. Importantly, these districts are distributed widely across the country and diverged significantly in their degree of urbanization and the presence of opposition to the regime. Olsztyn, for example, is a very rural area and was not a major site of opposition to the government while Opole was more densely populated and Szczecin was the location of a major shipyard which staged a strike during the nationwide unrest of June 25, 1976 (Bernhard, 1987, 386). The treatment of administrative district proliferation therefore is not confined to more urban, threatening areas where we would expect to observe significantly more state security collaborators.

The binary *District Split* variable obscures significant variation in the number of new administrative units created in the pre-1975 voivodships. The *Split Magnitude* variable captures the increase in the number of regional state security organizations created through the administrative district reform. Before the reform, the districts of Łodz and Warsaw included both municipal and rural divisions, so had two state security organizations, while all other voivodships had only one. The increase in the number of state security offices in each voivodship in 1975 ranged from zero in the three cases described above to four in Poznań. Four voivodships saw an increase of two offices, while increases of one and three were both seen in four cases. There is therefore a relatively equal distribution of observations across the five categories of the *Split Magnitude* variable.

The dependent variable in all my analyses, *Collaborators*, is the number of secret collaborators registered with the Security Service of the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs in each voivodship, collected from Ruzikowski (2003). These data are based on internal reports which have been made available to researchers in the archives of the former secret police

agency in Warsaw. They are summaries of the numbers of private citizens providing information and assistance to the state security apparatus in domestic surveillance and repression. They exclude those employed in foreign and military intelligence or counter-intelligence, professionals used in surveillance operations, and individuals working within the state security bureaucracy, for example in the passport or censorship office. Secret collaborators fulfilled an important role in the operations of the state security agency of the Polish People's Republic. Every secret collaborator signed an official agreement with the agency, and was assigned a pseudonym and registration number for internal use. The most common form of collaborator was an *informant*, who provided information on the identity and activities of actors hostile to the regime. However, collaborators also included *residents*, individuals trusted to run their own network of informants, and *agents* who not only provided information but infiltrated, participated in, and cultivated contacts to anti-regime groups.

To create the dependent variable *Collaborators*, I merged Ruzikowski's (2003) data on the number of collaborators per voivodship following the coding scheme laid out in Table 1. All collaborators registered with a post-reform voivodship state security office are therefore assigned to the pre-reform voivodship within which that office was located. In this way, I create a balanced voivodship-year panel dataset from 1950-1984, where the units of analysis are pre-reform voivodships. As I show in the left-hand panel of Figure 7 in the Appendix, the *Collaborators* variable is right-skewed. It ranges from 74 to 2,752, has a mean of 844 and a standard deviation of 429. In the right-hand panel of Figure 7, I show that the number of collaborators in an area is positively correlated ($r = 0.57$) with the population of the voivodship during the period under analysis.

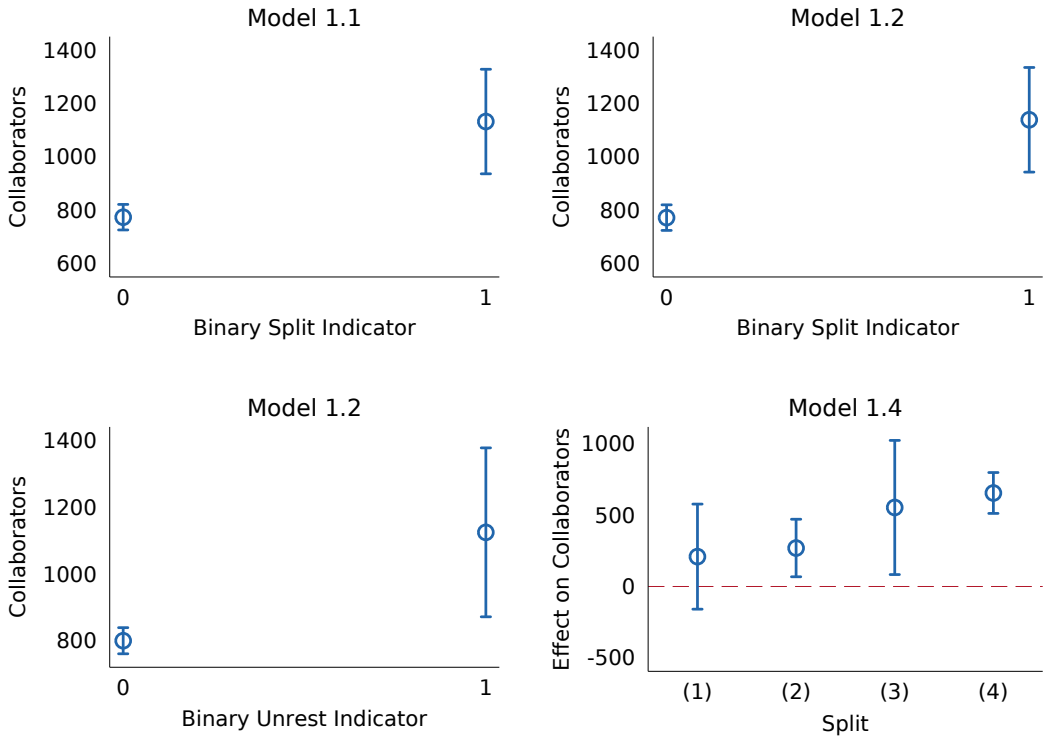
To test the competing effects of threats to the PZPR on the development of the Bezpieka's secret collaborator network, I created a binary variable *Unrest 1976* which is coded as one if a pre-reform voivodship experienced a strike or more violent form of social unrest during the wave of mass anti-regime contention in June 1976. I collected this data from the accounts

in Blazynski (1979) and Bernhard (1987). The uprising was a response to announced food price increases and most intense at the Ursus tractor works outside Warsaw and the General Walter weapons factory in the city of Radom in the Kielce district. However, it spread to generate strikes in Gdansk and numerous other centers across the country. The *Unrest 1976* variable is coded as one for eleven districts and zero for six.

Results

I begin my analysis by testing *Hypothesis 1*, that districts which were split through the 1975 administrative reform saw faster growth in the density of their secret collaborator network after the reform. I estimate two difference-in-differences regressions taking *Collaborators* as the dependent variable, and regressing it on the most simple, binary indicator of *District Split*, which takes a value of one if a voivodship was divided by the 1975 reform, and its interaction with an indicator for the period after the 1975 *Reform*. I present these results as Models 1.1-1.2 in Table 2 and in Figure 4. In Model 1.1, which includes only year and voivodship fixed effects as controls, the effect of the 1975 reform on the size of the collaborator network in divided voivodships is positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.004$). As I show in the upper-left panel of Figure 4, divided voivodships had 359 more secret collaborators than undivided areas post-reform, on average. This is a substantively large effect, as the average voivodship had only 1,286 collaborator in the post-reform period. The increase associated with the reform is more than half of one standard deviation of the *Collaborators* variable. In Model 1.2, I also control for unrest by including the *Unrest 1976* variable and its interaction with an indicator for the post-1976 period. As I show in the upper-right panel of Figure 4, the magnitude of the effect of the binary *District Split* indicator on collaborator networks is slightly larger, at 367 versus 359 in Model 1.1, and it remains statistically significant ($p < 0.003$).

Figure 4: Effects of Collaborator Models, Table 2



Mass opposition to the regime, as measured by the *Unrest 1976* variable, is also positively associated with growth in the secret collaborator network from 1976. The coefficient on the interaction between these two terms is significant at the $p < 0.029$ level. Changes in the density of the Polish secret collaborator network associated with the 1975 bureaucratic reform are very similar in size to, or even slightly larger than, those associated with a district's experience of mass opposition to the regime in the form of strikes or riots in June 1976. As I show in the lower-left panel of Figure 4, the substantive size of the effect associated with the *Unrest 1976* variable is around ten percent smaller than that associated with the *District Split*, at 324 versus 367, respectively.

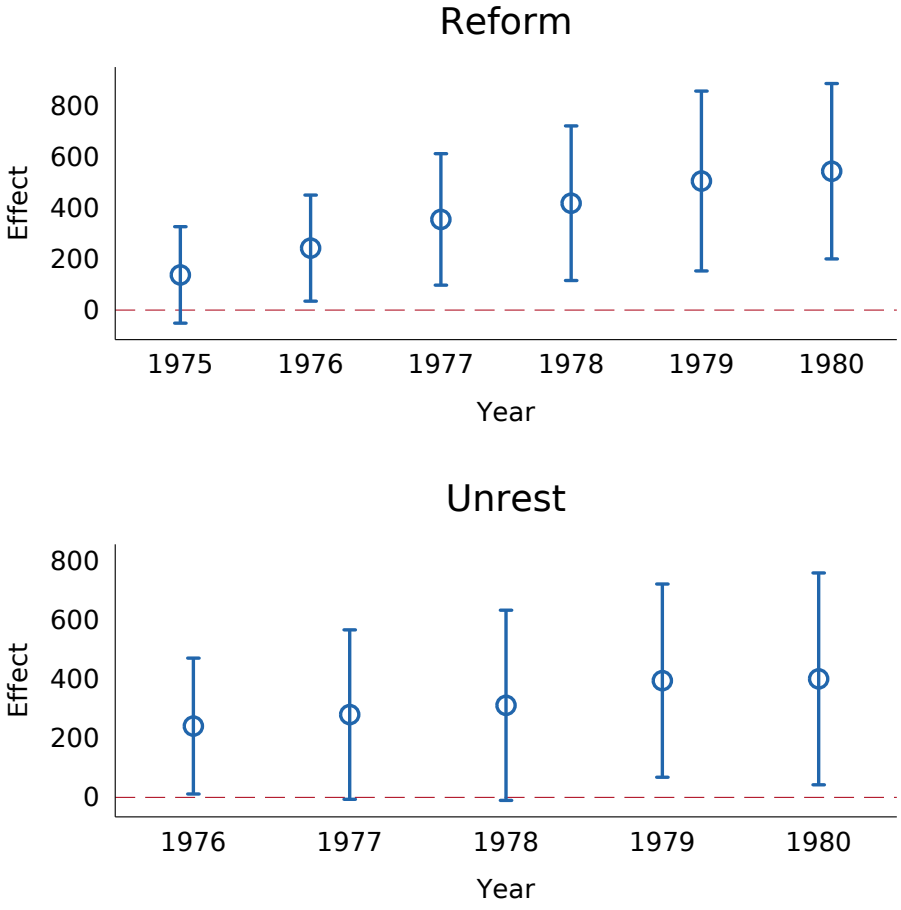
In the second step of my analysis, I test *Hypothesis 2*, that the effect of the administrative district reform will be increasing in the number of new administrative units created within

a given district. I allow for the effects of the 1975 reform to vary by the way that the administrative restructuring affected each area. Some voivodships saw the creation of no more state security offices through the reform, some saw one or two more offices created while others hosted up to four more voivodship-level secret police administrations after 1975. In Models 1.3-1.4 in Table 2, I interact the *Reform* variable with a series of dummy variables capturing the *Split Magnitude*, or the increase in the number of state security offices caused by the 1975 administrative reform. I capture the reform as an ordinal variable, taking no change as the base category and testing differences across the range from *Split (1)* indicating an increase of one office through *Split (4)* indicating four more offices in a voivodship post-1975. As above, Model 1.3 includes only the indicators of reform, while Model 1.4 also controls for unrest in 1976. The results of Model 1.3 indicate that the effect of the administrative district reform on the number of collaborators in a district is positive and significant when the increase in state security administrations is 2 or more. The size of the effect is monotonically increasing as the magnitude of the reform increases. The addition of one secret police administration in a district increases the number of collaborators by 209, on average ($p < 0.28$); two additional administrations increased the number of collaborators by 231 ($p < 0.12$); three additional administrations were associated with an increase of 554 collaborators ($p < 0.02$); and four additional administrations caused an increase of 732 ($p < 0.001$). Results of Model 1.4, which I graph in the lower-right panel of Figure 4, are similar to those of Model 1.3. The effects of reform are slightly smaller overall, but still monotonically increasing in the magnitude of the reform and reach greater levels of statistical significance. The reform's effects are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level for the addition of two or more administrations, rather than for three or more as in Model 1.3.

In Model 1.4, the *Unrest 1976* variable is associated with slightly smaller increases in the number of collaborators to Model 1.2 (277 versus 324). This effect remains statistically

significant ($p < 0.02$), but is much smaller in magnitude than the increases in collaborators associated with more significant reform. The addition of three secret police administrations is associated with an increase in the collaborator network twice the size (554) as the experience of unrest in 1976, and the addition of four secret police administrations is associated with a still larger effect (655). Here, when modeling the effects of the administrative district proliferation using an ordinal variable, I find that the effects of the intra-agency reform on surveillance capacity are in fact larger than those of mass opposition to the regime.

Figure 5: Effects of District Reform and 1976 Unrest on Collaborator Numbers Through Time



In the final step of my analysis, I test *Hypothesis 3*, that the effect of the *District Split*

variable on the collaborator network will be increasing through time. To allow the effects of the administrative reform on collaborator networks to vary through time, I estimate models which interact the binary *Distict Split* indicator with a series of dummy variables for the years 1975-1980. I report the results of these models as Model 1.5-1.6 in Table 2. Model 1.5 includes only *District Split* and its interactions with the year dummies. Here, the magnitude of the effect of the binary reform indicator is monotonically increasing through time and is statistically significant from 1976. In 1975, reformed districts had 138 more collaborators, on average ($p < 0.15$), in 1976 the effect was 235 ($p < 0.02$), increasing to 346 in 1977 ($p < 0.005$), 409 in 1978 ($p < 0.004$), 493 in 1979 ($p < 0.002$) and 531 in 1980 ($p < 0.001$). I graph the results of Model 1.6, which includes the *Unrest 1976* indicator and its interactions with binary indicators for the years 1976-1980, in Figure 4. Here, the effects of the intra-agency reform on the density of the informant network are very similar in magnitude and statistical significance to those in Model 1.5. However, the model also allows comparison with the effects of mass unrest. These are initially larger and more statistically significant, with *Unrest 1976* associated with 241 more collaborators in a district in 1976 versus 138 more collaborators in a district in the year of the administrative reform. However, the effect of mass unrest remains relatively stable through time, increasing only by 66% to 401 by 1980. The statistical significance of the effect of mass unrest also never reaches levels above $p < 0.02$, in 1979, and in 1977-1978 is only significant at $p < 0.06$. The effects of the *District Split* variable, on the other hand, increase by almost 300%, from 138 to 543, between 1975 and 1980, and this latter effect is significant at the $p < 0.002$ level. These models therefore show that the effects of the administrative reform on the number of secret collaborators in a district had a monotonically increasing, larger cumulative effect than the 1976 mass unrest, which caused an immediate but stable increase in district collaborators.

Conclusion

In this paper, I draw attention to intra-agency reforms which change the incentives and constraints facing individual bureaucrats within coercive institutions. I argue that these reforms, which are relatively frequent but difficult to observe, have significant effects on the nature of repression under authoritarian regimes. By using an exogenous source of variation in the number of units responsible for domestic surveillance and repression in Poland, I was able to show that this type of intra-agency reform was associated with large and statistically significant changes in the surveillance capacity of the state security agency across space and time. Areas which were divided by the 1975 administrative district reform saw faster growth in their secret collaborator networks, and this effect persisted through time into the 1980s. The effects of the reform were large, and larger than the effects of a wave of mass unrest which occurred in June 1976. I interpret these results as strong evidence of the importance of intra-agency reforms to the activities and capabilities of coercive institutions.

It is interesting to speculate on the indirect consequences of the 1975 administrative district reform for the stability of the Polish communist regime. By causing growth in the Bezpieka's informant network, the reform could inadvertently have contributed to greater coercive capacity and prolonged communist rule in the country. However, this is obviously not the case. Within fifteen years of the administrative changes, the Polish regime was forced to negotiate with Solidarity despite its best attempts to infiltrate and subvert the opposition movement. The growth of the Polish Bezpieka in the 1970s started from a low base, as the size of the agency in terms of staff and collaborators was far lower than in the neighboring German Democratic Republic, for example. And after 1976, when the country was rocked by nationwide strikes and protests against low living standards, opposition began to crystallize around committees of dockworkers which were to grow into the Solidarity movement. Growth in the Polish collaborator network, though significant after 1975, was too little, too late to

save the communist government.

Although it does not significantly change our understanding of the collapse of the PZPR regime in Poland, the above analysis can inform our understanding of coercive institutions and authoritarian politics in a range of different settings. If intra-agency reforms can have large effects on an outcome as important as the coercive capacity of a communist, single-party regime, they can be expected to have significant effects on the activities and outputs of a wide range of other bureaucracies under authoritarian governments. These sorts of dynamics should be of interest to scholars of autocracy and democratization, because bureaucratic outputs from revenue through propaganda to repression have effects on the stability of authoritarian regimes. However, intra-agency reforms pose thorny problems for data collection and research design. I suggest that studying the effects of exogenous shocks to authoritarian bureaucracies is a promising strategy for analyzing intra-agency structures and reforms. Although it may be very difficult to directly observe the incentives and constraints facing individual bureaucrats within these agencies, the ways agency behavior changes in response to exogenous shocks can reveal much about how they operate.

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Appendix

Figure 6: Trends in Secret Collaborator Networks by Split Magnitude, 1970-1980

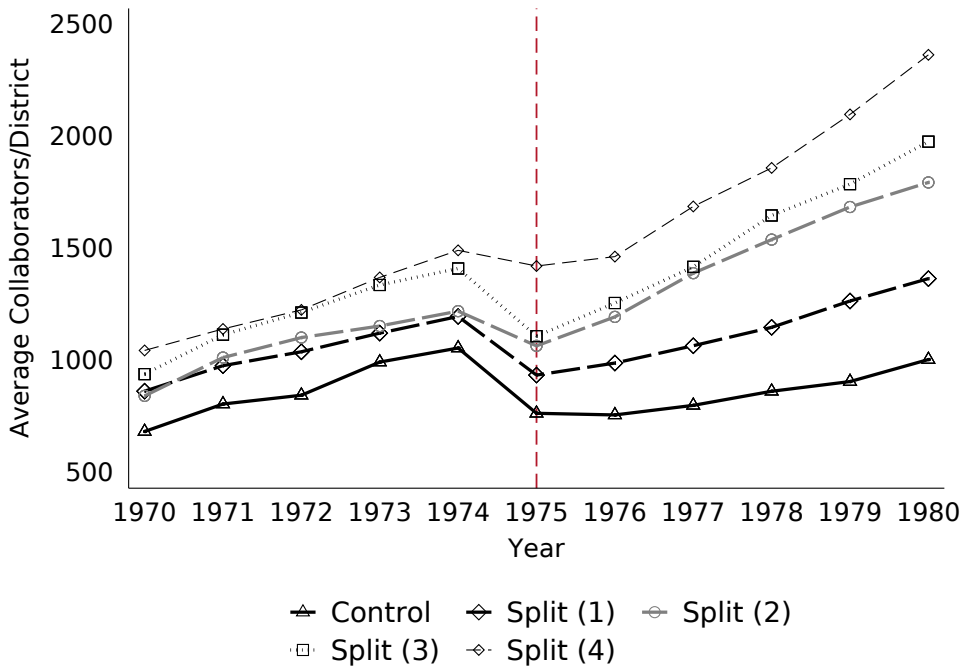

Figure 7: Collaborator Data, by Pre-Reform Voivodship

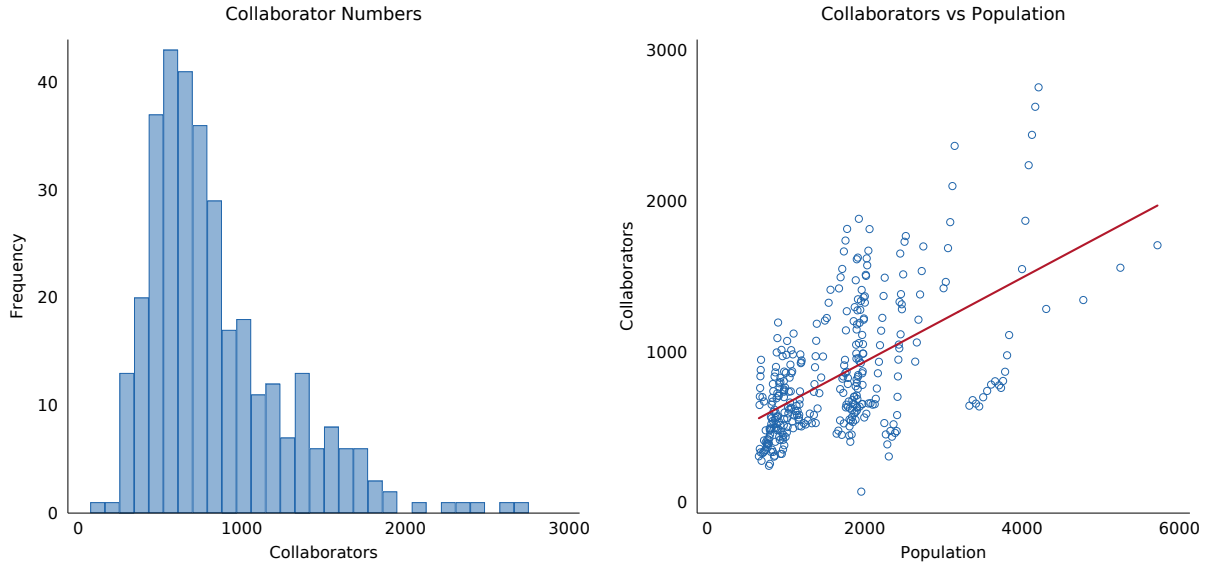

Table 1: Matching Polish Voivodeships (*Województwo*) Pre-1975 and Post-1975

Pre-1975	Post-1975	Split	Magnitude	Problem
Bialystok	Bialystok, Suwalki, Lomza	Yes	2	No
Bydgoszcz	Bydgoszcz, Torun, Wloclawek	Yes	2	No
Gdansk	Gdansk, Elblag	Yes	1	No
Koszalin	Koszalin, Slupsk	Yes	1	No
Lublin	Lublin, Chelm, Biala Podlaska, Zamosc	Yes	3	No
Lodz, Lodz (Rural)	Lodz, Skierniewice, Sieradz, Piotrkow Tryb	Yes	2	No
Olsztyn	Olsztyn	No	0	No
Opole	Opole	No	0	No
Poznan	Poznan, Konin, Leszno, Kalisz, Pila	Yes	4	No
Szczecin	Szczecin	No	0	No
Warsaw, Warsaw (Rural)	Warsaw, Ostroleka, Ciechanow, Plock, Siedlce	Yes	3	No
Wroclaw	Wroclaw, Jelenia Gora, Legnica, Walbrzych	Yes	3	No
Zielona Gora	Zielona Gora, Gorzow Wlkp	Yes	1	No
Katowice	Katowice, Czestochowa, Bielsko-Biala	Yes	2	Yes
Kielce	Kielce, Radom	Yes	1	Yes
Krakow	Krakow, Tarnow, Nowy Sacz	Yes	2	Yes
Rzeszow	Rzeszow, Krosno, Przemysl, Tarnobrzeg	Yes	3	Yes

Figure 8: Map of Polish Voivodships Pre- and Post-1975 Reform

Table 2: Model Results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Split	-63.5*	173.7***			-63.5*	173.7***
	(31.1)	(31.1)			(31.4)	(31.7)
Post-Reform	5.2	-550.5***	5.2	-549.5***		
	(72.5)	(89.3)	(72.9)	(87.6)		
Reform*Split	358.6**	366.8**				
	(124.4)	(124.5)				
Split (1)			-231.0***	83.4		
			(47.9)	(47.0)		
Split (2)			-31.6	273.2***		
			(36.7)	(25.7)		
Split (3)			127.0*	127.0*		
			(61.2)	(59.9)		
Split (4)			183.6***	202.8***		
			(12.1)	(18.3)		
Reform*(1)			209.2	209.2		
			(191.7)	(187.8)		
Reform*(2)			231.1	269.5**		
			(147.0)	(102.8)		
Reform*(3)			553.5*	553.5*		
			(245.0)	(239.8)		
Reform*(4)			732.1***	655.1***		
			(48.5)	(73.1)		
Split*1975					137.5	137.5
					(95.5)	(96.3)
Split*1976					235.1*	242.4*
					(104.0)	(105.9)
Split*1977					346.2**	354.7**
					(122.6)	(131.2)
Split*1978					408.6**	418.1**
					(140.0)	(154.3)
Split*1979					493.0**	504.9**
					(159.3)	(179.5)
Split*1980					531.1**	543.2**
					(164.0)	(175.1)
Unrest 1976		171.6***		256.7***		171.4***
		(31.0)		(24.2)		(31.9)
Post 1976		340.7***		371.2***		
		(97.9)		(89.2)		
Unrest*Post 1976		324.3*		277.0*		
		(148.9)		(116.1)		
Unrest*1976						241.2*
						(117.2)
Unrest*1977						280.0
						(146.1)
Unrest*1978						311.4
						(164.0)
Unrest*1979						394.8*
						(166.7)
Unrest*1980						400.7*
						(182.7)
Observations	336	336	336	336	336	336

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$