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Discourses on Civil Society in Poland

Agnes Arndt: Premises and Paradoxes in the
Development of the Civil Society Concept in Poland

Dariusz Gawin: Civil Society Discourse in Poland
in the 1970s and 1980s

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Agnes Arndt: Premisses and Paradoxes in the Development of the Civil Society

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Agnes Arndt:

**Premises and Paradoxes in the Development
of the Civil Society Concept in Poland**

Zusammenfassung:

Mit dem 20. Jahrestag des Falls der Berliner Mauer und der Öffnung der Grenzen in Ostmit-
teleuropa jährt sich im Jahr 2009 auch die seit mittlerweile zwei Jahrzehnten bestehende Ver-
mutung, 1989 habe neben der Demokratisierung des ostmitteleuropäischen Raums ebenso die
Rückkehr der Zivilgesellschaft markiert. Ziel der folgenden Überlegungen ist es, die seitdem
sich entwickelnde transnationale Karriere des Begriffes Zivilgesellschaft noch einmal auf
ihren vermuteten Ursprung in den Oppositionsbewegungen Ostmitteleuropas zurückzubezie-
hen und auf diese Weise kritisch zu hinterfragen. Am Beispiel der Volksrepublik Polen zwi-
schen 1968 und 1989 werden der Verlauf, die Voraussetzungen und die Besonderheiten der
Begriffsbildung von Zivilgesellschaft in Ostmitteleuropa untersucht, bislang unbekannte Cha-
rakteristika des polnischen Diskurses ebenso wie Missverständnisse der westeuropäischen
Rezeption benannt und hinsichtlich ihrer empirischen und theoretischen Konsequenzen für die
weitere historische und sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung analysiert.

Abstract:

2009, the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening of the borders in East
Central Europe, also marks two decades of the assumption that 1989 brought not only
democratisation to the East Central European region but also a return to civil society. This
paper examines the transnational career of the civil society concept since that date, passing its
presumed origins in the oppositional movements of East Central Europe in critical review.
Taking the example of the People's Republic of Poland between 1968 and 1989, the course,
conditions, and particularities of concept formation in the region are examined, and hitherto
unknown aspects of the Polish discourse and misunderstandings in the Western European
reception are described and analysed with respect to the empirical and theoretical
consequences for further historical and social scientific research.

I. Introduction

2009, the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening of the borders in East Central Europe, also marks two decades of the assumption that 1989 brought not only democratisation to the East Central European region but also a return to civil society. The part played by civil rights movements, civil society protest, and democratic opposition in the peaceful and non-violent collapse of communism in Eastern Europe remains undisputed, indeed second to none, if one considers, for example, the signal sent by a mass organisation like the 10 million-strong Polish trade union Solidarność. But it is somewhat surprising that this protest continues to be uncritically historicized, examined scientifically, and laid claim to politically as a "civil society" phenomenon. Civil society, it appears, has become a key concept in much actor-related, historical, and social scientific analysis of the transformation process in East Central Europe, relegating concepts like dissent, resistance, and opposition to the background. What is surprising about this development is not only the breadth with which the thesis of a "renaissance of civil society in East Central Europe" has been celebrated in the research literature,[1] but also the persisting lack of studies that address this thesis empirically and theoretically, and thus relating it to the horizon of experience of the players in regional democratic system change. For their view of the civil society aspect of system change in East Central Europe is at times much more critical than that taken by academe. The scholar Aleksander Smolar, for example, who had emigrated to Paris from Warsaw in 1968, commented as long ago as in the 1990s that the conception of civil society that had won popularity in East Central Europe had "little in common"[2] with past Western European debates, "with the thinking of Locke, Ferguson, Smith, Hegel, Tocqueville, Marx, and Gramsci." According to Smolar, the concept of civil society turned up "in the language of the emerging opposition under the influence of their contacts with Western intellectuals. For various reasons, the idea of civil society fascinated both Western, post-Marxist left-wing

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[1] Of the mass of studies directly addressing the thesis of a "renaissance of civil society in Eastern Central Europe we mention only the following: Jacques Rupnik, Dissent in Poland, 1968–78: The end of Revisionism and the Rebirth of the Civil Society, in: Rudolf L. Tókes (ed.), Opposition in Eastern Europe, London/ Basingstoke 1979, p. 60–112; Zbigniew Rau, Introduction, in: id. (ed.), The Reemergence of Civil Society in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Boulder/ Oxford 1991, p. 1–24, here p. 12 and 16 ff.; Chris Hann, Civil Society at the Grassroots: A Reactionary View, in: Paul G. Lewis (ed.), Democracy and Civil Society in Eastern Europe, London 1992, p. 152–165, here p. 152; Jean L. Cohen/ Andrew Arato, Civil Society and Political Theory, Cambridge/ London 1994, p. 15; John A. Hall, In Search of a Civil Society, in: id., Civil Society. Theory, History, Comparison, Cambridge 1995, p. 1–31, here 1; John Keane (ed.), Civil Society and the State. New European Perspectives, 2 ed., London 1998, p. 2 ff; id., Civil Society. Old Images, New Visions, Stanford 1998, p. 19–20; Thomas Janoski, Citizenship and Civil Society. A Framework of Rights and Obligations in Liberal, Traditional, and Social Democratic Regimes, Cambridge 1998, p. 7; Jürgen Kocka, Zivilgesellschaft als historisches Problem und Versprechen, in: Manfred Hildermeier/ Jürgen Kocka/ Christoph Conrad (eds.), Europäische Zivilgesellschaft in West und Ost, Frankfurt/ New York 2000, p. 13–40, here p. 18; John K. Glenn, Framing Democracy: Civil Society and Civic Movements in Eastern Europe, Stanford 2001, p. 24 ff; Sudipta Kaviraj/ Sunil Khilnani, Introduction: Ideas of civil society, in: id. idem. (ed.), Civil Society. History and Possibilities, Cambridge 2001, p. 1–2; Ansgar Klein, Der Diskurs der Zivilgesellschaft. Politische Hintergründe und demokratietheoretische Folgerungen, Opladen 2001, p. 19 and finally: John A. Hall/ Frank Trentmann, Contests over Civil Society: Introductory Perspectives, in: id., (ed.), Civil Society. A Reader in History, Theory and Global Politics, Houndmills/New York 2005, p. 61 – 13 and p. 143 – 149.

[2] Cf. Alexander Smolar, Przygody społeczeństwa obywatelskiego, in: Ewa Nowicka/ Michał Chałubiński (ed.). Idee a urządzanie świata społecznego. Księga jubileuszowa dla Jerzego Szackiego. Warsaw 1999, p. 386–396, here p. 387.

circles and neo-conservatives. Both were looking in the East for a major ally in the ideological struggles being fought out in their own world."[3]

The aim of this paper is to trace the transnational career of the civil society concept back to its presumed origins in the oppositional movements of East Central Europe, throwing critical light on the contradiction noted by Aleksander Smolar between research to date and the experience horizon of contemporary witnesses. Taking the example of the People's Republic of Poland between 1968 and 1989, the course, conditions, and particularities of concept formation in East Central Europe are examined. An attempt is made, however, to set out the differences in how the concept is defined in Poland and Western Europe essential for any understanding of the Polish civil society discourse, and to analyse the empirical and theoretical consequences for further historical and social scientific research. Drawing on the original writings of the democratic opposition, light is to be cast on the background and specificities of the Polish discourse, and the so-called renaissance of the civil society concept subjected to critical review. The central argument pursued throughout is that the civil society concept exerted far less influence on the milieu of the democratic opposition in Poland and, above all, from a much later date than generally assumed.

II. "The Next Ideas Emerged on the March": Conditions and Phases of the Democratic Opposition in Poland

Among the most striking aspects of the Polish civil society discourse is its close association with the social practices of protagonists in circles of the democratic opposition. "The next ideas," as Adam Michnik put it, "emerged not infrequently 'on the march' and there was usually not enough time for theoretical generalisation."[4] The period from 1968 to 1989 in the People's Republic of Poland was marked not so much by stringent intellectual confrontation with the idea of civil society as, to quote participants, with the conscious and gradual "emergence of society as a subject of action." This process began with cultural appeals, proceeded to economic adjurations and finally political demands, culminating in a fundamentally new relationship between society and the state and in democratic system change in Poland. The concept and idea of civil society developed not before but in pursuit of this process, intermeshing with it and adding new intellectual perspectives to the potential for action in socialist societies that had been generated in Poland and abroad.

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[3] Ibid., p. 387. The Polish civil society discourse is much more likely to have been influenced by Karl Popper's concept of the open society than by Western European theory formation. Popper's "The Open Society and its Enemies" was published in Polish in 1987 in the so-called "second circulation" ("drugi obieg" the Polish term for samizdat) attracting a great deal of attention in the underground press critical of the regime, cf. Popper, Społeczeństwo otwarte. The term open society (społeczeństwo otwarte) is still used today by former dissidents like Adam Michnik in their as yet only partially met demands for an active society directed towards social participation and plurality, cf. Adman Michnik, in: Czego potrzebuje demokracja: idem., Wsciekłość i wstyd, Warschau 2005, p. 277–293, here p. 278.

[4] Cf. Adam Michnik, Takie czasy… Rzecz o kompromisie, London 1985, 1; Mazowiecki expressed himself similarly, in id., Powrót do najprostszych pytań, in: Więź, (1973) 2, p. 28–33, here p. 30.

The social and political scope that prefigured this potential was subject to varying conditions. In the case of Poland, at least three main phases can be identified in the development of democratic opposition and civil-society protest. The first was the period from *1968 to 1974* beginning with student protests in Warsaw triggered by cancellation of the classical drama "Dziady" by Adam Mickiewicz and the anti-Semitic campaign of the Gomułka government, a period which marked the start of Polish intellectuals' search for alternatives to 'totalitarian' socialism. Some 20,000 people of Jewish origin emigrated to the United States or Western Europe in 1968. However, what estranged intellectuals hitherto ideologically close to communism from the party and obliged them to abandon as illusory any notion that the political system could be reformed from within was the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia and suppression of the so-called "Prague Spring."[5] Leszek Kołakowski's essay "Theses on Hope and Hopelessness" (1971)[6] provides a graphic example of the developing search for alternative orientations and new values for left-wing politics and of the settlement of accounts with communism a number of formerly Marxist intellectuals felt obliged to undertake in the aftermath of 1968.

The final abandonment by intellectuals of reform efforts under the heading of "revisionism" in 1968 was paralleled by conflicts embracing the whole of society, which found expression in worker revolts against the economic reforms introduced in 1970 and drastic price increases, especially for food and daily consumer goods. On 14th December 1970 a strike began in the Gdańsk Lenin Shipyard that spread to the cities of Słupsk, Gdyńa and Elbląg, escalated with the shooting of a demonstrator, and swiftly developed into a revolt embracing both the Baltic coast and inland areas.[7] It culminated in December 1970 with the replacement of Gomułka by Edward Gierek[8] as first secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), who was, however, unable to maintain the brief improvement in the economic situation made possible by substantial aid in money and kind from the Kremlin.[9]

Gierek's initial policy of stronger liberalisation in cultural life was reversed during the second phase of democratic opposition formation in Poland – *between 1976 and 1980* – by a restrictive amendment to the constitution adopted unanimously by the Polish Sejm on 10th February 1976 with only the Catholic ZNAK member Stanisław Stomma abstaining. In addition to the monopoly of power granted the PZPR and the eradication of the separation of powers, which had been entrenched in the Polish constitution of 22nd July 1952, it laid down the socialist nature of the Polish state, the leading role of the Party, the close ties with the fraternal Soviet Union, and interdependence between civil rights and the performance of duties towards the fatherland. Protest initiatives by individual intellectuals – the "Letter of the

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[5] Cf. Andrzej Friszke, Opozycja polityczna w PRL, 1945–1980, London 1994, p. 303–308; Dariusz Gawin, Civil Society Discourses in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s, (in this Discussion Paper), p. 1–4; Jerzy Holzer, Solidarität. Die Geschichte einer freien Gewerkschaft in Polen, ed. Hans Henning Hahn, München 1985, p. 35–36.

[6] Cf. Leszek Kołakowski, Tezy o nadziei i beznadziejnośći, in: Kultura, 258 (1971) 6, p. 3–12.

[7] Cf. Jerzy Eisler, Zarys dziejów politycznych Polski, 1944–1989, Warzawa 1992, p. 114; Jerzy Holzer, Solidarität. Die Geschichte einer freien Gewerkschaft in Polen, ed. Hans Henning Hahn, München 1985, p. 37; Andrzej Friszke, Opozycja polityczna w PRL, 1945–1980, London 1994, p. 303–308.

[8] Edward Gierek (1913-2001) – from 1956 to 1970 member of the Central Committee of the PZPR and First Secretary of the PZPR from 1970 to 1980.

[9] Jerzy Eisler, Zarys dziejów politycznych Polski, 1944–1989, Warzawa 1992, p. 31.

59" of 5th July 1975, a petition signed by 101 personalities from cultural life of 31st January 1976, and various events organised by the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia (KIK) – were unable to prevent passage of the constitutional amendment. Nonetheless, the writings of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, for example, from the period 1975 to 1977 show how much one of the main topics of critical intellectuals had gained ground – namely the question of the protection of civil and human rights in Poland.[10]

Owing to steadily growing popular discontent and the brutal suppression of worker revolts in June 1976 in the industrial centres Radom, Płock and the Ursus tractor factory close by Warsaw, the topic of civil rights became even more urgent. The result was a growing understanding between intellectuals and workers, who since the mid-1970s began to organise themselves in what was at first an only small group of committed critics of the regime. 14 intellectuals, including the historian and educationalist Jacek Kuroń, the historian and literary critic Jan Józef Lipski, and the economist Edward Lipiński, founded the "Committee for the Defence of the Workers (Komitet Obrony Robotników – KOR)[11] on 23 September 1976, which was joined by Adam Michnik on 1st May 1977. Calling for observation of the Charter on Human Rights signed by Poland on 1st August 1975 in Helsinki, the committee stood up for the rights of demonstrating workers, provided material support for those arrested and their families and appealed to the government to release those detained. The emergence in the months that followed of the so-called "second circulation," a samizdat forum critical of the regime and accordingly independent of official institutions and not subjected to political censorship, boosted the work of the committee and extended its international reach. Underground periodicals like *Puls, Robotnik, Głos, Res Publica* and *Krytyka* and underground publishers like NOWA emerged.[12] At the same time, in January 1978, the "Society for Scientific Courses" (Towarzystwo Kursów Naukowych – TKN) was founded and the "Flying University" (Uniwersytet Latający) was revived, an institution with roots going back to the period of "organic work" during the division of Poland between 1795 and 1918. In the critical atmosphere of this slowly emerging milieu of active dissidence in Poland, Adam Michnik published his "New Evolutionism" in 1976, which within a brief space of time was to become a key text for the democratic opposition in Poland.[13] And it was in this climate that new worker strikes

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[10] Cf. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Chrześcijaństwo a prawa człowieka, in: Więź, (1978) 2, p. 5–15 and the texts that appeared in 1977 presented at a meeting of the Warsaw "Club of Catholic Intelligentsia" on the subject "The Christian and Human Rights" in: Editions du Dialogue (ed.), Chrześcijanie wobec praw człowieka, Paris 1980.

[11] On the history and radius of action of the KOR see above all Jan Józef Lipski, KOR. A History of the Workers' Defense Committee in Poland, 1976–1981, Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London 1985, espec.p. 50 ff.; Andrzej Jastrzebski (ed.), Dokumenty Komitetu Obrony Robotników i Komitetu Samoobrony Społecznej "KOR", Warszawa/ London 1994 and Helmut Fehr, Unabhängige Öffentlichkeit und soziale Bewegung. Fallstudien über Bürgerbewegungen in Polen und der DDR, Opladen 1996, p. 75 ff.

[12] Cf. Rudolf Jaworski/ Christian Lübke/ Michael G. Müller, Eine kleine Geschichte Polens, Frankfurt am Main 2000, p. 354; Jerzy Eisler, Zarys dziejów politycznych Polski, 1944–1989, Warzawa 1992, p. 131, p. 148–149 and p. 189; Andrzej Krajewski, Między współpracą a oporem. Twórcy kultury wobec systemu politycznego PRL, 1975–1980, Warszawa 2004, p. 439 ff; Jan Józef Lipski, KOR. A History of the Workers' Defense Committee in Poland, 1976–1981, Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London 1985, p. 11 and 208 ff.

[13] Adam Michnik, Le nouvel évolutionnisme, in: Pierre Kende/ Krzystof Pomian (ed.), 1956, Varsovie-Budapest. La deuxième révolution d'Octobre, Paris 1978, p. 201–214.

were launched in August 1980,[14] which reached a new level of escalation with the dismissal of the independent trade unionist Anna Walentowicz at the Gdańsk Lenin Shipyard. The strike committee convoked by the workers and headed by Lech Wałęsa, which had formulated "21 demands" calling on the government in particular to authorise a trade union independent of the party, improvements in labour law, and the restoration of civil rights, was advised by a staff of intellectuals, prominent among whom were Bronisław Geremek, Tadeusz Mazowiecki und Adam Michnik, and which had the support of the Catholic Church and the workers. An agreement, spectacular under socialist conditions, between the strikers and the regime was signed on 31ˢᵗ August 1980 by Lech Wałęsa and Mieczysław Jagielski[15] known as the "Gdańsk Social Accords" or "Gdańsk Agreement,"[16] under which the government promised to meet most of the workers' demands and to permit the establishment of a free trade union. On the suggestion of Karol Modzelewski[17] it was given the name *Solidarność*, and within a year had assembled a membership of some 10 million, about two-thirds of the working population of the country.[18]

A new change in the leadership of the PZPR marked the third important turning point and – *between 1981 and 1989* – the last main phase in the development of opposition in Poland. In September 1980, Gierek was relieved of all his offices and expelled from the party in the following year. In October 1981, replacing the interim Stanisław Kania, minister of defence General Jaruzelski[19] assumed the position of secretary of the PZPR central committee. After continuing conflicts between the government and *Solidarność*, which insisted on implementation of the promised improvements in labour law and civil rights, he imposed martial law on the People's Republic of Poland on 13ᵗʰ December 1981.[20] Forced underground politically, *Solidarność* consolidated civil-society modes of action and extended what had started with an economically motivated strike that had developed into a political confrontation between government and society into a nation-wide, non-violent, solidary

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[14] Cf. Apel KSS „KOR" do społeczeństwa w sprawie sytuacji gospodarczej, społecznej i moralnej w PRL, in: Zygmunt Hemmerling/ Marek Nadolski (ed.), Opozycja demokratyczna w Polsce, 1976–1980, Wybór dokumentów, Warszawa 1984, p. 502–507, esp. p. 505 ff (previously published in: Komunikat, (June 1979) 30, p. 4–7).

[15] Mieczysław Jegielski (1924–1997) – from 1959 member of the Central Committee of the PZPR, from 1959–1970 minister of agriculture and from 1970 to 1981 deputy prime minister of the People's Republic of Poland.

[16] Cf. Protokoll der Vereinbarung zwischen dem Regierungsausschuss und dem überbetrieblichen Streikkomitee vom 31. August 1980 in der Werft von Gdańsk (Danziger Abkommen), in: Barbara Büscher/ Ruth-Ursula Henning/ Gerd Koenen/ Dorota Leszczyńska/ Christian Semler/ Reinhold Vetter (eds.), „Solidarność". Die polnische Gewerkschaft „Solidarität" in Dokumenten, Diskussionen und Beiträgen 1980–1982, Köln 1983, p. 36–43.

[17] Karol Modzelewski (born 1937) – historian and active dissident in Poland since the 1960s.

[18] Cf. Timothy Garton Ash, The Polish Revolution New York 1984, p. 37 ff.; Maryjane Osa, Solidarity and Contention. Networks of Polish Opposition, London 2003, p. 142 ff; Melanie Tatur, Solidarność als Modernisierungsbewegung, Sozialstruktur und Konflikt in Polen, Frankfurt am Main/ New York 1989, p. 101 ff.. and especially Jerzy Holzer, Solidarität. Die Geschichte einer freien Gewerkschaft in Polen, edited by Hans Henning Hahn, München 1985, p. 110 ff.

[19] Wojciech Witold Jaruzelski (born 1923) – from 1956 general, from 1964 member of the Central Committee of the PZPR, from 1968 minister of defence and from 1981–1989 First Secretary of the PZPR.

[20] Cf. Jerzy Eisler, Zarys dziejów politycznych Polski, 1944–1989, Warzawa 1992, p. 175; Jerzy Holzer, Solidarität. Die Geschichte einer freien Gewerkschaft in Polen, herausgegeben von Hans Henning Hahn, München 1985, p. 387–408. An excellent, regionally organized overview of the martial law period in Poland is provided by Antoni Dudek (ed.), Stan Wojenny w Polsce. 1981–1983, Warszawa 2003. Informative from the perspective of those involved: Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Internowanie, London 1982.

campaign of resistance against the authoritarian regime.[21] It became involved in the underground press and the organisation of clandestine lectures, calling for prudence in what was referred to in Warsaw as the "Polish-Jaruzelski war".

After the government finally lifted martial law on 21 July 1983 – leaving the ban on *Solidarność* in place – the years to come were marked by massive economic problems, price hikes for basic foodstuffs, and a steady deterioration in the general standard of living. In view of the catastrophic economic situation and encouraged by Michail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost and perestroika*, the trade union organised a new wave of strikes in April 1988. Wałęsa put an end to the strike in August 1988 after a meeting with the minister of the interior Czesław Kiszczak,[22] at which the minister held out the prospect of revoking the ban on *Solidarność* and setting up a "round table". On 18th December 1988[23] 119 people, including members of *Solidarność*, the *Club of Catholic Intelligentsia* and independent experts established a *Citizens' Committee* (Komitet Obywatelski) headed by Wałęsa as an oppositional organisation. The "round table" talks, which began on 6th February 1989, involving 35 members of the opposition headed by Wałęsa and including Michnik, Geremek and Mazowiecki, came to an end on 5th April 1989 after nine weeks of negotiations with the signing of an agreement on political, social, and economic reform. Among the most important achievements of this agreement was the renunciation by the Communist Party of their monopoly of power, the gradual introduction of full popular sovereignty, political pluralism, free basic rights, democratic procedures for appointments to government and administrative positions, freely elected territorial administrations, the establishment of the Senate as the second legislative chamber after the Sejm, and the legalisation of all hitherto banned trade unions. In the election held on 4th June 1989, Wałęsa's oppositional Citizens' Committee made triumphal gains despite the quota arrangements that assigned 69 % of seats in the Sejm to the communists. With a voter turnout of 62 %, the opposition won 252 of 261 seats in the Polish Sejm, which confirmed the government of the first head of a democratic government in Poland on 12th September 1989 by a vote of 402.[24]

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[21] Cf. Wiktor Osiatyński, Rzeczpospolita obywateli, Warszawa 2004, p. 130 ff. On the underground activities of Solidarność see Grzegorz Ekiert/ Jan Kubik, Rebellious Civil Society. Popular Protest and Democratic Consolidation in Poland, 1989-1993, Ann Arbor, p. 41; John K. Glenn, Framing Democracy: Dzieje Solidarnośći w podziemiu (1981–1989), in: idem, Solidarność. XX lat historii, Warszawa 2000, p. 137–274 and Hartmut Kühn, Das Jahrzehnt der Solidarność. Die politische Geschichte Polens 1980–1990, Berlin 1999, p. 301 ff.

[22] Czesław Kiszczak (born 1925) – from 1981 to 1990 minister of the interior and from 1986 to 1990 member of the politburo in Poland.

[23] Cf. Karol B. Janowski, Źródła i przebieg zmiany politycznej w Polsce (1980–1989), Toruń 2003, p. 194; Jerzy Holzer, Der Kommunismus in Europa, Politische Bewegung und Herrschaftssystem, Frankfurt am Main 1998, p. 203 ff.

[24] Cf. ibid. P. 347; Jörg H. Hoensch, Geschichte Polens, 3rd ed., Stuttgart 1998, p. 249 ff and Andrzej Friszke, Polska. Losy Państwa i Narodu, Warszawa 2003, p. 438 ff.

III. In Search of Suitable Addressees: Key Texts and Guiding Concepts in the Polish Civil Society Discourse

Any endeavour to provide a representative overview of the intellectual basis for the civil society discourse in Poland must include at least three personalities: the medievalist and former foreign minister Bronisław Geremek, the lawyer and first democratically elected prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and the historian, journalist, and chief editor of the *Gazeta Wyborcza* Adam Michnik. As intellectuals, as members or supporters of oppositional organisations like the *Committee for the Defence of Workers* and the *Society for Scientific Courses*, as advisors to the national trade union *Solidarność* founded in 1980, and as negotiating partners of the communist government in the round table talks in 1989, Geremek, Mazowiecki and Michnik are among the figures regarded by both academe and the public in Poland and abroad as being the most important architects of system change in Poland.[25] And they are probably most frequently associated with the renaissance of civil society in the region.[26]

The text most frequently mentioned and translated, and hence probably best known is by Adam Michnik. It appeared in 1976, initially in French, under the title "New Evolutionism." In this essay, Michnik proposes a new, "evolutionist" programme of opposition to the communist regime. The focal point of his idea is the "conviction that the appropriate addressee of an evolutionist programme should be independent public opinion and not the totalitarian power."[27] The focus is no longer on the party as torchbearer but on Polish society, which is drawn into responsibility for the political future of the country and the humanisation of the socialist system. Michnik notes that a dominant role in this process must be assumed by the Polish workers who "through their unyielding and consistent attitude [had] already forced the government to make a number of spectacular concessions".[28] The author thus manages for the first time to redirect the focus of reform towards self-organised, social protest, providing the programmatic foundations for a trend that had begun to emerge historically with the student and worker unrest in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, the term civil society does not occur in Michnik's text. He used it for the first time in 1981 in his essay "Minął rok"[29] (AYear has Passed). With reference to *Solidarność*, founded a year previously, he

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[25] Biographical information of the intellectuals mentioned are to be found in the following publications: Andrzej Friszke, Art. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, in: Antoni Dudek (ed.), Opozycja w PRL. Słownik biograficzny, 1956–89, tom I, Warszawa 2000, p. 230–233; Marek Kunicki–Goldfinger, Art. Bronisław Geremek, in: id.., p. 95–98 sowie Jan Skorzyński, Art. Adam Michnik, in: id.. p. 234–237.

[26] Cf. inter alia Helmut Fehr, Eliten und Zivilgesellschaft in Ostmitteleuropa. Polen und die Tschechische Republik, in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, (2004) 5–6, p. 48–54, here p. 48, 50 und 52; Winfried Thaa, Zivilgesellschaft – ein schwieriges Erbe aus Ostmitteleuropa, in: Osteuropa, 54 (2004) 5–6, p. 196–215, here p. 198 and finally: Jürgen Kocka, Civil Society: Some Remarks on the Career of a Concept, in: Ben-Rafael Eliezer/ Yitzhak Sternberg (eds.), Comparing Modernities. Pluralism Versus Homogenity. Essay in Homage to Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Leiden/Boston 2005, p. 141–47, here p. 143–144.

[27] Cf. Adam Michnik, Nowy Ewolucjonizm, in: id. Szanse polskiej Demokracji. Artykuły i eseje, London 1984, 77–87, here p. 84.

[28] Ibid., p. 84.

[29] Cf.. Adam Michnik, Minął rok, in: id. Szanse polskiej Demokracji. Artykuły i eseje, London 1984, p. 69-74, here p. 69.

wrote: "In Poland for the first time in the history of a communist regime, a *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* has been reconstructed and a compromise found with the state."[30]

After Adam Michnik, Tadeusz Mazowiecki was the next to adopt the term, using the French expression *société civile*. In an article published in German in the *Wiener Journal* under the title "Europe – Considered from This Side and That," Mazowiecki, in a similar manner to Michnik, sums up the developments of 1980/81 as a process of establishing a civil society: "The experience of August 1980, which was the most important political experience of my life, consisted in extending the boundaries of the possible. ... This took place not because we envisaged assuming power but because we created scope for the self-determination of society."[31] According to the author, the agreements that were concluded in the summer of 1980 between government and society "became, as it were, a second constitution, a constitution agreed with society, which entrenched the possibilities and rights that had been won."[32] The social situation of the Polish population, he claimed, had improved continuously since 1956. Mazowiecki writes that "1956, 1968, 1970, and 1980 are milestones in social conflict between society and government in Poland. They can be regarded as isolated outbreaks of dissatisfaction, despair, or protest; a sort of struggle again enforced fate, which did nothing to change the fundamental impotence against this fate. But this series of dates can also be seen differently, as thresholds crossed on the way out of impotence, as a process of awakening and growth towards a 'société civile', a society of citizens."[33] In the view of Adam Michnik and Bronisław Geremek, the most important constants in this process were active resistance against the socialist system and the struggle for "awareness, freedom, and independence."[34] In 1984, Michnik wrote that "it was a conflict between two worlds: the *ancien régime* was under persistent pressure from a society that had come back to life."[35] "The purpose of 'Solidarność' in its spontaneous development", he continued, "was the reconstruction of societal ties and self-organisation to guarantee and protect labour, civil, and national rights."[36] What was involved was a social movement, an institution that "was a fundamental element of the developing democracy" in Poland, which combined the call for "reform of the market with the ethos of egalitarianism" and which "formulated the traditional left-wing idea of social self government in the language of national solidarity."[37] In 1987 Tadeusz Mazowiecki explained why such an institution mobilising ten million Polish citizens against the state had been referred to as a *société civile*: "If I have said there is a 'société civile' in Poland, the import of

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[30] Ibid., p. 69.

[31] Cf. ibid., p. 69 and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Europa – von dieser und jener Seite betrachtet, in: id., Partei nehmen für die Hoffnung. Über Moral in der Politik, Geleitwort von Manfred Seidler, ed. with an afterword by Georg Ziegler, Freiburg/ Basel/ Wien 1990, p. 166–175, here p. 172.

[32] Ibid. p. 172.

[33] Ibid., p. 170.

[34] Cf. Adam Michnik, Minął rok, in: id. Szanse polskiej Demokracji. Artykuły i eseje, London 1984, p. 69–74, here p. 70; id., Takie czasy… Rzecz o kompromisie, London 1985, p. 9 sowie Bronisław Geremek, Frieden und Menschenrechte, in: Frank Herterich/ Christian Semler (eds.), Ostmitteleuropäische Reflexionen, Frankfurt am Main 1989, p. 65–69, here p. 68.

[35] Cf. Adam Michnik, Minął rok, in: id. Szanse polskiej Demokracji. Artykuły i eseje, London 1984, p. 69-74, here p. 71 and id., Polska wojna. List z Białołęki, in: id., Szanse polskiej demokracji. Artykuły i eseje, London 1984, p. 23-35, here p. 25.

[36] Cf.. Adam Michnik, Minął rok, in: id. Szanse polskiej Demokracji. Artykuły i eseje, London 1984, p. 69-74, here p. 69.

[37] Ibid., p. 73.

the term lies in the dimensions of the phenomenon. They show that we are dealing not with insignificant splitter groups but with a far-reaching societal reality. The reason is to be found in the events of 1980/91, but also in everything that they left behind. In the first place, there was an irreversible shift in awareness. Then there were a number of official or unofficial associations or social action groups which almost always have to be seen in conjunction with 'Solidarność'."[38]

While these texts by Polish intellectuals from the 1980s can be regarded as more of a personal attempt to find the language for expressing a fundamentally new relationship between state and society than an elaborated theoretical treatment of the *civil society* concept and phenomenon in Poland, their endeavours take on a semantically and theoretically much sharper profile in the early 1990s. In the course of various lectures which contemporary witnesses of the democratic transformation process were invited to hold in Western European countries, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Bronisław Geremek, in particular, began to develop something in the way of a history of the *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* concept in Poland. During the 93rd Bergdorf Round Table on 13th and 14th July at Schloss Bellevue in Berlin, Tadeusz Mazowiecki declared that the concept of civil society, "although it has a much older genealogy, [was experiencing] a renaissance in the antitotalitarian, democratic opposition."[39] He described the constitution of a civil society in Poland as follows: "Everything was focused on one endeavour: to make possible what to many so-called 'realists' seemed impossible, namely to gradually rescue certain fields from the totalitarian system, to replace them by a 'civil society', and to oblige the already tottering system to accept society as a partner."[40] "What was behind this," he stressed, "was of course the vision of reforming this system – the vision of building up a democracy."[41] At a conference on The Idea of a Civil Society at the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina on 21st to 23rd November 1991, Geremek argued in similar vein in a paper entitled "Civil Society and the Present Age."[42] "The concept of civil society, understood as a program of resistance to communism, first appeared in Poland during the late 1970s and early 1980s, primarily in conjunction with the Solidarity movement."[43] But, he continued, the concept had much older roots, pointing to the tradition of a civil society directed against the state in the 18th century, to reception of the concept by Marx in the 19th century, and the reinterpretation of the Marxist view of civil society by Antonio Gramsci in the 20th century. Thus, in 1991 for the first time, one of the intellectuals under study placed the social utopia developed in the Polish democratic opposition in the tradition of the historical civil society discourse reaching back to

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[38] Cf. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Europa – von dieser und jener Seite betrachtet, in: id., Partei nehmen für die Hoffnung. Über Moral in der Politik, Geleitwort von Manfred Seidler, ed. with an afterword by Georg Ziegler, Freiburg/ Basel/ Wien 1990, p. 166–175, here p. 173.

[39] Cf. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Einige Thesen über die Schwierigkeiten beim Aufbau der Demokratie, in: 93. Bergedorfer Gesprächskreis am 13. und 14. Juli 1991 im Schloss Bellevue, Berlin 1991, p. 10–19, here p. 12.

[40] Ibid., p. 10.

[41] Ibid., p. 11.

[42] The proceedings of the conference were published by the National Humanities Center, cf.: Bronisław Geremek, Civil Society and the Present Age, in: National Humanities Center (ed.), The Idea of a civil society, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina 1992, p. 11–18. Geremeks paper also appeard in 1992 under the title Civil Society Then and Now, in: Journal of Democracy, 3 (1992) 2, p. 3–12. The latter version is quoted here.

[43] Ibid. p. 4.

Georg Friedrich Hegel. "Throughout all of recent history" – according to Geremek – "the concept of civil society seems to have been endowed with a life of its own. It has gone through various fluctuations, certainly, but has remained continually with us, at least in thought or political imagination. It has taken on its greatest power, however, during times of direct confrontation with the communist system.[44] "The magic of the word 'citizen' in Poland and Czechoslovakia" – he explained – "came from the widespread sense that it referred less to one's subordination to the state and its laws than to one's membership in an authentic community, a community whose essence was summed up in the term 'civil society'"[45] Such an understanding of the concept of citizen, Geremek claimed, also found expression in the political talks between government and opposition in April 1989: "In the Roundtable talks of 1989 one side went under the name 'partygovernmental', while the other side was called – and called itself – 'societal'. [...] This meant that politics have prevailed over geometry, squaring 'roundtable' to give it two opposing sides. The longstanding contradiction between Poland's communist state and its non-communist society had at last found expression in the language of politics".[46] In conclusion, Geremek predicted that: "The concept of civil society will retain its validity, both as an instrument of analysis and as a program of pragmatic action."[47]

However, some years were to pass before the concept found its way into the political and social parlance of Poland. For only in the mid-1990s are first entries on the concept *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* to be found in dictionaries and reference works on the Polish language, political theory, and social and political sciences.[48] In 1995 the term occurs for the first time in the new edition of the *Encyklopedia Popularna* under the heading *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* followed by *społeczeństwo cywilne* in brackets.[49] It was defined as a "society in which intervention by the political authorities in the life of the citizens is reduced to a minimum" and in which "the citizens create on their own initiative forms of economic, societal, and cultural life in keeping with their needs."[50] In the 1996 edition it is also equated with *społeczeństwo cywilne (civil society)* and derived from the political thinking of Cicero, Hegel, and Marx – without, however, mentioning the tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment.[51] According to the author, the term had been revived in political parlance in the 1980s and 1990s owing to its use by "political scientists" who had stressed "the need for the self-organisation of citizens and the limitation of government influence on their lives." It has since been used more fre-

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[44] Ibid., p. 6.

[45] Ibid., p. 10.

[46] Ibid., p. 7.

[47] Ibid., p. 12.

[48] The two components of the term – society (społeczeństwo) and citizenship (obywatelstwo) – had been introduced in their present-day meanings in the 18th century, cf. Maciej Janowski. Gab es im 19. Jahrhundert in Polen eine Zivilgesellschaft? Erste Überlegungen, in: Arnd Bauerkämper (ed.), Die Praxis der Zivilgesellschaft. Akteure, Handeln und Strukturen im internationalen Vergleich, Frankfurt a.M. 2003, p. 293–316, here p. 296. Nevertheless, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the concept was not yet among the basic categories of social and political thinking in Poland.

[49] Art. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie, in: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN (ed.), Encyklopedia Popularna PWN, Warschau 1995, p. 597.

[50] Cf. ibid. p. 597.

[51] Art. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie, in: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN (ed.), Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN, Warschau 1996, p. 970.

quently "in thinking about East Central Europe" to denote "action aimed at overcoming totalitarianism."[52] An entry with the same wording but including further references is to be found in the 2004 edition of the *Wielka Encyklopedia*.[53] The 2000 *Leksykon Politologii* limits itself to a comprehensive history-of-ideas treatment of the origins of the concept from Roman and Greek Antiquity to the present day, pointing to the contemporary use of the term as an analytical category in explaining the collapse of real socialism and the role played in this process by social action groups and organisations.[54] The *Encyklopedia Politologii* defines *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* as a "philosophical and sociological-political science category that assigns the element of nationality or citizenship to the forms of community life."[55] The author derives this category from Aristotelian theory and the thinking of John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, Georg Friedrich Hegel, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Karl Marx before referring to the contemporary use of the concept. It is the specification of "an ideal of social life in the community"[56] based on the free choice of the ways and means of attaining goals by individuals and their subjectivity – in equality before the law as regards both rights and duties. This *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* constitutes itself in "spontaneous and – in relation to government institutions – autonomous initiatives and activities of everyday life" on the basis of voluntary organisations embracing "various spheres of individual and collective life," in the context of which "the articulation and harmonisation of interests in obedience to recognised rules and preparation for political activity is made possible," the latter being based on the principles of "pluralism and democracy" and the elements of "consensus and compromise"[57] governed by law that are inherent in these principles. The treatment of *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* in the 2001 *Mała Encyklopedia Wiedzy Politycznej* takes a different view in so far as it underlines not only democracy as the constitutional basis but also stresses the importance of private property and free competition in the economic field for the operation of civil society.[58] The only contribution that directly addresses the role of East Central European dissidents in connection with the rediscovery of the concept is to be found in the Polish edition of *Słownik myśli politycznej* by Roger Scruton.[59] The concept *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* is introduced together with its English equivalent (*civil society*), dating its popularisation back to the 18th and 19th centuries in association with Hegel and Marx, and relating the re-appearance of the concept in contemporary usage to the democratic opposition in East Central Europe. According to the author of the article, the opposition propagated the ideal of a civil society in the face of the communist governments of East Central Europe based on voluntary engagement and spontaneous activities, and exempted as

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[52] Cf. ibid. p. 970.

[53] Art. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie, in: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN (ed.), Encyklopedia Popularna PWN, Warschau 2004, p. 950.

[54] Art. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie, in: Andrzej Antoszewski (ed.), Leksykon Politologii, Breslau 2000, p. 546–549.

[55] Art. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie, in: Wiesław Skrzydło/ Mark Chmaj (ed.), Ustroje Polityczne, in: Mark Zmigrodzki (ed.), Encyklopedia Politologii, vol. II, Zakamycze 2000, p. 374–375.

[56] Ibid., p. 374.

[57] Ibid., p. 374–375.

[58] Art. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie, in: Mark Chmaj/ Wojciech Sokoła (ed.), Mała Encyklopedia Wiedzy Politycznej, 2nd ed., Torn 2001, p. 352.

[59] Art. Społeczeństwo obywatelskie, in: Roger Scruton, Słownik myśli politycznej , Warschau 2002, p. 381.

far as possible from interference by the state. It is, he claims, a vision of a depoliticised society.[60]

IV.   Society versus the State: Premises and Paradoxes in the Development of the Civil Society Concept in Poland

Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato conclude their studies on civil society in Poland with the remark that "the lack of clarity regarding the type of civil society that is to be constructed or reconstructed" is paradigmatic for the Polish case.[61] This is likely to be true for the period under study – 1968 to 1989 – even though the authors are concerned less with any failure to meet a normatively charged ideal of civil society than with its not unusual nature in the light of transformation processes such as those Poland has experienced over the past twenty years. Not only many former dissidents in Poland dissatisfied with the state of society in their country[62] but also researchers repeatedly have in past years criticised the internally antipluralist structures of *Solidarność* as the main fault of the trade union and the greatest obstacle to the establishment of a stable, post-communist civil society after 1989.[63] However, Wolfgang Merkel and Hans-Joachim Lauth have rightly stressed that the structures of civil societies in an authoritarian system are usually hierarchical and oriented on homogeneity to enable them to operate across cleavages in their efforts to liberalise the regime. This characteristic is hence not evidence of "non-civil society behaviour" but a strategic functional element in a dynamic understanding of civil society at the given stage of transformation, which, however, needs to be overcome at later stages. If this has been slow to happen in Poland, the particularities of the Polish conception of civil society are partly to blame. In past years, the fundamental anti-state thrust of Polish civil society – until 1989 not only the most important driving force of the democratic opposition but also an axis that, in view of the historical experience of the Polish nation, had offered sufficient points of departure for diverging societal interest groups – has often proved to be a problematic constant on the Polish road to democracy.[64] And critical re-

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[60] Ibid., p. 381.

[61] Cf. Jean L. Cohen/ Andrew Arato, Civil Society and Political Theory, 4th ed., Cambridge /London 1994, p. 33.

[62] No-one has better expressed the disappointment of Polish dissidents about the state of society after 1989 than Adam Michnik, cf. id. Wyznania nawróconego dysydenta, in: id., Wyznania nawróconego dysydenta. Spotkania z ludźmi, Szkice 1991–2001, Warschau 2003, p. 247–262, esp. p. 251 ff. (previously published in: Gazeta Wyborcza, 22.–23. December 2001). In similar vein: id., Die zweite Phase der Revolution in Polen, in: id., Der lange Abschied vom Kommunismus, Hamburg 1992, p. 15–86, here p. 66 ff and Jacek Kuroń, Polityk zamiast teściowej?, in: Gazeta Wyborcza, 1 February 1993, p. 4.

[63] Cf. Michael Carpenter, Civil Society or Nation? Re-evaluating Solidarity Ten Years after the Revolution, in: Polish Sociological Review, 127 (1999) 3, p. 333–351, here p. 338 ff, see also: John K. Glenn, Framing Democracy: Civil Society and Civic Movements in Eastern Europe, Stanford 2001, p. 194 ff.

[64] On the problems of system change in Poland and the persistent lack of a democratically consolidated civil society, see Gerhard Besier, Jedes Land ein "Sonderfall." Transformationsprozess und postkommunistische Parteien, Deutschland und Osteuropa nach 1989, in: Halbjahresschrift für südosteuropäische Geschichte, Literatur und Politik, 17 (2005) 1, p. 5–12; Klaus Ziemer, Die Konsolidierung der polnischen Demokratie in den neunziger Jahren, in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, (1998) 6–7, 2 p. 9–38, esp. p. 35 ff.; Andrzej Antoszewski, Społeczeństwo obywatelskie a proces konsolidacji demokracji, in: Andrzej Czajowski/ Leszek Sobkowiak (eds.), Studia z teorii polityki, vol. 3, Breslau 2000, p. 7–23, here p. 20–21 and from

search with an empirical and theoretical interest in the peculiarities of system change in East Central Europe should not ignore this basic orientation of civil society "against" the state.

The players in the Polish civil society discourse we have mentioned were well aware of these particularities. Conceptualising a dichotomy between a liberal-democratic understanding of civil society and a civil society developed from within a totalitarian system, Tadeusz Mazowiecki repeatedly pointed out that civil society in a democratic country is "something natural, which does not stand in opposition to but alongside the state while nevertheless pervading it."[65] In a totalitarian system, by contrast, the concept of civil society is quite different in nature: "This was the sphere that had been rescued from the omnipotence of the state and in fundamental opposition to the state. Because we were unable to recognise this state as our own, we had to organise ourselves against this state. Such complete self-organisation was, of course, not possible. Nonetheless, precisely this 'civil society' was a widespread form of democratic opposition as it emerged in the 1970s and 1980s.[66] But, as all three intellectuals emphasise, the sphere of civil society action that had developed in Poland with the advent of *Solidarność* could by no means be regarded as established and consolidated in the political structures of post-communist Poland: "The civil society of 1980 was the projection into the future of a vision that rested upon an awesome emotional unity. The civil society of more than ten years later cannot and should not base itself on emotions, but on the building of carefully nurtured institutions; on the practical realization of ethical values; and on the involvement of the greatest possible numbers of people in public life. The main task now is constructing democratic mechanisms of stability, such as constitutional checks and balances; civic education in the spirit of respect for law; and the encouragement of citizen activism. Civil society does not act in opposition to the democratic state, but cooperates with it. It no longer has to be a kind of 'parallel polis', but now can simply be part of the polis."[67] In order to survive, Polish civil society had therefore to be repositioned in a changing mutual relationship between state and society. Tadeusz Mazowiecki stresses that "'civil society' as it is understood in democratic countries, namely as a certain societal reality, must develop anew. It is not and cannot be a mere new edition of the old anti-totalitarian 'civil society'."[68] "Relations between independent institutions and societal activities undertaken in this sphere are," according to Adam Michnik, "of fundamental importance for the present and future. What is needed is a pluralist range of attitudes and a common understanding, grounded in respect, of the indispensability of differing forms of resistance and engagement. Otherwise we – as a society – risk losing a common language."[69] In addition to the anti-state thrust of Polish civil

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a quantitative perspective: Andrzey Juros/ Ewa Leś/ Sławomir Nałęcz/ Izabela Rybka/ Marek Rymsza/ Jan Jakub Wygnański, From Solidarity to Subsidiarity: The Nonprofit Sector in Poland, in: Annette Zimmer/ Eckhard Priller (eds.), Future of Civil Society. Making Central European Nonprofit Organizations Work, Wiesbaden 2004, p. 557-599, esp. p. 564 ff.

[65] Cf. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Einige Thesen über die Schwierigkeiten beim Aufbau der Demokratie, in: 93. Bergedorfer Gesprächskreis am 13. und 14. Juli 1991 im Schloss Bellevue, Berlin 1991, p. 10–19, here p. 12.

[66] Ibid., p. 13.

[67] Cf. Bronisław Geremek, Civil Society Then and Now, in: Journal of Democracy, 3 (1992) 2, p. 3–12, here p. 12.

[68] Cf. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Einige Thesen über die Schwierigkeiten beim Aufbau der Demokratie, in: 93. Bergedorfer Gesprächskreis am 13. und 14. Juli 1991 im Schloss Bellevue, Berlin 1991, p. 10–19, here p. 13.

[69] Cf. Adam Michnik, Uwagi o opozycji i sytuacji kraju, in: id. Szanse polskiej Demokracji. Artykuły i eseje, London 1984, p. 88–92, here p. 89 (previously published in: Biuletyn Informacyjny, 33 (1979) 7).

society, this language displayed three other characteristics essential to understanding the Polish discourse. The first is the tardy and to some extent extremely disparate usage and interpretation of the civil society concept by Polish contemporary witnesses; the second is the consistent equation of the concepts *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* and *społeczeństwo cywilne* in all works of reference; and third – with one exception – the equally consistent ignoring of the economic sphere in discussing the action logic of civil society. How do these aspects fit in with the history of the civil society concept in socialist Poland?

As expected, the fact that two of the three intellectuals under study adopted the concept *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* only in the late 1980s, significantly choosing the English or French term and using it as an analytical category for treating the collapse of communism, is in surprising contradiction to the research literature quoted at the outset and the current thesis that *civil society* had been a goal and guiding principle of the Polish democratic opposition since the 1970s. It is particularly striking that the increasing use of the civil society concept by Bronisław Geremek and Tadeusz Mazowiecki coincides with an increase in the number of international conferences and symposiums which began to pay greater attention in the late 1980s to the topic of civil society in reaction to the political upheavals taking place in East Central Europe. The civil society concept seems to have offered not only former dissidents, who thus gained a forum for presenting their interpretation of system change in Poland, but also their interlocutors in Western Europe and the United States a vanishing point in the new perspective on the possibilities of societal engagement and a terminological point of departure for communicating the differing experience with the subject matter gathered in both parts of Europe. For it was only with this growing international interest and in the context of the international debates on the subject that Geremek and Mazowiecki began to recognise the English and French terminology as the semantic and analytically logical denotation of their experience with the *Solidarność* trade union. The civil society concept thus spread in Poland in the late 1980s, at a time when in Western Europe and the United States first studies on the renaissance of civil society in East Central Europe – for instance the early research by Andrew Arato and John Keane – were being undertaken and were beginning to feed into a post-Marxist discussion on the future of the socialist idea in Europe.[70] The Polish emigrant Zbigniew Pełczyński, teaching in Oxford, intervened in the debate with his book *The State and Civil Society*,[71] in which he sought to fructify the Hegelian distinction between state and civil society (*Staat* and *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) for the contemporary discussion. Reviewing the book in 1985, John Keane emphasised that "the current revival of interest in this politically vital subject cannot take the form of a simple revival; it must look beyond both Marx *and* Hegel"[72] "To speak in their language 18th and 19th century theories of civil society and the state, including Hegel's, must today be *aufgehoben*: preserved and yet transformed into a more complex and openly democratic understanding of how to limit or eradicate the old and new forms of authoritarian power presently threatening civil and political liberties in both

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[70] Cf. Andrew Arato, Civil Society against the State: Poland 1980–1981, in: Telos, (1981) 47, p. 23–47; id., Empire versus Civil Society: Poland 1981–82, in: Telos, (1981–82) 50, p. 19–48; John Keane, Despotism and Civil Society, in: id. (ed.), Civil Society and the State. New European Perspectives, 2 ed., London 1998, p. 35-72.

[71] Cf. Zbigniew A. Pełczyński (ed.), The State and Civil Society. Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy, Cambridge 1984.

[72] Cf. John Keane, Hegel against Marx, in: New Society, (August 1985), p. 237–238.

halves of Europe"[73] When in 1986/87 a first scientific project headed by Tadeusz Płużański at the Polish Academy of Science began to investigate the revival of the civil society concept from the perspective of the history of ideas, it was able to draw on the results of this research – Hegel's, Marx', and Gramsci's readings of civil society were analysed with reference to the works of Zbigniew Pełczyński, John Keane und Norberto Bobbio and fed into the conceptualisation of a *społeczeństwo obywatelskie socjalizmu* (civil society in socialism).[74] As defined by project researchers, it includes all workers, i.e., all people involved in the production of tangible and intangible assets as well as those who participate indirectly – via authorized agents – in the means of production and social property, and who are located within a sphere based on civil liberties and democratic modes of action beyond the reach of intervention by the state.[75] In a manner probably other than expected, John Keane's plea for a new understanding of Hegelian and Marxian civil society has thus been met. At the same time, Geremek's und Mazowiecki's efforts since the late 1980s to consider the confrontation between the authoritarian state and Polish society from the viewpoint and in continuity with the historical tradition of civil society thinking was also able to draw on a discourse that had developed since the early 1980s in mutual interaction between Western and Eastern Europe. In sum, the concept of civil society allowed Polish intellectuals to join in this transnational discourse, to find common terminological ground for Eastern and Western European politicians and intellectuals interested in social reform, and hence to catch up with Western Europe in reform-oriented communication as had been qualitatively impossible prior to 1989.[76]

In all, it is evident that the context of discussion that developed between Eastern and Western European intellectuals in the late 1980s played no less a role in consolidating the *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* concept in contemporary Polish usage than the very sporadic use of the term by the democratic opposition prior to 1989 is likely to have done. A period that had a particularly strong influence on this process began with the proclamation of martial law in December 1981. Not only the interest that had rapidly grown in Western Europe since the early 1980s but also the second aspect of the Polish concept – the synonymous use of the terms *społeczeństwo obywatelskie* and *społeczeństwo cywilne* – are presumably to be attributed to this period.[77] In the writings of Adam Michnik it is clear that it was in this phase of

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[73] Ibid., p. 238.

[74] Cf. Tadeusz Płużański, Społeczeństwo obywatelskie sozjalizmu. Uwagi o modelu, in: Studia Filozoficzne, 262 (1987) 9, p. 125–139; Józef Orzeł, Relacja pomiędzy państwem a społeczeństwem obywatelskim u Hegla i Marksa, in: Studia Filozoficzne, 262 (1987) 9, p. 81–96 and Eugeniusz Górski, Kategoria społeczeństwa obywatelskiego u Gramsciego i jej recepcja, in: Studia Filozoficzne, 262 (1987) 9, p. 97–110.

[75] Cf. Tadeusz Płużański, Społeczeństwo obywatelskie sozjalizmu. Uwagi o modelu, in: Studia Filozoficzne, 262 (1987) 9, p. 125–139, here p. 125 ff.

[76] The lack of a common language for left-wing intellectuals in Eastern and Western Europe has been graphically illustrated by John Keane with the example of a conversation with Czech dissidents, cf. John Keane, In the Heart of Europe, in: id., Democracy and Civil Society, 2nd ed., London 1998, p. 191–212, esp. p. 194 ff.

[77] This is also pointed out by a number of Polish authors, who, however, like Forbrig, also stress that the societal visions of Eastern Central European dissidents up to 1980/81 and far beyond were not labelled społeczeństwo obywatelskie or społeczeństwo cywilne but simply społeczeństwo (society) at times with the added epithet independent, alternative, or conscious, cf. Kazimierz Wójcicki, The Reconstruction of Society, in: Telos (1981) 47, p. 98-104, here p. 102 ff., Eugeniusz Górski, Rozważanie o społeczeństwie obywatelskim. I inne studia z historii idei, Warschau 2003, esp. p. 9 and Jerzy Szacki (ed.), Ani książę, ani kupiec – obywatel. Idea społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w myśli współczesnej, Krakau 1997, esp. p. 12 and 18.

recent Polish history, marked by the intensified militarization of the entire country, that Polish dissidents first began to add the attribute *civil* to the term hitherto used for society. In May 1982, Michnik wrote in his essay "O oporze" (On Resistance): "Today Poland needs no terrorism. It needs a broad underground movement with the aim of reconstructing *civil society* (*społeczeństwo cywilne*), a movement that embraces cities and villages, factories and educational institutions, universities and secondary schools. The underground movement 'S' must have so broad a scope."[78] According to Michnik, such an underground movement must not be based on an institutional structure and promise a "world without conflict"; it must dispose of "a moral ethos, veracity, pluralist action imperatives, and solidarity."[79] "I think [the underground] should offer a programme of practical activities with the aim of reform, a programme of social self-defence, a contact with authentic culture and its standards of value, collaboration in a real civic and intellectual life."[80] Drawing his conclusions from the historical experience of Polish society in the light of events like the suppression of the Poznań Uprising in 1956, the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, and a number of failed revolts during the period of Poland's division, Adam Michnik underlined that such a programme can emanate only from a *civil society*. The meaning of the adjective *civil* in this context is also to be understood not purely with reference to ordinary citizens and their concerns. Reference is rather to the *civilian* aspect, namely in contradistinction to a regime felt to be "non-civil/civilian," which in the eyes of Michnik "has declared war on its own society"[81] and which nevertheless needs to be fought by *civil/civilian* means, in other words peaceful and non-violent means.[82] That the expression used by Michnik in 1982 only came to be noted at international conferences and in international journals in English and French and taken up by Polish intellectuals like Geremek and Mazowiecki is a further indication of the importance of the transnational dimension in the history of the civil society concept in the People's Republic of Poland.

The third characteristic element in the development of the Polish concept – the failure to take account of the relationship between society and the economy in both the writings of Polish dissidents and in current Polish definitions of civil society – confirms a peculiarity to which a number of social scientists had already drawn attention. "On the whole," according to Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, "in neither Latin America nor Eastern Europe has the 'interface' of civil society and market economy been adequately analyzed."[83] Jerzy Szacki and Lech Mażewski, too, describe the relationship of the democratic opposition to the economy as the key weakness in oppositional thinking. Mażewski claims that the failure to address market economy mechanisms and to question the socialist planned economy persisted

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[78] Vgl. Adam Michnik, O oporze, in: id., Szanse polskiej Demokracji. Artykuły i eseje, London 1984, p. 93-109, here p. 102.

[79] Ibid., p. 108.

[80] Ibid., p. 108.

[81] Vgl. Adam Michnik, Polska wojna. List z Białołęki, in: id., Szanse polskiej demokracji. Artykuły i eseje, London 1984, p. 23-35, here p. 23

[82] Górski associates Michnik's first use of the adjective civil also with the idea of "civil courage", which Michnik exhorted society under martial law to display in order to continue its struggle against the repressive, now militarised state, cf. Eugeniusz Górski, Rozważanie o społeczeństwie obywatelskim. I inne studia z historii idei, Warschau 2003, p. 60.

[83] Cf. Jean L. Cohen/ Andrew Arato, Civil Society and Political Theory, 4 ed., Cambridge/ London 1994, p. 77, 67 and 78 and in similar vein: Winfried Thaa, Zivilgesellschaft – ein schwieriges Erbe aus Ostmitteleuropa, in: Osteuropa, 54 (2004) 5–6, p. 196–215, p. 204 und Timothy Garton Ash, The Uses of Adversity. Essays on the Fate of Central Europe, London 1999, p. 274.

in sections of the Polish opposition until well into the 1980s. Debates addressing this gap were concerned not with eliminating the planned economy but with involving the population in shaping it.[84] Jerzy Szacki described the situation as follows: "In the East … civil society appeared as an ideological creation. What is more, it focused on the creation of a new moral and social order whose economic foundations were highly unclear."[85] This phenomenon had once given Jan Kubik cause to speak of an "imperfect civil society"[86] in pre-1989 Poland. Of the figures under study, Bronisław Geremek was the only one to address this deficiency in retrospect: "The civil society emerging in the countries of the East had one great weakness, namely in the economic field," the historian wrote in 1989. "It would have seemed obvious that civil society should declare vehement resistance to the usurpatory presumption of a state that made itself owner of everything. But this was not the case. … On the economic horizon there were the utopian temptations of cooperative movements and worker self-government," as Geremek continues in his polemic against the economic notions of *Solidarność*, "but these temptations remain utopian and provide no practicable approach for the economy of a civil society. In the present situation, this weakness of civil society can have serious repercussions. What needs to be done is to set up economic programmes. The future of democracy in the post-communist countries depends on it."[87]

V.   Summary and Conclusions:

In sum, analysis of the aspects of the Polish civil society discourse we have been considering shows that, until well into the 1990s, all three intellectuals used the civil society concept and equivalent terms (*społeczeństwo obywatelskie, społeczeństwo cywilne, Zivilgesellschaft, société civile*) primarily as a descriptive and analytical category for conceptualising the new relationship between the state and society in real socialism engendered by the trade union *Solidarność*. This concept was justified on grounds not only of the civil rights and freedoms wrested from the regime but also of the size of the trade union with its potential for mass mobilisation and the emancipation of certain areas of social action from the influence of the state. For a long time the intellectual pioneers of the conception failed to address the future external relationship of civil society with the state and the economy. They also ignored the question of the internal relationship between civil society and its basis in the Catholic, working, and intellectual population of Poland and hence with the individual and collective interests hitherto bundled in the mass organisation *Solidarność*, and how this basis was to be

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[84] Cf. Lech Mażewski, W objęciach utopii. Polityczno–ideowa analiza dziejów Solidarnośći, 1980–2000, Torn 2001, p. 149–150.

[85] Cf. Jerzy Szacki, Liberalism after Communism, Budapest 1995, p. 99, in similar vein: Eugeniusz Górski, Rozważanie o społeczeństwie obywatelskim. I inne studia z historii idei, Warschau 2003, p. 8, 69, and 74.

[86] Cf. Jan Kubik, Between the State and Networks of 'Cousins': The Role of Civil Society and Non-civil Associations in the Democratization of Poland, in: Nancy Bormeo/ Philip Nord (eds.), Civil Society before Democracy. Lessons from Nineteenth–Century Europe, Oxford/New York 2000, p. 181–208, here p. 189.

[87] Cf. Bronisław Geremek, Die Civil Society gegen den Kommunismus: Polens Botschaft, in: Krzysztof Michalski (ed.), Europa und die Civil Society. Castel Gandolfo–Gespräche 1989, Stuttgart 1991, p. 257–272, here p. 271–272.

transferred to a pluralist system of social conflict resolution. In simple terms, civil society in Poland up to 1989 had been a model of social action developed in social practice and tested under the political conditions of real socialism that required neither theoretical grounding nor a clear and uniform label. According to Jerzy Szacki, "the conviction sufficed that it was something completely different from the state."[88] It was a social utopia that was in large measure normatively and ethically grounded, both rooted in and running counter to the historical experience of the region, a utopia whose profile was for many years extremely blurred but which for this reason was perhaps all the more acceptable to much of the Polish population.

However, among the internal contradictions of the latest upswing in the civil society discourse in Western Europe and the United States has been a failure to take due account of the nature of the Polish contribution to the rediscovery of civil society, despite acknowledgement of the crucial importance of the Eastern European opposition movements in this process. A triple distortion results in the historical debate. First, elements of this rediscovery are completely set aside, thus disregarding their significance. Second, positions in the history and theory of the concept are constructed that derive the Polish debate on civil society one-sidedly from a Western European theoretical understanding, interpreting the concept in the continuity of modern, Western European developments – so that current constellations of political and socio-economic problems in the Eastern European transformation country are seen logically as breaking with these modern Western developments. Third – the real paradox – the very elements in the Polish discussion that arose in connection with Western European and American developments are dissociated from this context, consolidating and perpetuating the isolation of what Habermas[89] has pointedly described as the always merely reiterative but never interactive intellectual and political development of East Central Europe during the second half of the 20th century.

Recent research has made efforts in many directions to eradicate these distortions. Some, like Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde in their essay "Rethinking Civil Society" criticise the excessive normative expectations that Western European studies have placed in the development of civil society initiatives and organisations in former Eastern Bloc countries. "Many of the assessments of civil society," the authors claim, "are based on too high expectations associated with the dissident's conception of civil society. The decline of civil society in post-communist Europe is thus derived from a diminishing point appeal of dissident's normative theories (for example the 'parallel polis') – theories that themselves were not without problems, and theories whose usefulness should be primarily viewed in the context of opposition against a totalitarian regime."[90] Instead of proceeding on the too narrow assumption that the democracy process in East Central Europe was hampered by a supposedly "non-civil" and undemocratic civil society, Kopecký and Mudde argue that "empirical research on civil society should study the nature of the relationship between CSOs [Civil Society Organi-

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[88] Cf. Jerzy Szacki, (ed.), Ani książę, ani kupiec – obywatel. Idea społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w myśli współczesnej, Krakau 1997, p. 22.

[89] Cf. Jürgen Habermas, Die nachholende Revolution. Kleine Politische Schriften VII, Frankfurt am Main 1990, p. 180 ff.

[90] Cf. Petr Kopecký/ Cas Mudde, Rethinking Civil Society, in: Democratization, 10 (Autumn 2003) 3, p. 1–14, here p. 2.

sations] and democracy/democratization, rather than assume it."[91] Alan Renwick takes a similar view in "Anti-Political or Just Anti-Communist? Varieties of Dissidence in East-Central Europe and Their Implications for the Development of Political Society."[92] He identifies eight categories of civil society dissidence in East Central Europe, distinguishing between various forms of oppositional engagement against the state, circumventing the state, and involving the state. In particular, he questions the thesis advanced by Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stephan[93] that the form of "ethical civil society" developed before 1989 had tended to prevent the consolidation of a democratic, political society, seeking to disprove it through detailed analysis of the content of Eastern European dissidents' engagement. In a 2005 essay, Jan Kubik also pointed to the fragility of a line of argument that equates the emergence of civil societies with the modernisation and Westernisation of the states and nations involved.[94]

Transferring these demands to historical research on civil society, it is apparent that the so-called "rediscovery" of civil society in East Central Europe can be sufficiently described and explained only if it is comprehended and examined as a multiple process of cultural transfer. Such an approach presupposes, first, that the debate on civil society in East Central Europe abandons the normative pattern of explaining the emergence of civil society as a merely imitative process of catching up with Western developments. Second, this focuses attention on concepts, ideas, and traditions that describe the East Central European path to civil society as an original process to be understood and explained in terms of categories and definitions inherent in it.[95] In the long run, such parallel examination of the differing origins and semantics of civil societies is a precondition for differentiated, theoretical and empirical research into civil society. Apart from enabling various forms and developments of civil society in Europe to be compared, it would also show where the concepts, values, and content of civil society overlap, interact, and differ. Civil society as an historical phenomenon could accordingly be regionally contextualised and its discursive interaction with neighbouring phenomena and debates examined, permitting investigation in the overall context of the varying cultural, social, and political conditions for its emergence at the national and transnational levels. Only with precise knowledge of and competition between different concepts and meanings of civil society can the varying but ultimately common phenomenon of civil society in Europe and elsewhere be studied without defining it in terms of any perception predetermined by or deriving from Western research. For example, civil society organisations or activities that have developed in opposition to a totalitarian system cannot enter into a definition of civil society that presupposes the existence of democratic conditions. In this context, sectoral definitions of civil society such as those proffered in recent historical research can serve only as standards for comparison and cannot be regarded as universally valid. Definitions of civil society can better be operationalized that stress its fluidity,

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[91] Cf. ibid. 11.

[92] Cf. Alan Renwick, Anti-Political or Just Anti-Communist? Varieties of Dissidence in East-Central Europe and Their Implications for the Development of Political Society, in: East European Politics & Societies, 20 (2006), p. 286–318.

[93] Cf. Juan J. Linz/ Alfred Stephan, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation, Baltimore 1996, p. 272.

[94] Cf. Jan Kubik, How to Study Civil Society: The State of the Art and What to Do Next, in: East European Politics & Societies, 19 (2005), p. 105–120, here p. 113.

[95] Cf. for details Agnes Arndt, Intellektuelle in der Opposition. Diskurse zur Zivilgesellschaft in der Volksrepublik Polen, Frankfurt am Main/ New York 2007, p. 137 ff.

changeability, and processual nature[96] and that, although addressing demarcation from the state, the market, and the private sphere, treat this demarcation not as static but, especially under non-democratic regimes, as a process of siting civil society still under negotiation. Only a definition of civil society that systematically distinguishes between the various stages of civil-society functionality with respect to democratic participation, treating them on an equal footing, will prove useful for examining civil societies in Europe as a whole and beyond its borders. In contrast to transformation research, which has long operated with such differentiated definitions of civil society, historical research has some catching up to do.[97] Civil societies in East and West could accordingly be properly compared primarily in terms of action logical components, i.e., by comparing their logics and possibilities of action, value standards and goals based on plurality, tolerance, and compromise.[98] This also provides an opportunity to respond to and thus counter the frequent reproach that civil society as a whole makes excessive normative demands. Instead of disputing or evading the issue of the normativity of civil-society phenomena and models, future research could make the basic normative assumptions of the civil societies it is investigating themselves the subject of attention, thus focusing not only on the ethical and moral foundations of modern civil societies over time but also on the often ignored and hitherto seldom examined links between civil society and violence, power and exclusion.[99] Research that integrates these elements, which treats civil society as a fluid, changeable, normatively grounded phenomenon that differs from context to context in the Western and non-Western worlds, will continue to throw a critical light on a concept which in its openness to criticism could and should give proof of its utility for further research

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[96] See especially: Dieter Gosewinkel und Dieter Rucht, Zivilgesellschaft als Prozess, in: Dieter Gosewinkel/ Jürgen Kocka/ Dieter Rucht/ Wolfgang van den Daele (ed.), Zivilgesellschaft - national und transnational. WZB-Jahrbuch 2003, p. 29-60.

[97] Cf. on transformation research above all the essay by Wolfgang Merkel und Hans-Joachim Lauth, Systemwechsel und Zivilgesellschaft: Welche Zivilgesellschaft braucht die Demokratie, in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, (1998) 6–7, p. 3–12.

[98] On the difference between the action-logical and sectoral logical definition of civil society cf. above all Jürgen Kocka, Zivilgesellschaft. Zum Konzept und seiner sozialgeschichtlichen Verwendung, in: id./ Paul Nolte/ Sven Reichardt/ Shalini Randeria (eds.), Neues über Zivilgesellschaft. Aus historisch-sozialwissenschaftlichem Blickwinkel, WZB Discussion paper P 01-801, Berlin 2001, p. 4-22, here p. 10-11 as well as Jürgen Kocka, Civil Society from a historical perspective, in: European Review, 12 (2004) 1, p. 65-79, here p. 68-69. Examples of an action logical perspective and the actor-centric investigation of the carrier groups of civil society are to be found in, inter alia, Ute Hasenöhrl, Zivilgesellschaft und Protest. Zur Geschichte der Umweltbewegung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zwischen 1945 und 1980 am Beispiel Bayerns, WZB Discussion Paper SP IV 2003-506 and in Jürgen Schmidt, Zivilgesellschaft und nichtbürgerliche Trägerschichten. Das Beispiel der frühen deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (ca. 1830-1880), WZB Discussion Paper SP IV 2004-502.

[99] This demand has been repeatedly made, notably by Sven Reichardt und Dieter Gosewinkel, cf. int. al. Dieter Gosewinkel, Zivilgesellschaft – eine Erschließung des Themas von seinen Grenzen her, WZB Discussion Paper SP IV 2003-505 and Arnd Bauerkämper/ Dieter Gosewinkel/ Sven Reichardt, "Paradox oder Perversion? Zum historischen Verhältnis von Zivilgesellschaft und Gewalt", in: Mittelweg 36, 15. Jg./2006, p. 22-32.

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Dariusz Gawin:

Civil Society Discourse in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s

Zusammenfassung:

Darius Gawin analysiert die Veränderung im politischen Denken der polnischen Opposition ab dem „Offenen Brief an die Polnische Vereinigte Arbeiterpartei" von Jacek Kurón und Karol Modzelewski 1965 bis zum Programm der Solidaritätsbewegung 1981. Er zeigt, dass die politische Identität von Oppositionsgruppen in Polen zwischen 1968 und 1976 einen signifikanten Wandel erfuhr. Während für den „Brief" von 1965 immer noch der Mythos der Revolution konstituierend war, verlor sich der Glaube an den revolutionären Messianismus der Arbeiterklasse, nachdem in den Ereignissen von 1968 die Arbeiter für antisemitische und anti-intellektuelle Staatsaktionen gegen oppositionelle Studenten instrumentalisiert worden waren. Es entwickelte sich eine neue intellektuelle Koalition, die den dialektischen Konflikt zwischen reaktiven und progressiven Kräften hinter sich ließ und die „laizistische Linke" mit den „liberalen Katholiken" in einer Orientierung auf Aktionen vereinigte, die später als Aufbau der Zivilgesellschaft bezeichnet wurde. Anstelle des traditionellen Dualismus zwischen links und rechts bildete sich ein neuer Antagonismus zwischen Totalitarismus und Demokratie heraus. In dieser anti-totalitären Vision entwickelte sich die Identität der linksgerichteten polnischen Opposition auf Grundlage einer Idee der Selbstorganisation von "Gesellschaft" im Gegensatz zum Staat. Die Vision einer unabhängigen Zivilgesellschaft nahm in der Bewegung der unabhängigen sozialen Initiativen zwischen 1976 und 1980 reale Gestalt an und gipfelte in der 10 Millionen starken Solidaritätsbewegung, welche in ihrem Programm von 1981 – kurz vor Verhängung des Kriegsrechts – die Einführung von Demokratie, Pluralismus und Selbstverwaltung forderte. Nach 1989 wurde Selbstverwaltung eines der Prinzipien der polnischen Verfassung.

Abstract:

Dariusz Gawin analyzes the change in oppositional political thinking in Poland from the "Letter to Party members" by Jacek Kurón and Karol Modzelewski in 1965 until the programme of the Solidarity movement in 1981. He shows that the political identity of opposition groups in Poland underwent a significant transformation between 1968 and 1976. While the myth of revolution was still constitutive for the 1965 "Letter", after the events of 1968, when workers were instrumentalized for anti-Semitic and anti-intellectual state action against oppositional students, the faith in the revolutionary messianism of the working class was lost. A new intellectual coalition developed which abandoned the dialectical conflict between the reactionary and progressive forces, uniting both the "lay left" and "liberal Catholics" in an approach to action, later to be defined as the building of civil society. Instead of the traditional division between left and right, a new division between totalitarianism and democracy emerged. In this anti-totalitarian vision, the identity of the leftist Polish opposition came to be based on the idea of self-organization and "society" as opposed to the state. The vision of an independent civil society took real shape in the movement of independent social initiatives between 1976 and 1980, culminating in the ten-million-strong Solidarity movement which, in its 1981 programme issued shortly before the proclamation of martial law, called for the introduction of self-government, democracy and pluralism. After 1989, self-government, became one of the principles of the Polish constitution.

I. Introduction

The political identity of the opposition groups in Poland underwent a significant transformation between 1968 and 1976. Following the harsh suppression of the authorities and descent of the student rebellion of March 1968 and the workers' protests of 1970 into a blood bath, the country's independent intellectuals experienced strong sense of loss and crisis. Despite the change in leadership in 1970, which was accompanied by a declared liberalization of political system, the actions of the new head of the Communist Party, Edward Gierek, did not, however, result in any genuine liberalization of the system.[1]

The term "shock" was often used to describe the events of March 1968 – not only because of the shock caused by the brutality and scale of the repression.[2] The March rebellion caused a truly profound shock – an ideological one. The defeat suffered by the students was rightly perceived as a disintegration of the traditional paradigm of leftist identity. The student movement of 1968 was obviously left-wing in nature. In a text entitled "The Sacrament of the Bull" published in *Krytyka* (i.e. Criticism), an underground intellectual quarterly, in 1988, Adam Michnik described the identity of his generation in the following words: "We were looking for a method for a real socialism, we studied Marx, did not like conservatism and the Church. At the student meetings we sang the Internationale… I am not generalizing. The majority of this generation was different. Although we, the commandos [i.e. the group of left-wing youths, mainly from the Warsaw University, led by Michnik, a student of history – D.G.] were like this – quite red."[3]

The leftism of "the commandos", however, was not merely left-wing rhetoric; behind this rhetoric was a much deeper feeling, an homogeneous and deep-rooted way of thinking, for which the myth of revolution was of constituent significance. To illustrate the meaning of this term more clearly, we must go back to a text written several years earlier: i.e. the "Letter to the Party Members" of 1965 by Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski, who were young researchers at Warsaw University, at the time, the former employed as a teacher, the latter as an historian. Although they were older than "the commandos", they played the role of informal leaders of this community. The reprisals carried out against the authors of the "Letter" consolidated the group and at the same time contributed to the publication of its political opinions not only in Poland, but also abroad.

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[1] See: A Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna w PRL, 1945–1980*, London 1994, in particular the chapter "From December to June", pp. 283–337.

[2] This term was used in the title of the collection of reports on the March events published in the so called "second circulation" (books and magazines published by opposition illegally); see: *Krajobraz po szoku* (*Scenery after the Shock*), Warsaw 1989.

[3] Adam Michnik, "Sakrament byka" in: *Marzec 68. Krytyka, nr 28–29. materiały z sesji zorganizowanej w dwudziestą rocznicę Marca 1968 na Uniwersytecie warszawskim* (*Nos. 28–29. Materials from the session held on the 20th anniversary of the March 1968 at the Warsaw University*), brochure, p. 26.

The "Letter" presents a comprehensive critique of the Communist system in Poland from the Trotskyist perspective – i.e. as a system based on the rule of party-state bureaucracy.[4] According to the authors, the state had been appropriated by a "new ruling class" whose domination was based on control over the means of production and exploitation of the working class. This new ruling class was the bureaucracy that had created a police dictatorship in order to maintain its monopoly of power. The working class should, therefore, throw off the yoke of oppression and overthrow this exploitation-based system. Kuroń and Modzelewski went on to write: "Today, at a time of general crisis in the political system, revolution is in the interest of the working class: to overthrow the bureaucracy and current labour relations, take control of people's own work and its products, over the purposes of production, that is to introduce an economic, social and political system that would be based on workers' democracy." They understood this "worker's democracy" as a system of workers' councils under the leadership of the Central Council of Delegates. The councils would constitute a remedy for the maximum decentralization of the power structure. Its dispersion would enable participation in governing the country, even at the lowest level. At the same time the councils would enjoy the prerogatives of the economic, police (the workers' militia, playing a role of the army), legislative and executive authorities. In the context of such an approach, the idea of self-organization was limited only to the working class – which would be the exact subject of self-organization as a progressive force in itself.

For obvious reasons Kuroń and Modzelewski's vision criticized not only real socialism but also capitalism and bourgeois democracy. They openly said in their letter: "we oppose a parliamentary system. The experience of the two twenty year periods [i.e. 1918–1939 and 1944–1964 – D.G.] shows that it does not protect against dictatorship and, at the same time, even in its most perfect form, it is not democracy in any shape. In the parliamentary system there is competition between the parties for votes: the minute a ballot paper reaches the box, the electoral manifestos could be thrown away. […] The citizens' participation in political life boils down to their reading of the leader's statements in the press, hearing them on the radio, seeing them on the television and, once every four or five years, going to the polls to elect the leaders of the party that will control them. The rest happens on the basis of their mandate but without their participation." Thus, parliamentary democracy was a farce. In contrast, the council system offered the possibility of the constant and direct participation of the working masses in politics. The left-wing youth gathered around Kuroń and Modzelewski perceived the aggravating crisis of the late 1960s as an increasingly revolutionary situation.

The course of the student revolt in March 1968 ruthlessly exposed the deceptiveness of such ideas. There was no revolution – society turned out to be a passive spectator of the drama unfolding at the universities. Worse still, some of the workers allowed themselves to be mobilized against the student movement under the anti-Semitic and anti-intellectual banners. A constitutive element of Kuroń and Modzelewski's reasoning at the time the letter was written was the a priori assumption that the working class in itself is progressive and cannot, therefore, fulfil the function of reaction.[5] It was for this reason that the crash of theory and

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[4] The text of the letter in: *Opozycja wobec rządów komunistycznych w Polsce 1956–1976. Wybór dokumentów*, Z. Hemmerling, M. Nadolski eds. , Warsaw 1991.

[5] Ibid., p. 241.

reality in March 1968 was so painful. The perfidy of the authorities lay in the way that they used the allegedly "working" armed groups to beat the students and justified this action using anti-Semitic slogans. The associations with fascism came to mind easily.

The essence of the ideological shock, which for the commandos were the events of March 1968, consisted in their loss of faith in revolution and the revolutionary messianism of the working class as the progressive force in itself. The inevitable upshot of March 1968, therefore, was a deterioration of leftism in its traditional form. The dramatic nature of the situation did not simply consist in the fact that the revolution suffered defeat, but that the very idea of revolution turned out to be impossible and incapable of living up to reality. The increasing development of the revolutionary situation had not led to a breakthrough. Instead of revolution the bureaucracy allowed the various anti-Semitic, authoritarian and anti-intellectual elements to erupt – i.e. all of the reactive forces. Naked violence and propaganda fused the fear of the right and aversion to the bureaucracy into a single idea – a concept of totalitarianism. Only then could the left have extricated itself from the sense of loyalty – although conditional and incomplete – to the Polish Peoples' Republic. As expressed by Adam Michnik at the anniversary session in 1981: "The cord connecting the people of the left with the political system was cut in 1968."

II.   II.   The period of quest: 1968–1976

Together with the bafflement prompted by the fact that the forces hitherto regarded as reactive – i.e. the Roman-Catholic Church and the Roman-Catholic intellectuals – rose in defence of the young leftist protesters who had been victimized by the socialist state, the debunking of the myth of revolution and Marxist paradigm of thinking contributed to the need to seek a new paradigm of thinking. Jacek Kuroń expressed this as follows: "In March of 1968 all our hopes were shattered. It emerged that the anti-totalitarian left is so weak that, in reality, it was unable to act as an independent force: the entire community of students who participated in the March movement can be hardly considered as the left. The governing camp, which was derived, after all, from the left and belonged to it, launched nationalist watchwords, took advantage of people's emotions and exploited national hatred. At the same time, the people of spirituality other than leftist came out against the offensive of Communist nationalism in the name of the values also cherished by us. […] We understood that the battlefront against totalitarianism in the name of freedom and democracy stretches across the dividing line between the left and the right. In other words, our sense of ideological belonging and, therefore, identity cannot be connected with this division which is void in today's Poland, and probably in the entire Soviet camp. There was a need to establish ideological and political self-determination anew, and this was possible only in dialogue with these people outside our community whom we considered close to us."[6]

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[6] Jacek Kuroń, *Wiara i wina. Do i od komunizmu*, Warsaw 1990, p. 337.

The basic question facing the generation of March 1968 could be summarized briefly as follows: if neither right nor left, what else? Traditional leftism turned out to be impossible; for obvious reasons, rightism could not provide an answer to the ideological dilemma. Thus, there was a need to step outside the charmed circle of dialectical conflict between the reactive and progressive forces. The intellectual works of the leftist intelligentsia followed the path established by texts such as the *Origins of the Disobedient* (*Rodowody niepokornych*) by Bohdan Cywiński, *New Evolutionism* (*Nowy ewolucjonizm*) and *The Church, Left and Dialogue* (*Kościół, lewica, dialog*) by Adam Michnik and the journalism of Jacek Kuroń and Leszek Kołakowski. It resulted in the creation of new model of political action and a new way of thinking about politics. It was the way that united both the "lay left" and "liberal Catholics" in one orientation for action, later defined as the building of civic society.

A criticism of the Marxist tradition was initiated by Leszek Kołakowski, the most outstanding representative of the revisionism of the 1960s. He was forced to emigrate by the events of 1968 and published an article entitled "Theses on Hope and Hopelessness" in the monthly journal *Kultura* (*Culture*) in Paris in 1971. In this article, he claimed to have stepped outside of the charmed circle of faith in reform that usually ended in defeat or conformism, or – on the other hand – culminated in a full-frontal clash with the political system.[7] He postulated a method of social pressure, not, however, in the form of political conspiracy but in the form of independent activities aimed at the recovery of subjectivity by society, or "life in dignity." As a matter of fact, in his opinion, the self-organization of society offered the means of escaping from the hopelessness in his title. An additional feature of Kołakowski's reasoning was a thesis concerning the death of Marxism: "The international communist movement ceased to exist. The Soviet version of the idea of communism also ceased to exist"; he referred to Marxism-Leninism as a "dead and already grotesque construct".[8] The parting with Marxism described by Kuroń and postulated by Kołakowski required the initiation of a search for other methods of political action and other conceptual frames for the organization of political thinking. The way for an encounter with the liberal Catholics was paved in this way.

The intellectual foundation for this encounter was prepared by a book by Bohdan Cywiński, a Roman Catholic journalist connected with the Catholic organization "Znak" (*The Sign*), and Tadeusz Mazowiecki. The book was entitled *Origins of the Disobedient* (*Rodowody niepokornych*) and depicted the history of Polish intellectuals, i.e both Roman-Catholics and socialists, from the early 20th century. Cywiński demonstrated that the traditional political categories applied to these people are meaningless. In both cases what was important was spiritual formation, concentration on ethical issues and the provision of assistance to all those in need and those who are wronged. He wrote: "The essence of disobedience, its fundamental value, is not on the ideological level but on the moral level. The people to whom we attribute this feature belonged to various political organizations or to none. They only shared values of morality […]."[9] According to its authors, the book would contribute to filling in the "border trenches" – already null and void – between the rebellious Polish intellectuals, i.e. the left, and

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[7] Leszek Kołakowski, "Tezy o nadziei i beznadziejności" in: *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony i 27 innych kazań*, London 1984, p. 289.

[8] Ibid., p. 292.

[9] Bohdan Cywiński, *Rodowody niepokornych*, Paris 1985, p. 382.

the Church: "Noticing in our diverse traditions and ideological pedigrees the common moral values shall become a factor that unites us in their fulfilment, and in the struggle for their fuller, more general and more genuine fulfilment, the feeling of mutual strangeness and distance shall weaken, and the ideological community of people of good will, of people rebellious against evil will grow."[10]

The direction of the quest to overcome the ideological *impasse* reached by the anti-system Polish intelligentsia after 1968 embarked on by Kołakowski and Cywiński was also continued by Jacek Kuroń. The initial elements of a new concept of self-organization of society against a totalitarian regime could be found in his article "An Argument about the March Events" (*Spór o wydarzenia marcowe*) published in *Zeszyty Historyczne*, in Paris in 1973. In his conclusion, he wrote: "A totalitarian system […] depraves not only these who wield power over it, but an enitre society. Our journalists sometimes refer to the erosion of social bonds but those who comprehend this diagnosis are few. In a more intelligible language it means that the nation is dying. Because, after all, a nation – its culture developed by generations – is alive only in a special state of the attitudes and consciousnesses of their members which we call a social bond." Hence there is a need to reconstruct these bonds: "Any coming out, even an individual one, against a totalitarian system lifts a veil of lies and fear, defends – regardless of the matter in question – the values of national culture. […] Any petition, political process, leaflet prompts the reflection that there is more to life than buying a car."[11] For this reason, Kuroń wrote in conclusion: "In my opinion, the point is that as many Poles as possible should hear and see the people who oppose. Thus not conspiracy but open mutinies, and, in no case, on no account, can it be an act of violence: the issue here is a word, article, books."[12]

This idea was expressed even more explicitly by Kuroń in his well-known article "Political opposition in Poland" (*Polityczna opozycja w Polsce*) published anonymously in the journal Parisian *Kultura*. Here, we are presented with a developed version of oppositional consciousness that was born after the rejection of Marxism and revisionism and leftist imaginarium. The conflict takes place between "society" and the "totalitarian system". This means escaping from an ever-present dilemma in Polish history – either participate in the system or conspire against and fight it by force of arms. A starting point is to cultivate work in the communities, mainly those of students and creative intellectuals: "Frequently a community develops around a small core group of people-institutions, outstanding creators or people held in high esteem for their moral attitude, bravery and clarity of thought. Even more often [it develops] around a certain type of social, partly institutionalized, initiative, such as, for example, amateur theatres, tourism groups, clubs etc."[13] In such a context the correct course of action should be self-organization, the establishment of contact and forging of social bonds: "If you want to fight – read, read a lot! Talk, talk a lot, write and speak at meetings and seek out people like yourself. Ask your relatives and friends to send you books from abroad and lend them to others. And, first and foremost, buy yourself a [copy of the] Penal Code and never

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[10] Ibid., p. 386.

[11] Jacek Kuroń, "Spór o wydarzenia marcowe" in: *Polityka i odpowiedzialność*, London 1984, p. 103.

[12] Ibid., p. 106.

[13] Jacek Kuroń, "Polityczna opozycja w Polsce", in: *Polityka… op. cit.*, p. 119.

ever be in breach of it."[14] After the formation of a Workers' Defence Committee (KOR), this programme already assumed its final shape in Kuroń's important text "Thoughts on an Action Plan" (*Myśli o programie działania*). The author proposed here the concept of social movements: "What I mean here by social movement is this kind of cooperation between large communities of people in which every member fulfils his or her aspirations operating within small independent group. Such small independent groups become social movements when they are united by community of the most general purpose."[15]

Thus the invalidation of the division based on the traditional division between left and right meant the emergence of a new division: between totalitarianism and democracy (democratic opposition). Therefore the system of real socialism and nationalism, obscurantism and anti-Semitism could be located on the side of totalitarianism. This collective name was assigned to all of the bad elements of both the right and left – for, despite their apparent differences, they all encouraged violent methods of political struggle. All what was good on both sides of the old divisions could be found on the other side, i.e. the side of democratic opposition. This was a real and significant breakthrough, both in the way of thinking about politics and in the methods of political action. First and foremost, however, it meant going beyond the institutional framework of political life. XXX

It was such an approach that Adam Michnik proposed in his classical text *New Evolutionism* (*Nowy Ewolucjonizm*), written in the autumn of 1976; indeed, this very text launches the narrative on a revival of the idea of civil societyin a monumental work on civil society by Joan Cohen and Andrew Arato .[16] The main purpose of this article, which was published two years later in London's emigration quarterly *Aneks*, was to overcome the mistakes of the previous methods of independent action initiated after 1956. Michnik identified two main groups of oppositionists for that period: i.e. revisionists and neo-positivists. The revisionist group was made up of the left-wing and, to a large extent, openly Marxist intellectuals who supported Gomułka in 1956 in the hope that there could be possible – as Michnik wrote – "humanization and democratization of the system of wielding power." A function of fundamental dogma, a basic assumption behind their actions, was realized through their assent to the idea of the leading role of the Party. Regardless of the fact of whether they considered themselves to be ideological Marxists or leftist intellectuals, a large majority of them were the Party members. Despite seeing the drawbacks of the system, they nevertheless thought that these could be eliminated through action "within" the system.

Another type of political strategy developed after October 1956 was referred to by Michnik as "neo-positivism" (in the Russian partition of the 19th century, the term "positivists" defined the advocates of civilizational progress who were unfavourable to the tradition of political conspiracy and national uprisings). In Michnik's opinion, the main organizational representative of this movement in Gomułka's Poland was the *Znak* (*The Sign*) group which was made up of liberal Catholic laymen. The *Znak* group not only had a network of the clubs of Catholic intellectuals and the monthly publications *Znak* and *Tygodnik Powszechny* (*Catholic*

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[14] Ibid., p. 123.

[15] Jacek Kuroń, "Myśli o programie działania", in: *Polityka… op. cit.*, p. 133.

[16] Adam Michnik, "Nowy Ewolucjonizm" in: *Szanse polskiej demokracji. Artykuły i eseje*, London 1984, pp. 77–87, Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, „Civil Society and Political Theory", Cambridge: MIT Press 1992.

Weekly) which were published in Cracow, but also its own parliamentary representation in form of the *Znak* club in the Sejm. Together with the Warsaw community of *Więź* (*The Link*), which was led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki and looked on favourably by Cardinal Wyszyński, the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, the Catholic neo-positivism movement played a role of licensed political opposition in the 1960s.

According to Michnik, both the revisionists and neo-positivists were defeated in 1968. Anti-intellectual and anti-Jewish campaigns, launched after the March events, severed the link between the leftist intelligentsia and the Party. At the same time the parliamentary club *Znak*, which tried to defend the students and victimize the intelligensia on legal grounds, came under brutal attack from the authorities. This raised a question as to whether any oppositional political action within the framework of real socialism was possible. Michnik responded in the affirmative, presenting a proposal for the launch of a nation-wide grassroots pressure group. He wrote: "The way to fight persistently for reform, the way to bring about the evolution of greater civil liberties and human rights is, in my opinion, the only way for dissidents in Eastern Europe". For this reason "the right recipient of the evolutionist programme should be independent public opinion, and not a totalitarian regime. The programme should give directions to society on how it should act, and not to the regime on how to reform itself." The actions of independent circles should, therefore, be aimed at "the slow, gradual, partial transformation" of social reality. XXX

In Michnik's opinion, a duty and moral imperative of the opposition should be – in accordance with Kołakowski's formula – "life in dignity". The intellectuals who form a democratic opposition fight "not only and not so much for a so-called 'better tomorrow' as for a better today. Every act of resistance allows and makes possible the laying of foundations for the construction of democratic socialism that not only should be – and probably not mainly – a legal and institutional structure, but above all a real community of free people created every day."

In addition to *The New Evolutionism*, Michnik also presented a proposal for an ideological alliance between the left and the liberal Roman-Catholic intellectuals in 1976 in his book *The Church, Left, Dialogue*. He maintained that the old ideological divisions were becoming increasingly anachronistic in the new circumstances. "Should we – the people of the secular left – not understand finally that, in the face of totalitarian dictatorship, a traditional concept of progress and reactionism or of division between the left and the right are becoming less important than the primary line of division between the supporters and opponents of totalitarianism? And should we not revise – on the basis of these statements – our traditional opinion of the state and role of the Roman Catholic Church in postwar Poland?"[17] He strongly emphasised that: "a central element of leftist thought in a totalitarian state must be anti-totalitarianism. In this sense, the old divisions formulated under the conditions of bourgeois democracy are out-of-date. In the altered post-1945 political situation, a fight for leftist ideas mainly means a fight for freedom and human rights. Without all of this the projects of social reforms are only a golden utopia or mask of totalitarian violence."[18] The point of contact was

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[17] Adam Michnik, *Kościół, lewica, dialog*, Warsaw 1998, p. 34.

[18] Ibid., p. 186.

to be an anti-totalitarian vision of the unity of human rights and duties, because "life in truth and in desire for truth is a right of man, but at the same time it is his duty."[19]

An identity of the leftists based on the idea of self-organization and not revolution meant a radical change in the way they understood politics. It was no longer a dynamic fight, not without occasional violence, for overthrowing exploitation and defeating reaction, but consisted instead of an inner spiritual transformation in the face of the threat from the regime based on lies and violence. Thus the new, ethical left was unrevolutionary; it aimed not to establish a workers' democracy but a fraternal community of citizens, and its method of action was not to search for a space within the existing legal structures, i.e. mainly those of the Communist Party, but to build open and non-legalized structures that would allow society to self-organize in parallel to the official structures. The political thinking of the opposition was therefore shaped by an anti-state syndrome – the state was a tool of "rule", part of the "system." Its opposite and not its complement, as in traditional liberal thought, became self-organizing society (or, as it is referred to by Western intellectuals, civil society) – also referred to *independent society* or *alternative society* – towards the state.

III.   III. Solidarity and an idea of a Self-Governing Republic: 1981

The vision of forming an independent civil society or universal social self-organization took real shape, first, in a growing movement of independent social initiatives, underground publishing houses labelled as "the second circulation", various oppositional organizations established between 1976 and 1980 and culminated in the ten-million-strong Solidarity movement. Solidarity was formally a labour union, but in reality it absorbed all of the former independent organizations and groups. One of the leading roles in Solidarity was played by the activists of the KOR and the circles of Warsaw leftist intellectuals, under the leadership of Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuroń, now officially the union's expert-advisers. The idea of social self-organization – then defined as "Self-Governing Republic" – played a prominent role in the debates conducted within Solidarity during a dozen or so months of its legal existence.

The idea of a "Self-Governing Republic" became the most important element of a programme of Independent Self-Governing Trades Union (NSZZ) Solidarity (*Solidarność*) passed in October 1981 at the First National Convention of Delegates in Gdańsk. Thus this idea was conceived only a few weeks before the imposition of martial law and was never implemented – for obvious reasons which cannot be gone into in detail here. Despite this, it presents an interesting example of an attempt at the development of oppositional debate between 1968 and 1980.

The fact that in its institutionalized form, the great social movement of Solidarity was a trade union, in which the most important role was played by large businesses, meant that the concept of a workers' government lay at the centre of its interest in an idea of self-

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[19] Ibid., p. 112.

government.[20] The issue of workers' self-governance, self-governance in companies, was tightly intertwined with the problem of economic reform. These two problems were always addressed jointly in the debate within Soildarity and were treated as the two aspects of the same assignment to overcome an economic crisis, in which Poland found itself in 1981.[21] A good account of the difficulties experienced by the participants of Solidarity's debates on the definition of the idea of self-government can be found in a series of articles by Roman-Catholic journalist Stefan Wilkanowicz, which were published in the "Tygodnik Solidarność" (*Solidarity Weekly*) just before the first convention of the trade union and during its first round in 1981, and deal with the topic of workers' self-government.[22]

Wilkanowicz significantly broadens the concept of self-government; he did not limit it to workers' self-government in companies, but had something much more important in mind: i.e. all of social life. He suggested that ideological inspiration be sought in the texts of Edward Abramowski, a theoretist of the early 20th century leftist cooperative movement. According to Abramowski, the efficient management of modern developed society could not be guaranteed, even by the best state apparatus. Society as a whole is much too complex and too advanced in its path towards progress. For this reason, in Abramowski's opinion, it could be governed "only by the autonomous associations flexibly reacting to new needs and problems. Only these provide individuals with sound social development facilitating initiative and creativity, while at the same time teaching them to cooperate and be sensitive to common good". As emphasised by Wilkanowicz, Abramowski presents a vision of self-governing society where the socialization of people takes place by way of education and practical cooperation, and not through administrative compulsion. Thus reference to Abramowski allowed Wilkanowicz to present a contrast, which is pivotal to his understanding of the idea of self-governance, between socialization as the ability of a free individual to coexist and cooperate with other free and conscious individuals and collectively forge genuine social bonds, on the one hand, and nationalization as the organization of social life through the structure of compulsion and, in reality, alienated from the society which it instrumentalizes for its own purposes, on the other.

From this perspective, in Wilkanowicz's opinion, the history of the recent decades in Polish history was one of a rapid process of "nationalization". It resulted in the rapid appropriation of an entire state life by the state apparatus which absorbed and incapacitated societies and cooperative associations, i.e. all autonomous so far social institutions. As Wilkanowicz writes, a natural sense of social bonds was weakened in this way. Only in 1980 was there a significant turn towards real self-government and genuine socialization. To validate this thesis, Wilkanowicz presents his own understanding of "socialization" in his text. He re-

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[20] The question of workers' government in the initial legal period of "Solidarity's" existence was analysed in detail by Szymon Jakubowicz, Solidarity's then advisor on workers' self-governance; see S. Jakubowicz, *Bitwa o samorząd 1980–1981*, London 1988.

[21] See, for example, an ordering of information in a bulletin "As Biuletyn Pism Związkowych i zakładowych NSZZ S. Agencja prasowa"; within the scope of intra-union information – from spring 1981 – the issues of workers' self-government were often placed in the chapter entitled "Workers' self-government and economic reform" (*Samorząd pracowniczy i reforma gospodarcza*).

[22] S. Wilkanowicz, "Ku Polsce samorządowej" *Tygodnik Solidarność*, No. 23, 1981; about the conflict concerning the form to be taken by a statute of workers' self-government which took place in summer of 1981, see: S. Jakubowicz, *Bitwa…, op. cit.*, Chapters V and VI.

fers to the definition presented by the Roman Catholic Church in an Encyclical entitled "Mater et Magistra", in which "socialization" means an increasing interdependence of citizens which introduces multiple and varied forms of social intercourse into their lives. Presenting socialization from a moral angle, Wilkanowicz defines it as an attitude that is characterized by sensitivity to the needs of others and to the common good and a willingness and ability to cooperate with others.

Officially, the postulate of self-government became an element of the Solidarity programme passed at its First Convention in 1981 – the sixth chapter of the Programme was entitled "The Self-Governing Republic".[23] Shortly afterwards, in the internal union debate and wider circles, this chapter and concept – i.e. "self-governing Republic" – became the general name for the ideological identity of Solidarity movement in the final months before martial law. From this perspective of special significance seem to be a preamble to the Programme in which the movement declared the meaning of fight started in Summer of 1980 – "We are creating an organization that combines the characteristics of a trade union and a great social movement. The combination of these attributes determines the strength of our organization and our role in life of the entire nation. Thanks to this powerful trade union organization, the Polish society ceased to be fragmented, disorganised and lost: uniting under the banner of solidarity, it regained its strength and hope.".

The chapter dedicated to the idea of the "Self-Governing Republic" stated that public life demands radical and far-reaching reforms in order to permanently introduce self-government, democracy and pluralism. And pluralism, as stated by the authors of the Programme, must relate also to the sphere of political life. For this reason Solidarity would support and protect civil initiatives aimed at presenting various political, economic and social programmes to society and at self-organization to facilitate the implementation of these programmes. Thesis number 20 of this chapter returns to the idea of workers' self-government: "an authentic self-government of workers shall be a basis for the Self-Governing Republic." In its sixth chapter the Programme also refers to the concept of local self-government. Thesis number 21 states that "Legally, organisationally and financially independent local governments must constitute the genuine representations of local society." An authentic local government should be elected by way of free election, and its bodies should be authorized to decide on all local matters. Thesis number 22 of the Programme represented an important demand made by Solidarity: "Organisations and self-governing bodies should have representatives at the level of the highest state authorities." Thus the idea of self-government gained a new political and systemic dimension. A special role in that regard was played by the section number three of the 22nd thesis: "We deem it purposeful to consider the need to create a body of self-governing character (self-governing chamber or socio-economic chamber) at the level of the highest state authorities. Its purpose would be to supervise the implementation of economic reforms and economic policy and similar institutions at the lower levels." Although formally intended to control an economic aspect of social life, in reality, this "chamber" foreshadowed – albeit in vague and imprecise way – the elevation of the principle of self-government principle to the significance of one of the constitutional norms.

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[23] The Programme of the NSZZ 'Solidarność' passed at the Fist National Convention of Delegates, insert with *Tygodnik Solidarność* No. 29, October 16, 1980.

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