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**POLSKA
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The Road to Self-Governance. Poland 1989–1990

Local elections, held in May 1990, completed the first and most important stage of restoring local government in Poland. They were also of great importance for the whole process of Polish systemic transformation. The creation of local government with broad prerogatives and the related constitutional and legislative changes led to a profound transformation of the political and social system, having no precedent throughout the former Soviet bloc. The creation of nearly 2,500 self-governing municipalities resulted in the decentralisation of state administration. Duties and responsibilities were distributed between municipalities, central government and the emerging intermediary structures. Not only did this reform change the political system, it also catalysed social transformation, contributing to a dynamic development of civil society.

This book is dedicated to the birth of local government in Poland, 1989 to 1990. The authors' intention is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the development of self-governance in Poland today: from the birth of the idea until its implementation and consolidation in the sphere of social practice. The considerations are presented in chronological order, including all turning points in the process, the most important participants, and the institutional planes in which they interact with each other.

In *The Introduction*, the authors look for the origins of the Polish model of local government. In Chapter I, entitled *The Road to the Local Government Reform*, they situate the issue of the local government reform in Poland in an historical context: the breakthrough events associated with the fall of

communism in Poland and in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. They note that the issue of local government was one of the main topics of the election campaign conducted by the non-governmental trade union, Solidarity, prior to the parliamentary elections of 4 June 1989; it was seen then as one of the basic elements of building democracy in Poland. The authors also attempt to reconstruct the major problems faced by the new Polish authorities, such as the need for a thorough reconstruction of state institutions and coordination of multiple and parallel developments in this area, as well as determining the pace and scope of the reform, including the date and the rules of conducting local elections.

Chapter II, entitled *The Intellectual and Political Sources of Local Government in the Third Polish Republic*, contains a reconstruction of work on the final form of self-governance: from the evolution of the idea itself and theoretical concepts of the 1970s and 1980s, through negotiations conducted by the opposition with representatives of the Polish People's Republic in the group for local self-government at the Round Table Conference, to the legislative process in the so-called Contract Sejm: the work of deputies on the package of four self-government laws.

Chapter III discusses the debate regarding local government reform in the daily press (in the period January to June 1990). The authors study both the frequency of articles devoted to the issues of local government and their content. The analysis involves articles from "Tribuna", "Gazeta Wyborcza" and "Rzeczpospolita". This makes it possible to find similarities and differences in the ways in which these national newspapers presented the issues in question.

Chapter IV is dedicated to the role of Citizens Committees in local government reform. They played a major role in the election campaigns for local government in 1990. They formed an active, nationwide movement of supporters of political changes that grew out of Solidarity. At that time, Citizens Committees were also the most important political force in local Poland. They were established firstly to organise the Solidarity election campaign prior to the parliamentary elections in June 1989. The Committees were accompanied by a broad social movement that showed great organisational efficiency and effectiveness in action. It was a civic movement and, although it expressly articulated its opposition to the communist authorities, it was open enough to attract thousands of people united beyond ideological or organisational boundaries.

Chapter V, entitled *The 1990 Local Elections: Pre-election Polls and the Electoral Reality*, presents the results of the pre-election polls, the course of the first local elections, the attendance and the results. It discusses the most important political and social factors, which determined these results. It also analyses the impact of internal differences, divisions and conflicts within the civic Solidarity movement on the voting behaviour of Poles in the first local elections held in the Third Polish Republic.