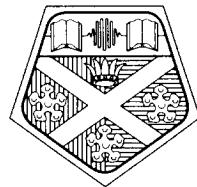


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## *LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IN TRANSITION COUNTRIES: THE CASE OF POLAND*

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COUNTRIES: THE CASE OF POLAND**

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## **Introduction: the importance of local government reform in Poland**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the process of local government reform in Poland in the decade since the fall of communism. The paper traces the themes, issues and political forces which shaped the reform package and continue to influence developments in Polish regional and local government today. Recent developments in Polish local government merit attention for several reasons. Events in post-communist Eastern Europe provide opportunities to observe the process of democratisation and the laying of the foundations of democratic political systems. The role and functions of various bodies (state institutions, political parties, social movements, interest groups etc.) and the historic, national and international factors influencing the pace and direction of their development can be assessed. The size and strategic importance of Poland (it has by far the largest population of the first rank of former communist countries seeking EU membership) means that here these themes tend to be writ large.

The case of local government reform highlights well the factors at work in the democratisation process. Transformation of the territorial structure of government is considered a vital part of democratisation. Generally, government institutions are designed to function at several geographic layers within a state: national, regional and local. The need for these tiers is usually justified in terms of the efficient provision of local services and the democratic representation of local interests.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, it is argued that decentralisation of government functions ought to lead to higher efficiency in terms of internal administration and the provision of services. On the other hand decentralisation grants local levels more political

autonomy, increases opportunities for local political participation, facilitates the representation of local interests and strengthens the government's legitimacy. As such regional and local governments play a vital role, bridging the gap between 'civil society' and the central state. It prevents overloading at the centre and acts as a barrier to the development of authoritarianism.<sup>2</sup>

However, within this, the choice of an appropriate local government system raises important questions. Which government functions ought to be decentralised (some, for example, national defence and the national currency, are obviously matters for the centre)? Can a balance be struck where government units are small enough to encourage local participation and large enough to be economically and administratively efficient? How can the principle of local autonomy be reconciled with the interests of the nation-state? In practice these issues are reflected in the number, character and powers of national, regional and local tiers.

Although most liberal democracies have a basic three-tier system of national, regional and local governments, differences in territorial arrangements are apparent between states and within states over time in accordance with changing political and socio-economic circumstances. Across Europe, a range of very different local government systems has developed. These systems can be grouped into three categories: fused, dual, and split-hierarchy systems.<sup>3</sup> The fused system of local government combines a locally elected council with strong central supervision. In its original French form the prefect level and the local mayor were centrally appointed. In its more recent form, local mayors are elected (from local

councils) and wield their authority independently of the council. In many cases, the mayor's authority is further underpinned by the fact that he also carries out functions on behalf of the state, independently of the local council. In practice, the relationship between mayors and their councils (between the executive and legislature) varies a good deal between countries that have a fused system: in some cases, the mayor is elected from the council, more common in some parts of Germany; whereas in France and Spain, mayors are directly elected by the local council; and in Italy, mayors are elected by the citizens. In the English dual system of local government, the mayor has no separate authority and is purely a ceremonial figure. The councils are autonomous within their legal area of authority. Nordic countries operate split hierarchy systems which represent a compromise of fused and dual systems. The central government holds considerable power over the provincial level and appoints its members, but local councils are autonomous within their areas and, as in the dual system, follow a collective mode of decision making.

In countries carrying the historical baggage of four decades of communist rule and undergoing rapid political and economic transformation the choice of territorial model takes on particular significance and is subject to new pressures. The reconciliation of national and local interests is difficult in post-communist East-Central Europe where national sovereignty has only recently been achieved. There is a tension between the desire to strengthen the integration of the newly independent state during a period of political and societal flux and the impulse to replace the communist model of a heavily centralised system of government with a heavily decentralised version. There is a clash between the desire to return to pre-communist

models and the need to adapt to the post-communist setting. The impotence and corruption characteristic of local and regional levels under communism also represents a stiff challenge for reformers. The pivotal role of local government in linking the interests of civil society with the state did not exist under communism because civil society, as understood in the west, was absent. For instance, political parties usually play an important part in this representational function, linking local interests with national levels of politics. However, a feature of local government in the region in the first half of the 1990s was the lack of importance of political parties at the local level, inherited from the communist period<sup>4</sup>.

Territorial reform in the post-communist states of East-Central Europe must also take place in a period of economic austerity and growing regional disparities. The economic recession sparked by the transition from communism creates an impulse for centralisation to ensure that the distribution of scarce resources is controlled. Moreover, socio-economic differentiation between regions, evident in Poland for decades, has worsened since the fall of communism. Indicators such as unemployment, quality and quantity of inward investment and GDP levels point to growing differentiation between regions and local communities since the beginning of the transition process. There is a widening gap between those who have benefited from the shift to a free market system and those who have not.<sup>5</sup> Decentralisation can be seen as a way to lessen these inequalities by increasing the efficiency and responsibility of regional and local elites. The introduction of equal, formal responsibilities to all regions and locales should curb the previous political dominance of more powerful industrial regions which lobbied influentially in Warsaw. However the danger exists

that the new reforms will help consolidate the pattern of regional differentiation. Local governments in already strong regions could take better advantage of the reforms than their counterparts in poorer areas. Richer locales may fare better than poorer ones under an autonomous financial system and this would contribute to regional socio-economic disparities. Finally, the pressure of the European Union on administrative reform in East-central Europe must be noted. Vital EU funding and future EU membership have become increasingly linked to carrying out reforms according to EU guidelines.

After the collapse of communist rule in 1990 Poland was, in theory, free to select from varying forms of local government models. The return of models based on the traditional, pre-communist system of regional and local administration could be seen as the natural choice after the overthrow of what many Poles saw as an alien, foreign system. Poland traditionally had a three-tier system of local government with locally elected communes (gminas) and counties (powiats) and large, powerful provinces (voivodships) headed by a centrally appointed governor. The system was based on German and Austrian models, a legacy of Poland's partition by Prussia and Austria-Hungary up to 1918.<sup>6</sup> However, the country had undergone massive upheavals since its last period of independence in the inter-war years. The communist era had witnessed large-scale processes of industrialisation and urbanisation which had radically altered the country's socio-economic landscape.

Western models were attractive to countries anxious to shake off their communist pasts and build their futures in Western Europe. However it was

obvious that simply transplanting an administrative model from an established liberal democracy to a country in the process of transition from a communist system was impossible. Thus questions remained. How many new regions should be created and where should their new boundaries be drawn – along pre-communist lines or to compliment the country's modern economic profile? Should the county tier, abolished under communism, also be re-introduced between the regional and local levels of government? Exactly which responsibilities and powers should each tier have in the new, post-communist setting? An examination of administrative reform in Poland allows us to re-examine some questions of democratic theory in a fresh context.

In practical terms, the case of administrative reform provides the opportunity to identify the various forces at work in Poland's political landscape in the past decade. The political structure of the country was being decided and domestic and international interests were keen to exert influence on the institution-building process. As we shall see below, prominent elements in the 'Solidarity camp' consistently supported devolution of power from Warsaw, in keeping with the model of a decentralised 'self-governing republic' evident in Solidarity programmes since 1980. Former communists, their allies and civil servants in the old system tended to defend the status quo and protect their power bases. Nationalists opposed decentralisation as a dangerous dilution of newly won sovereignty. Poland's historic regions reasserted their identity and demanded greater levels of autonomy from Warsaw. The European Union exerted increasingly powerful influence to shape Poland's territorial structure according to its plans.

Poland's adoption of a new constitution in 1997, the election of a government that year with the political will to push reforms through, and the emphasis placed on regional policies by the European Union (as talks over Poland's future membership began in earnest), returned local government reform to saliency towards the end of the decade. At the beginning of 1999 the Polish government introduced a package of far-reaching reforms designed to revitalise regional and local administrative structures and encourage political and economic initiatives at these levels. The final section of the paper provides an early assessment of these reforms. While acknowledging early difficulties, it argues that the new legislation represents a genuine devolution of political and economic powers to regional and local levels, and suggests that its future impact is likely be significant.

The paper refers on several occasions to the province of Upper Silesia to examine the impact of waves of administrative reform on provincial and local levels. In this respect Upper Silesia (in Polish Górnny Śląsk), centred on Katowice in the south-west of Poland, provides an apt subject (see Map 1). Traditionally, Upper Silesia has been the most industrialised and, economically, the most important region in Poland.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless it faces an uncertain future as the Polish government addresses the problem of restructuring the region's archaic, heavy-industrial base. Upper Silesia has also experienced political and cultural stresses stemming from a strong sense of regional identity and the presence of ethnic tensions. Centuries of Polish-German co-habitation, with political power and economic dominance being regularly exchanged between these ethnic groups, have given Upper Silesia a distinct regional identity. This, combined with the area's economic importance, has won Upper Silesia unprecedented levels of regional

autonomy within the Polish state over the years. Upper Silesia's experience is not representative of other Polish regions, but the main themes addressed in this paper are clearly observable there.<sup>8</sup> In summary, analysing the process of regional and local government reform should provide insights into the role and functions of local government, the factors influencing institutional development in post-communist Eastern-Central Europe and the future prospects for the region's integration in the EU.

### **Local Government Reform in the Early Transition Period**

Before turning to the process of local government reform in Poland in the 1990s it is important to establish briefly its historical background. Historical structures provide an important context within which Poland's recent reform of local government can be understood because, in common with other post-communist states, it has sought to revive some elements of its pre-communist model. Also, the repression of local interests caused by the inter-war and communist administrative systems explains some of the difficulties in establishing truly autonomous and effective local governments today. Lack of local autonomy can be explained in large part as the continued difficulty of transforming from the excessive centralism of the former Soviet structure. However, for most of Central Europe, including Poland, it also represents a longer inheritance from pre-communist systems. Up to 1918 Poland was partitioned between the Russian, Prussian and Austro-Hungarian empires and central administrative control in each system was dominant. State agencies held financial and administrative powers and there was no local autonomy at the level of the commune. This lack of local

power continued after Poland achieved independence at the end of WWI and lasted until 1939. Large, powerful regions with centrally appointed governors maintained Warsaw's dominance.<sup>9</sup>

After the communist take-over power was nominally vested in the elected council of each level of Poland's traditional three-tier system. However, in keeping with the communist model of a highly centralised state, all local activities were overseen by the local party branch and controlled by central government. Communist-run local authorities had no budgets of their own. They were local agents of central power, not servants of their community: "It was a system which permitted the ordinary citizen no initiative whatsoever".<sup>10</sup> The system of local government financing was heavily centralised. Almost all rates were fixed by Warsaw, leaving no room for local decisions. Funding was distributed according to a strict hierarchy. Central state grants were allocated to the provinces which then allocated finances to local levels.<sup>11</sup>

Local government structures were reformed periodically during the communist era. In 1975 the Gierek regime increased the number of provinces from 17 to 49, leaving these new, smaller, weaker provinces even more dependent on the central ministries. The divergent paths of territorial reform in Eastern and Western Europe during this period is illustrated by the fact that at around this time countries in Western Europe, such as France, Italy and Spain, were moving in the opposite direction; enlarging and strengthening their regional units to improve their economic performance.<sup>12</sup> Poland's inter-mediate, county level was abolished, leaving 2,475

communes which varied in size from the 142 urban ones which covered large towns or cities to the 2333 rural ones which often encompassed several small villages. Central control over both remaining levels increased. The communist attitude to regional and local politics was summarised by Gierek when, after this round of administrative reforms, he stressed that Poland was not 'a sum of provinces and counties' but a single social and political organism.<sup>13</sup> Regional and local tiers gained some autonomy as part of the round of reforms in the mid-1980s, becoming responsible for providing public services such as health, welfare and transportation. Nevertheless, these measures represented a partial realignment of forces within the existing framework rather than far-reaching, systemic change. The lack of accountability of local officials and councillors to their locality, coupled with an arbitrary process of decision making resulted in the 'double alienation' of local leaders from the political elite they served and the local communities they represented. Demoralisation and corruption became widespread and remain a problem to the present day.

In 1990 it was apparent that the administrative system bequeathed by the pre-communist and communist eras would not suit the conditions of post-communist Poland. The heavy centralisation and corruption characteristic of the existing model of local government was anathema to the traditions of the incoming Solidarity government for whom decentralisation of political power was a long –held goal. It was clear that local levels were too weak and, in the case of the provinces, too small to perform any meaningful political or economic functions.

In 1990 the Sejm passed the Local Self-government and Local Administration Acts which provided for the transfer of responsibilities from the direct control of central government to relatively autonomous local organs. Communes were to be the basic units of local government, led by elected councils, responsible for local services including education, health, housing and public transport. The forty-nine provinces were designated territorial units of central government. Each provincial chief executive was nominated by the Prime Minister and was responsible for the implementation of central government policy. Provinces possessed assemblies of delegates selected from all local authorities within the province. Assemblies had no decision-making powers but monitored the functioning of local authorities, adjudicated disputes between citizens and the communes and served as an advisory body to the chief executive. These reforms, in theory at least, were a combination of Western and traditional, Polish models. Elements of the modern French model of fused administration were evident with a locally elected council combined with strong central supervision through the use of a strong regional chief as an agent of central power. Survey evidence showed that this first wave of post-communist administrative reform prompted a significant change in the position of local government authorities in the opinion of the inhabitants of the communes. Those polled, while expressing their dissatisfaction at the failure of local government's to initiate economic development, saw local leaders as representatives of local interests to a much higher degree than was previously the case.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, the powers gained by regional and local governments as a result of the reforms were ambiguous. During the early 1990s several

proposals related to regional and local reorganisation were formulated. These usually envisioned the creation of fewer, larger provinces. One extreme proposal was the creation of six to eight 'pollands', i.e. autonomous regions that would have similar constitutional powers as German lands. This option was rejected as contrary to the Polish tradition of a unitary state. Proposals for redrawing of provincial boundaries repeatedly aroused opposition from the forces outlined below (see p-). Reform was postponed and the provinces remained too small and weak to fulfil the substantial responsibilities entrusted to them in the fields of regional regeneration and international co-operation. The decision on whether or not to re-introduce the county as a level between the province and the commune was similarly delayed. The Mazowiecki government's introduction of 250 new administrative *rejons*, which deconcentrated some of the competences of the provinces and prepared the way for the return of the district level, again mobilised strong opposition.<sup>15</sup> Communes received new political responsibilities but still lacked the economic power to fully execute them. Central government controlled taxation, imposed civil service wage policies, fixed rents for municipal housing, set rates for some local user charges and intervened in land-use policy and management. The 1990 legislation gave communes income from national taxes: a 5% share of the revenue from tax on legal entities and a 15% share of the revenue from the new personal income tax. These accounted for around 1/4 of total income.<sup>16</sup> The reforms also provided local authorities with income from local taxes. However the level of most of these taxes was set by central government, yields from them were usually small and numerous exemptions existed in the case of their payment. As a result local tax administration costs were extremely high.<sup>17</sup> In many cases, local authorities' share of public revenue was too small to cover

expenses incurred from the assumption of new responsibilities. As a result, the Finance Ministry, with the power to provide specific and block grants to local authorities exercised more authority than suggested by the reforms. The motivation of local communes to generate their own finances and gain a level of autonomy was reduced by their dependence on the centre for finance. Between 1991 and 1997 the private revenues of communes fell from 45.5% to 35.3% of all budget revenues while grants from the state budget rose from 25.5% to 38.3%.<sup>18</sup>

Primary education provides a good example of the gap between new responsibilities and financial capabilities in Polish local government during this period. Primary education was one of the main public service tasks transferred to municipal administration from the central state in 1990. However, although local governments were now responsible for finance, the Ministry of Education retained power over appointments and the level of pay of staff and over the curriculum and the organisation of schools. Given the level of central interference and the financial limitations, few communes were willing to take up their new responsibilities. By the end of 1994 only one quarter of all communes in Poland administered primary schools.<sup>19</sup> The absence of genuine decentralisation of regional and local government finances indicated that the balance of power still tilted heavily to Warsaw. Observers at the time noted “a high emphasis in Poland on financial policy oriented towards central government and a relatively low emphasis is placed on the financial autonomy of local authorities”.<sup>20</sup>

The reasons for the ambiguity in administrative reforms in the early transition were largely political. The political flux of the early transition

period made it difficult to pass legislation without disruption. The Mazowiecki government's initiative of March 1990, which began to address reform of the communist model of territorial organisation, was overshadowed by its 'war at the top' with the supporters of Lech Walesa and disrupted by the fall of the administration at the end of that year. Subsequently, frequent changes of government meant that "the decentralisation of political authority in post-communist Poland has ebbed and flowed according to the will of the ruling party in the Polish parliament".<sup>21</sup>

Various interests emerged with their own, conflicting, visions of how Poland's administrative structure should develop in the post-communist era. Generally speaking, post-Solidarity parties such as Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) and the Freedom Union (UW – formerly the Democratic Union, UD) have supported decentralisation. At the start of the post-communist era regional and local reforms were seen as an important part of Solidarity's programme: a response to the communist neglect of regional and local levels of government and a move toward decentralisation of political power. The concept of a 'self-governing republic' where the centralist Party-state system was devolved and political legitimacy emanated from the locales to the centre was prominent in Solidarity programmes from 1980 onward.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, the country's first post-communist administration, dominated by the Solidarity movement, took office promising to "smash the People's Republic model of a centralised government and state administration".<sup>23</sup> When the AWS and UW formed a coalition government after the elections of 1997, members proposed decreasing the number of administrative regions, initially from 49 to 12, and strengthening their

powers. They also called for the reintroduction of the county as an intermediate tier between the province and the commune. These proposals served the aims of erasing much of the communist legacy in the field, reintroducing elements of the old Polish model and transferring power and responsibility from the centre to these levels. However, support for decentralisation has not been unanimous within the Solidarity camp and the issue has caused internal tensions.

Although broadly supportive of administrative reform the former communist camp and its allies, grouped around the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) have tended to be more cautious about introducing radical changes. Its stance can be seen as an effort to protect elements of the status quo which afforded them some advantage. It can also be interpreted as a desire by the former communist camp, which now subscribes to a social-democratic ethos, to protect Polish society from the most severe consequences of radical reform. Its position can also be regarded as a pragmatic choice to offer opposition to the Solidarity camp. Thus when it came to power in 1993 the former communist camp halted the process of administrative reform developed by successive Solidarity governments. In 1997 the SLD supported the new Solidarity government's local reform package in principle but disagreed with its proposed reduction of new provinces to 12. Prominent SLD member Aleksander Kwasniewski, president of Poland since 1995, claimed that although dividing Poland into 12 provinces was a very good solution from the economic point of view the social consequences for capitals of provinces not included in the new model would be severe. He thus vetoed the bill and proposed a new system of 17 provinces. Eventually,

the new division of Poland into 16 provinces was agreed, a compromise which was seen as a victory for the SLD and Kwasniewski.<sup>24</sup>

A former communist ally, the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) the major representative of Poland's influential farming sector, was also a significant actor in the reform process. The PSL opposed any changes which might affect its traditionally strong support in rural areas. It feared that the reduction of the number of provinces and the reintroduction of counties would switch political power from local elites in the villages and countryside to the elites of the medium-sized towns where the peasant party was much weaker<sup>25</sup>. Thus, as a coalition partner of the SLD from 1993-1997 the PSL helped to stall the reform process. When the AWS-UW government took office in 1997 the PSL opposed its plan to re-establish the county as the second tier local government unit. PSL leaders proposed that the second tier should be the province, which at the time was solely an organ of the state administration. During parliamentary debate the PSL forced the notion that only the commune would be mentioned by name as a unit of local government in the 1997 constitution.<sup>26</sup>

Some nationalist groups, out of fear that the creation of strong provinces would encourage direct, cross-border co-operation between regions and foreign countries and threaten 'national values', also criticised the planned reforms. The nationalists were particularly concerned about encouraging links between Germany and western Polish provinces. The issue of balancing the principles of local autonomy and national unity is not peculiar to Poland or the post-communist countries of East-Central Europe: countries in Western Europe have been struggling with the problem since the

nineteenth century. However, in comparison to the West, the process of democratisation and decentralisation in Poland has been introduced virtually overnight amidst the upsurge of nationalist feeling which accompanies the achievement of national sovereignty. In this context it is not surprising that the tensions between the desire to consolidate the power of the nation-state and the desire to devolve political powers to regional and local levels was evident. Such tensions were still apparent in border areas after the introduction of the 1999 reforms. For instance, the Catholic-National Union (R K-N) in Opole recently denounced the province of Opolskie as an artificial construct: a concession to Poland's German minority which is concentrated in the region.<sup>27</sup> This debate also threatened the internal discipline of the governing party AWS. The AWS, an alliance of over 30 political organisations, which came to an agreement under the aegis of the Solidarity movement, formed a block and won the elections in 1997. Many parties are represented in the AWS including liberal, secular members who supported the reforms and a vociferous national-Catholic wing, which was more critical. The unity of the governing AWS-UW coalition was also strained as the latter, generally more liberal, secular and pro-European consistently supported decentralisation.<sup>28</sup> Continuing resistance within the coalition to the government's initial plan to introduce twelve provinces was demonstrated by its defeat in parliament in June 1998 when 41 members of AWS and 8 from UW voted with the opposition.

In addition, reforms were opposed by officials whose political and administrative status was under threat. The reforms would result in a smaller number of provinces, and many of the old provincial capitals would lose their offices. The questions of which of the provincial cities were to be

deprived of their status would decide the allocation of administrative posts and influence an area's ability to attract investment. A recent report about the situation of the former provincial capital cities, prepared by the Governmental Centre for Strategic Studies, concluded that some negative effects of downgrading are already visible. Companies are showing less interest in investing in these areas and are starting to move to the new provincial capitals, prices of real estate are going down, many educated people are leaving and unemployment is on the rise.<sup>29</sup>

The government introduced a special program to assure downgraded cities of money for their future development. However, the government program, named Dialogue and Development, was a failure. Government resources for the program were only PLZ 3.1 million (about USD 720,000), to be divided equally between each city in question, resulting in only USD 20,000 being given to each city. Consequently, local demonstrations including street marches, blocking of national highways and petitions were organised. Local lobbyists played a part in forcing the government to expand the number of new provinces from the initial 12 to 16. As we shall see below, opposition is still apparent in some regions and locales, which feel they have suffered as a result of the new administrative division of the country.

Interests representing Poland's historic provinces exerted further pressure on the reforms. These had diverse traditions and characteristics as a result of Poland's partition in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. They had maintained their sense of regional identity through the communist period and anticipated receiving more autonomy in the post-communist setting. The early 1990s saw the emergence of provincial groups such as the Movement for Silesian

Autonomy (RAS) for whom the provincial chief executive could still be seen as 'Warsaw's man' in the region. They lobbied for greater autonomy from the centre at provincial level.<sup>30</sup>

The process of administrative reform since 1990 has thus been delayed by the conflict of various visions of the function of the post-communist state. Although debates surround administrative reform in most countries, in Poland they were particularly pointed as the system was being rebuilt and fundamental questions over the state's structure and functions were unsettled. Should it serve to defend newly acquired sovereignty from the centre or to foster democracy from local levels? Should it re-assert the characteristics of the pre-communist era or adapt to the realities of post-communism?

### **The New Wave of Reforms**

Reform of regional and local administrative systems began to rise to the top of the political agenda in the second half of the 1990s. This culminated in the introduction of a far-reaching package of bills at the beginning of 1999. There were several reasons for this fresh focus on local government reform. The approval, by referendum, of a new constitution in 1997 provided a catalyst for the process. The constitution adopted in April 1997 states that Poland is a unitary state and that local government ensures decentralisation of public authority. It emphasises the institutional status and legal rights of regional and local levels of government: "They shall have the rights of ownership and other property rights...the self-governing nature of units of

local government shall be protected by the courts" (Article 165, Constitution of the Republic of Poland 1997). The new constitution thus provided the foundations for a new round of local and regional government reforms.

Shortly afterwards, the parliamentary elections of autumn 1997 returned a coalition of the Solidarity-based centre-right to power. One of its main campaign promises was completion of the local government reform initiated in 1990 by the first Solidarity administrations. Despite ongoing opposition from the groups, noted above, the new government possessed the political will to persevere with the reform process.

A final factor behind the fresh focus on regional and local reform was the European Union's increased emphasis on these levels in countries seeking membership. As an EU applicant state, Poland signed the Association Agreement of 1991, a fundamental requirement of which is the completion of the process of internal democratisation along West European lines. The founding of the Committee for the Regions in 1994 reinforced the EU's demand for a coherent regional policy and administrative structures adapted to the model of EU countries. A coherent regional policy and rational administrative structures adapted to the model of EU countries are regarded as vital attributes of aspiring members of the EU. Structural funds such as PHARE – Polish Hungarian Assistance for Restructuring of the Economy – were introduced to support cross border initiatives and foster strong, democratic units of local and regional government: ". [The PHARE programme] is a clear incentive for the Visegrad 4 partner states [Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia] to strengthen the competencies of their regions. After all, the cross-border programme expects local and

regional authorities to provide for the relevant planning, implementation and monitoring of activities".<sup>31</sup>

In Poland the absence of a co-ordinating central government body led to confusion over who was responsible for regional policy. Regional investment came from a variety of sources (province budgets, state subsidies, foreign aid and other agencies and foundations) and all claimed a role in regional and local policy-making. This confusion was deepened by conflict between the province as a representative of central government and the commune as a representative of local government. As a result, regional policy tended to develop either through the introduction of very general initiatives by the centre which ignored regional differences or through spontaneous, uncoordinated projects from local or regional actors "the territorial system and its two-level division (province and commune) makes it impossible to get away from the departmentalised, centralistic model of administration".<sup>32</sup>

In May 1998 the bureaucratic confusion and wrangling over the distribution of EU aid resulted in the European Commission's rejection of a series of Polish PHARE grant applications worth ECU 34 million on the grounds of poor preparation.<sup>33</sup> From 1998 on the EU obliged the Polish government to set up regional structures and initiatives to administer its financial assistance. According to this logic such harmonisation of Polish regional and local structures with the EU ought to make it easier to receive grants in the future. The issue was debated in the Polish government and played a role in the reform process.<sup>34</sup> Thus the ratification of a new constitution, the election of a government committed to decentralisation and the growing influence of the

EU galvanised efforts to arrive at a more coherent, responsible system of regional and local government.

Map 1: Republic of Poland – administrative divisions since 1999



Source: Polish Agency for Foreign Investment (PAIZ) 1999.

## **The Reforms**

From January 1999 Poland has operated a three tiered system of regional and local government. The structures, responsibilities and powers of local and regional levels have been altered considerably:

### *The Provinces*

The 16 new provinces co-ordinate and supervise economic and social programs at a regional level. Their responsibilities include areas such as public education, especially higher education, health care, culture, modernisation of rural areas, spatial development, environmental protection and public roads and transportation. In order to carry this out this role, the provincial government is encouraged to co-operate with a variety of government and non-government organisations at international, national and local levels. One of the most important responsibilities of the province is international co-operation. It is Poland's equivalent of the regional tier of government in the EU and is responsible for determining the main goals of international co-operation and plans to join international regional associations, a role that will become increasingly important as Poland's accession to the EU approaches.

The new provinces have two structures of authority. The most important institution remains the chief executive, who is appointed by the Prime Minister upon nomination by the Minister of Internal Affairs and Public Administration. He or she has final say in the implementation of provincial

policies and, as representative of the state treasury, controls finances. Though still subordinate to the chief executive, the power of the provincial assemblies has been considerably increased. Members are now directly elected and have responsibility for, among other things, planning a regional development strategy, the provincial budget, local taxes, supervision of counties and communes and entering into co-operation with foreign companies, governments, regions etc.. The assembly appoints and supervises the provincial executive organ, the provincial administrative board. The 16 new provinces finance 15.9% of their local initiatives themselves with the remainder coming from shares in state taxes (1.5% of Personal Income tax and 0.5% of Corporate Income Tax), general government subsidies and specific grants from the state budget.

### *The Counties*

The county level has been reintroduced between province and commune levels in order to assume responsibility for areas that cannot be dealt with by the commune. There are 308 counties and 65 townships, or town counties with county heads. Counties are responsible for issues concerning more than one commune: for high schools, local roads, clinics and hospitals, law and order etc. that concern more than one commune. As with the province, the county has a dual administrative structure. The directly elected county council is the controlling, legislative body while the county board wields administrative power. Counties are entitled to 1% of PIT. Only 7.7% of the new counties' operations are paid for from funds accrued from their own,

locally collected resources with the rest coming from state grants (47%) and subsidies (49%).<sup>35</sup>

### *The Communes*

Communes, established in 1990, continue to be the primary and fundamental vehicle for local communities to perform public tasks on their own behalf. They retain all existing responsibilities over the municipal economy, water supply and sewage systems, roads and public transport as well as various new ones. There are 2,489 communes nation-wide.

The municipal councils, directly elected by the citizens, are responsible to their constituents only. Each council appoints a board and a mayor as its executive body (debates continue about whether these local leaders should be directly elected) but it is within the power of the councils to recall both the mayor and the board, at any time, by a simple majority. The revenues of communes have not undergone any basic change. At present communes raise 30-50% from their own incomes..<sup>36</sup> The rest of the communes' income comes from shares in state taxes, i.e., 27% of personal income tax, and 5% of companies income tax; general government subsidies; government grants, revenues obtained from municipal assets and other entities belonging to communes.

## **Balance Sheet – Assessment of reforms so far**

So, to what extent do these recent reforms mark a new shift in the balance of power between central government and regional and local levels? An early assessment of problems and achievements of the reform process to date can help answer this question.

### **Problems**

#### *Inadequate Financial Decentralisation*

The weakest element of the reforms is their financial basis. In theory, the reforms provide the foundations to boost the economic power of local government. However, both opponents and supporters of the reforms agree that decentralisation of public finances is an ongoing process that requires much more attention.<sup>37</sup> Since the introduction of the reforms, local government representatives have consistently complained that the government has not set aside enough money for the administrative restructuring and that local government units' tax-raising powers are still too limited at all three levels.<sup>38</sup> At county level the financial weakness of the new level has led some local government representatives to question whether it should be regarded as unit of self-government or an extension of the central state.<sup>39</sup> Local and regional governments still raise only a fraction

of their budgets from locally collected resources with the rest coming from central subsidies and other external sources.

Reform of Poland's taxation system has continued since 1999. For instance, in June 2000 the cabinet approved a bill to raise communes share of personal income tax from 30% to 60% and corporate tax revenue from 5% to 60%. There has been strong criticism of the wages local government officials were paying themselves and the huge discrepancy between levels of remuneration in large, urban local authorities and their smaller rural counterparts. As a result, in July 2000 the government imposed a ceiling on local government salaries.<sup>40</sup> In theory this move should benefit local government budgets from where these salaries are drawn.

Continued reliance on the centre obviously undermines the claims of the new local and regional levels to genuine autonomy and impairs local units of government in their function of service providers. Opinion polls suggest that the impact of the reforms on the Polish public has been weakened by the lack of economic resources at local level. In surveys conducted one year after the introduction of administrative reform 37% inhabitants of communes saw no difference in the capabilities of local government to provide local services while 25% thought there were now more problems than before and only 19% thought things were now better.<sup>41</sup>

It must be noted that resources are bound to be limited given that Poland's administrative reorganisation has proceeded simultaneously to reforms of the country's educational, pension and social welfare systems and their progress is inextricably linked. For example, under the new arrangement

education will now be administered according to the principle of subsidiarity. The province is now responsible for grammar schools. The counties are responsible for secondary schools and communes are responsible for primary schools. This marks a positive shift towards the decentralisation of service provision and the clarification of areas of competence between different levels of government. However, as in the past, local government representatives have complained that not enough money as been set aside to implement restructuring of the educational system.<sup>42</sup> Recent teachers' protests over the consequences of educational reform have not been directed at regional and local governments who are now their official employers but at central government, asking if local government will be given the money to finance schools.<sup>43</sup> This is, perhaps, a reflection of where true power still lies. Government opponents have been able to point out that failure to decentralise the financing of regional and local government and reform taxation has led not just to problems of financial stability at these administrative level but obstructed the progress of educational reform in primary and secondary schools.<sup>44</sup>

*Responsibility for the state's regional politics remains unclear – corruption continues*

Bureaucratic confusion and political wrangling remain, despite the efforts of the reforms to rationalise the administration of the regions and localities. Legislative activity on the creation of a central body responsible for the co-ordination of regional policy is ongoing. In the middle of 2000 Prime

Minister Jerzy Buzek announced the transferral of regional co-ordination duties from the Economics Ministry to a new Ministry for Regional Development (MRRiB). However political battles continue to be fought over these new arrangements between the forces outlined above. The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), the senior partner in Poland's new coalition government following the elections of September 2001, has promised to reverse this transfer of regional powers, claiming that regional policy is best located alongside other structural policy in the Economics Ministry.<sup>45</sup> Thus Poland has yet to fully establish a central, co-ordinating body for regional policies. Various state organs continue to claim responsibility leading to 'turf-wars' over regional and local projects.<sup>46</sup> The Department of Internal Affairs and Public Administration recently noted the conflict between: "centralists who want Warsaw to maintain control of practically everything" and "supporters of decentralisation who believe that the centre should control only sectoral programmes, such as those relating to the steel industry".<sup>47</sup>

Uncertainty continues at regional and local levels too. There are quarrels over the division of subsidies and EU finances are diverted for projects which ought to be funded by the communes themselves.<sup>48</sup> After the introduction of the reforms the Polish press criticised the "administrative disorder" and "unsettled system of foundations and agencies" which persisted at central, regional and local levels.<sup>49</sup>

Corruption, widespread amongst local authorities under communism thrives on this bureaucratic uncertainty and the majority of Poles currently regard it as a worsening problem.<sup>50</sup> A World Bank Report identified new local

administrations as a major source of corruption, criticising the close ties between political parties and city council members. Local officials were accused of taking advantage of their public role to serve their private interests.<sup>51</sup> In Warsaw the administrative responsibilities of different levels is particularly unclear. After the introduction of the reforms several local officials took up prominent public, political and private positions simultaneously, leading to political infighting and accusations of corruption which precipitated a crises and eventually led to the collapse of the governing coalition.<sup>52</sup>

*Demarcation of new provinces, counties and communes still not fully settled*

The demarcation of new provinces and counties has caused controversy in some regions with conflicts emerging from ethnic, political and economic sources. We have already noted the ethnic and economic factors behind protests over the new administrative boundaries and these continue to undermine the stability of the new system. For largely economic reasons, the town of Slawkow, which belongs to the Malopolskie province wants to join the Silesian province. Despite strong cultural links with Malopolskie, the majority of the town's workers find employment in Huta Katowice or the coking plant at Przyjazn, which now lie across the Silesian border. Unemployment stands at around 40% in Slawkow and those who go to Silesia looking for work are often refused because they come from another province.<sup>53</sup> The desire to accommodate traditional identities, compensate some cities for the loss of provincial status and generally avoid tensions such as those caused through the upheavals of provincial-level reorganisation has

led to the creation of too many district units. This threatens to cripple the district structure.<sup>54</sup>

## **Achievements**

### *Extension and clarification of local government autonomy*

Despite the aforementioned difficulties the reforms of 1999 have significantly boosted the legal basis and formal political powers of regional and local government in Poland. Each level now possesses directly elected assemblies, which appoint and supervise their administrative boards. The consolidation of the powers of the commune has fundamentally strengthened political decentralisation. The reintroduction of the county as an intermediary level of administration between the province and commune levels means that the new provinces have passed on a considerable part of their responsibilities to lower levels. In theory, the responsibility for local-level issues will become more decentralised in the interests of greater democracy and efficiency. At the same time larger, stronger provinces, freed from much of their local-level functions, will be the main partners in negotiations over regional initiatives and thus will be responsible for the way regional policies are introduced by the government. According to the Council of Ministers "the idea is to decentralise state structures, increase the regional powers of provinces and strengthen communes as a basis of local government".<sup>55</sup> The new provinces remain 'dualistic' in nature with the chief executive still representing the central state and the assembly representing local government. However, the introduction of direct elections to the

provincial assembly has boosted its role as an autonomous regional-level body.

The impact the reforms will have in terms of encouraging the development of a democratic political culture at regional and local levels remains to be seen. The next round of local government elections (scheduled for 2002) should give a clearer impression of whether the reforms have encouraged the political participation of the citizenry at local and regional levels. It should be noted that the reforms have already prompted Poland's national political parties to foster closer links with the electorate at regional and local levels. Independent candidates still dominated at the last local elections, held on the eve of the reforms' introduction in 1998. However, observers noted, for the first time, significant links between the political scene at national and local level.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, although recent opinion polls have indicated citizens' disappointment with local government service provision since the reforms, local government leaders enjoy significant levels of public trust.<sup>57</sup> Finally, recent political disputes involving the new administrative structure can be seen as a sign that politics is becoming more devolved and that these levels are becoming important political arenas.

#### *Increased potential for local economic development*

It is still too early to assess the impact of the recent administrative reform on local economic development. As we have seen, reform of local government finance is ongoing and it will take time for members of local government to adopt to the new circumstances. However, it can be anticipated that the

reforms will create favourable conditions for the development of local economic activity. Decentralisation and the direct involvement of local authorities, particularly at regional level, in supporting local development ought to boost local economies. The rationalisation of local administration should lead to a decrease in bureaucracy, an increase in efficiency and less corruption. Communes can stimulate local business formation through the restructuring of former state enterprises and at the same time build the local tax base.

Foreign investors will have to change their activities to deal with the decentralised system. Up until now the headquarters of most foreign investors have been located in Warsaw, close to the centralised system of regional administration. However, lobbying may become more devolved as investors have to deal with elected regional and local administrations. This shift will surely increase their awareness of the regions in which they operate. It must be noted that the recent reforms could potentially strengthen regional economic disparities. Under the new conditions there is no reason to expect that more backward regions will be able to close the gap with their more developed counterparts. In fact, early evidence suggests that the pattern has been reinforced, with, for instance, more economically developed regions attracting most foreign investment.<sup>58</sup> In this context the need, noted above, for a central agency to co-ordinate policies of regional development is even more pressing.

### *The European dimension*

One must remember that the creation of 16 large political regions was also prompted by the desire to provide a better base for linkage with EU regional initiatives. In this respect the reforms are beginning to bear fruit. In October 1999 the European Commission's annual report on state's seeking membership praised the reforms as "impressive in depth and scope" and predicted that, once fully implemented, the reforms should facilitate integration with the EU.<sup>59</sup> The new relationship between the Polish regions and the EU was illustrated by the recent series of seminars entitled 'Poland-EU, a new stage in Co-operation', held in Brussels and attended by regional and local administrative officials from across Poland.<sup>60</sup>

### **Conclusion**

One can conclude that the reform of regional and local government introduced at the beginning of 1999 has finally erased one of the most persistent remnants of the communist period. The legacy of the country's pre-communist and communist past and the economic and political difficulties of the transition period demonstrated the obstacles to institution building in post-communist East-Central Europe. In practice, Poland has combined aspects of Western models and its own traditional system. Elements of the modern French model of fused administration with a locally elected council combined with strong central supervision and the German practice of appointing the mayor from the council are apparent. The creation

of large, powerful, regions with centrally appointed governors and the reinstatement of the county as an intermediate level of local government are reminiscent of Poland's own pre-communist model. The new 'fused' system also reflects the tension between the desire to establish local democracy and the need to consolidate the power of the centre in the post-communist period.

The reforms have moved Poland to the forefront of administrative reorganisation in comparison to some of its post-communist neighbours. Poland was the first of the 'Visegrad countries' to introduce a three tier system of administrative organisation in order to further decentralise the rights and duties of regional and local government, though the introduction of similar structures is currently being debated throughout the region.<sup>61</sup> Just before their introduction, an observer noted that the Polish reforms marked "the biggest administrative and political shake-up undertaken until now in any post-communist country".<sup>62</sup>

The legislative package introduced is flawed and incomplete. The allocation of some regional and local responsibilities must be clarified further and the system of local government finance remains inadequate. Obviously the success of the reforms will depend on whether the legislative foundation they have laid is built on. This will require the centre's continued commitment to decentralisation. The recent parliamentary elections of September 2001 returned a Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)- Polish Peasants' Party (PSL) coalition government, similar to the administration which stalled the reform process in the mid-1990s. Although the SLD supports decentralisation in principle it opposes some details of the AWS-

UW sponsored reforms. As we have seen, the Peasant Party has consistently opposed administrative reform. It could attempt to obstruct further moves toward decentralisation. Some of the most vociferous critics of the reform process, including the PSL, are also strongly opposed to the terms of Poland's accession to the EU and administrative decentralisation may be drawn into membership controversies as the debate sharpens. Similarly, the success of administrative reform is bound to the progress of education, health and social welfare reforms. The failure of these other initiatives could lead to the rejection of the administrative reorganisation and the stalling of further moves toward decentralisation. Thus, the ongoing battle between centralists and decentralists involving political parties, local government officials, teachers representatives, medical workers etc. will obviously influence the progress of the reforms.

Nevertheless, it can be anticipated that the reform package will strengthen the ongoing process of post-communist democratisation. The trend of decentralisation ought to lead to greater representation of local preferences, greater integration of local and national levels of politics and increased political stability. Moreover, it offers regional and local authorities the potential to become important actors in local economic development. The recent reforms have also furthered the harmonisation of Polish and EU local government structures. This should facilitate the distribution of EU funding and Poland's eventual entry to the EU.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, G. Jones and J. Stewart, *The Case for Local Government* London: Allen and Unwin 1985 p10 and P.J. Taylor *Political Geography* Harlow: Longman 1993 pp317-318.

<sup>2</sup> See H.M Baldersheim et al. *Local Democracy and the Process of Transformation in East-Central Europe* Boulder- San Francisco – Oxford: Westview Press 1996 p4.

<sup>3</sup> See R.J. Bennet. *Local Government in the New Europe*. London: Belhaven 1994.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Szczerbiak 'The Impact of the 1998 Local Elections on the Emerging Polish party System' *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* Vol.15 No.3, September 1999 p81.

<sup>5</sup> See G. Gorzelak 'The regional patterns of the Polish transformation' in Bachtler J, Downes, R and Gorzelak G, *Transition, Cohesion and Regional Policy in Central and Eastern Europe* Ashgate: Aldershot 2000 p156 henceforth Gorzelak (a)

<sup>6</sup> See M. Illner 'Territorial Decentralization – a Stumbling Block of Democratic Reforms in East-Central Europe?' *Polish Sociological Review* 1 (117) 1997 p28.

<sup>7</sup> Figures from 'Characteristics of the Silesian Voivodship' Statistical Office Katowice 1998.

<sup>8</sup> See G. Gorzelak *Czy Polska będzie państwem regionalnym?* Warsaw: Warsaw University 1993 p52 (henceforth Gorzelak (b)).

<sup>9</sup> In the first half of the 1920s Upper Silesia proved the exception to the rule. During this period Silesian industry was expanding rapidly and the Silesian lobby was one of the most powerful groups in the Sejm. From 1920 onward the region was granted a large degree of self-government, including a regional parliament which had the competence to deal with all matters except foreign affairs, the army, the judiciary and tariffs. However, Upper Silesia's position changed in 1926 with the rise of Pilsudski's militaristic, dictatorial regime and the consolidation of a heavily centralised system.

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<sup>10</sup> R.F. Leslie, (ed.) *The History of Poland Since 1863*, Cambridge University Press, 1980 p14.

<sup>11</sup> See P. Bury and D. Stawasz *Financing the New Polish System of Local Government* Glasgow Polytechnic: Policy Research Unit 1991 p5.

<sup>12</sup> See G. Gorzelak 'Decentralisation of the Territorial Organisation of the Polish State' Paper presented at the Plenary Session IV of the International Science Association International Conference – Regional Transitions 15/9/01 p2 (henceforth Gorzelak (c)).

<sup>13</sup> See Leslie p424.

<sup>14</sup> See R. Cichocki and A Cielecka 'Local Communities and Local Self-government in Poland: A Case Study' in A. Coulson *Local Government in Eastern Europe: Establishing Democracy at the Grassroots* Elgar 1995 pp186-197.

<sup>15</sup> See Gorzelak (c) p3.

<sup>16</sup> See A. Wieczorkowska 'Utrwalanie Prowizorium' *Życie Gospodarcze* 6/12/92.

<sup>17</sup> See A. Cielecka and J. Gibson 'Local Government in Poland' in Coulson p38.

<sup>18</sup> See A. Kowalczyk, 'Local Government in Poland' in T.M. Horvath (ed.) *Decentralization: Experiments and Reforms* Budapest: OSI/LGI 1999 p237. p237.

<sup>19</sup> See Ibid. p238.

<sup>20</sup> See A. Cielecka and J. Gibson p38.

<sup>21</sup> J. Regulska 'Decentralisation or (re)centralisation: struggle for political power in Poland' *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* Vol.15, 1997 p187.

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<sup>22</sup> See J. Pokladecki 'Demokratyczny system kreacji władzy a elity lokalne' in P. Dobrowolski and S. Wrobel (eds) *Władza i społeczna lokalne a reforma samorządowa w Polsce* Katowice 1995 pp69-79.

<sup>23</sup> Quote from the Cabinet Office on the introduction of general laws on the territorial organs of the state administration, March 1990.

<sup>24</sup> See T. Olijasz 'Sixteen Provinces, at Last' *Warsaw Voice* 26/7/98.

<sup>25</sup> See Gorzelak (c) p4.

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, comments of PSL Senator Adam Struzik, opposing the return of powiats at a Conference for Local Government Reform in 1997, reported in J. Koral 'Rewolucja samorządowa' *Gazeta Wyborcza* 29-30/11/97 p4.

<sup>27</sup> See A. Wozniak 'Obrona Częstochowy' *Wprost* 28/11/99.

<sup>28</sup> See W. Bokajlo 'The reform of Polish local government' in K. Cordell (ed) *Poland and the European Union* Routledge, London 2000 p148.

<sup>29</sup> See 'After the Reform: the effects of administrative change on Poland's cities' *Central European Review* Vol.2 No.26, 3 /7/00.

<sup>30</sup> S. Bieniasz, 'O autonomie dla Górnego Śląska' *Kultura* nr 11/518 1990 p17.

<sup>31</sup> M.A. Rupp 'The Pre-accession strategy and the governmental structures of the Visegrad countries' in K. Henderson (ed.) *Back to Europe: Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union* Cambridge: UCL 1999 p103.

<sup>32</sup> D. Pietrzak, 'Tak dla reformy' *Rzeczpospolita* 'Regiony Polski' supplement 19/3/98.

<sup>33</sup> See also G. Blazyca and M. Kolkiewicz, 'Poland and the EU - do recent disputes threaten the accession process?' *University of Paisley European Studies Working Paper* November (Paisley 1998).

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<sup>34</sup> See *A New State for New Challenges: Effectiveness, Openness, Subsidiarity*, Chancellery of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, State System Reforms Department Aleje Ujazdowskie 1/3, 00-538. Warsaw, 1998.

<sup>35</sup> See J. Regulski *Building Democracy in Poland: The State Reform of 1998* Discussion Papers, No. 9 Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative Open Society Institute 1999

<sup>36</sup> See K. Jedrzejewska, 'Idea bez podstawy' *Rzeczpospolita* 'Regiony Polski' 31/8/99.

<sup>37</sup> See R. Wrobel 'Administracja publiczna' *Rzeczpospolita* 21/1/2000.

<sup>38</sup> See, for instance, K. Jedrzejewska 'Budżety gmin i powiatów' *Rzeczpospolita* 25/1/00.

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, comments of Grzegorz Grzelak, member of a county council in Pomorskie "County councils can only carry out the decisions of the Ministry of Finance and the Sejm who provide their budgets" quoted in R. Wrobel 'Administracja publiczna' *Rzeczpospolita* 21/1/2000.

<sup>40</sup> See 'Niekoniecznie oszczędności' *Rzeczpospolita* 28/7/2000 p2.

<sup>41</sup> Survey carried out by PBS for *Rzeczpospolita* 15-16/1/2000, reported in R. Wrobel 'Sondaż Rzeczypospolitej' *Rzeczpospolita* 25/1/00.

<sup>42</sup> See calls for over 1 billion zloty worth of central government subsidies from local government representatives at a session of the Sejm Commission on Government and Local Government reported in *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> See A. Filas 'Szkoła oporu' *Wprost* 15/5/01.

<sup>44</sup> See Bokajlo p158.

<sup>45</sup> See 'Rozwój regionalny w Polsce – synteza programu działania (Regional development in Poland – a synthesis) from SLS web site [www.sld.org.pl](http://www.sld.org.pl) cited in G. Blazyca, E. Heliska-Hughes and K. Heffner 'Poland –can regional policy meet the challenge of regional problems? Paper given at

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Seminar *Restructuring heavy industrial regions – A comparative study of Scotland and Upper Silesia* (University of Paisley October 26<sup>th</sup> 2001).

<sup>46</sup> See Guz-Vetter, M 'Pomóc na wiare?' *Gazeta Bankowa* 17-23/4/99 p13.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in See R. Wrobel 'Administracja publiczna' *Rzeczpospolita* 21/1/2000.

<sup>48</sup> See J. Dziadul, 'Operacja lepkie ręce' *Polityka* 18/9/99 p22.

<sup>49</sup> See M. Guz-Vetter p13.

<sup>50</sup> According to a recent poll carried for *Rzeczpospolita* by PBS 63% of Poles agreed that nothing is easy unless you bribe someone and that corruption today is worse than a few years ago. See 'Polska w gorszej połowie' *Rzeczpospolita* 20-21/3/99.

<sup>51</sup> See J. Strupczewski 'Poland must curb high level corruption – World Bank' *Reuters*, Warsaw 23/3/2000.

<sup>52</sup> See 'Dojenie Warszawy' *Gazeta Wyborcza* 20-3/6/99 p1.

<sup>53</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> See Gorzelak (c) p7.

<sup>55</sup> *The Council of Ministers decisions: Public Administration Reform* Government Information Centre (CIR) No.2 (18) February 1998.

<sup>56</sup> See Szczerbiak p82.

<sup>57</sup> In a recent poll over 50% of respondents declared their trust in their local leader at commune level – less than the President of Poland but more than other central state institutions such as the Prime Minister and Parliament. See F. Frydrykiewicz and R Wrobel 'Samorządowa wyliczanka' *Rzeczpospolita* 2/5/99.

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<sup>58</sup> Bachtler p161.

<sup>59</sup> See T. Oligasz, 'Moving Toward Europe' *Warsaw Voice* 24/10/99 p5.

<sup>60</sup> See A. Ratajczyk and S. Madejski, 'Polish Administrators Go To Brussels' *Warsaw Voice* 3/10/99 p17.

<sup>61</sup> See K. Lacina and Z. Vajdova 'Local Government Reform in the Czech Republic' in Horvath p261 and I. Temesi 'Local Government in Hungary' in Horvath p353 for discussion of new regional tiers in these countries.

<sup>62</sup> J. de Weydenthal 'Poland: Government Embarks on Decentralising Reform' *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* 10/2/98.

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