

**FACULTY RESEARCH GRANT  
FINAL REPORT**

**Witnessing Sociological Lives in Central and Eastern Europe:  
Autobiographies of Transformation**

**1. Description of the grant supported activity:**

In November of 1989, the image of workers with jackhammers perched atop the Berlin Wall, as if dancing to the beat of the rock music blaring amidst the celebrative crowds below, powerfully and poignantly broadcast to the world the independence of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union. Foreshadowed by the rise of Solidarity and the revolt of the Gdansk shipyard workers in Poland almost a decade earlier, with the great transformation that followed, the climate for sociology in the region changed dramatically. Sociologists found themselves with a new independence free of the ideological and intellectual restrictions that had been imposed by the previously ruling Communist state and Party authorities. Planned economies were quickly replaced by newly emerging markets, and through them increased articulation with world markets and world sociology, as well as the forces of globalization.

Though remarkable, particularly as presented through the vivid images of the mass media, the transformation, admittedly unanticipated by sociologists or political analysts on either side of the Wall, did not occur overnight. As is the case with all such transformations, it was the result of a whole series of less visible and often unrecognized changes. For more than a decade, I have been conducting research with my Polish colleague Professor Janusz Mucha on the great transformation that has occurred in Central and Eastern Europe, and the impact it has had on its sociology. Our first two books, *Eastern Europe in Transformation: The Impact on Sociology* (Westport: Greenwood, 1994), and *Sociology in Central and Eastern Europe: Transformation at the Dawn of a New Millennium* (Westport: Praeger, 2003) examined the impact that the imposition of Communist rule, and then the transformation that followed, had on the configuration and national traditions of the discipline within the nations of the region. Their focus was largely a structural one, i.e., how were various institutions (universities and academies of science), curricula and the teaching of sociology, professional associations, journals and publishing houses influenced, and how did this influence the discipline.

However, as noted sociologist C. Wright Mills observed, the sociological imagination should combine the analysis of history and social structure, with that of agency and biography. In the spirit of Mills, Professor Mucha and I decided to complete our work by turning the sociological imagination upon itself through a collection of autobiographies of sociologists who actually lived through the history we have previously documented. The Faculty Research Grant I received supported my work on this project during the Summer of 2004.

**2. Were you able to complete the project? Describe any difficulties you had?**

My proposal was to work with Professor Mucha to complete our collection of the autobiographies of 10 sociologists from Central and Eastern Europe, and to complete a manuscript for publication. During the Summer, Professor Mucha and I worked together to write the conclusion. In addition, I edited the entire book and prepared the final manuscript for submission. We have completed the project as planned, without any difficulties.

**3. Did, or will, the project result in a specific product -- a manuscript, composition, syllabus, etc? If so, please describe and indicate state of development.**

The result of this project is a manuscript, *Witnessing Sociological Lives in Central and Eastern Europe: Autobiographies of Transformation*. It has been reviewed by the Publications Committee of the European Sociological Association and recommended for inclusion in its monograph series that is published by Routledge. It is currently under review by the editorial board of Routledge. We anticipate a decision soon. If Routledge dismisses the recommendations of the ESA, we will submit the manuscript to Transactions Publishers. If this is not successful, Columbia University East European Monographs has indicated an interest in publication.