

Cultivating Moderates: East-West Exchanges and International Influences on Poland's Transition to Democracy

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Abstract

Beginning in the 1950s, American nongovernmental organizations and US government agencies sponsored exchange programs to bring Eastern European scientists, humanists, scholars, and professionals to Western Europe and the United States, in the belief that exposure to the West would pull East Europeans toward democratic capitalism and undermine communist power. Four decades later in 1989, Poles from both government and opposition groups sat together at a round table to negotiate a transformation from one-party communist rule to capitalist democracy. But did these trips and experiences influence how political elites sought to reform their society at the end of the Cold War? Put most broadly, can pathways of influence and shifts in perception within specific epistemic communities be measured, mapped, and visualized to better illustrate and understand exogenous influences on the democratization process in Eastern Europe?

This interdisciplinary project combines traditional, archivally-based qualitative techniques used by historians with digital network analysis tools to better understand the complex, overlapping networks of political revolution and international exchange that came together during the Round Table negotiations in Warsaw in 1989.¹

Project Description

In the wake of Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 de-Stalinization crusade, the US government, then led by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, worked to promote evolutionary change behind the Iron Curtain, to weaken Soviet controls in the area and strengthen possibilities for national independence by Eastern European nations. As explained in National Security Council (NSC) Report 5607 from June 29, 1956, the NSC proposed a policy to "seek projects which would have impact within the Soviet bloc and encourage the liberal[izing] tendencies." According to NSC 5607, exchanges became a way for the United States to take the offensive against the USSR by exposing Soviet bloc peoples to the outside world "so that judgments will be based on fact and not communist fiction"; "encouraging freedom of thought" through both challenging ideas and by exposing intellectuals to American concepts of intellectual freedom. These exchanges would have the effect of "stimulating demand" for personal security; they would "stimulate desires . . . for more consumer goods," as well as encourage "nationalism within the satellite countries by reviving the historical traditions of these people and by suggesting the great benefits that can be derived from a courageous policy of defiance of Moscow." While the NSC was calling for the US government to take the lead in pursuing exchanges, the policy left open the possibility that "private US initiatives should be welcomed, whenever they advance US policy or seem to be an acceptable and necessary price for what will advance US policy."²

Polish and American diplomats began to discuss the possibilities of starting cultural and educational exchanges.³ The possibility was first broached by the Americans during a conference on atomic energy hosted by the United Nations in New York in September through early October 1956.⁴ The first serious discussions of the possibility of exchanges, however, were raised when Polish and American diplomats met twice on the sidelines of a UNESCO meeting in Delhi in late November and early December 1956. After the second meeting in Delhi, the leadership of the Polish Communist Party (PZPR) Politburo was informed of the call by both sides to pursue technical talks in either Washington or Warsaw regarding the possibility of creating personal exchanges led by private organizations like the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, which

the Poles believed “could be very important for us in different fields.”⁵ Less than two weeks later, on December 18, Eugenia Krassowska, the undersecretary of the Polish Ministry of Higher Education, was meeting with Rockefeller Foundation representatives in New York City and requested that contacts for any exchanges go through the Ministry of Higher Education.⁶ So, while diplomats began the conversations about exchanges, the details of the relationship were quickly passed off to the Ministry of Education and private American foundations.

Soon thereafter American NGOs (including the Brethren Church and the Ford, Rockefeller, and Kosciuszko Foundations) acted on this opening in the Cold War and launched programs to bring hundreds of Eastern European natural scientists, engineers, social scientists, humanists, agriculturalists, and medical professionals to the United States and Western Europe for training and collaboration. Interestingly, there was a clear specialization of effort that delineated these groups’ programs. The Brethren Church, for example, ran a relatively small program focused on bringing younger Eastern European agricultural scientists to the United States for graduate level training and research. For its part, the Ford Foundation’s program, overseen by Shepard Stone and Stanley Gordon, recruited and assessed candidates, who included well-respected academics, educational leaders, influential thinkers, and promising new scholars from the humanities and social sciences (particularly sociology, psychology, and economics), as well as from the professional fields of journalism, city planning, and business management. The Rockefeller Foundation focused its efforts on professionals in the natural sciences (biology, chemistry, physics) and the medical field (biomedical research, public health, and nursing programs). Both the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations’ programs ran successfully from 1956 to 1962 and then haphazardly until about 1967, when these two foundations helped to found the Inter-University Committee on Travel Grants (IUCTG) to create a more permanent infrastructure for exchanges.

As relationships between the United States and the Communist Bloc normalized in the late 1960s and into the era of détente, groups like the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX, which grew directly out of the IUCTG) institutionalized these ad hoc relationships, just as formal US government

exchanges launched through, for example, the Fulbright Program, the International Visiting Leaders programs, the National Science Foundation, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Based on an initial examination of archival records from multiple repositories in both Poland and the United States, it is safe to estimate that between two and three thousand Poles were invited West from the 1950s to the 1980s.⁷

In terms of existing scholarship, these exchanges (with Poland specifically and Eastern Europe, more generally) have only received limited attention from scholars. Studies on American activities pursued by the United States Information Agency in the conflict between communism and democratic capitalism only deal tangentially with exchange programs because the key exchanges from the 1950s to the 1980s were run by NGOs or under the domain of the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Exchange, not USIA.⁸ Other individuals have written important studies of the United States' public diplomacy policies toward the Soviet Union, which make eloquent qualitative arguments about the importance of exchanges, broadcasting, and exhibits for changing both popular and elite Soviet attitudes about the United States. These studies, however, are of limited value because they are written by practitioners who were involved in the events and generally overlook programs specifically focused on Eastern Europe.⁹ Walter Hixson has written an exceptional history of cultural diplomacy in the Cold War. But it ends in 1961 and is focused on American policy without divining its effectiveness.¹⁰ Important studies which make compelling arguments about the use of the International Visitor Leadership Program for promoting greater cooperation and shared values between America and Western Europe leave out questions about its role in the East.¹¹ A useful overview of the Ford Foundation's International Affairs program in the 1950s and 1960s exists, but it is focused entirely on the foundation's internal decision making about West European policies.¹² Two articles have been written about the Ford Foundation's program in Poland, but this scholar's work is focused almost exclusively on that single program's influence on the development of sociology as a discipline within Poland.¹³ No comparable work has been published on any of the other NGOs' activities. Scholarship mixing political science and history provides important insights into how exchanges can shape individuals and diffuse norms across

international boundaries, but these works focus on individual institutions or discrete transnational networks, rather than exchanges between East and West more broadly.¹⁴ Overall, these studies provide primarily anecdotal evidence of individual experiences of exchanges, and none of the existing work seeks to tie explicitly the exchanges to the process of political transformation in 1989.

Moreover, with a list of several thousand exchange participants, holistically searching for connections between American exchange programs and the indigenous Polish political processes that shaped the Round Table negotiations is daunting. In order to provide some limits for investigation, this project focuses on the influence of exchange programs on the 570 individuals who directly participated in the Round Table negotiations. This includes members of the Polish Communist Party (PZPR), the political opposition (led most prominently by the Solidarity Trade Union movement), and the Catholic Church, as well as “expert” members of different Round Table panels officially aligned with neither side. Research in the Ford Foundation archives completed in 2016 confirmed that some connections between exchanges and the political processes were direct; for example, thirteen Round Table members, from both the opposition and government circles, were alums of the Ford Foundation program.

More broadly new techniques drawn from social network analysis and digital humanities provide an avenue to better understand the complexity of East-West exchanges as they overlap with domestic political processes in Poland. As such, this project also breaks new ground methodologically. As Giles Scott-Smith, the preeminent historian of Cold War era trans-Atlantic exchange programs, has noted, “Examining the political effect of exchanges falls into a gap between quantitative analysis (statistical assessments and hard data) and qualitative analysis (personal judgment).”¹⁵ All of the scholarship mentioned above falls distinctly on the qualitative side of the equation, relying on compelling anecdotal evidence about exchange programs. A broad, quantitative approach for investigating East-West exchanges has not yet been attempted.

To this end, this project is focused on transforming the textual and unstructured data regarding East-West exchanges run by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations

and located in the collections at the Rockefeller Archive Center into a structured database which can be analyzed using data science techniques. One dataset of this database quantifies individual Round Table participants' lives and their influence networks over time, based on standard practices in social network analysis.¹⁶ Each Round Table participant receives a single row in the dataset with initial columns for relevant demographic information (name, date of birth, sex, age at the start of the Round Table, profession, role in the Round Table). The dataset also includes columns for the groups and organizations that individuals joined and left during their lives prior to February 1989: what I call "institutional affiliations." These affiliations include: institutions where individuals worked and studied; local and international professional organizations they joined; party, local and national government, and opposition leadership bodies they served; periodicals and samizdat (illegal, independent publications) with which they collaborated; and important events (negotiations, strikes, protests, etc.) in which they were involved. Each entry for a round table participant's institutional affiliations includes the date when the affiliation began and when it ended so that longitudinal analyses can be performed. The information that fills these data cells for each of the Round Table participants are compiled from publicly available reference books from the 1980s and 1990s, online databases, digitally archived CVs and other academic websites, and published biographical dictionaries. If two people share an institutional affiliation, they are considered connected within their network. This dataset then provides structured information on the connections between individuals who shaped Poland's political transformation through the Round Table negotiations.

The database also includes both the English and Polish names of each discrete institutional affiliation, a standardized abbreviation, a category (periodical, post-secondary school, political agreement, protest statement, etc.), and its geographic location. This "categories list" is essential to maintain consistency and allow later filtering of data once we are at the visualization stage of the social network analysis.

This, however, is only half of the information needed to map and visualize potential pathways for political influence vis-à-vis exchanges. Thus, a comparable

and similarly structured dataset of East-West exchange participants also needs to be created tracking exchange participants' demographic information and their institutional affiliations both in their home country and while on the exchange. Neither the Ford Foundation nor the Rockefeller Foundation kept a centralized list of exchange participants and the relevant information for my inquiry, so this data has to be sifted out of other regular reports, information from application materials, and correspondence between exchange administrators and exchange participants.¹⁷

This information from the Rockefeller Archive Center has primarily been used to create this analogous East-West exchange participants dataset. With the help of student research assistants here at Cal Poly, I have been able to create a dataset including 431 Poles who participated in Ford Foundation exchanges to the United States or Western Europe and 226 Poles who participated in the Rockefeller Foundation exchange program to the United States. Both programs operated between 1957 and 1967. There is no centralized or comprehensive list of exchange participants and their affiliations, so this work needs to be based on trips to individual archives. These archival files must then be processed systematically and by an individual human, an exceptionally tedious process. Because information in the archives appears in many forms about who participated in what exchange and worked with what institutions while in the West, there is no clear way to automate and speed this process.

However, dataset entries for the entire opposition side of the Round Table have already been completed. Working together with Kelly Bodwin, an assistant professor of statistics at Cal Poly, we have designed an interactive R-based Shiny app, to explore the data and data patterns. This piece of the completed database combined with the Shiny app provides some proof of concept on the effectiveness of the dataset to illuminate meaningful patterns in Round Table members' shifting connections over time. Based on this work, I have presented two papers thus far: "Mapping the Indefinable: Using Social Network Analysis to Explore the Influence of East-West Exchanges on Poland's Transition to Democracy in 1989," Third Conference of the New Diplomatic History Conference, Middelburg, the Netherlands, (October 24-26, 2018); and "Mapping the Indefinable: Designing a

Social Network Analysis Shiny App to Explore the Influence of East-West Exchanges on Poland's Political Transformation" (with Kelly Bodwin), DH2019, Utrecht, the Netherlands (July 9-12, 2019).

Overall, the work remains at an awkward midpoint, in which the gathering, wrangling, and processing of data is still ongoing. Because the database is incomplete, the core questions this methodology has been created to answer, unfortunately, cannot yet be fully addressed or analyzed.

¹ These "Round Table" negotiations took place from February to April 1989 and included reformers from within the Communist government, members of the political opposition, and a select members of the Catholic clergy. Among other tasks, the Round Table Agreements created a framework for semi-free elections held in June 1989, through which the first non-Communist government since 1945 came to power in Poland. See M. Castle, *Triggering Communism's Collapse* (Boulder, CO: Rowan and Littlefield, 2003); and Andrzej Garlicki, *Karuzela* [Carousel] (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2003).

² National Security Council Report, "Statement on Policy on East-West Exchanges." dated June 29, 1956, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v24/d104>.

³ This push for greater exchanges was concurrently pursued with a policy of providing substantial economic aid to the Polish government. After much debate, Poland received about \$95 million in U.S. aid in 1957: \$30 million in Export-Import Bank credits for machinery and transportation equipment; \$18.9 million for cotton, fats, and oil through Ex-Im bank; and \$46.1 million in PL 480 aid which permitted credit sales of agricultural surplus to friendly governments. After the \$95 million credits in 1957, \$98 million were granted in 1958 and \$103, \$130, and \$44 million respectively in 1959, 1960, and 1961. By December 1961, Poland had received an equivalent of \$460,900,000." Piotr S. Wandycz. *The United States and Poland* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 364, 373.

⁴ "Note regarding the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations," dated June 6, 1957, in Archive of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AMSZ), Dept III, Zespół 9, wiązki 50,teczka 659, „Fundacja Rockefeller i Forda 1956, 1957, 1958.”

⁵ Extract of Correspondence, dated November 29, 1956, and Extract of Correspondence, dated December 6, 1956, in AMSZ, Dept III, Zespół 9, wiązki 50,teczka 659, „Fundacja Rockefeller i Forda 1956, 1957, 1958.”

⁶ Extract of Correspondence, dated December 18, 1956, in AMSZ, Dept III, Zespół 9, wiązki 50,teczka 659, „Fundacja Rockefeller i Forda 1956, 1957, 1958.”

⁷ The Smith Richardson Strategy and Policy Fellowship provided support for travel to numerous archives including the secret police, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Communist Party archives in Warsaw, Poland; Department of State records at the National Archives in College Park, MD, and at the special collections library of the University of Arkansas; and Ford Foundation records at the Rockefeller Archive Center.

⁸ Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Wilson Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004);

D. Browne, *International Radio Broadcasting* (New York: Praeger, 1982); J. Critchlow, "Public Diplomacy during the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 75-89; M. Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 1997); and A. Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000).

⁹ Y. Richmond, *Cultural Exchanges and the Cold War* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); and J. Critchlow, *Radio Hole-in-the-Head/Radio Liberty* (New York: Booksurge Publishing, 2006).

¹⁰ W. Hixon, *Parting the Iron Curtain* (New York: St. Martin Griffin, 1998).

¹¹ G. Scott-Smith, *Networks of Empire* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008; and G. Scott-Smith and H. Krabbendam, eds, *The Cultural Cold War in Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 2008).

¹² Berghahn, *America and the International Cold Wars in Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

¹³ I. Czernecki, "An Intellectual Offensive," *Cold War History* 13, no. 3 (2013): 289-310; and I. Czernecki, "America and Human Capital Formation in Communist Europe," *International Review of Social Research* 4, iss. 2 (June 2014): 61-74.

¹⁴ R. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), M. Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces* (Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); and S. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁵ G. Scott-Smith, "Mapping the Indefinable," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 173-195, quoted at 191.

¹⁶ C. Prell, *Social Network Analysis* (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 2011).

¹⁷ During a self-funded trip to the Rockefeller Archive Center in August 2015, I focused on Ford Foundation Archives, International Affairs Records, Series 5 (Exchanges 1954-1970), boxes 1-7, as well as microfilmed Ford Foundation Records, Grants H-K (FA732D), Institute of International Education, Inc. (05700322), reels 2518 to 2521, all related to Grant 57-322 with the Institute of International Education to run the Poland exchanges from 1957 to 1967. During the 2017 trip supported by the RAC Grant-in-Aid, I followed up with smaller programs for Polish and other East European exchanges, including Ford Foundation Records microfilm, Ford Foundation Grants, S-Thel, reel 0530-0533, which included programs run by the British Council (57-321), the National Office of French Universities and Schools (57-370), the University of Geneva (58-20), and Columbia University's exchanges for journalists (56-286). This second trip focused much more on materials from the Rockefeller Foundation, primarily from RG1.2, series 789 Poland, boxes 1-4 and 6-10.