

Citizen Committees 1989–1992.

The core of the Polish transformation

This book is a result of many years of research into the history of Citizens' Committees, between 1989 and 1992, that is, the first years of the transformation of the Polish social and political system. The Citizens' Committees were a part of the large social movement constituted by the Solidarity Independent Self-Governing Trades Union. They had been established prior to the June 1989 elections to the 'contractual', tenth-term *Sejm* and the first-term Senate to serve the needs of the electoral campaign for the candidates representing Solidarity. Thousands of people took part in that campaign, which was crowned with success. They continued their work following the elections, supporting the reformatory efforts of the government of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki. They were involved in preparing the reform of local authorities and, in May 1990, they won an overwhelming majority of seats in the first free elections to those bodies since World War II. It was then that many of the Committees ceased their operations. However, a significant number of them continued until the first fully free parliamentary elections in Autumn 1991. Some of them have survived and exist to this day as associations.

The Citizens' Committees created a wide social movement, the role of which was vital for the democratic and market reforms in Poland. They constituted 'the core of the Polish transformation'. From 1989 to 1992, they not only performed the role of electoral staff in elections to Parliament in June 1989 and to the local authorities in 1990, but also functioned as a surrogate of state and local authority administrative bodies, as civic and political

associations, and as economic, cultural, self-help, educational institutions and so forth. Activists of the Committees were mostly competent local authority officials, politicians and civil servants. They organized schools, foundations, banks and cooperatives; they established open universities, opened publishing houses and published innumerable local newspaper titles. They run charities and ecological movements and developed entrepreneurship in towns and cities, as well as in rural communities. The Citizens' Committees also built from the scratch a network of local Poland's international contacts. Prior to the first free elections to the re-constructed system of local authorities, the Citizen Committees took part in drafting appropriate legislative changes and trained thousands of candidates for councillors and local authority officials. Thousands of the Committee movement activists built the structures of civic society across Poland. The Committees were thus involved not only in the very process of the system's transformation, but also in the later phase of consolidating the systemic changes in Poland.

The book consists of five parts. The process of forming the Citizen Committees and the Solidarity electoral campaign they organised are described in Part 1. Part 2 is devoted to the participation of the Citizen Committees' activists both in the new parliament's debates and legislative efforts and in the reforms of the social and political system undertaken by Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government. Part 3 dwells in its entirety on the Citizen Committees' operations across Poland in the following fields: (1) preparing the ground for the local authority elections; (2) public administration and policy; (3) economic activities and entrepreneurship development; (4) foreign contacts and cooperation; (5) local and regional Committee press; (6) self-help and charity; (7) ecology and the health service; (7) restoring historical awareness and national and regional tradition; (8) educational and cultural activities. The Citizen Committees' participation in preparing the reform of the local authorities and in carrying out the 1990 elections thereto is described in Part 4. The process of the split in the Committee movement which had occurred by the time of the Presidential elections in autumn 1990 and, subsequently, their role in the debates on the electoral law and the date for the free parliamentary elections are analysed in Part 5. It is also in this part that the forms of the Citizen Committees' participation in those elections is discussed. The fortunes of the Committee movement after the Parliamentary elections in the autumn of 1991 are presented at the end of the book.

An important element of this book is the extensive bibliography of the sources referred to in the process of writing it. They include both case studies and memoirs; however, paramount among them are the numerous documents dating from the years 1989 to 1992 which were gathered by the author and were hitherto unknown to scholars, as well as the interviews she conducted with many of the participants in the events described in the book.