Civil Society From Abroad: the Role of Foreign Assistance in the Democratization of Poland

by

Grzegorz Ekiert and **Jan Kubik**

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Grzegorz Ekiert is Professor of Government at Harvard University and Faculty Associate of the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies and Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University.
Jan Kubik is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, and Director of the Center for Russian, Central, and East European Studies, Rutgers University.

Contact:
Grzegorz Ekiert, Ekiert@fas.harvard.edu
Jan Kubik, Kubik@rci.rutgers.edu

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the role of civil society in democratization processes, drawing on East European, mostly Polish, experiences. It begins with a brief overview of the major types of definitions of civil society. Its bulk is devoted to a detailed analysis of the origins and functions of various sectors of civil society during the three phases of democratization: (a) state-socialism's disintegration; (b) transfer of power; and (c) consolidation of democracy. For each phase and each sector of civil society the impact of international linkages and foreign (external) resources is assessed. The essay closes with a set of generalizations on the relationships between various types of civil society on the one hand and the forms of the domestic-international interaction, on the other.

1. Introduction.[1]

For a long time, the prevailing modes of conceptualizing regime transformations underplayed the role and importance of external actors, influences, and linkages. "Domestic factors–O'Donnell and Schmitter asserted–play a predominant role in the transition" (1986:19). This statement reflects both the peculiarities of the early cases belonging to the third wave of democratization and the limitations of the analytical outlook predominant at that time. Only recently did students of regime transitions recognized the role of external factors and foreign influences in shaping democratization in Eastern Europe and other regions (Pridham 1995; Pridham, Herring, and Sanford, eds. 1997). Perhaps this is because such factors have become more pronounced in recent years. Schmitter and Karl, for example, noted that:

> unlike Southern Europe and Latin America where democratization did not substantially alter long-standing commercial relations or international alliances, the regime change in eastern Europe triggered a major collapse in intraregional trade and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. Into this vacuum moved an extraordinary variety of western advisors and promoters - binational and multilateral. To a far greater extent than elsewhere, these external actors have imposed political 'conditionality' upon the process of consolidation, linking specific rewards explicitly to the meeting of specific norms or even to the selection of specific institutions (1994:182).

The impact and importance of foreign actors and multilateral organizations on the policies of

[1]For insightful criticisms and helpful hints we are grateful to Nancy Bermeo, Tomek Grabowski, Martha Kubik, Gerhard Mangott, **Phil Nord, Richard Rose, Harald Waldrauch and an anonymous reviewer for this paper series.**

postcommunist governments is well established, documented, and studied; their influence on civil society, a more elusive dimension of postcommunist transformations, is less obvious and poorly understood. In this paper we will focus on the role external factors and foreign actors played in shaping the development of civil society in the aftermath of the "Leninist extinction" (Jowitt 1992). The set of analytical claims we develop is based on various sources of evidence and its status is still predominantly hypothetical. A more systematic empirical study will be necessary to verify our claims.

Analyzing the impact external actors have on developing civil societies in postcommunist countries presents interesting conceptual and empirical challenges. Conceptually, two issues stand out. First, civil society (we are referring here to works which focus explicitly on civil society as well as on social movements, secondary associations, and contentious politics) is usually analyzed within a purely domestic context. The nature of public spaces, the relationship between civil society and the state, and contentious politics have hitherto been understood and explained within the framework of domestic politics Additionally, the major conceptual tools of the social movement/contentious politics research, such as the concept of political opportunity structure, have emphasized the domestic dimension of contentious collective action. Also, civil society organizations and various groups challenging the political status quo were seen as enmeshed in a web of domestic relations and structures and responding to the domestic incentives and constraints. Only recently has the fashionable concept of globalization encouraged a much broader approach and growing appreciation of the role of external factors and actors. The rapidly growing literature on NGOs, "global civil society," and "transnational advocacy networks" (Meyer and Tarrow, eds. 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler 1998; Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald, forthcoming) exemplifies this trend to reassess collective struggles

within an international context of transnational contentious politics and transnational non-governmental organizing.

The second issue to which we will return shortly is the general vagueness and analytical confusion surrounding the concept of civil society, its application to empirical research, and its relevance to understanding the political developments in postcommunist Eastern Europe.

In this paper we will examine the role of civil society in democratization processes, drawing on East European, mostly Polish, experiences. We shall begin with a brief overview of the major types of definitions of civil society. Next, we will analyze the origins and functions of various sectors of civil society during the three phases of democratization in Poland: (a) state-socialism's disintegration; (b) transfer of power; and (c) consolidation of democracy. For each phase and each sector of civil society we will attempt to assess the impact of international linkages and foreign (external) resources. We will close with a set of generalizations on the relationships between various types of civil society on the one hand and the forms of the domestic-international interaction, on the other.

The two main points we are going to develop in this paper are simple. First, there has been a striking continuity between the pre- and post-1989 configurations and developments of civil society in the region (see also Vachudova and Snyder 1997). In countries where civil societies were relatively strong before state socialism’s collapse, they have remained strong and have come to play a significant role in democratic consolidation. Second, a variety of external actors have been intimately involved in the development and functioning of civil society organizations both before and after 1989. The depth and extent of this external involvement shaped the evolution of civil societies in postcommunist countries.

2. Understanding civil society.

We believe there are three basic types of definitions of civil society; one normative and two analytical:

1.Civil society as a normative idea. The concept of "civil society" is frequently used in discussions on a historically evolved and/or normatively (un)desired arrangement of social relationships in a modern Western society. It is one of the major conceptual tools Western philosophers and social thinkers employ to analyze the uniqueness of their own civilization (Seligman 1992, Tester 1992, Colas 1997). The concept also proved to have a tremendous emotional and intellectual appeal to the people living under authoritarian and (post)totalitarian regimes, which programmatically attempted to destroy or limit the sphere of independent associations (Arato 1981, 1981-2, 1982; Kideckel 1994:137-143; Hall 1995:2-3; Keane 1988b).

2.Civil society as a public space, institutionally protected from the state's arbitrary encroachment, within which individuals can freely form their associations. This understanding of civil society is perhaps most eloquently developed by Jurgen Habermas, who defines a public sphere as "a sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion" (in Eley 1992:290). Eley writes about: "the structured setting where cultural and ideological contest or negotiation among a variety of publics takes place."[2] "Civil society" and "public

[2]Nancy Frazer (1992) brings out an important issue of the multiplicity of public spaces in the context of her discussion on women's exclusion from many of them. Her analysis helps in developing a more nuanced understanding of both public spaces and civil society, which, should be reconceptualized

sphere" are different concepts and belong of course to different discourses, yet the phenomena denoted by them share many common attributes. It is useful to re-define civil society as a public space in order to emphasize two of their common features: public accountability and the rule of law.[3]

3.Civil society as a set of organized groups/associations, whose members deliberate or act collectively to accomplish common goals.[4] Additionally, those organizations share several characteristics, usually including the following:

(1) civil society's groups and/or associations are secondary, not primary (e.g., family). Moreover, their members are able to dissociate themselves from influences exerted by their primary (e.g., familial) associations (Gellner's modular man).

(2) they are open and inclusive and their activities are transparent (not hidden from public scrutiny; they are publicly accountable);

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as the multiplicity of civil societies. We move in this direction by emphasizing a multi-sectoral nature of civil society and specific qualities of its constituent parts.

[3]See Habermas 1974:49 and the discussion of these concepts in Calhoun, ed., 1992.

[4]For a similar distinction between "space" and "mode of organizing secondary groups" see Weigle and Butterfield's conceptualization (1992).

(3) they are tolerant and moderate in their claims and methods. They are willing to protect the independent public space and tend to be anti-radical, reformist, moderate;[5]

(4) they produce dense networks of relationship based on trust and reciprocity often referred to as social capital (Coleman 1988; Portes 1998; Putnam 1995).

[5]In Plattner's words: "A diverse and faction-ridden civil society thus is transformed into an ally of individual rights and popular government. But the latter clearly remain the key goals, while the former is simply a means of attaining them" (1995: 171-72).

For the purpose of empirical analysis, both analytical definitions of civil society, understanding it as a space and as a set of specific groups inhabiting this space, should be adopted. This allows to keep their mutual relationships sharply in focus and explore the modalities of civil society under various political regimes and in different social contexts. In democratic systems, the civil society space is institutionally established, stabilized, and guaranteed usually, though not necessarily, by legal (particularly constitutional) regulations, although the boundaries of this space are usually contested and fuzzy. The battle to create, enlarge, and protect such a space is carried out by organized groups constituting civil society in the second sense. It is however very important to remember that once such a space comes into existence it can be populated not only by its creators and protectors, but also by at least two other types of groups: enemies and free riders. The former use the institutional protections of civil society space to plot its destruction. Both communists and fascists employed this strategy during their ascent to power.[6] Some contemporary "fundamentalist" Islamic political movements seem to follow this strategy as well. They enjoy the protections of civil society space, but are not going to advocate any extension or strengthening of its boundaries or defend it against danger.

Under each political regime public space is constituted in a specific way and different types of groups are protected or repressed by the state. Under state socialist regimes the space was highly restricted and organized groups had very little autonomy. This repressiveness was, however, evolving

[6]See, for example, Allen 1984.

and it varied across time and space. During the post-totalitarian phase, state socialist regimes were more open and tolerant of some semi-autonomous and independent associations than in the Stalinist phase. Those organizations were, however, unprotected by the law and subject to the arbitrary interference of the authorities. We call this situation unistitutinalized autonomy. Consequently, three forms of associations can be identified under state socialist regimes: (1) pseudo-autonomous (e.g., official trade unions or professional associations); (2) semi-autonomous (e.g., some churches and religious organizations); and (3) illegally autonomous (e.g., dissident groups or black-market networks). Thus, our understanding of civil society allows us to find its peculiar forms even in the most inhospitable social and political conditions. We will call an assembly of such forms, existing in a given time and space, incomplete civil society. It should be contrasted with the type known from developed western democracies which is best described as legal transparent civil society.

3. Incomplete civil society under state-socialism.

Contrary to the prevailing opinion, state socialism did not totally annihilate citizens' self-organizing. Under this regime, severe restrictions were imposed on the public space which was to be inhabited only by state-sponsored associations. In several countries of Central Europe during certain periods, however, some forms of non-governmental organizing were possible and some islands of autonomy emerged. Thus incomplete civil society came into existence and established itself as a discernible albeit limited in its scope counterweight to the totalizing ambitions of the party-states. It is enough to mention Hungarian activism epitomized in the concept of "goulash communism" or Polish

underground society in the 1980s. We have been able to identify seven specific sectors of “imperfect” civil society in which societal self-organizing took place and some autonomy was wrestled from the party state. It is important for the purpose of this paper to emphasize that independent associations and networks in Central Europe developed extensive international contacts and linkages. In fact their existence and survival often depended on foreign support and assistance.

3.1. Pseudo-autonomous organizations: official associations.

One of the understudied legacies of state-socialism is the dense network of organizations and movements, created during the consolidation of communist regimes in order to colonize public space and extend the party-state's penetration into all segments of society. Among these state-run organizations were trade unions, professional associations, sport and leisure organizations, women and youth movements. They simulated the functions of organizations existing in democratic societies and performed vital political, ideological, and social tasks within the institutional design of the communist party-state. During the earlier period of communist rule especially, they were nothing more than communist "fronts" with mandatory membership. They were also part of a transnational networks of organizations within the Soviet bloc and maintained extensive international contacts.

During the final years of communist rule, some of these organizations (at least in certain countries) achieved considerable autonomy. The collapse of state socialist regimes in 1989 left them free and entirely responsible to fend for themselves. Some were significantly compromised by years of political servility and ideological rigidity while others enjoyed limited credibility due to their long-standing

tradition of promoting specific groups' interests. Thus, there were those that disappeared almost instantaneously (e.g., the Society for the Polish-Soviet Friendship) whereas others swiftly adapted to the new situation. In fact, those that did adapt had distinct advantages over the newly emerging organizations and movements: they controlled sometimes sizable resources accumulated over the years, had legally defined functions, monopolized certain services, and had cadres of bureaucrats, organizers and activists.[7]

The pseudo-autonomous sector was resource-rich. Its organizations could rely on the state's support; some of them could also count on the assistance of various international organizations controlled by the Soviets. Often they proved to be relatively efficient organizational tools, allowing people to take care of some of their needs. They certainly did not champion the ideals usually associated with civil society, such as self-reliance and independence from the state and they usually discouraged people from seeking external assistance, unless it was officially sanctioned by the authorities.

32.2. Networks anchored in informal economic activities.

[7]On this point see also Smolar 1995:35.

As political economists (particularly Kornai 1992 and Hewett 1988) demonstrated, state-socialism's own institutional design made its economic system inefficient in the long run, hostile to innovation, and tremendously wasteful. In order to meet its own plan targets, the official system needed informal institutional crutches, a set of supplementary and complementary economic mechanisms that would make up for its increasingly crippling deficiencies. Such mechanisms emerged gradually, as many state employees who wanted also to improve their standard of living, developed alternative non-official strategies of economic behavior. These strategies, which eventually formed complex systems of shadow and second economies, not only allowed people to cope with chronic shortages, but were the main reason the sluggish socialist economy survived as long as it did.[8] As Ogrodzinski observed, the "unofficial" economy was both parasitic and symbiotic in relation to the official one (see also Hankiss 1990; Hewett 1988).

While engaging in these non-official strategies of economic behavior people created a complex network of mutual relationships, "the unplanned" (Wedel, ed. 1992) or "second" (Hankiss 1990) society. This unplanned society had many sectors, some of which were structured as patron-client hierarchies, with communist party officials frequently serving as "informal" patrons. But there existed also another pattern, more egalitarian and "democratic" *srodowisko* (milieu), where horizontal reciprocal

[8] "The shadow economy evolves from the enterprise directors' search for ways to meet their plan; it is the consequence of an effort to achieve the most important targets set in the formal system... In the second economy the motivation is to make money. Enterprises are simply making goods on the side, outside the planning system, which they sell for profit" (Hewett 1988:179).

exchanges were dominant.[9] Within their milieus people exchanged goods, services, and information.

There is a fair amount of controversy surrounding the two critical questions: to what degree these unofficial economic activities constituted (political) opposition to the official system and to what degree they contributed to the development of the civil society? They definitely emerged through spontaneous organizing, outside of the state's direct supervision, and formed a non-state self-organized system of networks and organizations. For some authors they did therefore form a sector of the "distorted" civil society (Ogrodzinski 1991; 1995a; 1995b); "civil" for they were spontaneously created by individuals, yet "distorted" for they often were unofficial-public and did not enjoy full constitutional protections.

[9]Hankiss introduces here a distinction between the "informal, latent, and non-legitimate sphere ... characterized by client-patron relationships, oligarchic and nepotism mechanisms, corruption, informal bargaining between state agencies" and the "second society ... characterized by the slow re-emergence of social networks, the incipient regeneration of local communities, interest mediation through informal channels" (1990:107).

Informal economic networks were often based on intense rivalry and engendered a divisive cultural pattern of "amoral familism" (Tarkowska and Tarkowski 1991),[10] which was not conducive to the creation of pro-civic social capital (Levi 1996). Yet, despite such "shortcomings," by the very fact of their existence, informal milieus defied the rules of the (post)totalitarian system (whose ambition was to control most if not all human interactions) and thus should be construed as one of the elements of proto civil society.[11] In the second half of the 1980s, many enterprises of the "second economy" were legalized and thus began to function as elements of the non-political legal civil society.

Through their activities in the semi-or unofficial economic domain, many people acquired not only considerable capital, but also many organizational skills. Some of them developed extensive

[10]"Internal ties frequently degenerate because of the rivalry of consumers caused by economic shortages. Microstructures tend to compete with other microstructures, thus creating aggression, social pathology and all the features of an 'unfriendly society'" (1991:104).

[11]"Political authoritarianisms, even totalitarianisms, which tolerate an autonomous economy, thereby unwittingly also create a Civil Society, or at least the social potential for the emergence of Civil Society" (Gellner 1994:146).

international networks, often of criminal or clandestine nature, that proved to be a source of resources, much needed particularly during the times of crisis. It is difficult to determine to what degree such economic activities served only narrow interests of individuals or domestic groups (amoral familism) and to what degree they contributed to the development of wider social organizations and ties. It is however clear that some portion of the capital generated by these activities was used to support the clandestine networks of the organized opposition (for example in underground publishing), particularly in the 1980s. Also, some of the international economic linkages, established by private entrepreneurs and selectively authorized by the government, were used to transfer resources for the underground activities.

32.3. Anti-communist resistance and independent circles (milieus) of "talkative opposition."

Since the beginning of the communist rule (1944 in Poland), various segments of Polish society engaged in resistance against the new Soviet-type system (Ekiert 1997, Ekiert and Kubik 1999, Ch. 2). Occasionally they developed into armed clandestine organizations, which managed to survive longer periods of time. During the later years (the 1950s through the 1980s), the memory of armed resistance began to function as an ideology/mythology of many informal networks, milieus, and organizations, which taken together form a phenomenon of "talkative opposition," without which "there could not have been a movement of practical social activity" (Arkuszewski 1992:237). Discussions in these informal clandestine networks served as unofficial public fora where many ideas, later implemented by "open" dissident organizations, were forged. These groups also served to establish a network of connections which later facilitated organizing efforts of dissident groups. None of these social groupings can be properly categorized as belonging to a full-fledged civil society: they existed in the unofficial public

domain and the private domain (family, kinship networks). They, however, prepared many people for open oppositional activities, erupting on the official public scene in 1976.

The circles of "talkative opposition" were closely connected to emigree intellectual communities in Paris, London, New York and elsewhere. Each trip abroad would produce new contacts, exposure to Western social science, philosophy and art, and access to emigree publications. Some of these publications were subsequently smuggled back to Poland, where they often entered limited though respectable circulation, enriching debates that were increasingly suffocated by the official Marxist-Leninist dogmas.

The main and truly influential link of the talkative opposition with the world of Western ideas, problems, outlooks and even events was provided by the radio. Radio Free Europe, Voice of America, or the Polish Section of BBC, were widely listened to despite continuous jamming and had tremendous impact on millions of listeners throughout the whole country. The role of these institutions in linking the two worlds, existing on opposite sides of the "iron curtain," can hardly be overestimated.

3.4. Counter-cultural movements.

Limited liberalization of the Polish regime in the 1970s created conditions for the development of an organizationally ephemeral but culturally very important sector of incomplete civil society. Several critical cultural movements, youth subcultures, and alternative life style movements sprang to life, mostly in the major academic centers, such as Warsaw, Cracow, Wroclaw, Gdansk, Lodz and Lublin (Bozoki 1988, Rykowski and Wertenstein-Zulawski 1986). Many of them found institutional sponsors on the

fringes of official party-state institutions, such as youth and student organizations. These groups and movements challenged the official culture or at least some of its axioms and carved out for themselves and their audiences relatively autonomous spaces for cultural expression. Student theaters and cabarets would be prime examples of this counter-culture. They were influenced by Western artistic and musical trends as well as the newest development in youth fashion. Members of these groups maintained contacts with their spiritual kin in the West and often traveled to Western countries. Counter-cultural movements were tolerated by the authorities as long as their activities did not become openly political. Following the collapse of the state socialist regime their members often become active in the emerging NGO sector.

32.5. Open anti-communist opposition: dissident organizations.

In Poland, the post-Stalinist "thaw" of 1956 produced not only the relatively well-known periodicals and organizations of intellectuals, but also the first truly independent trade union: (Zuzowski 1992:28). For a brief moment (1956-57), several independent organizations formed the legal transparent civil society, but they were soon delegalized orand dissolved by the communist authorities. Clandestine dissident activities continued for years, but they lacked two defining feature of civil society: transparency and legally guaranteed access to the official public space;. They constituted however–in Arkuszewski's apt phrase–the "talkative opposition."[12] The situation changed dramatically in 1976.

[12]For the details of the pre-1976 oppositional activities in Poland see Bernhard 1993; Zuzowski 1992; Laba 1991.

On September 23, 1976, people involved in helping workers persecuted for their participation in the June strikes, formed the Workers' Defense Committee, known under its Polish acronym KOR. This was the first oppositional group in Communist Poland that went public, established working contacts with the workers, and developed an extensive network of collaborators and sympathizers throughout the country. The circle of people who cooperated with KOR in such activities as distributing KOR publications, collecting money, and gathering and transmitting information grew steadily, reaching several thousand by the end of the 1970s.[13] The formation of KOR proved to be a social catalyst. "By the time of Solidarity's formation in 1980, more than twenty different oppositional committees and associations had come into existence in Poland" (Bernhard 1993:76). Dissident organizations developed networks of contacts and communication across the soviet bloc, and in the 1980s a transnational dissident movement of sorts emerged in Eastern Europe. Following the Helsinki Agreements in 1975, Amnesty International and other western human rights monitoring organizations established links to dissident movements. Over time, those western organizations assumed the role of a protective umbrella, exposing arrests of opposition leaders and publicizing the plight of dissidents under communist regimes.

Dissident and human rights organizations were forerunners of a massive political movement that emerged in Poland in 1980. "Solidarity" was born during the strikes that erupted all around Poland that summer, as the culmination of a complex process of social mobilization initiated in the mid-1970s. It was

[13]For details see Lipski 1985:124 or Bernhard 1993:124-30.

the first massive, self-governing "social entity" ever to emerge in any communist state. Kubik proposed to conceptualize this entity as a cultural-political class in statu nascendi which was formed in confrontation with the entrenched political-economic-cultural class of the nomeklatura and its allies. This cultural-political class was made up not of workers or intellectuals but of all those who subscribed to a system of principles and values (usually referred to as counter-hegemonic, unofficial, independent, or alternative), who visualized the social structure as strongly polarized between "us" ("society,""people," etc.) and "them" ("authorities," "communists," etc.) (see Kubik 1994).

When "Solidarity" was delegalized in December 1981, hundreds of thousands of its members "went underground" and initiated thousands of independent oppositional groups and organizations. The network of underground organizations was enormous; it comprised trade union cells, educational institutions, university seminars, publishing houses, political "think-tanks," daily newspapers, magazines of opinion, news services, radio stations, discussion clubs, theater companies, video-production units, charity organizations. Physical space for all these activities was provided by private apartments and the Roman Catholic Church.

The links of the dissident world to the Western organizations and individuals were rich and diverse; moreover their density increased over time and in the late 1980s became truly massive by comparison with other countries of the region.

Since the group’s inception in 1976, KOR members developed a rich network of connections with the outside world. For example, a prominent KOR member, philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, resided in the West and acted as the Committee’s spokesman and representative. Many Western social

scientists and journalists found in the KOR intellectuals "spiritual brethren" pondering the issues of civic participation, the rule of law, and civil society. Foreign correspondents in Warsaw established close contacts with many dissidents and reported on their activities and persecution. Many writings of such prominent opposition intellectuals and organizers as Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron were published in the West. They evoked various responses that were in turn translated and published in underground publications in Poland. In fact, KOR leaders became quite popular in several intellectual circles of the West which contributed to a rather one-sided perception of the Polish opposition (other oppositional groups were usually ignored) and to a growing resentment among KOR's competitors, such as KPN or ROPCiO.

Of all the dissident groups, KOR was most successful in attracting much needed foreign material assistance, thanks to its influence in the West. Donations, funneled to the workers through KOR, took various forms, ranging from official grants by various organizations to honoraria and royalties for texts published in Western journals or interviews granted to Western news organizations.[14] Bernhard's study (1993:125) documents the use of foreign monies and food donations in KOR's early relief efforts on behalf of the workers persecuted after 1976 protests.

[14]An author writing under a pseudonym Tadeusz Wroblewski claims that: "The Opposition's main source of financial support was the West. Donations came from inspired individuals, from subscriptions, trade unions, social and political organizations, as well as from corporations, Polish emigre organizations, and governmental bodies such as substantial grants from the US Congress"

(Wroblewski in Wedel, ed. 1992:239).

After the delegalization of Solidarity in December 1981, Western assistance intensified tremendously. Through its foreign outposts, such as the Bruxelles office or the Committee in Support of Solidarity in New York (later Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe), a steady stream of cash and equipment began flowing to the delegalized movement. Many of these operations were complex and dangerous because they involved, for example, smuggling large pieces of printing equipment through the official state borders to the essentially clandestine movement. It would be hard to imagine such large-scale operations without the knowledge and substantial involvement of Western governments and private foundations. For example, between 1984 and 1989, the New York Committee (founded on December 13, 1981) distributed $143,760 to 194 clandestine publications and organizations. In 1986, using $200,000 from Soros's Open Society Foundation, the IDEE offered short-term stipends to 177 Polish intellectuals and activists, enabling them to spend a month or two in the West.[15]

The programmatic anti-communism of the Reagan administration was a blessing for Solidarity. High-level members of the administration and the president himself were directly involved in developing programs to assist the banned movement, which they saw as a significant ally in undermining the Soviet grip on Eastern Europe. Extensive contacts between Washington and the Vatican were established (Bernstein and Politi 1996:257-389) to coordinate support for the delegalized Polish movement. Yet, as Bernstein and Politi argue, both the White House and the CIA preferred to remain in the shadow,

[15]Lasota 1990:118-19.

allowing other organizations to plan and execute massive assistance programs. The most prominent among these organizations was the AFL-CIO, led by Lane Kirkland, a staunch Solidarity supporter. The scope of this support, still not fully assessed, can be glimpsed from several available figures. For example, the CIA spent about eight million dollars in 1982-83 alone on assisting Solidarity (Bernstein and Politi 1996:381). In 1989, the NED, through the International Rescue Committee in New York, allocated 1 million dollars to help Polish workers and their families (Wedel 1998:95).

During the 1980s the links between the West and the Polish "underground" civil society were not limited to transfers of material resources from the former to the latter. Both the inner-directed and the outer-directed linkages (Pridham 1995) were more comprehensive. Many western organizations not only offered material assistance to Solidarity but also significant moral support by not recognizing Solidarity's delegalization and cultivating as many connections with its underground leadership as possible. Already in 1986, a full two years before Solidarity re-legalization in Poland, the Polish union was formally affiliated with both the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the World Confederation of Labor (Holzer and Leski 1990:122), making it clear that the domestic legality and international legitimacy were separate. Such gestures, including Walesa's Nobel Peace Prize in 1983, had a tremendous, though intangible, effect on boosting the movement's morale and staying power.

Foreign outposts of Solidarity functioned also as information centers for the Western media, academics, potential supporters and contributors, etc. They facilitated the circulation of ideas between the movement's leaders, intellectuals, and Western opinion-making circles, contributing to the vibrancy of the underground cultural and political disputes.

3.6. Selectively authorized NGO's of the 1980s: a forgotten sector of civil society.

After the delegalization of Solidarity in 1981, independent social activity moved "underground." Illegal civil society, which formed almost overnight, was diversified but also strongly unified by a common symbolic umbrella (the myth of Solidarity). It continued its existence in the unofficial public domain until April 1989, when "Solidarity" was officially re-registered.

During the 1980s, however, the "humanization" of the regime (de facto liberalization) progressed as it began to tolerate increasing numbers of independent initiatives. Some organizations and "Solidarity" agencies, following the KOR pattern, "went public" and entered the official public domain, although they were defined as "illegal" by the state. Moreover, in the second half of the 1980s, communist authorities began authorizing selected independent "civil" initiatives: the process of de jure liberalization commenced. For example, in 1983 various local branches of the Polish Ecological Club (PEC) were officially registered. It was an important event, for the Polish Ecological Club was founded as an independent organization in 1980 under the protective umbrella of "Solidarity." After 1983, the local branch of the PEC in Ustron–the town Kubik studied–not only was allowed to produce very critical reports on the dismal state of local environment, but became a training facility of independently-minded activists. Many of them supported underground "Solidarity," were active in the local Citizens' Committee, and became leading politicians after the first independent elections to local self-governments in 1990.

The progressing liberalization of the regime, beginning several years before it collapsed, is

clearly reflected in the data on the formation of associations collected by Klon (Figure 1). The peak of "organizational frenzy" comes in 1991, but the trend is detectable since 1983, two years after "Solidarity" was crushed by Jaruzelski's martial law.

The legalization of such organizations as Ecological Clubs allowed them to reach out to international organizations and ask for assistance, both in terms of ideas and material resources. Yet another channel of interaction between the West and Polish civic organizations was opened.

3.7 Semi-autonomous sector: organizations sponsored by the Catholic Church and other religious organizations.

Paralleling Latin American experiences (Eckstein 1989; Oxhorn 1995; Levine 1993), semi-independent spaces for grass-root organizing were created under the protection of the Roman Catholic Church almost since the imposition of the state socialism in Poland. During the 1981-89 period Church-sponsored independent activities intensified; countless lectures, discussions, seminars, art exhibits, theater performances, movie screenings, massive charity actions, etc. were organized around the country. In many cases the participants in this "Catholic" civil society were active in other "illegal societies" of the oppositional underground. It is also striking that during the period of martial law, beginning in 1982-84, there was a veritable explosion of Catholic publications.

It is obvious that all these activities were strongly supported by the Roman Catholic Church, an institution with enormous resources. During the early 1980s, when martial law was in full force and Polish economy contracted dramatically, the Church coordinated massive assistance flowing into the country from Western governments, various non-governmental organizations, and individuals. Some of

the resources obtained this way were used to support underground activists and their families as well as to fund various clandestine activities, such as seminars, lectures, theater productions and art exhibits. In addition to providing space, material and organizational support, the Church during the 1980s supported many intellectual and artistic initiatives that were sometimes totally at odds with the Church's official dogma. This certainly contributed to the Church's enormous authority at that time.

3.8. Incomplete civil society under state socialism: a summary.

Our analysis shows that under state socialism, there existed an incomplete civil society. It assumed many organizational forms and its development was especially dynamic in Poland for a number of historical reasons. Polish incomplete civil society was diversified, i.e., composed of several sectors of varying degree of autonomy from the state. Networks, organizations and associations, existing in the restricted public space allowed by the repressive party state, can be classified as pseudo-autonomous, semi-autonomous, and illegally autonomous. Each of these sectors played a different political and social role, ranging from providing platforms for controlled civic activism, to economic support for opposition activists offered by (semi)clandestine trade networks of the shadow economy, to direct political action carried out by dissident organizations.

The growth and diversification of Polish civil society, from a near non-existence under Stalinism to tremendous intensity and variety during the 1980s, reflected the evolution of public space under the state socialist regimes.[16] The liberalization process, especially visible in the 1980s, allowed pseudo-

[16]For Fish's analysis of this phenomenon in Russia, see his 1995, particularly pages 52-79.

autonomous organizations to become more independent from the state; semi-autonomous ones were able to reassert their nearly full independence; illegal dissident groups could now secure freedom from repression, move openly into the public space, and in some cases become formally registered. However, the space even under the liberalized state socialist regimes was always conditional and vulnerable to arbitrary actions of the authorities. In this sense only the collapse of state socialist regimes in 1989 created conditions for the existence of the institutionally protected public space, similar to these existing in the developed western democracies which allow individuals to freely engage in associational life.

Without Western assistance, such a phenomenal growth of incomplete civil society in Poland is inconceivable. It is, however, clear, that the specific mode of existence of these societies under the non-democratic regime (co)determined the nature of their linkages with external allies. Two major sources of civil society's imperfection influenced its "foreign relations." First, its activities were defined as illegal, forcing activists "to go underground" and rely closely on various familial and informal networks of support. This, by necessity, blurred the lines dividing the private from the public, the official from the unofficial, or the transparent from the secretive. For the same reasons, all linkages with the West had to be hidden and channeled through private contacts, making public and transparent accountability impossible. This bred suspiciousness and distrust. Foreign partners faced similar dilemmas: official public support was supplemented by clandestine transfers of resources kept out of public scrutiny by necessity. Second, due to the nature of the regime, the emerging civil society was coterminous with political society; all civic actions were seen by the authorities as political challenges to its monopoly of power.

This made accepting overt Western assistance synonymous with treason and forced all interested parties to rely on covert forms of interaction. This also limited accountability.

It is imperative to emphasize that during the late 1970s and 1980s, the most important form of Western assistance was political support (both highly publicized and discreet). Western governments became more decisive in instituting sanctions and/or issuing official condemnations of repressive policies; non-governmental organizations and influential individuals engaged in more systematic support and publicity campaigns on behalf of East European dissidents. This pressure was quite effective in restraining communist governments and moderating repression. Material assistance to dissident organizations was also very important, as were the intellectual exchanges and the general circulation of ideas. All these forms of assistance reaffirmed for many Poles their much cherished sense of belonging to a “common Europe.” But the sharing of the Western organizational know-how, so critical during the next phase of democratic consolidation, was negligible. Clearly, the phase of the old regime deconstruction and the phase of democratic consolidation call for different forms of foreign assistance and different outside resources.

The speed and "quality" of civil society's institutionalization during democratic consolidation depends on legacies left by the preceding non-democratic system. In Poland, various sectors of civil society developed long before the collapse of the non-democratic regime. This development seems to be the main factor explaining the quick consolidation and vibrancy of legal transparent civil society after 1989. In turn, the existence of a well-developed civil society contributes to the relative strength of democracy in Poland; by contrast in countries which had a less developed incomplete civil society,

presumably due to the more repressive nature of their communist regimes (e.g., Slovakia, Croatia or Romania), democratic consolidation is slow and feeble (for a similar argument see Tamas 1999).

4. Citizens Committees: civil society during the transfer of power.

The 1989 transfer of power in Poland was not a straightforward intra-elite deal; it was not a clear-cut case of "pacted transitions." Lech Walesa, representing both the increasingly active (though still delegalized) Solidarity and the striking workers, arrived in Warsaw in August 1988 to begin negotiations with the representatives of the communist government.[17] The strikes continued until the end of the "round table" negotiations in April 1989 and immediately afterwards became a permanent fixture in Polish public life (Ekiert and Kubik, 1999).

This wave of mobilization intensified tremendously as "Solidarity" began hasty preparations for the first semi-free elections of the postcommunist period. In order to overcome the state's tremendous advantage in resources and media access, "Solidarity" facilitated the creation of Citizens Committees (CCs). Thousands of such committees were formed and during the next two months they organized

[17]It is estimated that the August 1988 strikes engulfed 30 major enterprises and involved 150 thousand people (Holzer and Leski 1990:155; for an excellent analysis of the 1988 strikes see Tabako 1992).

"Solidarity's" electoral campaign with the help of primitive home-made propaganda materials. The elections of June 4 were a stunning success for the newly re-legalized movement and a sounding, unanticipated defeat of the communist bloc: "Solidarity" candidates won all the mandates they were allowed to contest, except for one.

After this victory, Walesa authorized a highly controversial move: the dissolution of the CCs at the provincial level. "The CCs at the local level were allowed to continue, but without the Solidarity logo and union financing" (Grabowski 1996:225). This not only severed the links between the CCs and "Solidarity" but also led to a tremendous diversification of local civil patterns of activization and the formation of a complex and multifaceted civil society. The "golden age" of this massive set of local CCs came between September 1989 and May 1990, when they prepared the free election to local self-governments. "They became the main force behind the wide-ranging changes at the local level: from the revival of associational life to the assault on local communist networks to the promotion of the local administrative reform" (Grabowski 1996:227). And once again the CCs achieved spectacular electoral success. Their candidates came in first among all the organized forces: they took 42% of the seats, while the "independents" took almost 51%. The CCs candidates won 74% of the seats in many-seat constituencies (voting for "party" lists) and 38% of the seats in the single-seat constituencies (first-past-the-post).

Citizens Committees may constitute the most significant institutional innovation that separates the Polish path to democracy from the paths traveled by other countries of the postcommunist bloc. Thanks to the Committees, Poland was the first postcommunist country to acquire two fundamental institutions

of a viable democratic order: (1) an effective, organized force, able to counterbalance the successors of the old regime (ex-communists) by either replacing them in government or assuming the role of powerful, independent opposition at all levels of political organization and (2) a set of non-ex-communist organizations able to mobilize citizens via civic initiatives at the level of regions and localities.

What is truly fascinating in the story of CCs is the limited role external assistance played in their development; it was confined to transfers of financial resources, mostly during electoral campaigns. In their organizational structures and ideology they seem to have been purely domestic inventions. There is no doubt, though, that their emergence revitalized the whole range of civil society sectors and thus prepared the ground for the next phase of transition: democratic consolidation. During this phase, external assistance not only intensified, but its forms became quite varied.

5. The role of civil society during the consolidation of democracy.

Democratization theory acknowledges that the "revival," "resurrection" or "re-inventing" of civil society is essential for successful liberalization and democratization. It is also seen as a vital pre-condition for democratic consolidation. If so, East Central Europe has at least one of the ingredients of success, for–despite claims to the contrary (Bernhard 1996)–civil society has become a rapidly developing realm of the postcommunist polities. However, this phenomenon should be described as the resurrection combined with the re-configuration of civil society, since many organizations inherited from the old regime (former pseudo-autonomous associations discussed in section 3.1) have become dominant players in the new public scene. Yet, even if significant organizational continuity has been

maintained within civil society, the patterns of re-configuration and re-institutionalization within various sectors differ from country to country. This in turn shapes the role and character of civil society organizations and determines the types of collective actors who become most active during the political transition and consolidation of new democratic regimes in the region.

The ex-communist organizations became important building blocs of the new institutional order and, consequently, provided for a significant degree of organizational continuity in many sectors of postcommunist civil societies. Old organizations changed their leaders, preserved their assets, and adopted quite successfully to a new democratic environment. Although they often lost a substantial number of members and had to down-size their organizational structures and personnel, they nonetheless were often more effective than new organizations which had to start from scratch.

The real organizational revolution occurred, however, in other sectors of civil society such as non-governmental organization (NGOs). Counting the number of new organizations and analyzing their activities is not an easy task. In Poland, however, the Klon/Jawor research team, operating since 1991, produced some reliable estimates (Figure 1). According to their studies, by the end of 1994 there were 29,580 registered associations and 12,216 regional affiliates of these organizations. Moreover, by the end of 1996 there were about 5,000 foundations registered in the district court in Warsaw and 900

local foundations.[18] Altogether,

[18]Non Governmental Sector in Poland, 1998: 54-57. According to another source, by the end of 1992, there were more than 2,000 nation-wide voluntary associations registered in the Warsaw District Court a majority of which existed before 1989 (*Polska '93* (Warsaw: Polska Agencja Informacyjna, 1992), 148. This number did not include associations whose activities were limited to the regional or local level and were registered by provincial courts. See Prawelska-Skrzypek nd..

civil society in Poland was comprised of about 48,000 organizations, while before 1989 there were only several hundred large, centralized organizations.[19]

Figure 1

The Klon/Jawor data base provides comprehensive information on 4,515 organizations in 1993 (see also Krasnodebska et. al. 1996). A year later, they listed 7,000 associations and 4,500 foundations with a combined membership of approximately 2 million Poles. They had about 53,000 full-

[19]The Main Statistical Office reports for 1997, the existence of 32,716 organizations (Non

time employees and 64 percent of their budget came from private and foreign sources with only 26 percent from the state budget. They were active mainly in large urban centers (68%) (Prawelska-Skrzypek nd). New organizations were rapidly emerging in all sectors of civil society, especially where existing organizations were unsuccessful in adapting to the new conditions or where new spaces and issue-arenas opened after the collapse of the party-state.

The development of the trade union sector after 1989 exemplifies both the continuity and innovativeness of Polish postcommunist civil society. The new postcommunist labor sector emerged as a result of several mergers of old and new organizations. In April 1989, as a result of the "Round Table Agreements," Solidarity was re-legalized in its trade union formula. The postcommunist All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ) and Solidarity became two major competitors within a highly pluralistic, competitive, but politically divided trade union sector. Solidarity had 1.7 million members, while the OPZZ boasted a membership of around 4 million. The OPZZ lost some 2 million members since 1989 and several unions left the organization, including the powerful Federation of Miner Unions with some 350 thousand members. It became a key element of the ex-communist coalition and its activists ran for parliament on the SLD (Union of Democratic Left) ticket.

Due to the regime change, post-1989 Solidarity cannot be meaningfully compared to its pre-1989 incarnation. It is worth noting, however, that not only was its membership a fraction of what it had

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Governmental Sector in Poland, 1998: 54).

been in 1980/81, but its salaried staff were largely new. Post-1989 Solidarity was organized in 38 regions, 16 national industry secretariats and nearly 100 industry branch secretariats. There were a number of smaller and usually more radical federations such as Solidarity '80 with approximately half a million members. The smaller, newly-funded unions were critical of both Solidarity and OPZZ for their cooperation with the government and became more prominent in organizing protest actions in Polish industry. In short, the trade union movement was: (1) highly fragmented and decentralized, by comparison with other East European states; (2) competitive and politically divided on both national and local levels; (3) organizationally mixed, with inter-locking regional and industrial structures.

This selective overview illustrates the impressive recovery of Polish civil society after 1989. Yet, across all sectors of the newly reconstituted civil space there emerged significant organizational continuity with the past as well as serious fragmentation, political divisions and intense struggle for resources and members. Some observers noted also excessive personalization and exclusiveness among several influential organizations, particularly those that had extensive contacts with Western sponsors (Wedel 1998, Quigley 1997). The most striking feature of this new civil society was, however, its lack of systematic linkages with the party system (political society). As the Klon/Jawor data base demonstrates (see Table 1), NGOs' relationships with political parties were <u>much worse</u> than their relationships with any other institutional sector.

In short, from 1989 to 1998, the development of legal transparent civil society in Poland was well underway. This new LTCS was composed of myriads of spontaneously created associations and many re-constituted organizations that had been formed under state socialism. In many sectors (for

example, labor unions) several old and new organizations competed with each other for resources, members, and access to policy-makers and therefore the whole domain was highly contentious and fragmented. At the same time the party system (political society) did not effectively fulfil its function of interest aggregation, representation, and articulation;[20] there existed a lack of strong linkages between the people and political parties (Wesolowski 1995a:9). As a result, many of civil society's organizations and actors played an increasingly visible and vocal role in the country's politics, often confronting through protest actions both the parliament and the government.[21]

[20]For definitions of these three terms see Fish 1995:54.

[21]For a detailed analysis of protest activities in Poland see Ekiert and Kubik 1999.

Table 1[22]

Relationships between NGOs and other actors of the public scene

	Willingness to establish contact	No contact	Sporadic contact	Mutual assistance	Cooperation
Government	21	30	23	9	15
Voivodeship	18	13	29	17	22
Local government	12	5	21	27	35
Political parties	4	41	12	3	5
Church	6	14	26	15	34
Business	34	6	13	38	9
Local communities	14	9	16	28	31

6. International dimension of the postcommunist civil society in Poland.

[22]Source: Krasnodebska, et. al. 1996. (Representatives of NGO's were asked to assess their relationships with various other actors of the public scene. Numbers in the table are percentages).

6.1. Inner-oriented linkages.

The fall of state-socialism and the introduction of the modern democratic state based on the rule of law (Rechsstaat) changed the rules of interaction between Polish civil society organizations and their foreign partners. The secrecy and informality of pre-1989 interactions were replaced by transparency and formal accountability. Western assistance was now openly and "legally" available to former communist states and their citizens. As a result, Western governments, private foundations and multinational organizations began showering Central Europeans with promises of material resources, organizational know-how, and "civic" ideologies. According to Quigley, from 1989 to 1994 the West committed to Central Europe approximately $44.3 billion (1997:1). In Wedel's estimate, by the end of 1996, the countries belonging to the G-24 group committed to Central and Eastern Europe approximately $80 billion (1998:199). The scope of considered assistance was so huge, that a phrase "new Marshall Plan" began circulating within the policy-making circles of the West and the East.

Communism's abrupt fall in 1989 took the West by surprise. A new policy toward the East European states had to be forged almost overnight. At the July 1989 meeting of the Group of Seven (G7) it was decided that West European assistance to Poland and Hungary, the first two countries emerging from communism, should be coordinated at the level of the European Commission. Accordingly, the Poland-Hungary Aid for Restructuring the Economy (PHARE) was created. Its aim was to coordinate bilateral and multilateral assistance from the Group of Twenty-Four (G-24), initially to the first two named recipients and then to other ex-communist countries entering the path of democratic consolidation. On the recipient side, PHARE assistance was to be coordinated by

specialized governmental agencies.

At first, the European Commission was given the task of coordinating technical assistance for economic restructuring. Only later, in 1992, was its mandate expanded to include assistance for democracy-building. From then on, the Commission was asked by the European Parliament "to pay more attention to politics and civil society, and thus to create within PHARE a 'democracy program' different in character from the rest of the PHARE programs (Sedelmeier and Wallace 1996:361). Accordingly, more PHARE funds were re-directed toward such goals as the development of civil society, education, research, environmental and nuclear safety, and social development (Wedel 1998:201).

The United States reaction to the fall of communism was equally prompt. By November 29, 1989, the US Congress had passed the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) set of bills. They authorized almost $1 billion "to promote political democracy and economic pluralism in Poland and Hungary by assisting those nations during a critical period of transition."[23] Other nations were added later. While the bulk of American assistance (63%) was targeted for economic restructuring, democracy building was a vital component from the beginning.[24] In this area, however, the US and West Europe followed different strategies. In the United States, the main strategy was to give direct assistance to civil society organizations, bypassing governmental bureaucracies (Wedel 1998: 85). Also, the role of private and quasi-private foundations (such as National Endowment for Democracy) was more

[23]Quoted in Wedel 1998: 18.

[24]Calculation based on numbers found in Wedel 1998:200.

prominent than in Western Europe. Quigley, for example, estimates that between 1989 and 1994 private foundations provided more funds to Central Europe than USAID. While the latter spent about $339 million, the former spent $450 million (1997:3). In brief, while American assistance came predominantly from private and quasi-private (NED) organizations and went directly to various non-governmental organizations (though usually with the help of Western NGOs), the West Europeans preferred to funnel their aid through multilateral organizations and for governmental institutions in Eastern Europe to disburse it.

In general, three main types of institutions became involved in assisting postcommunist countries:

- International (multilateral) institutions, including such major financial organizations as the IMF, the World Bank, the EBRD or the PHARE Program developed by the European Community.
- Governmental agencies and quasi-private organizations, such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID) or various programs made possible by the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) legislation. Among the well-known programs activated by this legislative act are Citizen's Democracy Corps (CDC) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).
- Private organizations. More than 60 major foundations got involved in various programs in ECE. Among the most prominent have been a host of foundations financed by George Soros, the Humboldt Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Ebert Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Quigley demonstrates that Poland received a disproportionally large share of Western assistance. For example, he estimates that between January 1990 and December 1993, Poland received nearly half of all the financial commitments by the G-24 countries. This included first of all economic assistance - most prominently debt relief. The World Bank committed almost 60% of its total resources marked for disbursement in ECE to Poland. Additionally, between 1989 and 1994, American bilateral programs administered through AID committed over 40% of its resources to Poland (Quigley 1997:48). Yet, an analysis of the per capita aid provided by private foundations to the Central European states gives a different picture (see Table 2). In terms of private assistance, Hungary was well ahead of other countries, receiving over nine dollars per every citizen during the 1989-94 period, while Poland secured $2.5 per citizen, and Czechoslovakia $2.0.

Table 2

Foundation Assistance to Central Europe, 1989-1994 (US dollars in millions)[25]

	Hungary	Poland	Czecho-slovakia	Czech after 1/1/93	Slovakia after 1/1/93	Total*
Total assistance	95.31	96.41	31.55	15.53	9.28	444.8
Assistance per	9.3	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.8	6.9

[25]Source: Quigley 1997:122-23. Per capita calculations by authors. *Total includes assistance to the whole region and interregional assistance.

capita (1992) $/person						

As previously emphasized, the lion's share of the promised and actually disbursed aid was designated to assist the postcommunist governments with economic restructuring, including the development of a basic infrastructure. How extensive, then, was assistance extended to each country's fledgling political and civil societies, particularly the NGO sector? Since the exact data on assistance to civil society is difficult to obtain, we calculated what portion of assistance committed by the United States to several Central and East European (CEE) countries was designated for "democracy building," assuming that the development of civic initiatives would be classified under this heading. The results of these calculations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Spending for "democracy building" as percentage of the total cumulative obligations of the United States to Central and Eastern Europe.[26]

	Poland	Hungary	Czech Republic	Slovak Republic	Albania, Bulgaria, Romania	Total CEE
Total grant aid, 1990-96	847,831	227,693	147,004	154,532	1,225,435	2,712,495
Democracy	29,335	11,887	6,912	9,946	176,216	234,296

[26]Source: Wedel 1998:200.

building						
Democracy building as % of total aid	3.5	5.2	4.7	6.4	14.4	8.6

Assistance for democracy building, as a percentage of total cumulative obligations by the United States to CEE countries, constituted only 3.5 percent of aid to Poland, while it was 14.4 percent for such countries as Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania and 8.6 percent for the region as a whole.

The breakdown of grant aid from EU's PHARE Program presents a similar picture. During the 1990-1992 period no East European country received any money earmarked for "Civil Society, Democratization." Moreover, for the entire 1990-96 period, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic did not receive a penny in this category, though Slovakia received 0.5 million ECU (3.8 percent of the total grant aid during this period) and Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania received 7.7 million ECU (.5 percent).[27]

Our analysis of the aid extended to Central European states by private foundations reveals that the single largest item on the donors' list was assistance for institutions of higher education (38.8 percent of all aid disbursed from 1989 through 1994). Central European NGOs received about 31 million dollars (8.4 percent of the total) (Quigley 1997:139). In Poland, aid for NGO's constituted 17.6 percent of the total aid this country received during the 1989-94 period.

[27]Source for this calculations: Wedel 1998:201.

What is the meaning of all these calculations? The picture is not clear. Although Quigley and Wedel compiled and systematized an impressive array of figures, comparisons are still difficult and generalizations dubious, for the period under consideration is still too short and the classification of various forms of aid differs from study to study. According to Quigley's figures, Polish NGOs were funded more generously than their counterparts in other Central European states. No matter how we assess this level of financing, as moderate, low, or high, one issue is clear: Western aid and assistance flew to a civil society that was vibrant and rapidly growing and, despite certain weaknesses, began to play an important role in the country's democratic consolidation. We would argue, moreover, that the moderate–in our assessment–level of Western financial assistance to Polish civil society was actually a sign of this society's robustness, epitomized by its ability to attract other sources of financing. To verify this claim we turn to an analysis of NGOs' budgets.

A study conducted by the Klon/Jawor research team in 1994 revealed that assistance from foreign NGOs constituted merely 14 percent (18 percent in 1996-97) of all contributions to the budgets of Polish NGOs included in their study. And only 16 percent of Polish NGOs received assistance from foreign NGOs.[28] A conclusion is obvious: foreign aid, while critical in such areas as seeding new activities, did not play the decisive role in financing the NGO sector of the Polish postcommunist civil society. Most funding in 1996-97 came from the public funds, including central, regional, and local budgets (almost 33%). This could mean an excessive reliance on the state, but one must note that in some established democracies of the West this number is much higher. In Italy, 43 percent of the

[28]Non-Governmental Sector in Poland, 1998:42.

NGOs' budgets were provided by public funds; in Germany, 68%; in Great Britain, 40%; in France, 59%; and in USA, 30%.[29] Those figures may be interpreted as signs of the Polish civil society's considerable independence from the state, and thus as yet another indication of its strength.

6.2.Outer-oriented linkages.

There is a lot of unsystematic evidence which indicates that the pre-1989 linkages between western organizations and Polish "imperfect" civil society survived the regime change and have facilitated the "East-West" cooperation in the new era. For example, the Committee in Support of Solidarity in New York was transformed into the Institute on Democracy in Eastern Europe (IDEE). The organization today publishes the journal "Uncaptive Minds" and is very active in various civil society initiatives through its Washington and Warsaw offices. Through such well-established channels Polish NGOs and other organizations can; with relative ease reach potential Western allies or donors.

Years of clandestine cooperation with Western allies prepared many Polish activists for the democratic transition. The capital of necessary contacts, habits, and skills in Poland was perhaps more developed than elsewhere in Eastern Europe (with a possible exception of Hungary). This allowed many Polish organizations to compete successfully for Western resources. The negative aspect of this long-

[29]Data from a Johns Hopkins University study, quoted in Non-Governmental Sector in Poland 1998:71.

term legacy of cooperation is that some individuals and groups developed a monopolistic control over certain contacts and sources of assistance. Moreover, the most powerful contacts had been developed by representatives of the liberal political orientation (centered, for example, around the former KOR members) and their critics often pointed out the partisanship in the distribution of Western assistance among various political options (see Quigley 1997:91-93 or Wedel 1998).

If Poland had by far the most developed and diversified (imperfect) civil society under state socialism, does it also have the most effective civil society in postcommunism? This question is very difficult to answer–no reliable comparative data sets exist. We are convinced, though, that Polish civil society was robust and played a major role in democratic consolidation (Ekiert and Kubik 1999). We also found one interesting bit of evidence indicating that Polish NGOs have been better prepared to absorb Western assistance than their counterparts in the countries where the legacy of civil society is weaker. "A 1991 study showed that the percentage of governmental and multilateral aid promised by the West that had actually been disbursed in the region was very low in the CSFR (less than 2 percent) as compared to Poland (approximately 27 percent)" (Siegel and Yancey 1992:51-2).

6.3. Dilemmas of collaboration.

There exist several studies (see Wedel 1998; Quigley 1997; Siegel and Yancey 1992 for summaries) listing various problems and shortcomings of the West-East exchanges that are supposed to facilitate the growth of a vibrant postcommunist civil society. There is not room here to repeat these findings. We will merely signal several main problem areas that were particularly evident during the early

years of postcommunist transformations:[30]

- too many resources were used in donor countries;
- too little attention was devoted to developing domestic bases of support and financing and combining them with external assistance;
- too little work was devoted to the issue of long-term sustainability of NGOs and other organizations;
- too many resources were used on short-term visits by high-visibility officials; not enough on volunteers ready for long-term commitments;
- no serious attempts were made to develop systematic links with such sources of assistance as state administrations and domestic business communities;
- virtues of openness, accountability and participation (by local activists) were not sufficiently or strongly championed.

There is however a considerable amount of evidence indicating that in Central Europe both the governmental agencies and private foundations learned from their mistakes. Quigley conceptualizes the 1989-1994 history of the Western democracy assistance programs to Central Europe in three phases: (1) unfettered enthusiasm; (2) skeptical enthusiasm; and (3) growing disenchantment. Wedel (1998), whose analysis covers a longer time span (1989-1996), offers a different model: (1) Triumphalism; (2)

[30]This list is based mainly on Quigley 1997:107-10.

Disillusionment; (3) Adjustment. Both analysts share a common conclusion: during the third phase, Western aid to Central Europe became much more efficient. The donors and recipients learned how to cooperate across initially misunderstood cultural boundaries, how to identify worthy targets of aid, and how to disburse material and non-material assistance without heavy bureaucratic waste. The desired process of decentralization of aid was also initiated

6.4. Impact.

In general, most analysts would agree with Quigley (1997:4) that after 1989, Western foundations and other institutions "played an important, albeit modest, role in assisting democratic development" in Central Europe. It is enough to compare per capita spending in Slovakia and Poland (Table 2). The amounts are not vastly different (particularly when compared with Hungary), yet while Polish democratic consolidation is essentially complete, Slovakia's democracy is perceived as the most vulnerable among the CE countries. (See for example the Freedom House rankings).

By 1998, both the Western partners and Central Europeans have developed a much better sense of which forms of assistance are beneficial and efficient and which are simply untenable. Interestingly, public institutions have begun to utilize the extensive experience of private foundations and have consequently improved the efficiency of allocating their resources. Quigley observes a shift from capital cities to regions and localities. We will argue that this trend will play especially well in Poland, where the true devolution of power occurred early on and constitutes a cornerstone of the successful Polish democratic consolidation.

What is perhaps the most striking development in the short history of Western assistance to Polish postcommunist civil society, is its significant decentralization. Although, in general, most Western resources have been allocated to assist economic transformations and reform central government structures, the aid to civil society in Poland has been relatively decentralized. Through the Foundation in Support of Local Democracy (FSLD), with its sixteen regional centers in Poland, private and public West European and American foundations channeled millions of dollars to local and regional self-governments and NGOs. Ninety percent of over 2,300 Polish municipalities were involved in programs sponsored by the FSLD; 113,551 individuals underwent training, both in Poland and abroad. Rutgers University's Local Democracy in Poland program has served as the main Western outpost of the FSLD.[31] It should be pointed out, however, that the significance of the decentralization of assistance was initially not well understood in the West and the situation improved only after intense lobbying by Polish champions of self-government and local empowerment (see for example Regulska 1998; Graham 1995:6).

Finally, it should be noted that Polish NGOs, with their considerable experience, began over time to serve as bridges between Western initiatives and other postcommunist nations. For example, Stanowski (1998: 165) documents that the Warsaw-based Foundation for Education for Democracy (FED), supported primarily by the American National Endowment for Democracy (NED), shifted its educational activities from Poland (100% in 1990) to the NIS of Europe and Asia. Forty-four out of

[31]For details on the FSLD and LDP activities see various reports issued by the Rutgers Center; Regulska 1998 and also Quigley 1997:49-51.

seventy-six (58%) FED workshops in 1997 were held in the NIS countries.

7. Conclusions.

7.1. Historically, legal transparent civil society (LTCS) is a very rare type of social organization (Gellner 1994). It is found mostly in established western democracies, which prompts most scholars to argue that mature civil society and democracy reinforce each other (Linz and Stepan 1996: 7-8; Diamond 1997). There exist, however, other types of social arrangements that resemble it in one respect or another, i.e., do not possess all of its characteristics yet effectively limit the state's power and offer the citizens the opportunity for autonomous associational life. Such incomplete (imperfect) civil societies can function as allies or precursors, or even enemies of the LTCS, depending on the historical circumstances. In this essay we attempted to analyze one specific example of such incomplete civil society which developed in Poland. Our emphasis was on various forms of external assistance that facilitated the development of several sectors of the Polish civil society.

7.2. In societies initially controlled by authoritarian regimes, civil society often develops through a sequence of three stages. In a post-totalitarian regime it emerges first as illegal transparent civil society out of non-transparent activities (KOR's foundation in 1976). One of the conditions of its emergence and survival is the humanization (de facto liberalization) of the regime; another is a set (or system) of links with non-transparent networks, which are the major provider of resources for actors undertaking open civil actions.

For both processes–the formation of the first islands of civil society and the humanization of an authoritarian (or post-totalitarian) regime–external assistance is very important, if not decisive. As we demonstrated earlier, it is hard to imagine KOR's successes without multiple ties to its Western allies. Also, the opening of the regime, i.e., the relaxation of its oppressiveness, is hardly conceivable without (a) the Helsinki process, initiated in 1975 and (2) Gorbachev's reforms of the late 1980s.

The second phase is selective de jure legalization of some organizations by the rulers. Polish examples include "Solidarity" or ecological clubs in the 1980s. Here again, Western recognition and assistance proved to be critical. Solidarity's years in the underground would not have been possible without massive aid programs, equipment transfers, steadfast moral support, and political pressure. Finally, during the third stage a legal space is created and the fully-fledged legal transparent civil society may develop. The role of foreign assistance during this phase, which begins with the collapse of the ancient regime (Wnuk-Lipinski 1995:96; Smolar 1996), is summarized in section 7.4.

7.3. In authoritarian and post-totalitarian systems where there is no rule of law, a set or system of networks develops. Some of them constitute the transparent but illegal or selectively legalized civil society, made possible within the confines of the arbitrary autonomy allowed either deliberately or inadvertently by the rulers. Totalitarian regimes allow very little, if any, autonomy; authoritarian and post-totalitarian systems are more open and often tolerate some independent associations, whose existence is however unprotected by the law and subject to the arbitrary interference by the authorities. This situation can be called uninstitutionalized autonomy: selectively authorized civil society, as a set of groups, exists but there is no full legal protection of a universally accessible official public domain.

Moreover, some organizations may be arbitrarily protected by the authorities, while others are ruthlessly persecuted.

Under state socialism the principle of uninstitutionalized autonomy (de facto liberalization) allowed the existence of three types of organizations: (1) pseudo-autonomous (e.g., official trade unions); (2) semi-autonomous (e.g., Roman Catholic Church in Poland); and (3) "illegally" autonomous (e.g., dissident groups, black-market networks). In authoritarian systems where the elite political actors reserve for themselves an almost complete monopoly of "doing politics," any independent action of civil society, becomes inadvertently political. On the other hand, mobilizing for action within dissident groups is unthinkable without the support of familial, kinship, and friendship networks. For these two reasons, the borders among political society, civil society, and domestic society are very porous. In fact, civil society cannot exist without a base within domestic society: Gellnerian "cousins" are not civil society's greatest enemies, but rather its necessary benefactors.

This situation, full of moral ambiguities and minimal formal accountability, favors specific forms of foreign assistance. Such assistance must take secretive forms, utilize clandestine channels of interaction, and sometimes be coordinated by agencies specialized in covert operations, such as the CIA. While such help is essential for budding civil societies under oppressive regimes, the covert nature of aid operations and the type of organizations involved leads to (a) accusations of moral (or even political) impropriety and (b) domestic feuds instigated by those groups and individuals who may perceive the developing patterns of assistance as unjust and partisan.

In polities based on the rule of law the situation is different. Most importantly, the system of laws

makes possible the establishment and protection of autonomous official public domain. Thus the vitality of civil society groups depends (a) on the comprehensiveness and durability of this autonomy, (b) on their degree of separation from traditional communities (primary groups), and (c) on their ability to depend on "civil economy."[32] It is a situation opposite to authoritarian systems, where civil society's strength depends on its interpenetration with traditional communities, “uncivil economies,” and “suspect” foreign allies. In a democratic state, based on the rule of law, foreign assistance must become overt and compatible with both the domestic and international rules of accountability.

7.4 It is not yet possible to correlate with any precision specific amounts and forms of Western assistance after 1989 with emerging features of postcommunist civil societies in Central Europe. It is, however, clear that the pattern of cooperation that emerged between Polish civil society and various external organizations (both public and private) has several distinct features. On the positive side we note:

- In Poland a virtuous circle between Western partners and domestic organizations developed. A strong and well-developed (by regional standards) civil society received moderate, yet critical support. This, in turn, led to the further strengthening of this society.

[32]On the concept of "civil economy" see Rose 1992 and Krygier 1997: 86-87.

- The proportion of committed Western resources that were actually disbursed was much higher in Poland than in Czechoslovakia. This seems to indicate that the level of prior preparedness to absorb external assistance is a critical factor in achieving high realization of commitments. Poland's example seems to suggest that this level of preparedness is directly related to the prior existence of a robust, even if imperfect, civil society.
- During the early years of democratic consolidation a large portion of foreign assistance to Poland was channeled to local self-governments and local NGOs. This is yet another example of the virtuous circle. One of the main features of Polish postcommunist political development was a far-reaching (by comparison with other countries) devolution of power to local self-governments, which established close collaboration with local organizations of the civil society (Table 1; Regulska 1999). By directing a considerable portion of its assistance to local communities, the West expedited this process.
- By concentrating its assistance efforts on civil society organizations, the West "invested" in the sector of Polish polity that was, in peoples' assessment, performing better than political society. This might have further increased the latter's relative underdevelopment, but excessive politization of assistance distribution was by and large avoided.
- Investment in Polish civil society, which was arguably most developed in the

postcommunist world, produced yet another positive result: some Polish NGOs, as soon as they established themselves and developed sufficient expertise, began functioning as "democratization bridges" with other emerging democracies, which had comparatively weaker traditions of civil society activities.

On the negative side we observe:

- Western assistance, in general, followed a somewhat perverse logic: initially, the bulk of assistance went to the countries (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic) that had already had the most developed proto-capitalist structures and strongest civil societies. Their virtuous circles were strengthened; but at the cost of deepening vicious circles elsewhere (former Soviet Union, Southern Eastern Europe) .
- Decentralized and initially poorly coordinated Western assistance, facilitated a considerable fragmentation within Polish civil society. This, in turn, increased the competition for resources and led to preoccupation with organizational survival at the expense of issue-related activities. Although such a dynamic creates divisions, competition, and weakness in the short run, it may prove beneficial in the long run by facilitating the development of a more robust civil society.
- Initial concentration of the relatively high level of Western assistance in major cities, attracted to such "metropolitan" NGOs skilled activists and potential political leaders, exacerbating the weakness of the emerging party system.

- By channeling their assistance to well-know (and usually liberal) individuals, networks and organizations, Western donors contributed to the creation of "winners" and "losers" in the emerging non-governmental sector. This not only bred resentment but also distrust and contributed to often destructive competition. Additionally, the "winners" were often to be found in large urban areas. This disadvantaged somewhat smaller towns and villages (Regulska 1998b; 1999:62).
- By championing agendas and methods that would replicate Western experiences, foreign donors contributed to the slower articulation of indigenous issues and concerns and the delayed development of civil society cultures that would reflect local traditions and needs (Les 1994:43; Regulska 1999:69).

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