



When Backwardness Became an Advantage: Professional Stays Abroad in the West as Midwife of the Transformation in Poland

Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast

I INTRODUCTION

The Polish historian Dariusz Stola, a researcher into migration and a Fulbright scholar himself, titled his 2010 magnum opus on the story of migrations from socialist Poland *Kraj bez wyjścia?*—“A country with no way out?” (Stola 2010). The question mark is pertinent here, since over the years the Poles found many ways out of their rigidly communist

This text is a supplemented and revised version of an article that appeared in German in 2022 in volume 11 of the Interdisciplinary Polish Studies series Jajesniak-Quast (2022). I am grateful to Jan Musekamp and Florian Peters for critical remarks on the original article, and to John Catlow for the English translation.

D. Jajeśniak-Quast (✉)
Center for Interdisciplinary Polish Studies,
European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany
e-mail: jajesniak-quast@europa-uni.de

© The Author(s) 2024
J. Günther et al. (eds.), *Roadblocks to the Socialist Modernization
Path and Transition*, Studies in Economic Transition,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-37050-2_11

Table 11.1 The metamorphosis of freedom to travel from the Polish People’s Republic

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total foreign trips</i>	<i>Of which: to the West</i>
1952	12,000	50
1989	19,000,000	5,000,000

Source: Stola (2010, 10)

country.¹ Stola’s book also makes plain Poland’s metamorphosis—from a closed state in the 1950s to a relatively open country at the end of the 1980s. In 1952, the year of the establishment of the Polish People’s Republic (a new name, a new constitution) a mere 12,000 foreign trips by Polish citizens were recorded, and only 50 persons travelled to the West. At the start of 1989, still before the June parliamentary election and the formation of the first non-communist government under Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the Polish authorities recorded 19 million travellers, of whom about 5 million were headed to the West (see Table 11.1).

This quasi-freedom of travel was decisive for the Polish transformation process—runs the thesis of the present chapter on the exchange programmes between Poland and the West. Moreover, Poland was one of the few countries of the Eastern Bloc that were able to develop their relationship with the West using the “advantage of backwardness”. This is the claim that I set out to prove below.

The main boost in relations of whatever kind with the West came in the 1970s (see Fig. 11.1). Thanks to Willy Brandt’s new eastern policy, under the motto *Wandel durch Annäherung*—“change through rapprochement”—an easing of Cold War tensions was achieved. In particular, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in August 1975 fundamentally marked the beginning of the end of the Eastern Bloc. The outcome of the Conference, which had lasted for more than two years, was to be the peaceful coexistence and cooperation of states with different political, social, and economic systems. In return for recognition of the borders of the post-war order and greater economic exchange with the West, the East made concessions in the field of human rights. Exchange between East and West in the professional and cultural

¹The usage in this chapter of the adjectives “socialist” and “communist” in reference to the history of Poland reflects the distinction between the general totalitarian functioning of a state under the dominance of a communist party (“communist”) and the degree of actual implementation of that party’s programme (“socialist”).

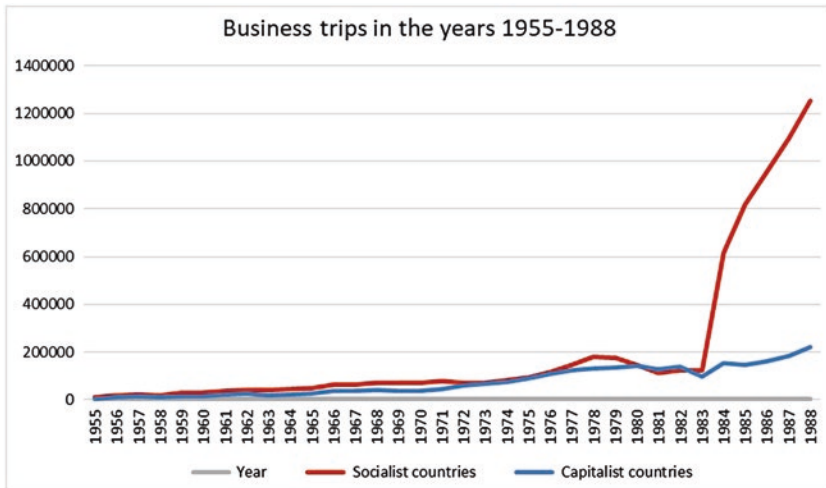


Fig. 11.1 Numbers of professional stays abroad by Polish citizens in socialist and capitalist countries, 1955–1988. Source: Stola (2010, 486–487)

spheres was promoted in particular by the third “basket” of the Final Act, which was intended to ensure, among other things, the flow of information, cultural and scientific exchange, and humanitarian aid between the two blocs.² Poland too had the opportunity to profit from this change in international relations.

As Fig. 11.1 shows, the number of professional visits undertaken from Poland to the capitalist countries rose continuously from 1971 onwards. In certain periods—for example, around the time of the CSCE Final Act—this number was even as high as the number of similar stays in the other socialist countries. The imposition of martial law on 13 December 1981, which saw the closure of the Polish borders, above all affected private travel, which became practically impossible. Official “cadre delegations”³ were permitted

² Archive of New Files in Warsaw (AAN), Rep. 1159—Instytut Badania Współczesnych Problemów Kapitalizmu w Warszawie 1969–1985, No. 1/3.

³ The term “cadre” is used for people who travelled to the West in the time of the Polish People’s Republic. As a rule these were professional trips, made on behalf of an enterprise or a scientific or other state institution. As in East Germany, permission to travel to the West for a shorter or longer time was a great privilege. However, in contrast to what was often the case in East Germany, not every travelling “cadre” in the Polish People’s Republic was “communist” or even a party member.

even under martial law. At the same time, the situation led to a wave of emigration, especially among academics. It is estimated that over 22,000 engineers, 3000 doctors, and over 3000 scientists left Poland for the West, cf. Urban (1998, 83). After the end of martial law on 22 July 1983, the number of professional stays in the West by Polish citizens again increased. However, in view of the selective measures of the party and government, these could not keep up with the rapidly growing number of professional stays in other socialist countries. Also of significance were the contract workers who had been sent from Poland to socialist bloc countries since the mid-1960s, primarily to East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union. The statistics were further swollen by commuters from the border regions of western and southern Poland, who worked at enterprises in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Due to the increasingly severe economic crisis of the 1980s and the associated hidden unemployment, particularly among women, additional opportunities for employment in more developed “brother countries” provided visible relief for the domestic labour market and financial support for numerous Polish families. In turn, many East German and Czechoslovak enterprises were dependent on these contract workers, due to a shortage of labour in their own countries.⁴

To explain this phenomenon, the following questions must be answered: Why was the Polish state able to utilise so well the possibility of increased exchange with other countries, particularly those in the West? Why did the Poles in particular find so many ways out of their rigid socialist system? How was it possible, from a political point of view, to leave the country? Were there gaps in the system? Was it possible in Poland to deviate from Marxism–Leninism and open up to the West? Were those professionals who travelled to the West obliged to belong to the communist party? Did the system’s imperfections force the party and state leadership to make Western solutions, foreign contacts, scholarships, and so on useful for the communist state?

An answer is to be found in the theory proposed in the 1960s by the economic historian Alexander Gerschenkron concerning the “profitability

⁴ Poland sent up to 30,000 qualified workers annually to East Germany alone, to perform construction and assembly work. Also around 3000 people, mainly commuters from Poland’s western provinces, worked for East German enterprises near the border (see Jajeśniak-Quast (2005) and Klípa (2019)).

of backwardness". Gerschenkron himself was shaped by his experiences of migration and time spent on scholarships at American universities. Born in Odesa in 1904, he and his family emigrated from Russia to Austria in 1920. Following the annexation of Austria to the German Reich in 1938, he went with his family to the US, where he did research under a scholarship at the University of California in Berkeley, until being appointed to a post at Harvard in 1948. In his book *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, Gerschenkron described the process of industrialisation and catch-up development in countries including France, Italy, Austria, and Bulgaria, but above all in the Soviet Union and nineteenth-century Germany (Gerschenkron 1962). He saw three main reasons for the fact that Germany, which initially lagged behind Britain in development, was able to develop relatively quickly into a leading industrial nation:

1. First, Germany was able to observe Britain's progress and the solutions implemented there, especially in the iron and steel industry, and was able to emulate that country and thus operate more efficiently or implement certain ideas faster, and often even better (ibid., 10). In other words, it could implement proven technologies that had already become established in earlier developed countries. The cost of such implementation is usually lower than development from scratch; it allows time and money savings and can avoid errors in development. Sometimes it even enables certain developmental stages to be skipped entirely.
2. A further advantage, especially at the start of industrialisation, was the absolutist nature of the Prussian state, which, due to its competitive way of thinking, established universities and financial institutions; these in turn improved education and investment capital and took on a leading role in the centrally controlled process of modernisation (ibid., 15).
3. Finally, due to the *Zollverein* and the founding of the Reich, a unified economic area was created (ibid., 25).

Just as in the time of industrialisation the moderate backwardness of Germany relative to Britain enabled rapid economic development, Poland was similarly able to derive certain benefits from its backwardness from the 1960s onwards. According to Gerschenkron, in a country where the

industrialisation process begins relatively late, different production and organisational structures are formed than in countries that are already developed. Institutions are created that never came into being in the already developed countries, because they were not needed. There is also a significant ideological difference compared with the developed countries (*ibid.*, 7). Gerschenkron emphasises that the European countries had different starting positions. Therefore, the development of countries that followed after Britain did not represent a copy of the latter's development; they had their own different processes. Gerschenkron himself established himself in the US as an expert on Soviet economics (Fishlow 2003). Consequently, despite the different political and economic systems, we can observe all three aspects of Germany's catch-up development in the case of socialist Poland as well:

1. Learning from abroad—this was made possible for Polish scientists and specialists by scholarship programmes and foreign stays. Help in overcoming the relative backwardness came from international organisations, such as the Technical Office of the United Nations in Geneva and New York. Their programmes were addressed primarily to the so-called developing countries. Poland managed to claim this status for itself, and not only to make use of the programmes, but also to shape them to its own advantage by sending specialists to the UN bodies.
2. The absolutist state—in the case of Poland this was the centralised People's Republic, which invested specifically in the training of specialists for both economic systems, for example at the Higher School of Planning and Statistics and the Research Institute for Contemporary Problems of Capitalism, both in Warsaw. Due to the high degree of backwardness and the economic system in place in socialist Poland, it was the state—and not the banking system—that played a decisive role.
3. The *Zollverein*—in Poland in the 1970s there was a relatively broad opening up to the West, with numerous examples of technology and credit transfer and increasing exchange of people and goods with the European Community and North America, especially after the oil crisis and the Helsinki process. The West's selective economic policy also played a large role here.

2 LEARNING FROM ABROAD: THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Unlike East Germany, Poland was recognised as a state by international organisations, and was one of the 51 founding members of the United Nations in 1945.⁵ Among the countries of the socialist bloc, it was Poland, Yugoslavia, Albania, and Mongolia that made the most extensive use of the programmes of the UN Technical Office. Particularly worthy of mention are the extensive financial resources made available for stays abroad by specialists and scientists in selected Western countries with the aim of gaining professional qualifications (work placements in companies, scholarships at scientific institutions and universities, etc.). Gerschenkron's "profitability of backwardness" applies here too because most of the programmes were directed at the modernisation of developing countries. The following is an extract from one of the reports of the Polish Committee for Foreign Economic Cooperation:

Making use of these subsidies requires complex diplomatic efforts, since United Nations technical assistance is primarily intended for developing countries. It should be emphasised that among the socialist countries, apart from Yugoslavia, Albania and Mongolia, which are treated as developing countries, only Poland has received quite significant subsidies from the United Nations technical assistance programmes [...]

We use the grants awarded to us by UN technical assistance above all for work placements for our specialists in Western countries [...]

[Thanks to] the United Nations we are able to make our specialists familiar with Western factories' methods and production processes, which would be difficult or impossible to access without UN intermediation [...].⁶

The UN's technical assistance was also funded by a number of cooperating organisations, particularly the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Atomic Energy Agency

⁵The following socialist bloc states were also UN founding members: Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, the USSR, the Ukrainian SSR, and the Belarusian SSR.

⁶AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/1, Departament Międzynarodowych Organizacji Ministerstwa Zagranicznego PRL-u, memorandum: Nasze korzyści ze współpracy z pomocą techniczną ONZ, Funduszem Specjalnym i UNICEF Departament Międzynarodowych Organizacji Ministerstwa Zagranicznego PRL-u, 23 July 1965, p. 2.

(IAEA), and the World Health Organization (WHO). Although Poland paid annual membership fees to these organisations, partly in foreign currency, overall, the country was one of the net recipients of financial assistance—similarly as it is in the EU today.⁷

Another factor that contributed to the modernisation of the Polish state was direct aid, in particular from US-based non-profit organisations and the Polish diaspora. A prime example and a symbol of American aid is the construction of a children's hospital in Kraków in the 1960s, which took place thanks to funding provided by the New York-based Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere and the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) on behalf of the US government. To this day, that institution is one of the most modern of its kind in Poland and beyond. The ICA would “utilize foreign currencies accruing to the United States for hospitals abroad designed to serve as centers for medical treatment, education and research, founded or sponsored by citizens of the United States”.⁸ The hospital's formal opening took place in 1965. Because of the financial support received from the Polish–American diaspora in the US government, it was named the “Polish–American Children's Hospital” and became one of the showpieces of political rapprochement between East and West during the Cold War. The Kraków hospital was visited by US President Gerald Ford in 1975, and again by Vice President George Bush in 1987.

Also of great significance, apart from the financial assistance and the transfer of modern showpieces (such as the aforementioned children's hospital), was the opportunity for Polish specialists and experts to observe and gain practical experience of work in the West. These numerous professional visits were often possible only through the mediation of the UN Technical Office, because according to the Polish government, direct contact with Western companies was hardly possible, due to the Cold War and the embargo. More than 50 per cent of all stays and work placements

⁷Ibid., p. 1.

⁸AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960, Contract for Architectural and Engineering Services between the Government of the United States and Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere, INC for the construction of the American Research Hospital for Children in Poland for the Medical Academy at Krakow, Poland, 23 November 1960.

undertaken by Polish specialists took place in the industrial sector.⁹ Another factor of great political and economic relevance was the participation of Polish experts, as representatives of a UN member country, in the work of the UN Technical Assistance Administration and its sub-organisations. This was mentioned in a report of the Polish Committee for Foreign Cooperation as early as the mid-1960s:

Our influence on the alignment of multilateral international cooperation is of great political and economic importance to us. These organisations form an important platform for the realisation of coexistence. [...] Moreover, our participation in the United Nations Technical Assistance, the Social Fund, and UNICEF is a means of communicating our views and experiences.¹⁰

Poland was thus able to exert a direct influence on the shaping of the technical cooperation programmes. A further role here was naturally played by the regular visits of UN experts to Poland, as well as research assignments from some specialised UN agencies to Polish institutions. The Polish state clearly understood how to make very good use of this opportunity, although the relatively numerous Polish diaspora in the West also undoubtedly had a role to play.

However, “learning from abroad” was not always uncomplicated. The inflexible regulations of the socialist state often stood in the way, as did ideological reservations. Every trip abroad, no matter how simple, had to be approved at many decision-making levels, right up to the highest levels of government. What in a market economy would have been decided at most in the executive suite of a company was highly centralised—and difficult—in socialist Poland. Nevertheless, the state decision-makers were aware of the importance of the exchange and the unique opportunity of learning abroad, and so the delegations were selected very carefully and for the greatest possible benefit to the relevant branch of industry. This is illustrated by a trip to the US and Canada undertaken by Polish experts from the cellulose and paper industry. In 1960, the American paper manufacturers Parsons and Whittemore invited five to six Polish engineers

⁹AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/1, Departament Międzynarodowych Organizacji Ministerstwa Zagranicznego PRL-u, memorandum: Nasze korzyści ze współpracy z pomocą techniczną ONZ, Funduszem Specjalnym i UNICEF Departament Międzynarodowych Organizacji Ministerstwa Zagranicznego PRL-u, 23 July 1965, p. 3.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 7.

from the sector, to make them acquainted with the achievements of the North American paper industry. Among other things, the concern supplied machines and technology to the paper factory in Ostrołęka in north-east Poland. The trip thus had the nature of a study visit: the specialists were to get to know the machines that were to be used in Poland in the modernisation and development of the paper industry. The ambitious goal of modernising and expanding the production of pulp, paper, cardboard, and fibreboard, as well as furniture for export, could be achieved only with the use of Western technology. The American technology would enable a 20- to 30-fold reduction in the consumption of water in the manufacturing process, and would also significantly improve the treatment of wastewater from the process. The trip needed to be approved not only by the Ministry for Forestry and Timber Industry and the State Planning Commission, but also by the Foreign Ministry. The recommendation made by the Foreign Ministry to Deputy Premier Piotr Jaroszewicz, who was ultimately also involved in the decision-making process, read: “In view of the type of trip and the fact that it relates to a private invitation from an American concern, I consider it inadvisable for such a delegation to include a member of the government of the Polish People’s Republic—in this case the Deputy Minister for Forestry”.¹¹ The deputy premier thus decided that members of the government would not take part in the trip, but it would include experts from the relevant paper factories.

This is an impressive example of targeted modernisation measures in the Polish socialist economy implemented with the help of study visits to the West, in spite of the obstacles faced along the way. The archived records show clearly that this type of exchange with the US, in spite of all ideological reservations, took place primarily in industries that were to undergo modernisation. The technological backwardness of Polish industry was too great; pragmatism often won out over ideology.

The records also show that from the late 1950s almost every industry and economic sector organised similar study trips to the US for Polish experts. They were often followed by six- to twelve-month work placements

¹¹ AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960; Podsekretarz Stanu w Ministerstwie Spraw Zagranicznych do: Towarzysz Minister R. Fidelski—Zastępca Przewodniczącego Komitetu Współpracy Gospodarczej i Naukowo-Technicznej z Zagranicą, Warszawa, 6 September 1960.

and study visits for young Polish engineers and specialists. Invaluable in this context are the personal contacts made, which in comparison with other Eastern and East Central European states were an almost unique characteristic of the backward Polish economy. Business contacts of this kind were often based on personal acquaintance, as is illustrated by a notice from the field of industrial design in the early 1960s. Because Polish industrial design was internationally recognised, the decision-makers hoped for potential export opportunities, and thus offered this private visitor numerous tours and discussions at Polish design centres throughout the country:

Freda Diamond—USA, glass industry consultant, designer and drafter, interior designer, glass design—would like discussions with design offices and representatives of the glass industry, particularly export glass (...) She is visiting privately from 8 to 15 September.¹²

In spite of the Iron Curtain, contacts with the West, and above all with the US, were not interrupted. From the highest circles of government, such as Polish Deputy Premier Jaroszewicz, down to specialists at the lower levels of combines and enterprises, knowledge and practical expertise were exchanged with involved experts, even across the Atlantic. Of the Eastern Bloc countries, only the Soviet Union was engaged in such exchange with comparable intensity. Extensive use was made of contacts with the Polish diaspora in American centres such as Chicago, New York, Detroit, and Southampton. Many problems that had been awaiting a solution since 1947, following Poland's rejection (under Soviet pressure) of the Marshall Plan and the economic embargo placed on the Eastern Bloc, could be at least partially alleviated by this means. For example, Poland was able to obtain US patent descriptions worth several hundred thousand dollars free of charge, after Watson, chairman of the US Patent Office, was received in Poland in late 1959, and his Polish counterpart Professor Muszyński made a return visit to the US in the following year. Although the descriptions were supplied in return for equivalent Polish

¹² AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960, Ministerstwo Przemysłu Lekkiego. Gabinet Ministra. Wydział Współpracy z Zagranicą, 17 August 1960.

patent descriptions, experts agreed that the transaction had clearly been to the Polish side's advantage.¹³

Another example of a study visit—this time involving the Polish electrical industry—confirms that the Polish experts visiting the US primarily wished to study mechanisation and automation in the industry, given that manpower in Polish power plants was twice as high as in the US.¹⁴ All of these trips were conceived as exchanges. American experts travelled to Poland, and Polish specialists were invited to make return visits to the US or Canada. According to assessments made by Polish ministries, the advantages of this exchange clearly accrued to the Polish side. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, most ministries estimated that their industries lagged behind the US in terms of technology by six to eight years. The advantages of cooperation with Poland mentioned by the American side were interpreted by Polish experts rather as pure “courtesy declarations”.¹⁵

In the case of the aforementioned electrical industry trip, the invitation for a one-month study visit for 10–12 persons from Poland came directly from the board of Detroit Edison Co., whose experts had already paid a visit to Poland in summer 1959.¹⁶ The US State Department declared that it would pay all of the costs incurred by the Polish delegation in the US. This allowed the Polish side to save its scarce foreign currency.

A common feature of all of these trips was the high professional level represented by those taking part. In the 1960 study trip by electrical specialists to the US, all participants held university degrees, mostly from the pre-war period (five from the Technical University of Lwów [Lviv] and three from Warsaw Technical University). All of them also spoke English

¹³AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960, Prezes Urzędu Patentowego PRL, Prof. Dr inż. Zb. Muszyński do Wiceprezes Rady Ministrów Tow. E. Szyr, 7 November 1959.

¹⁴AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960; Notatka w sprawie wysłania delegacji energetyki polskiej do Stanów Zjednoczonych, 1 April 1960, p. 3.

¹⁵AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960; Notatka dla Wiceprezesa Rady Ministrów Tow. Piotra Jaroszewicza w związku z rozmowami przeprowadzonymi z p. Walker Lee Cislarem, prezesem „Detroit Edison Company”, 26 September 1959.

¹⁶AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960; Notatka w sprawie projektowanej wizyty delegacji energetyków polskich w USA, 22 January 1960.

and other foreign languages (Russian, German, French, Czech) to a high standard. The delegations thus consisted not of pure “communist cadres”, but of specialists who knew how to make excellent use of the knowledge and contacts that they acquired.

Another opportunity to “learn from abroad” was provided by traditional representation in the form of Polish embassies worldwide—here particularly in the West. There is nothing unusual in this, since all countries use their missions to collect information. Nevertheless, compared with East Germany, for example, this path was of particular importance to Poland, since the GDR remained unrecognised for many years and thus lacked foreign embassies. The archival sources show in particular that the Polish embassy in the US, especially the Polish trade mission in Washington, was very active in passing on the latest information, and thus in ensuring the circulation of knowledge. That mission regularly informed experts in Warsaw about the latest publications and research results, and enabled access to the most important journals, or at least to abstracts. Paradoxically, journals from other socialist bloc countries and from China also found their way to Poland by this means—via a detour route that crossed the Atlantic.¹⁷

3 THE “ABSOLUTIST STATE”: THE ROLE OF STATE INSTITUTIONS

Like in the absolutist state of the nineteenth century, the Polish communist government created numerous institutions which—with help from the West—would play a major role in the modernisation process. Alongside the universities and colleges, above all the Warsaw Higher School for Planning and Statistics (now SGH Warsaw School of Economics), as well as many technical universities, the Polish government established a number of institutions that today would be called think tanks, many of which are still in existence. Notable among them was the Committee for Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation at the Council of Ministers (*Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej i Naukowo-Technicznej przy Radzie Ministrów*), which was established in 1958, and in 1962 was renamed the Committee

¹⁷ AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960; Embassy of the Polish People’s Republic. Polish Trade Mission do Komitetu Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, Dot. wydawnictw tutejszego Ministra Handlu, 21 November 1960.

for Foreign Economic Cooperation (*Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą*). Its remit included cooperation within the framework of Comecon, but also the UN Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva, and later the EEC. This state institution coordinated bilateral agreements, but was also responsible for cooperation with the UN Technical Office. Under UN technical assistance for developing countries, Poland had access to funds for expert exchanges, work placements, foreign stays, and scholarships from UN funds, from the FAO, UNESCO, the WHO, and others. In spite of the Cold War and the economic embargo between East and West, Warsaw's Committee for Foreign Economic Cooperation often took action to disseminate technical documentation from the West. Of particular interest were the latest developments in those sectors that were key to the modernisation of the economy. For example, in the construction industry, starting from the 1960s, American technical documentation for land development machinery and cement production was made available.¹⁸ From the late 1950s there were also contacts between the Polish committee, the US National Science Foundation, and the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America. This paved the way for numerous scholarships and professional stays in the US for Polish specialists.¹⁹ Other formats for exchange between Poland and the US were also agreed, in addition to the translation of patents and specialist literature.²⁰

However, the Western side also had an interest in establishing contacts with East Central Europe, whether on economic or political grounds. Almost every industry association in the US had specialists responsible for contacts with the "Eastern Bloc". Polish experts also knew how to make use of these contacts. The US specialists were often invited to Poland when they were already travelling in the region, for example, when attending congresses in the Soviet Union or other countries. An instance of this is a trip made by Alexander Gakner from the Washington Bureau of

¹⁸AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960, Sprawozdanie No. 2, Waszyngton, 21 August 1960.

¹⁹AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960, Przyjazd William E. Sievers z National Science Foundation w USA, 9 August 1960.

²⁰AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960, Odpis Centralny Instytut Dokumentacji Naukowo Technicznej.

Mines in 1960, on which he visited the USSR and attended an international mining conference in Budapest. He was invited to travel on from Budapest to Poland, where he was given a week-long tour of the country's leading mining and steelworking sites. From then on, Gakner was involved in arranging study visits to the US for Polish specialists and supplied Polish experts with current publications.²¹

The UN Technical Office in Geneva and New York also cooperated, for purposes of “development assistance”, with Western foundations, above all the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, in the fields of medicine and agriculture in particular. One result of the cooperation between the Geneva office and the Polish Committee for Foreign Economic Cooperation was the awarding of scholarships from these foundations. As early as 1964/65 the Ford Foundation provided up to 60 scholarships in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities, especially in economics, in addition to five scholarships for linguists. This was the beginning of the long-term cooperation that was also an element of Western science policy and diplomacy during the Cold War, as noted by Igor Czernecki (2013), Andrzej Turkowski (2018), Tomasz Zarycki (2009), and Andrzej Wyczański (1997). On the other hand, for the Polish side, this circulation of experts, scientists, and intellectuals was a targeted measure on the path to modernisation—but one that would ultimately lead to the collapse of the system and the subsequent transformation. The Western foundations thus reacted relatively patiently to the initial problems that were signalled by the Polish government, as illustrated by a letter from Eugenia Krassowska, State Secretary in the Polish Ministry of Higher Education, to the Ford Foundation's director Dr Shepard Stone:

I am pleased that the difficulties encountered this year in carrying out the Foundation's program for 1961 have now been overcome and mutual cooperation is continuing. [...] However, I was very surprised that, despite the reservations expressed in my letter of 25 May of this year, the Foundation sent out scholarship notifications to 13 persons. [...] I would therefore be grateful if, prior to the final decision, the Foundation's experts would inform us of the names of all persons considered as candidates for the Foundation's

²¹AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/41, USA: Dokumenty z rozmów inż. Lutosławskiego. Korespondencja 1959–1960, Notatka z rozmowy przeprowadzonej z Mr. Alexander Gakner /Bureau of Mines/, Waszyngton, 21 June 1960.

scholarships, and that no promises of scholarships would be made to persons to whom the Polish side has objections. [...]²²

Another important central institution for scientific contact and knowledge exchange with the West within the framework of Polish economic and social modernisation, and thus a long-term “midwife” for the transformation, was the Warsaw-based Research Institute for Contemporary Problems of Capitalism (*Instytut Badania Współczesnych Problemów Kapitalizmu*, IBWPK), established in March 1975, having previously been known as the Research Centre for East–West Relations (*Ośrodek Badania Stosunków Wschód–Zachód*, OBSW-Z). Its main tasks included the study of changes in the class structure in the West, the mechanisms by which states functioned, the parliamentary system, social changes, and above all the economy. Much space was given, particularly after the CSCE Final Act, to the subjects of human rights and civil liberties, as well as the West’s economic strategies with respect to the socialist states, before and after the Helsinki Conference. The Institute’s staff prepared reports and analyses intended primarily for the government and other decision-makers. They did not merely study the problems of capitalism at a distance, but regularly took part in numerous East–West conferences and international symposia. They were also involved in the programme of professional and scientific exchanges with the West. The Institute’s research results were also made available to a wider audience, especially through newspapers and journals (such as the quarterly *Kapitalizm*) and by way of international conferences.²³ Members of the Institute not only conducted research into information exchange, interpersonal contacts, and Europe-wide scientific, economic, and cultural cooperation, but in the 1970s and 1980s also put these ideas into practice.²⁴ This was a possibility that was

²² AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/1, letter from: Eugenia Krassowska, Podsekretarz Stanu w Ministerstwie Szkolnictwa Wyższego, to: Dyrektor Fundacji Forda, Dr. Shepard Stone, 17 October 1961.

²³ AAN, Rep. 1159—Instytut Badania Współczesnych Problemów Kapitalizmu—IBWPK w Warszawie 1969–1985, No. 1/3, Rada Naukowo-Programowa Instytutu, 1976, 1977, Protokół z posiedzenia Rady Naukowo-Programowej Instytutu Badania Współczesnych Problemów Kapitalizmu RSW „Prasa-Książka-Ruch“, 9 November 1977, pp. 3, 5–7.

²⁴ AAN, Rep. 1159—Instytut Badania Współczesnych Problemów Kapitalizmu, No. 1/3, Problematyka wymiany informacji i kultury między państwami o różnych systemach oraz „Praw Człowieka“ w pracach naukowo-badawczych Instytutu. Materiał na posiedzenie Rady Programowo-Naukowej, 15 April 1977.

not available to the same extent to all communist societies, or admittedly to all Polish citizens. In any case, it may be stated that the issues that became crucial during the systemic transformation had been studied and discussed much earlier, a fact that helped accelerate the change.

From the start, the work of the Institute was supported by a scientific advisory board. Alongside the Minister for Science, Higher Education and Technology (in 1975 this was the economics professor Janusz Górski) the board included academics from leading Polish institutions, including the Higher School for Planning and Statistics (SGPiS, known again as SGH since 1991), the University of Warsaw (especially for political science and journalism), the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN, including the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology and the Institute for State and Law), and the Polish Institute for International Affairs (PISM).²⁵ All of the aforementioned institutions are still operating and conducting research, which was important for the transformation process, and is an example of a continuity seldom found elsewhere in East Central Europe. In turn, the establishment and development of many such “cadre schools” was made possible by the financial assistance of the United Nations. To give just one example, in the mid-1960s the Centre for Executive Training (*Centralny Ośrodek Doształcania Kadr Kierowniczych*) in Warsaw benefited from over one million dollars from the UN Social Fund.²⁶

4 THE “ZOLLVEREIN”: EAST–WEST CONTACTS ESTABLISHED THROUGH STAYS ABROAD

Most Polish documents relating to professional and scholarship exchange between Poland and the West are held in the Archive of New Files (AAN) and in the archive of the foreign ministry in Warsaw. Analysis of these sources, particularly in relation to cooperation with the Ford and Fulbright Foundations, which began in the 1960s thanks to coordination by the UN Technical Office, reveals that there was a high degree of pragmatism in the cooperation between the communist government and the foundation representatives.

²⁵ AAN, Rep. 1159—Instytut Badania Współczesnych Problemów Kapitalizmu, No. 1/2.

²⁶ AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/1, Departament Międzynarodowych Organizacji Ministerstwa Zagranicznego PRL-u, memorandum: “Nasze korzyści ze współpracy z pomocą techniczną ONZ, Funduszem Specjalnym i UNICEF”, Departament Międzynarodowych Organizacji Ministerstwa Zagranicznego PRL-u, 23 July 1965, p. 5.

A tendency is observed whereby the Polish side was initially particularly interested in exchange in the field of modern industry, science, and technology. Similarities to the behaviour of the German state in its nineteenth-century modernisation process, as described in detail by Gerschenkron (1962, 10), are again visible. Polish preferences clearly lay in such emerging areas as biophysics, biochemistry, electronics, engineering, architecture, and business management, which suggests that the backdrop was a strong pressure to modernise the Polish economy (cf. Table 11.2).

Table 11.2 Overview of Polish Fulbright scholarships in 1969–1971 and 1983–1988

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Disciplines</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
1969–1970	6	Physics, Language and Literature, Sociology	6	0
1970–1971	8	Economics and Business Administration, Education, Language and Literature, Chemistry, Engineering, Animal and Plant Sciences, Bio-Sciences	7	1
1983–1984	25	Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Theatre Arts, Economics and Business Administration, Language and Literature, Journalism and Mass Communications, Linguistics, Medical Sciences, History and Civilization, Engineering, Earth Sciences	19	6
1984–1985	27	Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Computer Science, Earth Sciences, Economics and Business Administration, Engineering, Journalism and Mass Communications, Law Linguistics, Medical Sciences, Physics, Theatre Arts	18	9
1985–1986	26	Biological Sciences, Business Administration, Chemistry, Communications and Journalism, Computer Science, Economics, Engineering, Language and Literature, Linguistics, Medical Sciences, Physics and Astronomy, Political Science	19	7
1986–1987	32	Agriculture, American History, Biological Sciences, Business Administration, Chemistry, Communications and Journalism, Economics, Engineering, History (non-US), Mathematics, Medical Sciences, Psychology	25	7
1987–1988	31	Agriculture, Medical Sciences, Business Administration, Communications and Journalism, Economics, Sociology and Social Work, Political Science, Chemistry, Biological Sciences, Engineering, History (non-US)	23	8

Source: Chlebowska (2020, 37)

The Western side, on the other hand, aimed to have more scholarships awarded to Poles in the humanities and social sciences, and above all in economics. The Western foundations also increasingly provided scholarships in the fields of applied linguistics and foreign language teaching.²⁷ Not least, the political motives of Western economic policy also became clear, combined with the hope of being able to exert an influence on Poland's social elites.²⁸

The list of scholarship candidates was drawn up by the Polish higher education ministry based on proposals from various other ministries, universities, and the foundations themselves. It is clear, however, that in spite of the mutual coordination of the candidate lists and the selection interviews held in Warsaw and Kraków (only candidates who had the approval of the Polish side were admissible), the candidates were by no means predetermined by the party alone. Although the State Undersecretary at the Polish Ministry for Higher Education was already appealing in the mid-1960s for a selection of candidates who, apart from high academic and linguistic qualifications, would also represent a “certain political point of view”, the files show that most candidates, though being outstanding experts in their fields, were not necessarily politically engaged.²⁹ Many of them, especially in the 1960s, were not even members of the ruling Polish United Workers Party (PZPR). For example, among the 12 candidates for Ford Foundation scholarships for Polish heavy industry and the chemical industry in 1964/65 (destination countries: the US, the UK, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark) there were only two PZPR members; the great majority did not belong to any party.³⁰

²⁷ AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/1, Notatka pro memoriam w sprawie zasad i trybu przygotowywania kandydatów na stypendia Fundacji Forda, 28 January 1964, p. 1. This memorandum on the rules and procedures for the preparation of candidates for Ford Foundation scholarships is signed by Ford Foundation director Shepard Stone and by Eugenia Krassowska, State Secretary at the Ministry for Higher Education.

²⁸ Cf. the example of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) as reflected in state security and party documents (Pleskot, Rutkowski 2009, 2012).

²⁹ AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/1, letter from: Podsekretarz Stanu w Ministerstwie Szkolnictwa Wyższego, to: Przewodniczący Komitetu Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą przy Urzędzie Rady Ministrów, K. Olszewski, 30 January 1964.

³⁰ AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/1, Ministerstwo Przemysłu Ciężkiego, Wykaz tematów i kandydatów na stypendia Fundacji Forda na 1964/1965 r.

The application documents also show that almost all of the candidates had extensive specialist knowledge in their fields, and indicated very specific wishes to their host institutions. Most of them already had contact with the institutions, knew colleagues there, or gave precise indications of Western firms and institutions that they wished to get to know during their mostly half-year or one-year stays abroad. Apart from their expert knowledge and degree of networking, the applicants also exhibited impressive language skills. In addition to the language of the host country, most of them also had a good command of another foreign language, the most represented being English, German, and Russian.³¹

5 MIDWIVES OF THE TRANSFORMATION

Socialist Poland was one of few Eastern Bloc countries to make targeted use of programmes of professional and scientific exchange with the West. The Western technology transfer that took place from the 1970s did not bring the hoped-for result of rapid modernisation of the Polish economy, as it proved difficult to implement the new Western technologies in the structures of the rigid planned economy. However, thanks to numerous professional stays abroad, particularly from the 1970s onward, Polish specialists and managers had a huge advantage over the other societies in the Eastern Bloc, and they were able to build on this seamlessly when the systemic transformation began. Thus, the professional stays in the West were on the one hand a clear advantage in Gerschenkron's sense, but on the other they were simply a tactic related to political practice. From the 1960s, Polish experts learnt about the mechanisms of the market economy in the West, made valuable contacts, tried out the latest technologies, and built up a rich fund of social capital. In addition, they often accumulated the financial starting capital for the transformation process of the late 1980s, when new firms were established, many of them still being active today (Rybiński 2014, Kamosiński 2023). On the other hand, many of the plants that had been established in the Polish People's Republic suffered collapse or were sold off. The economic and social elites with their Western links were virtually ready for take-off, waiting only for the wind of change that would allow them to operate freely. They included former communist officials or people at the start of a similar career, but also representatives of

³¹ See the numerous personal questionnaires in: AAN, Rep. 575—Komitet Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą, No. 18/1, Kwestionariusz osobowy.

the opposition, since the beneficiaries of professional stays—as well as private stays (e.g., resulting from emigration)—in the West were not all supporters of the regime, but also included opposition intellectuals. All of them went to make up the post-communist elite after 1989—the midwives of the transformation.

Thanks to circulation of knowledge and their freedom to travel to the West, and using their international networking, former “communist cadres” were able to become midwives of the transformation. This is illustrated by Table 11.3, which lists some recipients of Fulbright scholarships. The list of the most prominent Polish Fulbright scholars reads like a *Who’s Who* of the Polish transformation period. Everyone who took up key political and business posts had previously made one or several professional stays in the West. For instance, Henryka Bochniarz—one of the two women appearing on the list of “midwives” of the Polish transformation in Table 11.3—received a scholarship from the Fulbright Foundation in the mid-1980s and taught at the University of Minnesota. After 1989 she became Poland’s industry and trade minister, and after leaving government she was active in business, serving as chair of the employers’ association until 2019. She founded and managed one of the first consulting firms (Nicom Consulting) and conducted many important privatisation projects in Poland. She belongs or has belonged to the supervisory boards of several companies, including some that are foreign-owned (they include Commercial Union, TVN, Lukas Bank, Agora, TP S.A., Fiat Auto Poland, Unicredit, Orange Polska, and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles Poland). She herself recounts that her American stay had a great influence on the shaping of the Polish economy and system in the time of the transformation. She could also count on her contacts in the US during that time. Many colleagues visited Poland in the 1990s to provide advice and support (Bochniarz 2022, 2023). In the communist era, Bochniarz had completed her studies in the Faculty of Foreign Trade at the Warsaw Higher School of Planning and Statistics, Poland’s economic “cadre school”. Until 1990 she also worked there as an assistant professor and long-term member of the research staff in the Institute of Foreign Trade Prices and Business Cycles. She was a member of the PZPR until 1990.

The second woman on the list, Danuta Hübner, graduated in economics and foreign trade in 1971, at the same renowned Warsaw institution as Bochniarz. She went on to receive several scholarships and visiting positions at foreign universities, including a Fulbright at the University of California. She completed her doctorate in 1974 and her habilitation

Table 11.3 The most prominent Polish Fulbright scholars and their role in the transformation process

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>US institution</i>	<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Key roles in Poland after 1989</i>
Henryka Bochniarz (b. 1947)	1985–1987	University of Minnesota	National economy	Industry minister, chair of PKPP Lewiatan employers' association, director of Boeing Central and East Europe
Marcin Świącicki (b. 1947)	1976, 1985	George Washington University, Harvard College	Economics	Deputy economics minister, minister for foreign trade relations, mayor of Warsaw
Leszek Balcerowicz (b. 1947)	1972, 1974	Saint John's University	Economics	Deputy prime minister, finance minister, responsible for Poland's transition to a market economy
Marek Belka (b. 1952)	1978–1979, 1985–1986	Columbia University, University of Chicago	Economics	Prime minister, head of the Polish central bank
Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz (b. 1950)	1980–1981	Columbia University	Law and administration	Prime minister, justice minister, attorney general
Danuta Hübner (b. 1948)	1988–1990	University of California	Economics	Deputy Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission, State Secretary in the Polish foreign ministry, minister for European affairs
Cezary Stypułkowski (b. 1956)	Late 1980s	Columbia University	Law	Director of several banks, member of the board of the International Institute of Finance
Tadeusz Iwiński (b. 1944)	1977–1978, 1988	Harvard College, University of California	Political science	Member of parliament, observer and member of the European Parliament, State Secretary in the prime minister's office

(continued)

Table 11.3 (continued)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>US institution</i>	<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Key roles in Poland after 1989</i>
Adam Biela (b. 1947)	1975–1976, 1981–1982	University of Michigan	Politics and psychology	Member of parliament, observer at the European Parliament
Dariusz Rosati (b. 1946)	1986–1987	Princeton University	Politics and economics	Expert for various international organisations, foreign minister
Grzegorz Kołodko (b. 1949)	1985–1986	University of Illinois	Economics	Deputy prime minister, finance minister, author of socioeconomic development programmes for Poland

Source: Chlebowska (2020, 38)

degree in 1980 in Warsaw, where she has been a professor of economics since 1992. Hübner was a member of the PZPR, but had left the party before the collapse of the system (her membership lasted from 1970 to 1987). During the transformation process she served as State Secretary at the Polish industry ministry, and then became head of the Polish President’s office. From 1998 to 2001 she was Deputy Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe, the same organisation that had assisted the Polish government in its modernisation efforts during the Cold War. From 2001 to 2003 Hübner was State Secretary at the Polish foreign ministry, and from 2003 to 2004 she herself served as Minister for European Affairs.³² Hübner was also Poland’s first EU commissioner, having played a significant role in Poland’s negotiations on European integration since the 1990s.

Another “midwife” of the transformation, Marcin Świącicki, took part in the very first phase of the transformation in 1989 on the government side, being a member of the economic and social policy team at the round table talks. He was one of the authors of the proposal for the conversion of the economy to market principles. In 1989–1991 he was Minister for Foreign Economic Cooperation in Tadeusz Mazowiecki’s government, and he signed the first economic cooperation agreement with the European

³² <https://unece.org/danuta-hubner>. Accessed 30 Mar 2023; <https://archives.cui.eu/en/isaar/734>. Accessed 30 Mar 2023.

Community. He also negotiated successfully with the Soviet Union on the cancellation of Polish debts. In 1994–1999 Świącicki served as mayor of Poland’s capital, and then until 2000 he was deputy minister for the economy and a member of Jan Kułakowski’s team that negotiated the conditions for Polish EU membership.

Świącicki was also a PZPR member, and was a secretary to the party’s Central Committee in 1989. However, from 1965 to 1972 he was also active in the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia (KIK), an organisation more readily associated with the opposition. Świącicki completed his studies in the communist era, like all other midwives of the Polish transformation. He graduated in sociology in 1970 from the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Warsaw, and in the following year completed his master’s degree at that university’s Faculty of Economics and Sociology. In 1981 he gained a doctorate in economics at the Institute of Planning. Before the transformation he had received two Fulbright scholarships and completed postgraduate studies in economics at George Washington University (1976) and at Harvard (1985).³³

To comment on a final example from Table 11.3, the most prominent “midwife” of the transformation is undoubtedly Leszek Balcerowicz. He is often called the father of the Polish transformation, primarily because of his eponymous Balcerowicz Plan, through which he carried out a radical conversion of Poland’s centrally planned economy to a market economy (Balcerowicz 1997). Supported by, among other things, a stabilisation loan from the International Monetary Fund, the plan included a full liberalisation of prices and a curbing of inflationary wage growth. This sudden switch to a market economy has been referred to as “shock therapy”.

Balcerowicz was another graduate in foreign trade from the renowned Higher School for Planning and Statistics in Warsaw. Although he was a member of the PZPR, he left the party after the imposition of martial law in 1981. He received two Fulbright scholarships in the 1970s, and gained a Master of Business Administration degree in the US. Even in the 1980s he published a plan, worked out with friends, for reforming the Polish People’s Republic as a market economy, and this brought him an offer to become involved in the Solidarity programme. In 1989, despite having been offered a position in the UK, Balcerowicz decided to accept the post of Polish finance minister. From 1989 to 1991 he served as Deputy Prime

³³https://mamprawowiedziec.pl/polityk/31024_marcin_swiecicki. Accessed 30 Mar 2023.

Minister and Minister of Finance in the governments of Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Jan Krzysztof Bielecki. In the early 2000s Balcerowicz was head of the Polish central bank, and succeeded in making the zloty a stable currency (Płociennik 2009).

It is interesting to note that almost all of the people listed in the table were associated with the PZPR to a greater or lesser extent. Although party membership was not a necessary condition for embarking on a professional stay in the West, with or without a scholarship, such travel was made more difficult for members of the opposition, the Church and Solidarity, particularly after the imposition of martial law in Poland. Nevertheless, opposition figures were equally active in the West. On the one hand, Western scholarships always remained open to non-party members and Church activists, as the example of Adam Biela (see Table 11.3) shows. On the other hand, the opposition made use of alternative channels, such as Jerzy Giedroyc's Paris-based *Kultura*. The past political affiliations of many of those listed in Table 11.3 thus only partially support the view expressed by Polish sociologists such as Adam Schaff, Jakub Karpiński, and Adam Podgórecki, that the systemic transformation was basically an institutional change created by the communist elite—these were certainly very important voices in the 1990s debate about the influence of the structures and secret services of the former Polish People's Republic on the preparation of the new “elite” for the transformation and the takeover of power. On the other hand there were also very many opposition “midwives” of transformation, so that in the case of Poland one can speak of a mixed elite—fully in line with the round table talks, which took place in Warsaw between 6 February and 5 April 1989, in the phase of the transition from a communist regime to democracy. These talks involved representatives of the ruling PZPR, but also the opposition Solidarity trade union, the Catholic Church, and other social groups. All of these groupings participated equally in the systemic transformation, and we can find representatives of all of them on the list of those who undertook professional stays in the West, some of them long before the transformation took place.

Scholarships, openness to the West, and freedom of travel were helpful in the process of systemic transformation above all for people who had connections to the power system. This statement is a recurrent theme of the sociological debate of the 1990s regarding the responsibility of the communist era elite and its successors for the political transformation. On the other hand, archive documents show that people from outside the

communist system were also involved in the transformation: entrepreneurs, craftsmen, teachers, artists, scientists, journalists, and so on. Many of them had not been members of the party, and often had even been active in the opposition; they also contributed to the transformation through their work (including that done in the West) in the times of socialist Poland.

6 CONCLUSION

The relatively strong international network built up by the Polish elite, even before the transformation process, arose from the unique possibility of using scholarships and other programmes of international organisations, particularly the United Nations and a number of foundations (many of which cooperated with the UN, especially at the beginning). Since Poland was a UN founding member and was classed as a developing country, it could draw on this assistance to a much greater degree than, for example, East Germany, which for a long time was not internationally recognised as a state, or Czechoslovakia, which was counted as one of the developed UN economies. Thus, in Poland's case, Gerschenkron's theory of the "profitability of backwardness" can be employed to explain the transformation process. In the context of the systemic transformation, the significance of professional stays in Western countries, undertaken by Polish experts and scientists from the late 1960s onwards, cannot be overestimated.

REFERENCES

- Balcerowicz L (1997) *Socjalizm, kapitalizm, transformacja* [Socialism, capitalism, transformation]. PWN, Warszawa
- Bochniarz H (2022) My American experiences. <https://fulbright.edu.pl/my-american-experiences-henryka-bochniarz/>. Accessed 30 Mar 2023
- Bochniarz H (2023) Networking zamiast prac domowych. Buduj relacje [Networking instead of housework. Build relations] (Forbes Women podcast). <https://www.forbes.pl/forbeswomen/henryka-bochniarz-networking-zamiast-prac-domowych-buduj-relacje/rfe0mhq>. Accessed 30 Mar 2023
- Chlebowska A (2020) *Wissenszirkulation im Kalten Krieg. Polnische Stipendiaten in den USA seit den 1970er Jahren*. MA thesis, European University Viadrina, Centre for Interdisciplinary Polish Studies, Frankfurt (Oder)
- Czernecki I (2013) An intellectual offensive. The Ford Foundation and the destalinization of the Polish social sciences. *Cold War History* 13(3): 289–310

- Fishlow A (2003) Review at https://eh.net/book_reviews/economic-backwardness-in-historical-perspective-a-book-of-essays/. Accessed 24 Apr 2023
- Gerschenkron A (1962) *Economic backwardness in historical perspective. A book of essays*. Harvard UP, Cambridge, MA
- Jajeński-Quast D (2005) “Proletarische Internationalität” ohne Gleichheit. Ausländische Arbeitskräfte in ausgewählten sozialistischen Großbetrieben. In Müller C T, Poutrus P G (eds.) *Ankunft – Alltag – Ausreise. Migration und interkulturelle Begegnung in der DDR-Gesellschaft*, 267–294. Böhlau Verlag, Köln
- Jajeński-Quast D (2022) Als Rückständigkeit zum Vorteil wurde. Berufliche Auslandsaufenthalte des “kommunistischen Kaders” im Westen als Geburtshilfe der Transformation in Polen. In Flade F et al. (eds.) *Transformation in Polen und Ostdeutschland. Voraussetzungen, Verlauf und Ergebnisse*, 205–222. Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden
- Kamosiński S (2023) *Przedsiębiorcy w Polsce w latach 1989–2019 [Entrepreneurs in Poland in 1989–2019]*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, Bydgoszcz 2023
- Klípa O (2019) Escaping the double burden. Female Polish workers in state socialist Czechoslovakia. *Slavic Review* 78(4): 1009–1027
- Pleskot P, Rutkowski TP (2009, 2012) *Spełniona Akademia. Polska Akademia Nauk w dokumentach władz PRL [The bound academy. The Polish Academy of Sciences in documents of the Polish People’s Republic’s authorities]*, vol 1: *Materiały Służby Bezpieczeństwa [Security service materials] (1967–1987)*, vol 2: *Materiały partyjne [Party materials] (1950–1986)*. IPN, Warszawa
- Płociennik S (2009) Leszek Balcerowicz. In Bingen D, Ruchniewicz K (eds.) *Länderbericht Polen*. 258–262. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Bonn
- Rybiński K (2014) *Go Global. Wywiady z twórcami polskich firm, które zdobyły rynki międzynarodowe [Go global. Interviews with founders of Polish firms that won international markets]*. Onepress, Gliwice
- Stola D (2010) *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracje z Polski 1949–1989 [A country with no way out? Migrations from Poland 1949–1989]*. IPN, Warszawa
- Turkowski A (2018) Polish intelligentsia totems in elites’ struggles for legitimization. The case of Jerzy Giedroyc and Poland’s eastern policy. *East European Politics and Societies* 33(1): 66–88
- Urban T (1998) *Polen*, CH Beck, München
- Wyczański A (1997) *Droga do III Rzeczypospolitej [The road to the Third Polish Republic]*. *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 3 (26 Jan 1997): 1–2
- Zarycki T (2009) *Peryferie. Nowe ujęcie zależności centro-peryferyjnych [Peripheries. A new perspective on centre–periphery dependences]*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

