

EVOLUTION OF PARTY SYSTEM IN POST-COMMUNIST POLAND

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in Partial fulfilment of the requirement for
the award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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INDIA
1997**



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July 21, 1997

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled *Evolution of Party System in Post-Communist Poland*, submitted by R. Manoj Kumar, Centre for Soviet and East European Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-10067, India, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is his own and has not been submitted so far, for any other degree or diploma of any University.

This dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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To
My Parents
&
Renu
With Love

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am immensely indebted to my supervisor Dr. Sashikant Jha but for whom this work would have never seen the light of the day. I express my heartfelt thanks to him for extending his cooperation time and again.

I shall be failing in my duty if I don't acknowledge the help extended by my friends Rajeev, Rajesh and Prabhat. They have been a constant source of strength and inspiration to me.

I also owe my gratitude to Keshav, Pradeep, Sujit, Jeetu, Anuj, Sujay, Pujari, Sanjay, Bhaskar, Bhanu, Dubey, Shahbaz, Siddoji, Prasad and others for giving me support and strength during moments of despair.

I thank the staff of JNU Library, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Sapru House Library and the British Council Library for their cooperation.

Finally, I thank Mr. Om Prakash for taking the pains of typing the manuscript at odd hours and in time.

New Delhi,
Dated 21st July, 1997.

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PREFACE

The disintegration of USSR was preceded by a wave of pro-democracy movements in the East European countries. The changes in Poland took place in the wider context of the decline of communism in Eastern Europe. Poland has always been something of a maverick in the Eastern block. In 1989 it again lived up to that reputation. Its ruling party, the Polish United Workers Party or PZPR became the first in Eastern Europe to come to terms with the erosion of its power. In an act that was as dramatic as it was unprecedented, the party gave up its hallowed "leading role" - that is, its monopoly on power and agreed, at first de facto and eventually de jure, to reconstitute itself as a "loyal opposition" within a genuine if nascent parliamentary system.

In the case of Poland it was the prior existence of a mass social movement, in the form of Solidarity, that effectively broke the back of orthodox communist rule in the country nearly ten years before it was finally swept away throughout Eastern Europe as a whole. This had a major influence on political processes of post-communist change, the emergence of new parties and, the institutionalisation

of the new political order. Processes of party development were, nevertheless, by no means limited to Solidarity supporters and forces associated with the free trade union. Party formation was, indeed, initially a relatively slow process but gathered pace after the passage of relevant legislation in August 1990. Party growth proliferated throughout 1991, prior to the first free general election and the process continued throughout 1992 and 1993 as the fragmented parliament provided little by way of example to encourage processes of institutional consolidation that might counter the fluidity that prevailed on the Polish political stage. By mid-1993 the number of political parties registered was well above 200. Only a small number had any real political significance, though. The holding of a second parliamentary election in September 1993, further, provides a valuable opportunity to chart the development of different parties or groups of parties in terms of their institutionalisation and evolving role in Poland's political system.

In the 1995 presidential elections, Lech Walesa, the founder of the Solidarity trade union suffered a narrow defeat at the hands of former communist Aleksander Kwasniewski.

The study acquires importance in the context of the changed political landscape in Eastern Europe in the post-Soviet, post-Cold war era. What conditions in post-Communism affect the rise of competitive political parties capable of providing significant options to the electorate is the essential question that has to be answered. Poland was the first of the East European countries to break with the Communist power monopoly and this created its own set of problems. It was also the first to implement a radical programme of economic reform and take a range of measures to establish a market economy. Moreover, the unique experience of the Solidarity movement and the problematic course of party development in Poland make this study even more significant.

The present study proposes to make an analysis of the political changes that had taken place in post-Communist Poland. It would also study the causes and consequences of the transition of Communist Poland into a democratic, pro-market, pluralist nation. The evolution of multi-party system, the fragmentation of political parties in the initial phase of political transition and the institutionalization of a relatively stable political order would be studied.

The first chapter gives the theoretical framework of party system and the role of political parties in political development. The second chapter gives a historical account of the political development in Communist Poland including the rise of Solidarity movement and its role in bringing about the collapse of hegemonic Communist rule in Poland. The third chapter studies the semi-competitive parliamentary election of 1989 and the first fully competitive election of 1991. This chapter attempts to analyse the kind of party system that was evolving in post-Communist Poland as well as the proliferation of numerous parties.

In the fourth chapter the parliamentary election of 1993 and the presidential election of 1995 are analysed. The reassertion of the left in post-Communist Poland is reflected by the results of these elections. In the last chapter which is the conclusion, the process and the dynamics in the development of party system in post-Communist Poland is dealt. It also tries to analyse the hegemonic, polarized, fragmented and pluralist phases in the consolidation of party systems in post-Communist Poland.

CHAPTER I
**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF PARTY
SYSTEM AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**

"A modern democratic state without this somewhat artificial and yet essential unanimity (party system) would become a brawling chaos of individual opinion."¹

Modern representative democracy has brought about party system as an indispensable factor in every political society. Political party in one form or another "is omnipresent".² This fact lays stress on the maximisation of political participation by enjoining upon the members of a political elite to take the people at large in confidence either for the sake of observing the myth that 'voice of the people is the voice of God', or to justify the very legitimacy of their popular leadership and authority. It also indicates political modernisation in the sense that it calls for the involvement of more and more people into the process of, what David Eston says, the 'authoritative allocation of values'. Whether it is the rule of a single person, or of

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1. Leacock, The Elements of Political Science, p.313.
 2. Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner, Political Parties and Political Development, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, p.3.

the few, or even of the many, the norms of party system demand sanctity to the maxim that the masses must participate in the political affairs of the country as much as possible.

Democracy, as Finer observes, 'rests, in the hopes and doubts, upon the party system'. A study of party system is however, beset with one difficulty. A political party "is notoriously difficult to define accurately."³ It "is not always easy to differentiate it from a faction, or interest group, or a parliamentary group which may have a life of its own, independent of electoral opinion or from a political movement which may temporarily transcend a number of parties or groups".⁴ According to Duverger, "a party is a community with a particular structure". Burke defined a party as a group of men who had agreed upon a principle by which the natural interest might be served.

The political party emerges whenever the activities of a political system reach a certain degree of complexity, or whenever the notion of political power comes to include the idea that the mass public must participate or be controlled.

3. Curtis, Michael, Comparative Government and Politics, New York: Harper and Row, 1968, p.136.

4. *ibid.*

According to Edmund Burke, a political party "is a body of men united for promoting the national interest on some particular principle in which they are all agreed."⁵

Sigmund Neumann defines a political party as "the articulate organisation of society's active political agents, those who are concerned with the control of governmental power and who compete for popular support, with another group or groups holding divergent views. As such, it is the great intermediary which links social forces and ideologies to official governmental institutions and relates them to political action within the larger political community."⁶

The emergence of political parties is a useful institutional index of a level of political development and its emergence is related to the modernization process. Duverger differentiates between internally created parties and externally created parties. An internally created party is one that emerges gradually from the activities of the legislators themselves. As the need for creating legislative blocs

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5. Burkey, Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontent, p.16.
 6. Neumann Sigmund, "Towards a Comparative Study of Political Parties" in Newmann (ed.), Modern Political Parties: Approaches to Comparative Politics, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1956, p.403.

and of assuring the re-election of members of these blocs is increasingly felt, political organisation at the local level or in the electoral constituency occurs where the local organization and the local parliamentary connection is established as the result of initiative exercised by those who are already in the legislative or who hold national public office, political parties are said to be created internally.

Externally created parties are those that emerge outside the legislature and invariably involve some challenge to the ruling group and a demand for representation. Such parties are invariably associated with an expanded suffrage, strongly articulated secular or religious ideologies, and, in most of the developing areas, nationalistic and anti-colonial movements.⁷ Parties that emerged in post-Communist countries are also externally created. Such parties may receive their original organisational impetus from such varied sources such as trade unions, co-operates, university students, intellectuals, religious organizations, and veteran associations.

7. J. Lapalombara and M. Weiner (eds.), Political Parties and Political Development, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, p.10.

According to Duverger, externally created parties tend to be more centralized than those that are internally created, more ideologically coherent and disciplined, less subject to influence from the legislative contingents of the parties, and generally less willing to ascribe major importance to be differential toward parliament.⁸ This may not be applicable to the political parties that emerged in post-Communist countries. It is not merely that the externally created parties are more ideological, more disciplined, or more aggressive in making demands on the system. It is also that, largely as a result of the circumstances under which they arose, they have frequently not developed a vested interest in existing political and in most instances social or economic institutions.

While some scholars have stressed the importance of parliament and the expansion of the suffrage as a critical variable in the emergence of parties, others have stressed the role of ideology. Thus the emergence of parliaments, adult suffrage, and parties themselves is related to the gradual emergence of democratic ideologies.⁹ Insofar as the emergence of parties, or political organizations or move-

8. Duverger Maurice, Political Parties, New York, 1955, p.xxiv.

9. Lapalombara and Weiner (eds.), n.7, p.12.

ments which antedate parties, is concerned a wide variety of ideologies have in fact served as vehicles for their justification. Indeed some parties were created as the instrumentalities of counter ideologies, in sharp disagreement with dominant political values. This is true in the case of Solidarity Movement of 1980-81 and the post-Solidarity parties that emerged in post-Communist Poland.

Political parties often grow out of crisis situations. Under some circumstances they are the creatures of a systemic political crisis, while in other circumstances their emergence itself creates a crisis for the system. The way in which political elites cope with such crises may determine the kind of political system which develops. Such historical crises not only often provide the context in which political parties first emerge but also tend to be a critical factor in determining what pattern of evolution parties later take. They are often historical turning points in political systems. New institutions are created that persist long after the factors which precipitated their creation have disappeared; and memories are established in the minds of those who participated or perceived the events that have subsequent effects on political behaviour.

Nations have experienced many internal political crises during the period in which political parties were being formed. Of these the most salient in their impact on party formation are the crises of legitimacy, integration, and participation.

The legitimacy crisis has been more central to the early formation of parties when the existing structure of authority failed to cope with the crisis itself and a political upheaval ensued. When governmental leadership fails to cope adequately with a crisis in legitimacy, a crisis in participation may occur and with it the creation of parties concerned with establishing local organizations or some measure of local support. Where the legitimacy crisis is adequately resolved - where parliaments are established and the power of the monarchy diminished, or colonial regimes establish a measure of self-government acceptable to the indigenous elite - then the "parties" formed may not involve a broader public and may be more appropriately conceived of as incipient parties.

A crisis in integration has also provided the milieu in which political parties have first emerged. While in some places the crises of legitimacy and integration have often been accompanied by the creation of political parties - and

particularly of incipient political parties - the earliest parties in most countries have typically been associated with the "crisis of participation". The first crisis of participation which occurs before parties have been established and where the target of participation efforts is a non-party elite involves a subjective change in the relationship between the individual and authority. Once a number of subjects cease, for whatever reason, to accept the authority of their rulers, then closed political systems are placed under stress and, except in very rare instances cannot remain closed. A rejection of existing authority as wholly legitimate will result in individuals grouping together to change the rules of the system so that they can gain a share in the control of the state apparatus. The earliest participation crisis may thus involve a crisis in legitimacy.¹⁰ The creation of parties in post-Communist countries after the fall of Communist regime can also be attributed to the crisis of participation and legitimacy.

Parties emerge in political systems when those who seek to win or maintain political power are required to seek support from the larger public. Such a developments occurs

10. J. Lapalombara and M. Weiner (eds.), Political Parties and Political Development, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, p.18.

under at least two circumstances. A change may already have taken place in the attitudes of subjects or citizens toward authority. Individuals in the society may believe that they have the right to influence the exercise of power. In the second circumstance, a section of the dominant political elite or an aspiring elite may seek to win public support so as to win or maintain power even though the public does not actively participate in political life. A non-participant population may thus be aroused into politics.

The study of parties is rather confined to a description of characteristics obtaining in each particular party, its relations to government, its recruitment and leadership, its objectives and programmes, and its electoral performance.¹¹

Maurice Duverger has given a general theory of parties which can embrace the phenomenon of parties in different political systems. According to Duverger, "a party is a community with a particular structure". To quote Duverger, "The protozoa of former periods have been succeeded by the twentieth century party with its complicated, and differen-

11. Apter David, Comparative Politics: A Reader, New York: The Free Press, 1963, p.328.

tiated organism."¹²

Duverger distinguishes parties in terms of direct and indirect structure, and in terms of whether the basic organizational unit is a caucus, a branch, a cell, or a militia-type unit.

Parties with direct structure are those whose members or affiliates are related directly - that is a party which has individual as members. Indirect parties are those which are built upon other social formations as their basic component units. The individual comes to his party membership or affiliation by virtue of his membership in a non-party agency.

Parties made up of loose caucuses loosely tied together into a larger formation constitute one characteristic kind of party and represent an organizational stage in the development of most parties. Duverger notes that this type of party is admirably suited to middle-class politics as it minimizes collective action.

The party whose main organizational unit is the branch is characteristic of democratic socialist parties. The

12. Duverger Maurice, Political Parties, London: University Paperbacks, 1964, p.xv.

branch party would be having a centralised party structure with its basic units being distributed geographically in space. The branch is more formal and an agency of more general purpose than the caucus.

The cell-based party has been developed by adherents to Communist doctrine. The main difference between a cell and a branch or caucus is that the cell is organized around the job or profession and is very small and conspiratorial in its mode of operation.¹³ It is well suited for revolutionary purposes and not suited for winning electoral contests.

In the militia-based type of party, the members are an elite, they wear distinct insignia, a uniform or a coloured shirt, and they drill and march. The militia-type unit finds main use in practising a kind of a quasi-legitimate violence in pursuit of its members or leaders' purposes.

According to Duverger, none of these parties can be found in reality. Parties in actual formation will always be having mixed structures.

Sartori includes the following kinds of parties in a

13. McDonald Neil A., "Party Perspectives: A Survey of Writings" in Eckstein and Apter (eds.), Comparative Politics: A Reader, New York: The Free Press, 1963, p.348.

study of the party system:¹⁴

1. Witness parties, those uninterested in maximising votes,
2. ideological parties, those interested in votes primarily through indoctrination,
3. responsible parties, which do not submit policies to maximising votes,
4. responsive parties, for which winning elections or maximising votes take priority, and
5. purely demagogic, irresponsible parties, which are only vote maximisers.

In the view of Michael Curtis, "Essentially party signifies a group of people who hold certain political beliefs in common or who are prepared to support the party candidates, work together for electoral victory, attain and maintain political power."¹⁵ Political parties are specialised associations whose purpose is to secure power within a corporate group for their leaders in order to attain ideal or material advantages. They may spring up within trade un-

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14. Sartori Giovanni, Parties and Party System: A Framework for Analysis, London: Cambridge University Press, Vol.I, p.327.
 15. Curtis Michael, Comparative Government and Politics, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962, p.21.

ions, corporations, universities, parliaments or the state itself - in which latter case they are political parties. Parties are thus specialised associations and become more complex, organised and bureaucratic as a society approaches the modern type."¹⁶ The central object of a political organisation is to capture power either singly or in collaboration with others. It is this goal of attaining political power that distinguishes political parties from other groups in the political system, although the distinction is rather blurred at times, especially in regard to pressure groups".¹⁷

Party Systems

The term party system is generally used to refer to a party complex composed of all parties that are closely related one to the other or to a common entity, such as a given state. It may also be used to refer to a single party in all of its regularized and patterned relations. System tends to be used to designate social formations characterised by a high degree of regularity and complexity and a

16. Brown Bernard E., New Directions in Comparative Politics, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962, p.21.

17. A.R. Ball, Modern Politics and Government, London: Macmillan, 1978, p.102.

low degree of formality in the interaction pattern.¹⁸ Each national state has its own party system and it is possible to classify and compare countries by the types of party systems they possess. The most obvious distinction rests upon the number of parties in each country. In addition to a number-based classification, party systems can also be classified into totalitarian and non-totalitarian, constitutional and unconstitutional, democratic and undemocratic, and class-based or ideologically based.¹⁹

Duverger's Classification

Duverger had formulated a simple classification of single, bio and multi-party systems and thereby sought to place all the party systems of the world in one of the three relevant categories.

A single party system "is characterised by the party in power either dominating all other groups, trying to absorb the political opposition, or in the extreme case suppressing all opposition groups which are regarded as counter-revolutionary or subversive of the regime as forces dividing

18. Neil A. MacDonald, "Party Perspectives: A Survey of Writings" in Harry Eckstein and David Apter (eds.), Comparative Parties: A Reader, New York: The Free Press, 1963, p.348.

19. *ibid.*

the national will.²⁰ A bi-party system may be said to exist where there are only two parties sufficiently strong to take part in the struggle for power. There may be other parties, but the alteration of power remains between the two major ones.

A multi-party system is one in which no party is able to obtain majority in the legislature entitling it to form government. According to Duverger's analysis, multiparty systems arise either from splits or overlappings in a natural two-way division. A split may come within either bourgeois or socialist parties and may be encouraged by the electoral system. Splitting creates a centrist position which is highly unstable because the centre position represents a tentative and compromised position only for one person.

Overlapping comes about as a result of a non-coinciding dualism in a society. For example, if a society is divided into two classes and two sections, but classes and sections do not coincide, there is a strong tendency for four parties to rise.²¹

20. Curtis, Michael, Comparative Government and Politics, New York: Harper and Row, 1968, p.165.

21. Neil A. McDonald, n.18.

Duverger distinguishes two kinds of multiparty systems. The first type came into existence because the existing parties would not accommodate the emerging views of the socialists. Thus there was no alternative political choice for an increasingly popular point of view. Under the second type the agrarian interests find a congenial party home in neither the socialist-labor nor in the bourgeois-type party. Thus the agrarians create their own party.

Sartori's Classification

Giovanni Sartori²² has given a much more diverse classification of party systems covering several sub-varieties within the one party system. He differentiated the two party and multi-party systems on the basis of 'pluralism' and 'atomism'.

According to Sartori, the single party system is one where political competition between different political parties is either non-existent, or is not very effective. The single party model may be said to have three main varieties. It is monopolistic when political power is wielded by

22. Sartori Giovanni, Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis, London: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p.222.

one party alone and no other party is permitted to exist at all. Such a party system exhibits three sub-varieties. It is totalitarian and has the rubric of 'dictatorship' when the degree of coercion is very high; policies adopted by it are highly destructive to the opponents; only official ideology is sacrosanct; no autonomy to other groups is sanctioned and the element of arbitrariness is unbounded and unpredictable.

It is authoritarian when the criteria of ideology is weak and non-totalistic; degree of coercion is medium and some autonomy is available to different groups. It is pragmatic when the hold of ideology is very feeble, even irrelevant; degree of coercion is quite low; sub-group independence is also allowed; and the element of arbitrariness is limited.

While the totalitarian and authoritarian parties assumed to reflect different ideological intensities, the one party pragmatic represents that end of the continuance at which an ideological mentality gives way to a pragmatic mentality. Totalitarianism and authoritarianism appear as different points of an ideological scale whose lowest point is called: pragmatism.

Another variety of the single party system is its hegemonic position where the existence of other parties is allowed but only one party counts more than all the other parties. The other parties live like its 'satellites' or subordinate entities without posing any challenge to its hold. The hegemonic party "neither allows for a formal nor a de facto competition for power. Other parties are permitted to exist, but as second class, licensed parties; for they are not permitted to compete with the hegemonic party in antagonistic terms and on an equal basis. Not only does alternation not occur, in fact it cannot occur, since the possibility of a rotation in power is not even envisaged. The implication is that the hegemonic party will remain in power whether it is liked or not."²³ The case of hegemonic party has two sub-varieties - ideological and pragmatic. In the ideological hegemonic party system the ruling party is committed to a particular ideology like the erstwhile Communist Party of Poland. It is pragmatic when the ruling party has no such commitment like in the case of the Institutional Revolutionary Party of Mexico.²⁴

23. Ibid., p.223.

24. Ibid., p.230.

Another variety of the single party system is the predominant party system where a power configuration exists in which one party governs alone without being subjected to alteration as long as it continues to win absolute majority in the elections.

According to Sartori, a bi-party system is one where the existence of third parties does not prevent the two major parties from governing alone and, therefore, coalitions are unnecessary. It involves these important conditions: two parties are in a position to compete for the absolute majority of seats; one of the two parties actually succeeds in winning a sufficient parliamentary majority and this party is willing to govern alone; and alteration or rotation in power remains a credible expectation.²⁵

Sartori's bi-party and multi-party systems embody the characteristic of 'polarised pluralism'. In a case of polarised pluralism, different parties exist and operate including those relevant anti-system ones that may go to the extent of undermining the legitimacy of the regime. There exists bilateral and multilateral oppositions and counter-oppositions with the result that interaction may be biangular, triangular or quadrangular. The system is multipolar

25. Ibid., p.188.

in that its competitive mechanism hinges on a centre that must face both a left and a right. In this way, centre party that attempts to outdo the parties located at its right and left will contribute, more than anything else, to a crescendo of escalation and extremisation. The degrees of ideological distance may be discovered between different parties. Cleavages are likely to be very deep, consensus is low and that the legitimacy of the political system is widely questioned. Centrifugal drives prevail over the centripetal ones. Ideological patterning may also be visualised. Politics contain parties that disagree not only on policies but also and more importantly, on principles and fundamentals. Irresponsible oppositions, governmental instability and shifting coalitions are a feature of the political system.²⁶

Sartori propounds a case of extreme pluralism which is the hallmark of an 'atomised' party system. A multi-party system having a highly fragmented character leads to the existence of highly fluid party politics. Here no party is in a position to cast a noticeable effect on the other. An atomised party is fragmented leader by leader, with very small groups revolving around each other. As such, it "had

26. Ibid., p.132.

no significant factional articulation beyond the face value of all that characterises a political party."²⁷

In the final analysis, it can be argued that no neat and water-tight classification of the party systems can be presented for the obvious reason that political developments take place so quickly that they disturb the conclusions of a serious study.

Political Development

Political parties of a nation make a profound impact on various aspects of political development. Political developments implies among other things a measure of political participation by large number of people who do not belong to the dominant political elite. Political development also implies a political complexity which requires a high degree of organization.²⁸

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The impact of political parties is profound on the following problems of development: national integration, political participation, legitimacy and the management of

27. Ibid., p.75.

28. Lapalombara, J. and Weiner, M. (eds.), Political Parties and Political Development, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, pp.4-5.



conflict. Parties and party systems are not only the product of their environment but also instruments of organized human action for affecting that environment.²⁹

The independent influence of parties on their environment is clearly revealed in the study of political participation. Movements or demands for political participation are a characteristic feature of political development. Authoritarian governments, by achieving large-scale economic growth while preventing any massive political participation, demonstrate that there is nothing inevitable about the expansion of political participation. But increased urbanization, the growth of mass communications, the spread of education, economic crisis and the loss of legitimacy of the leadership appear to be accompanied by an increased desire for some forms of political participation; and the amount of force needed by an authoritarian regime for maintaining control over its population is often in direct proportion to the development of this crisis. The response of party government to the desire for participation wavers between repression, mobilisation, limited admission and full admission into the party system.

29. Ibid., p.400.

Repression

The emergence of party systems does not in itself guarantee that governing elites under party systems will welcome expanded political participation. Three sets of factors may be associated with tendencies toward repression. The first is the system of values held by the dominant elite that exists where the party system materializes. If additional participation is viewed as a threat to the maintenance of these values, a heavy incidence of resistance to additional participation occurs. The second factor involves the degree of consensus in the society concerning the place which the maintenance of a representative system itself would have in a hierarchical system of values. Where the idea of representative government is accorded low priority, as compared to the other values held by the elite, there would be considerable reluctance to accept demands for participation. The third factor is purely psychological. It involves the hypothesis that new elites operating under a party system find it difficult to share with new claimants the political powers they themselves have been able to wrest from preexisting systems.

Mobilization

One party governments typically handle the demand for political participation difficulty from parties in a competitive system. The one party leadership is concerned with affecting the political attitudes and behaviour of the population as a whole and uses the instrument of the party, along with the state's repressive power and a controlled mass media, to achieve this goal. It is equally concerned with providing the appearances of participation without at the same time giving up the control of power generally associated with admitting additional actors into the political system. The regime may be concerned with developing a subjective sense of participation while actually preventing the populace from affecting public policy, administration, or the selection of those who will govern.³⁰

Limited Admission

Governments may permit social groups to organize their own parties but deny them access to national power and restrict their participation in the system. Frequently parties are permitted to organize after a period of government repression, but it is clear that under no circumstances

30. Ibid., p.403.

will the government allow them to assume power even if they win elections.

Full Admission into the Party System

In this case the dominant elite may grant individuals and groups demanding political participation, the rights of full participation either through existing parties or through newly formed parties. This is the typical response among well established democracies. In all cases where full participation is permitted, additional participation is not perceived as a serious threat to system maintenance or that the commitment to participation itself is so overriding as to supersede any concern for threats to the system or to highly held values of the dominant elite.

The manner of the resolution of the crisis of participation influences the nature of the parties and of the party systems that emerge. If the impetus to participate comes from a social class, such as the industrial workers or agricultural peasants, and it is opposed or repressed, class-based parties emerge. If the demand for participation is geographically based, or reflects a desire for previously denied participation on the part of a religious or ethnic minority, the failure to gradually absorb leaders of such

groups into the prevailing system will almost certainly give rise to political parties that reflect these narrow impulses to organization. Moreover, the organization of one party with a relatively narrow base often leads to organizational countermeasures and a proliferation of parties.

Political parties also provide legitimacy to the governing authority in the political system. The early phase of a new party system is always a period of uncertainty and instability because it involves new patterns of political participation. Political systems without parties and those with a multiplicity of parties have been among the least successful in establishing a sense of legitimacy.³¹ During the early phases of party development it is common for preexisting political groups to continue to exercise a considerable emotional hold on large sections of the populace.

The task of establishing a sense of legitimacy for a competitive party system is complicated by the general lack of cohesion found in most newly established party governments. However, with all of these difficulties, parties have been an important and on the whole successful

31. Fred R. von der Mehden, Politics of the Developing Relations, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964, p.65.

instrument for establishing legitimate national authority. One useful way of observing the legitimacy of a system is to observe the succession process. The succession process is a useful checkpoints for looking at the question of legitimacy because when power is transferred, individuals within the system are forced to decide whether their loyalties are confined to those who, upto that point, have exercised authority or to the system of government.

✓ The first test of the system often takes place when power is transferred from one leader to another within the same political party. The problem of transferring authority from charismatic to non-charismatic leaders, or the problem of learning how to exercise power without charisma, depends very much upon the establishment of accepted procedures within the governing party.

The transference of power from one party to another, especially the first such transfer that occurs within a party system, is often the critical testing point for the legitimacy of the system. This is evident in the case of East European countries where the hegemonic Communist Party system has given way to competitive multiparty system.

Parties try to resolve the crisis of national integration. National integration implies primarily the amalgamation of disparate social, economic, religious, ethnic and geographic elements into a single nation state. It also means the regularization of structures and processes whereby the discrete elements in a given national territory are brought into meaningful participation in the political system. In one-party authoritarian states, the government generally justifies the suppression of tribal, religious, and regional parties on the grounds that their very existence continues a threat to the nation's territorial integrity. And in competitive as well as in authoritarian party systems, the governing party tends to evoke national symbols so as to facilitate the development of a sense of national loyalty.

✓ The possibilities of the emergence of a single unifying party which reaches into all sections of the country depend upon the nature and extent of cleavage within the social system. Where a great number of cleavages such as religious differences, ethnic fragmentation, hostility between traditional and modernizing groups, conflict between urban and rural centres, and opposing ideologies exist, without the mitigating element of overlapping and cross-cutting cleavages, then it is particularly difficult for any one

party to recruit on the basis of appeals that cut across the country. Frequently political parties associated with such fragmented cultures have no intention of facilitating integration but aim instead at reinforcing the subcultures with which they are identified.

The essence of politics and the instrumental value of parties is the management of conflict, that is the ability of a political system to manage constantly shifting demands that are made on it. Parties are also an instrument for political socialization. The party is used as an instrument for effecting attitudinal and behavioral changes within a society especially so during the early phases of political development when they are among the few institutions concerned with affecting political attitudes. Thus political parties, operating either in an open competitive environment or as the single party of a one-party system, can find solutions to the central problems of political development confronting most of the nations.

With this theoretical framework of parties and party system in the background, the present study would proceed forward to discuss the transformation of the authoritarian hegemonic party system to a multi-party system that is considered as a central component of a post-Communist

democratic order in Poland. The next chapter would briefly deal with the evolution of party system in modern Poland as well the political developments that have taken place in Communist Poland.

CHAPTER II
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS
IN POLAND UPTO 1989

During the medieval period, particularly from the fourteenth century. Poland was an influential Central European power under its own Jagellion dynasty, which was in power between 1336 and 1572. It became the largest country in Europe when it was united with Lithuania in 1569. Defeat in the mid-seventeenth century in a war against Russia, Sweden and Brandenburg brought about its decline. A century later the country was partitioned among Russia, ruling the east, Prussia, the West, and Austria, the south-centre, where a measure of autonomy was granted. There were uprisings in 1830 and 1863 against the repressive Russian regime, leaving behind a legacy of deep antipathy.¹

At the close of the First World War, in November 1918, a fully independent Polish republic was established. Marshal Joseph Pilsudski, the founder of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), was elected the country's first President and, taking advantage of upheavals in the Soviet Union, Pilsudski

1. Derbyshier J. Denis and Derbyshire Ian, Political Systems of the World, Bombay: Allied Publishers Limited, 1990, p.267.

proceeded to launch an advance into Lithuania and the Ukraine which reached stalemate in 1921.

Politically, the immediate post-independence years were characterised by instability, with fourteen multi-party coalition governments holding power between 1918 and 1926, operating in an atmosphere of frustration and violence. They resulted from the inability of any one party to overcome the spoiling activities of its opponents, and in turn gave rise to a number of deplorable deformations. Neither the socialists on the Left nor the radical nationalists on the Right could gain the upper hand, and power fell to the political middlemen of the Centre.² Corruption of both the political and the material kinds came to the fore. Under such circumstances, Marshal Pilsudski then seized complete power in a coup, in May 1926, and proceeded to govern in an increasingly autocratic manner until his death in 1935. The country remained backward, only pockets of industrialism existing at Lodz and in Upper Silesia, with, in 1930, sixty per cent of the total population remaining dependent upon agricultural activities.³

2. Davis Norman, Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, p.124.

3. Derbyshire J. Denis and Derbyshire Ian, n.1, p.268.

A military regime, under the leadership of Smigly-Rydz, remained in power until the German invasion of September 1939. Western Poland was immediately incorporated into the Nazi Reich, while the remainder of the country, except for a brief Soviet occupation of East Poland between 1940 and 1941, was treated as a colony and endured tremendous suffering. A third of the educational elite were liquidated, while in all six million Poles lost their lives: half of them Jews, slaughtered in concentration camps. By the middle of 1944, parts of Eastern Poland had been liberated by Soviet Red Army forces, allied with Polish troops. A communist-dominated, multi-party coalition government was set up at Lublin. In March 1945, the remaining German forces were driven out of the country. During the initial period, the Soviet authorities placed little trust in the Polish Communists. They relied first and foremost on their own security services. After all, in 1945, it was only seven years since Stalin had ordered the total liquidation of the Polish Communist Party (KPP) and the execution of some 5000 of its activists; and it was only three years since the KPP's replacement, the Polish Workers Party (PPR), had been formed. Even if the Polish Communists had been willing to take power at that stage, there were far too few

of them to do so.⁴

The Soviet Union immediately recognised the 'Lublin Coalition' as the provisional government of Poland, but this was challenged by the Polish government in exile, based in London and backed by the Western allies. It was headed, as Prime Minister, by the peasant leader Mikolajczyk. Following the Yalta Conference, in February 1945, it was agreed to set up a joint government, but this was dominated by the 'Lublin Coalition' and PPR, which secured effective control of the security police and armed forces. Their position was further strengthened when, at the manipulated Sejm elections of January 1947, the 'Lublin coalition's list of candidates, the 'Democratic Bloc', secured 80 per cent of the votes and 88 per cent of the 444 seats. A month later, a 'People's Republic' was proclaimed, with the PPR predominant, and in October 1947 Mikolajczyk fled to the West.

Poland, if left to itself at the end of the Second World War, might have produced its own form of democracy, as in 1921, or possibly its own variety of dictatorship, as in 1926. Given their established traditions and allegiances, the Poles could not conceivably have adopted a Communist

4. Davis Norman, Good's Playground: A History of Poland, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.

regime of their ~~own~~ accord. What actually happened in 1944-48 was that the Soviet Union forcibly imposed a Soviet-style Communist system on Poland, regardless of the peoples wishes or the country's independent interests. In the words of Stalin himself, introducing Communism into Poland was 'like fitting a cow with a saddle'.⁵

A Soviet-style, one-party constitution was adopted on 22 July 1952. The Constitution of the People's Republic appeared to introduce a model democracy, with guaranteed civil liberties, universal suffrage, parliamentary government consisting of the President's Council of State, an elected Sejm or Assembly of 460 deputies, and a Council of Ministers answerable to the Assembly. In practice, this 'People's Democracy' was a legal fiction.⁶ A harsh, Stalinist form of rule was instituted by Boleslaw Bierut, the leader of Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR formed in 1948) between 1948 and 1956. This involved rural collectivization and the persecution of Catholic Church opponent. The PZPR differed from other Communist Parties in Eastern Europe by its failure to effect a thorough socialization of its country's economy during the period 1948-1985. With Stalin's

5. Ibid., p.3.

6. Ibid., p.7.

death in 1953, the attempted Stalinization of Poland lost momentum and eventually saw a partial reversal with the society remaining a de facto mixed economy. As a result, Poland entered the 1960s with private farmers holding about 90 per cent of the country's land and constituting over 30 per cent of the labour force. Small entrepreneurs made up another 10 per cent of the labour.⁷ The Party failed to dominate the social and cultural arenas. The powerful and independent Catholic Church provided an umbrella for the existence of various socio-cultural, semi-independent organizations that focussed on publishing, education, civic, and cultural activities.⁸

In June 1956 serious strikes and riots, resulting in 53 deaths, erupted in Poznan in opposition to Soviet exploitation and food shortages. This prompted the reinstatement of the more pragmatic 'nativist', Wladyslaw Gomulka, as PZPR First Secretary and the introduction of a series of moderate reforms. Gomulka made a series of concessions to popular demands. But these concessions were intended as provisional measures which were to be withdrawn as soon as the Party

7. Zubek Voytek, 'Poland's Party Self-Destructs', Orbis, Vol.34, No.2, Spring 1990, p.179.

8. Zubek Voytek and Gentleman Judith, 'Economic Crisis and Pluralism in Poland and Mexico', Political Science Quarterly, Vol.109, No.2, 1994, p.337.

felt strong enough to dominate the society. The organised resistance of social groups like the peasantry, the church and the intellectuals soon caused Gomulka to reestablish former priority that is to maintain the Party's hold on society. Gomulka survived a violent challenge to his authority in 1968.

Sudden food price rises, in December 1970, caused a further outbreak of strikes and rioting in Gdansk, Gdynia and Szczecin. These demonstrations had to be forcibly suppressed. This led to Gomulka's replacement as PZPR leader by the Silesia party boss and leader of the party's 'technocratic faction', Edward Gierek, Gierek proceeded to introduce a new economic reform programme directed towards achieving a rapid rise in living standards and consumer goods production.⁹

Instead of political concessions, Gierek placed all his faith in a new economic strategy, which was based not on the long overdue structural reforms of industry and agriculture, but on foreign trade and foreign credit. As a result, the country became heavily indebted to foreign creditors and further strikes and demonstrations took place at Radom and

9. Derbyshire J. Denis and Derbyshire Ian, op. cit., p.268.

Ursus in June 1976, on the announcement of a proposal to raise food prices.

The Party machinations over the amendments to Constitution in 1975-76, which formalized Poland's dependence on the USSR gave rise to a group of nationalist dissidents. Opposition to the Gierek regime, which was accused of gross corruption, mounted in 1979, following a visit paid by the recently elected Pope John Paul II in June 1979. The Pope's visit created a psychological uplift which broke the chains of fear and anxiety preventing ordinary Poles from being themselves.¹⁰

THE RISE OF SOLIDARITY

Poland's solidarity was one of the largest social movements in history. For sixteen months following its birth in 1980, it dramatically altered the face and temper of Poland.¹¹ Because of its size and popularity, it threatened the very foundations of Communist rule in Poland.

While the pressures leading the formation of solidarity had been building up for a long time, the spark that ignited

10. Davies Norman, n.2, p.17.

11. Mason David S., 'Solidarity as a New Social Movement', Political Science Quarterly, Vol.104, No.1, 1989.

the strikes in the summer of 1980 was a result of material grievances and frustrated expectations. Incipient organizational forms had already developed in Poland during the 1970s. After the workers' protests at Radom and Ursus in 1976, several new opposition groups emerged, including the small Free Trade Unions of the Coast, consisting mostly of workers; the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR), who were mostly intellectuals; the Movement for the Defence of Citizens' Rights (ROPCIO); the Young Poland Movement; and the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN). In the late 1970s, these groups and others produced dozens of underground publications and distributed many of them in thousands of copies. KOR activists initiated the publication of Robotnik (the Worker), which became an important source for worker activists on ideas for reforms and tactics for strikes and other actions. KOR and these publications were also an important channel of communication for dissident groups both before and during the summer 1980 strikes that led to the emergence of solidarity.

Strikes commenced in Warsaw in June 1980, following a poor harvest and meat price rises, and rapidly spread across the country. Protests over food shortages fuelled a plethora of minor grievances directed against all manner of hard-

ships and abuses. The MKS (Inter-Factory Strike Committee) was formed on 16 August, with nineteen delegates representing 388 enterprises. The strike committee in the vast Lenin shipyards of Gdansk rejected a favourable settlement of their own local claim, on the grounds that to do so would betray their fellow strikes elsewhere. The realization dawned that the party's monopoly of power was being challenged by the concerted action of workers all over the country under the ironic slogan of 'Workers of All Enterprises-Unite'. On 16 and 17 August, the delegates of MKS drew up their list of demands. The first was for a free trade union. The first version of these demands seemed more radical than the programme agreed later with Jagielski, including the demand for free elections and the abolition of censorship.

The dominant tone of the August vents was one of working-class and trade-union action. But the intellectuals soon made their voice heard. Their arrival on the scene was crucial in defining the composition of solidarity over the months to come.¹² Already, militants linked to the KOR and the RPCIO were involved. On 20 August, sixty-two Warsaw

12. Touraine Alain, et. al., Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.37.

intellectuals, many internationally known and some of them members of the Party, came out publicly in support of a free trade union. Demanding the recognition of the MKS and warning the government against a trial of strength. The intellectuals formed a 'committee of experts' on 24 August to help the delegates of MKS in the negotiations which were about to start with the government. Many other intellectuals played the role of political advisers, preparing files and meeting government advisers. This was the beginning of the collaboration between trade unionists and intellectuals which was to continue and evolve over the next few months in all the MKS.

Between 17 and 23 August the Lenin shipyard and the whole country continued to mobilise. On the day when negotiations began, 1000 delegates were present. One of the strike letters was titled 'Solidarnosc', and this came to symbolize the unity and determination of the worker. Negotiations between the workers and the government were held. With the help of intellectuals, the Gdansk shipyard workers developed their list of 21 demands which included changes that would have fundamentally altered the political system. Hard bargaining continued until 30 August. On 31 August in the Gdansk Agreement and later in a separate agreement signed with the miners' representatives at Jastrzebie in

Silesia, government officials were obliged to meet the most important of the strikers' demands. In return for confirmation of the Party's leading political role, they formally accepted a long list of concessions including the workers' right to strike, their right to organize themselves into free trade unions, their right to construct a monument of colleagues killed in 1970, and a relaxation of the censorship.¹³

In direct consequence of these agreements, delegates of strike committees from every province of Poland joined together at the National Coordinating Committee of a new Independent Self-governing Trade Union (NSZZ). They called their new organization Solidarnosc (solidarity) and they elected as their Chairman the thirty-seven year old unemployed electrician, who had climbed over the wall of the Lenin Shipyards to lead the crucial strike in Gdansk-Lech Walesa.

In September 1980, the ailing Gierk was replaced as PZPR First Secretary by Stanislaw Kania, but the unrest continued as the ten million member Solidarnosc campaigned for a five-day working week and a rural Solidarnosc was

13. Davies Norman, n.2, p.18.

established. Meanwhile, inside the PZPR, rank and file pressure began to grow for greater democratization, and a quarter of the party's members actually joined Solidarnosc. In the Extraordinary Party Congress convened in July 1981, the elections for the Central Committee were democratically organized on the basis of an open list of candidates in place of the usual closed list selected in advance by the higher organs. As a result, 90 per cent of the old committee failed to get reelected. With mounting food shortages and PZPR control slipping, Kania was replaced as PZPR leader by the joint Prime Minister and Defence Minister, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, in October 1981. With Soviet military activities taking place on Poland's borders, martial law was imposed, on 13 December 1981. Trade Union activity was banned, the leaders of Solidarnosc arrested, a night curfew was imposed and a Military Council of National Salvation established, headed by Jaruzelski. Five months of severe repression ensued, resulting in 15 deaths and 10,000 arrests.¹⁴ Throughout 1982, Poland was officially ruled by a Military Council of National Salvation (WRON). Despite repeated attempts, the remnants of solidarity were unable to challenge the iron grip of the Military. On 8 October, the

14. Derbyshire J. Denis and Derbyshire Ian, *op. cit.*, p.269.

authorities abolished Solidarity and other free Unions.

Solidarity's main resource was its human capital. Within a few months after the Baltic strikes, the movement had enlisted nine million members, out of an electorate of twenty six million. Solidarity faced a dilemma in that it has a revolutionary goals in trying to achieve structural changes in the system, but could not resort to revolutionary means. Solidarity recognised that it could not confront the party head on, both because of the possible civil violence they might entail and because of ever present threat of Soviet intervention on behalf of the Party.

Besides violence, solidarity recognized certain limits. In fact, KOR member and solidarity adviser Jack Kuvon coined the phrase "self-limiting revolution" to describe the whole solidarity phenomenon, Jadwiga Staniszkis has adopted the terminology to describe solidarity's initial phase during which the movement attempted the "painful process of cramming that radical wave of protest and class war into a 'trade-union formula'.¹⁵

Both the Gdansk agreements and solidarity's statutes acknowledged the leading role of the PUWP in the Polish

15. Staniszkis J., Poland's Self-Limiting Revolution, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, p.17.

State. Few Poles wanted solidarity to become a political party or wanted any new political party besides the PZPR and its satellite parties. However, interviews with solidarity activists reveal that while they did not want to seize power from the authorities, they did want "to drive the Party from their lives, and to limit it to proper functions within the state, so that a free society might once more exist."¹⁶

Solidarity was unique in its unusual combination of values: democracy, equality, socialism and participation. While Solidarity's program did not once use the term socialism, it strongly supported most socialist principles.¹⁷

The tradition of popular revolt and the measured success of such revolts in earlier years in Poland, the existence of an independent and alternative source of authority and allegiance in Roman Catholic Church; the peculiar Polish ambivalence, even hostility, toward the Soviet Union and its ideology, and the loss of authority and decay of the PZPR are unique to Poland and help in defining the unusual form and content of solidarity.

16. Touraine Alain, n.12, p.56.

17. Mason David, "Solidarity and Socialism" in Jack Bielsiak and Maurice Simon, eds., Polish Politics: Edge of Abyss, New York: Praeger, 1984, pp.118-137.

In the final analysis solidarity was simultaneously and indissociably a trade union, a democratic and a national movement. Solidarity was at the same time a social movement and an agent of the liberation of society, seeking to restore autonomy to civic life.¹⁸

In June 1982, curfew restrictions were eased, prompting further serious rioting in August. Three months later, Lech Walesa was released and in December 1982 martial law was suspended, and then formally lifted in 1983 Pope John Paul II visited Poland in June 1983 and called for conciliation. The authorities responded in July by dissolving the Military Council and granting an amnesty to political prisoners and activists. This amnesty extended in July 1984, with the release of 35,000 prisoners and detainees on the fortieth anniversary of the People's Republic prompting the American government to relax its economic sanctions.

During the next three years, the Jaruzelski government sought to engineer a slow return to normality through pragmatic reform, including the liberalisation of the electoral system. Conditions remained tense, however, and became strained after the murder of Father Jerzy Popieluszko, a

18. Touraine Alain, n.12, p.173.

pro-Solidarnosc priest, by members of the security forces, in October 1984. Anti-government feelings were fanned by the continued ban of Solidarnosc and by a threat to try Lech Walesa for slandering state electoral officials when disputing the October 1985 Sejm turn out figures. This threat was eventually withdrawn, in February 1986.

Economic conditions slowly improved, as from output increased in response, to raised the procurement prices, but Poland's foreign debt problems remained huge. In September and December 1986, with the release of further prominent dissidents and the establishment of a new broadly based 58-member Consultative Council discussion forum attached to the Council of State, the Jaruzelski administration sought to regain the public trust. This was followed in July 1987 by the Sejm's creation of the new post of ombudsman to 'increase the guarantee that state bodies function in accordance with the law'.

Further, more radical, economic and political reforms were framed in 1987 and presented to the public in a national referendum in November. They comprised in the economic sphere, a three-year restructuring package, involving immediate price rises of between 40 and 200 per cent, and increased resort to market mechanisms and the private sector.

in the political sphere the reforms included a further liberalisation of electoral processes, decision-making devolution and the creation of a second Sejm chamber, staffed by 'self-governing' local council representatives. However, the referendum was opposed by dissidents, including Solidarnosc's leader, who called for a boycott. As a result, 69 per cent favoured political reform and 56 per cent economic change. These approval ratings, when converted as proportions of the total electorate, fell about 4-6 per cent short of the required 50 per cent mandate which the government had sought in advance. As a consequence, the reform programme had to be diluted, damaging the standing of the Jaruzelski regime.

Further problems mounted for the government in the spring and summer of 1988 as a new wave of strikes and demonstrations was launched by workers under the Solidarnosc banner, demanding higher wages, to offset recent substantial price rises, and union recognition. The strikes paralysed the country's shipyards, steel works, coal-mines and port facilities at Gdansk, Nowa Huta, Silesia and Szczecin. In June, solidarity called for a boycott of local and provincial elections and the turnout was accordingly low. By mid year, the government of Zbigniew Messner stood at cross-roads: it could either impose draconian neo-Stalinism or

enter into a partnership with the opposition.¹⁹

The party still controlled the apparatus of oppression, so a new crackdown was still possible in principle. In fact, however, the party was too deeply divided to take such vigorous action, especially with the Soviet opposed to it. Moreover, Mikhail Gorbachev repeatedly went on record stating that he supports the freedom of choice and does not insist on imitation by Soviet allies. Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze emphasised Soviet adherence to the "supremacy of international law and freedom of choice."

The Polish Communist leadership saw that its only way out lay in some form of co-operation with the opposition. The Mieczyslaw Rakowski government, formed in September 1988, tried to lure its opponents into a coalition arrangement that would offer only minimal power while burdening them maximum responsibility for the sacrifices required by economic reform. But the opposition was content to wait until pressure forced the PZPR to engage in serious talks described as Round-Table Talks. It was the party's Tenth Plenum in December 1988 and January 1989 endorsed a fundamental ideological breakthrough - the acceptance of politi-

19. Zubek Voytek, 'Poland's Party Self-Destructs', Orbis, Vol.34, No.2, Spring 1990, p.180.

cal pluralism. Tadeusz Mazowiecki (who later served as Solidarity's first prime minister) observed that the party's agreement to hold elections "was not a gift given by the rulers to the ruled. It was forced by the requirements of Poland's economic, political and international situation."

The Round-Table Agreement

The round-table talks on holding an election were scheduled originally for October 1988, but owing to disputes within the PZPR, they began in February 1989. The talks were completed two months later. The two sides agreed on an election, to be held on 4 June and completed by a run-off to be on 18 June and the creation of an upper chamber to be called Senate. An electoral commission was appointed to supervise the election.

The Sejm: The 460-seat Sejm is the law-making body that selects and controls the government. The agreements provided for a prearranged division of the Sejm, reserving 299 seats (65 per cent of the total) for a coalition made up of the PZPR and its subservient parties, and 161 seats (35 per cent of the total) for the opposition as well as independent candidates.

The Senate: The newly created 100-seat Senate was to serve as a higher deliberative body with veto power over the Sejm and, together with the Sejm, serve as half of a National Assembly to elect the President. The Senate's members represented forty-nine districts reflecting the administrative divisions of the country. Each district would elect two Senators, except for Warsaw and Upper Silesia, the two most populous districts, which would elect three. Since a two-thirds vote of the Sejm could override the Senate's veto, its power would be limited, but it would be a truly representative body. Elections to the Senate were virtually unrestricted, the only requirement was to marshal three thousand valid nominating signatures.

The agreement also provided for the re-legalisation of Solidarnosc, the ending of the state's media monopoly, and substantive package of social, economic and political reforms. It included the formal conferment of legal rights to the Catholic Church, enabling it to run its affairs free from state interference and to operate private church schools and hospitals, and the substantial indexation of wages to the inflation level.

ECONOMIC CRISIS:

With Stalin's death in 1953, the attempted rapid Stalinization of Poland (1948-53) lost momentum and eventually even saw a partial reversal with the society remaining a de facto mixed economy. Agriculture remained largely in private hands, and diverse milieus of urban petty-entrepreneurs preserved. Developmental strategies behind the Gomulka and Gierek periods (1956-70 and 1971-80 respectively) envisioned a steady transformation toward the ideal of the mature socialist society involving the emergence of a well developed industrial system.²⁰

The workers' and the food riots in December 1970 brought down the Gomulka regime and with it the original post-Stalinist development program. By the mid-1960s, the economy had stagnated and political pressure had begun to rise. In the wake of the December 1970 uprisings that toppled Gomulka, his successor, Edward Gierek undertook an extremely ambitious program of economic expansion.

Although one of the chief assets of the conservative, self-reliant Gomulka system had been the avoidance of any

20. Zubek Voytek and Gentleman Judith, 'Economic Crisis and Pluralism in Poland and Mexico', Political Science Quarterly, Vol.109, No.2, 1994, p.337.

foreign debt burden, dependence upon foreign financing became the cornerstone of Giersk's program. Borrowed foreign capital was to ignite the rapid development of the socialist sector of the economy and lead to the ultimate triumph of socialism in Poland. Western credits were to finance massive purchases of western technology. Poland was then to transformed quickly into a massive producer of technologically advanced goods that would be competitive in western markets. The elite reasoned that Polands favourable comparative labour cost would boost exports enabling the nation to repay its loans and to generate capital for investment.²¹

Like the Gomulka program, the Gierek program did not call for the forceful destruction of the society's non-socialist milieus private farmer, urban petty entrepreneurs, and the church. Instead the government chose to wait for the effects of the triumphant growth of the socialist sector to be felt, ultimately eliminating undesirable social elements. However, the Gierek government did not intend to allow these independent sectors to develop any further. The massive legal-bureaucratic apparatus erected during the

21. Gamarnikow M., "Poland Under Gierek: A New Economic Approach", Problems of Communism, Vol.21, September-October 1972, p.25.

Gomulka period to harass and contain these elements was retained in order to guarantee that the triumph of the socialist sector would coincide with the demise of the society's nonsocialist sectors.²²

The perseverance of private farmers and urban petty-entrepreneurs had little bearing upon the success of the Gierek plan. Instead, the inability of Poland's political elite to implement the program constituted the chief reason for its demise. The elite proved to be totally incapable of designing a systematic, orderly investment policy and instead through out the 1970s presided over a chaotic orgy of investment.²³ As a result, hundreds of investments begun during this period remained uncompleted and offered little prospect of completion in the near future. The extremely costly, short-term credits that were taken to finance the import-intensive new enterprises delivered the final death blow to the Gierek scheme.²⁴

At the end of the 1970s, Poland's foreign debt had

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22. Kolankiewicz G. and Lewis P.G., Poland: Politics, Economy and Society, London, 1988.
 23. Woodall, ed., Policy and Politics in Contemporary Poland, London: St. Martin's Press, 1982.
 24. Kaminski B., "The Dying Command Economy: Solidarity and the Polish Crisis", Journal of Contemporary Studies, No.8, Spring 1985, p.14.

increased to 30 billion US dollars, and western credits had begun to dry up while energy costs had risen dramatically. In fact, economy was bankrupt and an increasingly shaken elite tried to contain the damage. The rapid, fall in the living standard, the unprecedented growth of inflation were some of the most direct consequences of the economic collapse. The distress among workers resulted in the rapid escalation of labor strife, especially strikes and work stoppage. Most important was the growing trend of cooperation between the mobilized labor sector and the traditional political opposition.

The embattled elite was neither able to stem the labor action that escalated in the first half of 1980 nor did it display the internal cohesion needed to prevent the social fusion that created Solidarity in August 1980. Moreover, during the solidarity period, the elite became so engulfed in combating the solidarity challenge that no coherent programs of economic rescue were undertaken. As a result, the economy and the standard of living further deteriorated. It was only with the imposition of martial law on 13 December 1981 that the political deadlock was temporarily broken as Solidarity was forcibly outlawed and its leaders arrested.

The attempted political restoration under martial law was the last desperate gamble of Poland's political elite to revitalize the hegemonic party system. However, the party's effort to reclaim its hegemonic political role carried with it a trap; the removal of the opposition from the legal political scene once again placed sole responsibility for economic renewal on the shoulders of the elite. While only a bold economic initiative could conceivably address the system's profound economic malaise, the creation of a coherent, feasible program for reform proved to be a major stumbling block. Prospects for success appeared even bleaker when seen in the light of half-hearted attempts at bureaucratic restructuring undertaken in the first half of the 1980s, the results of which offered little encouragement. The confidence of the Polish elite and its resolve in restoring the hegemonic party system were shaken not only by the failure to create and pursue a plan for successful economic recovery but also by international factors, including U.S. economic sanctions. Most important, however, was the steady pressure from the Western European lending community and governments demanding a program of reform based upon political liberalization and economic decentralization.

The gravity of the situation was compounded by the restlessness of the workers, who in a massive wave of

strikes in the spring of 1989, shook the very foundations of the system. Unwilling to contain the action with the use of brute force, the desperate elite turned to Lech Walesa and other leaders of the still-illegal Solidarity for help. Although Walesa's and Solidarity's intervention managed to quell the strikes, the elite found that it had to pay a heavy price for this co-operation - the promise to enter into negotiations with Solidarity's leadership. To strengthen its hand before the opening of the path-breaking negotiations, the elite needed some quick successes on the economic front.

The policy answer to this dilemma was the emergence of the Rakowski government in the fall of 1988. Soon after becoming prime minister, Mieczyslaw Rakowski extended repeated apologies to Poland's petty-entrepreneurial milieu.

Beyond the lofty pronouncements and half-hearted deeds on the petty-entrepreneurial front, the Rakowski regime was unable to design a decisive plan to reform the socialist sector of the economy; hence, its mandate rapidly eroded. The emergence of the Rakowski government provided only a temporary delay in fulfilling the promise to negotiate with Solidarity. However, since the Rakowski government was unable to rally the society around a new program of economic

reform, in winter 1989, the whole system faced a dramatic crossroad. If the elite were to renege on its promise to negotiate, then a subsequent wave of strikes and civil actions would paralyze the economy and propel it into chaos. Although the elite still retained the capacity to impose its political will upon the society, it also clearly understood that any exercise of the use of force could provide no economic solution whatsoever, and in fact would be likely to spur further economic deterioration. Instead, the party opted to accept a program of political pluralization to provide a means for resolving the economic crisis and decided to commence negotiations with the opposition.

CHAPTER III
POLITICAL PLURALISM AND
FRAGMENTATION OF PARTY SYSTEM
IN POST-COMMUNIST POLAND

The transition from one-party dictatorship to constitutional pluralism was neither swift nor smooth. The format agreed upon for June 1989 elections involved a transitional form that lay between the totally pre-arranged and controlled model of elections practised during the period of the party's hegemonic rule and the elections that were supposed to be entirely unrestricted and democratic.

At the time of the round table negotiations, solidarity did not seriously bargain for the holding of completely free elections since it was not prepared to accept the possible consequence of such elections, i.e. the formation of its own government. It was argued that Solidarity's lack of properly trained, vital middle-range cadres would turn a premature ascent to power into a disastrous fiasco. The movement's clear objective was to become the undisputed leader - the parliamentary opposition, able to influence and modify the policies of the party led government while preparing its own cadres for the inevitable ascent to power in the next sever-

al years.¹

The 1989 Elections

Preparations for the elections to be held in two rounds starting two months after the conclusion of the agreement (on June 4th and 18th) moved ahead swiftly. The effectiveness and strength of Solidarity's resources were relatively formidable in comparison to what the party had at its disposal.² The Citizens' Committees spread across the nation from the original "Citizen Committee by Lech Walesa" served as the political and electoral arm of the movement, and in an effective cooperative effort between their central and local levels, they selected a well defined and disciplined set of Solidarity candidates that came to be known as "Lech's Team".

The Catholic Church proved to be a major campaign resource both as a spiritual and a moral supporter of Solidarity's ideological platform. Solidarity's campaign was supported by a very complex national mass media system as well as by the international mass media.

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1. Zubek Voytek, "The Threshold of Poland's Transition: 1989 Electoral Campaign as the Last Act of a United Solidarity", Studies in Comparative Communism, Vol.XXIV, No.4, December 1991, pp.361-62.
 2. Ibid., p.368.

Solidarity's ideological platform was complex, multi-faceted and decentralised. The only ideological platform that could effectively unite Solidarity during the electoral campaign was the rejection of the PZPR as the dominant political force and the promise of national salvation.

The Election Results: The results of the first round of the elections on 4th June reflected that the electoral process was of a broadly plebiscitary nature and the opportunity to vote against the candidates of the ruling coalition was in most cases firmly taken.³ The overwhelming majority of Sejm seats accessible to Solidarity candidates were also taken by them on the first round.

In the first round of elections of the 460 seats in the Sejm only 165 had been filled on the first ballot. Of these 160 had been taken by Solidarity candidates. Solidarity had also taken 92 of the 100 Senate seats on the first ballot. Another striking outcome of the first round was that only two of 35 uncontested candidates on the national list of the ruling coalition managed to gain the 50% of the votes neces-

3. Lewis Paul, "Non-Competitive Elections and Regime Change: Poland 1989", Parliamentary Affairs, Vol.43, No.1, January 1990, p.96.

sary to get elected.

The results of the first electoral round carried two clear messages: a striking level of support for Solidarity candidates wherever they presented themselves, and a correspondingly low level of support for establishment candidates (to the extent that only 5 gained the 50% of the vote necessary to gain a Sejm seat on the first ballot), combined with a widespread positive attempt to block the passage to the Sejm of the great majority of those on the national list of coalition notables.⁴

During the campaign for the run-off elections, Solidarity's participation was very limited. On the other hand, several leading candidates of the official coalition were required to compete against each other in the runoffs. Solidarity clearly advised its supporters to choose those candidates of the PZPR coalition who were more compatible with the goals of the movement. Thus, Solidarity became a powerful arbiter for the coalition candidates (particular of the minor parties) and its recommendation was crucial for most of those who prevailed in the runoffs.

After the second round the Senate emerged as a wholly

4. Ibid., p.97.

independent, non-party Chamber, with 99 Solidarity members and one Henryk Stoklosa, a private businessman. In the Sejm, Solidarity clearly swept all the 161 (35%) seats for which it was allowed to compete freely. The ruling coalition won a total of 276 seats distributed among the three parties. PZPR won 173 (38%) seats, the United Peasant Party got 76 (17%) seats and the Democratic Party won 27 (6%) seats. Ten seats went to PAX, eight to the Christian Social Association and five to the Polish Social Catholic Union.

The immediate consequence of the stunning electoral defeat was the beginning of the collapse of the ruling coalition itself. Both of the subsequent partners in the coalition - the United Peasant Party (ZSL) and the Democratic Party (SD) - had many compelling reasons to abandon their coalition with the Communists and to begin cooperating with Solidarity. In particular, since according to the round table agreements the next elections were supposed to be completely free and unrestricted, continued cooperation with the Communists would not fare well for the coalition's junior partners.

On the other hand, while the formidable solidarity movement was united in its political struggle against the hegemonic Communist Party, in reality it represented diverse

and often contradictory socio-economic interests, such as urban workers, private farmers, urban petty entrepreneurs, artistic and intellectual milieu, and the religious lay movement. The future institutionalization of the Solidarity Movement would be very likely to bring out its own polarization. Thus the transition toward an alliance with Solidarity held great promise for the subservient parties. Potentially, they would be able to feed upon the intrinsic divisions within Solidarity and transform themselves into solidly class-based parties.⁵

The breakdown of the ruling coalition proceeded swiftly. Soon after the electoral defeat, the minor parties within the coalition began an ideological campaign presenting themselves as victims of the Communist hegemony. The first public collaborative effort between Solidarity and its new partners, occurred during the presidential election of the only pre-agreed to candidate, the top Communist leader Wojciech Jaruzelski. In a well planned and executed manoeuvre by the new coalition, Jaruzelski was elected President by the narrowest margin of one vote.

5. Zubek Voytek and Gentleman Judith, "Economic Crisis and Pluralism in Poland and Mexico", Vol.9, No.2, 1994, p.350.

In the following month, the new coalition prevented the Communist Prime Minister designate, Czeslaw Kiszczak, from forming a cabinet and instead challenged with its own proposal for a coalition government. On 7th August 1989, Lech Walesa argued against the idea of a Kiszczak government for perpetuating the conservative tradition of one-party rule. He then floated the idea of a coalition composed of Solidarity with the UPP and DP, or the only grouping capable of resolving Poland's accelerating economic and political crisis.⁶

On August 18th President Jaruzelski asked Tadeusz Mazowiecki to become Prime Minister and form a government. His election to the premiership was carried by the Sejm on 24 August, with 378 deputies in favour and only 4 voting against. Mazowsiecki's coalition government was composed of a deputy prime minister from each party with an additional 11 posts for Solidarity, 3 for PZPR, 3 for the UPP and 2 for the DP.

The Mazowiecki government's decision to plunge immediately into a market economy, substantially lowered the purchasing power of large segments of the society. Such

6. Lewis Paul, n.3, p.103.

hardships, however, did not improve the PZPR's chances for rebuilding its social constituency. By contrast, the society blamed its predicament upon the failed policies of the Communists and enthusiastically supported the first solidarity government.⁷

Under these circumstances, the PZPR began rapidly to disintegrate. To prevent its complete disappearance, its reformist factions decided to reconstitute the party, as a social democratic party, Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (SDRP), hoping to find more popular support. The PZPR's XI Congress in January 1990, however, inflicted a final humiliation. With the clear instigation of Solidarity leaders who were interested in dealing with a cooperative social democratic party, Tadeusz Fiszbach, Walesa's personal friend and a top PZPR leader, formed a second, splinter social democratic party, Union of Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (USRP) that substantially weakened the first.

The movement toward political and economic pluralism and political liberalization in Poland derived from the economic crisis-driven decision taken by the political

7. Zubek Voytek and Gentleman Judith, n.5, p.352.

elites to embrace the only remaining feasible option that could reignite economic development - the legitimation of private initiative as the engine of growth. The onset of chronic economic crisis and the accumulated failures of political elites clearly stirred the actions of burgeoning opposition group and opened new windows of opportunity for their development. At the same time, while the political transition was shaped in important ways by the political energies of opposition forces, the judgements made by beleaguered political elites played a critical role in the movement toward pluralism.⁸

The linkage between the economic reform project and the political initiative undertaken was evident in the pattern followed by elites in affording increased political space to opposition forces. In Poland, it may be argued that Solidarity would have potentially remained deeply underground had the political elite not undertaken to resolve the economic impasse. It was not until the political requirements of the economic transformation became clear that political elites in Poland undertook their political reassessments. As they confronted a series of economic crises, the Commu-

8. Ibid., p.359.

nist Party retained impressive political capabilities throughout the series of economic crises that confronted and continued to command a powerful political apparatus. The political shift stemmed from the reasoning within ruling circles that economic liberalization would have to be pursued and that political liberalization would constitute a necessary corollary to that process.

The first Solidarity government included Leszek Balcerowicz as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, who initiated the 'shock therapy' as part of the new economic plans that would bring under control the inflation rate, balance supply and demand, privatize state owned enterprises and introduce a competitive market economy.⁹

The Solidarity government gained in the strength and legitimacy after its success in the local elections of 27 May 1990. A total of 51,987 councillors were elected for almost 2,400 local councils. The Communists i.e., the SDRP could win a total of less than one per cent of the vote. The Solidarity groups won 47.5 per cent, with an unknown number of additional supporters from among the

9. Staar Richard F., "Transition in Poland", Current History, Vol.89, NO.551, p.402.

unaffiliated.¹⁰

Despite this victory by the Solidarity Citizen's Committee and its allies, a split occurred within the Solidarity Movement, resulting in a struggle for power. This was, perhaps, precipitated by the establishment of a Center Alliance (P.C.), which had issued a declaration on 12 May 1990, in Warsaw. This declaration, signed by about 100 individuals launched the campaign to make Lech Walesa the next President of Poland. An election would require the expulsion or resignation of the current President, General Jaruzelski, who had been elected to serve until 1995. The P.C. also called for speeding up political reforms, for the new Parliament to adopt a completely new constitution, for the removal of remaining Communists from the government and for "shock privatization".

Later, in July, a group called "Citizens Movement for Democratic Action (ROAD) was formed by about 100 pro-government intellectuals. They supported Prime Minister Mazowiecki for the Presidency. ROAD consisted of many of the intellectuals who advised Walesa during the early years of solidarity.

10. Ibid., p.403.

The campaign for the 1990 Presidential elections accentuated the differences within Solidarity and the conflict between Walesa and the intellectuals. Both, Mazowiecki's and Walesa's campaigns were supported by the centre-right coalitions. ROAD had closely allied itself with the right-wing party of the intelligentsia, "The Forum of the Democratic Right". Moreover, each side welcomed support by socialist groups - Walesa by Tadeusz Fiszbach's Union of Social Democracy and Mazowiecki by Jan Jozef Lipski's Polish Socialist Party. Thus, the ideological differences between the Mazowiecki and Walesa camps were a sham.¹¹

The resignation of Jaruzelski submitted to the Sejm on 19 September facilitated a popular presidential election on 25 November 1990. The campaign by both sides was characterised by mediocrity, lack of imagination and rhetorics. A month before the election, nearly a quarter of the electorate remained uncommitted and unconvinced by either Walesa or Mazowiecki.

The conditions were ripe for the emergence of a maverick candidate, and Stanislaw Tyminski arrived. He began to

11. Zubek Voytek, "Walesa's Leadership and Poland's Transition", Problems of Communism, Vol.40, Nos.1-2, January-April 1990, p.80.

draw strong support in certain social quarters. The results of the election gave Mazowiecki 18 per cent of the vote, made up almost entirely of hard-core intelligentsia and middle-clan followers. Walesa captured a disappointing 40 per cent, while the candidates of the united left and the divided peasantry gained 9.2 per cent and 7.2 per cent respectively, and the militant nationalist candidate obtained 2.5 per cent of the vote. Tyminski stunned and humiliated all political quarters by drawing 23 per cent of the vote and became the challenger to Walesa in the run-off election on 9 December.¹²

In the runoff election, Tyminski won 25.75 per cent of the vote and Walesa captured 74.25 per cent of the vote. Following Walesa's election to the Presidency and the constitution of a new government under the premiership of Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, the timing and mechanics of the parliamentary elections began to be debated. Ultimately, in a compromise between Parliament and President and within Parliament, it was formally decided to hold elections on 27 October 1991.

The presidential election of 1990 marked the demise of

12. Ibid., p.82.

a united Solidarity and the beginning of a more chaotic post-Solidarity epoch. In the transitional parliament the Solidarity elite engaged in a fierce family feud that in the end tore the grand movement asunder. Solidarity's parliamentary caucus (OKP) was quickly divided into a whole range of so-called post-solidarity parties. The emergent party system was further upset by the proliferation of new parties and organisations that had no tradition, no apparatus and no identifiable programme.¹³

Parliamentary Election of 1991

Preparations for the first completely free and competitive election to the Sejm and Senate began long before the date of 27 October was formally announced. The new electoral law encouraged small groupings to field candidates. It provided impetus to those reluctant to merge with like-minded groups as it was believed to favour small parties.¹⁴

The major contending parties can be divided into three groups:

13. Ka-lak Chan Kenneth, "Poland at the Crossroads: The 1993 General Election", Europe-Asia Studies, Vol.47, No.1, 1995, p.124.

14. Millard Frances, "The Polish Parliamentary Elections of October 1991", Soviet Studies, Vol.44, No.5, p.840.

(i) **The heirs of Solidarity:** Apart from Solidarity which contested the election to ensure trade union representation in parliament, the heirs of solidarity include the political parties which had been taking shape as a result of splits in the Solidarity movement, previously held together by the presence of a common, Communist enemy.

The Democratic Union (UD) began as an electoral alliance in support of then Prime Minister Mazowiecki's presidential candidacy in 1990. In the run-up to the parliamentary elections the UD appeared the most consistently popular political party with opinion polls showing 15-20% popularity among the electorate.

The Congress of Liberal Democrats (KLD) was virtually unknown, till its leader Bielecki became Prime Minister in January 1991. The tiny party had originally emerged from the entrepreneurial wing of Solidarity in Gdansk. It expanded quickly, attracting elements from other political groups. Both UD and KLD are liberal in their political and economic values, though the economic laissez-faire liberalism of the KLD is stronger and faith in the market greater.¹⁵

15. Ibid., p.842.

The Centrism was broadly of centre-right pro-capitalist and Christian Democratic orientation. Its origin lay with the growing split within Solidarity. It was initially concerned as a coalition supporting Walesa's presidential candidacy. The Centrum's leader, Jaroslaw Kaczynski was the head of the Presidential Chancellery.

The Christian National Union (ZChN) was a right-wing nationalist, a clerical party. The party's leader Professor Wieslaw Chrzanowski, was Minister of Justice in the Bielecki government. The ZChN was the major force behind Catholic Election Action (WAK).

A fifth major grouping was that of Solidarity peasant movement. It entered the election as the Peasant Accord, an alliance of two small Solidarity peasant parties and elements of trade union Rural Solidarity.

In addition, a large number of other, smaller groupings had also emerged from Solidarity's womb. These included the Party of Christian Democrats and the social democratic group, Labour Solidarity.

(ii) **The Successor Parties:** These are the political parties which have descended as heir to the Communist Party and its

junior partners.

The Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (SDRP), heir to the PZPR preferred to seek allies for the parliamentary elections, in which it participated as a unit of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). Varying at local levels, this was an alliance of parties and social organizations previously enjoying Communist patronage, including the trade union OPZZ.

The Polish Peasant Party (PSL) resulted from the merger in May 1990 of the successor to the Communist satellite party and second PSL, returned from exile in London. Roman Bartoszcze became its leader and its presidential candidate in 1990, winning 7.2 per cent of the vote. By Spring 1991 the peasants were the most disaffected of the population. This universal disillusion provided a strong incentive for cooperation. As a result, two electoral alliances were forced, that of the Peasant Accord (PL) of the Solidarity movement and that of the PSL - Programmatic Alliance, also including the Union of Rural Youth and the network of Rural Cities. The PSL remained by far the largest political party in Poland, with a membership of some 12500.

Other Political Parties: The Polish political scene also provided a mosaic of other political parties. Some had

been excluded from the parliamentary arena through Solidarity's domination of the opposition in 1989, others had emerged subsequently. Some were known as 'couch parties' because their members could sit together on a single setter. Others, however, enjoyed some sort of national visibility, often because of prominent leaders. They also possessed more clear-cut ideological bases.¹⁶ The Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN), under Leszek Moczulski, was aggressively anti-Communist in its stance.

The radical liberal Union of Political Realism led by Janusz Korwin, the Polish Friends of Beer Party (PPPP), the Centrist Christian Democratic Labour Party which formed an electoral alliance of 'Christian Democracy' were the other groups which suffered a lack of clear identity.

16. Ibid., p.844.

Table 1: POLISH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF 1991

THE MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES

Party	Leaders	Policy orientation
Democratic Union (UD)	Tadeusz Mazowiecki Aleksander Hall Jacek Kuron	Centrist, pro-market, 'corrective intervention', civil libertarian, 'right' and 'liberal' factions
Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD)	J. Krzysztof Bielecki Donald Tusk	Economic laissez-faire, rapid privatisation, secular, civil libertarian
Porozumienie Obywatelskie Centrum	Jaroslaw Kaczynski, Jacek Maziariski	Centrist, Christian Democrat, economic intervention plus rapid privatisation, decommunication
Christian National Union (ZChN)	Wieslaw Chrzanowski, Antoni Macierewicz	Clerical nationalist
Solidarity Peasant Movement (PL)	Jozef Slisz, Henryk Bak, Gabriel Janowski	Pro-market but agricultural intervention, pro-Church
Polish Peasant Party (PSL)	Waldemar Paylak	Pro-market but agricultural intervention, Christian teaching
Social Democracy (SDRP)	Aleksander Kwasniewski, Leszek Miller	Mixedeconomy, state social service provision, secular
Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN)	Leszek Moczulski, Krzysztof Krol	Economic intervention, strong law and order, state social services, anti-Soviet

The Election Results: The national average turnout for polling was 43.2%. The parliamentary election generated a disparate, fragmented parliament with no party strong enough

to provide a clear center of gravity.¹⁷ A large number of groupings (29) achieved representation in the Sejm with fewer (13) in the Senate, plus a contingent of independent and regional Senators. Fragmentation is still evident after excluding those with a single seat. 15 parties or coalitions of parties, one trade union and three regional groupings in the Sejm and nine parties and one trade union in the Senate have got representation.

The vote for the first seven parties was distributed across the 7-13% band, with the first, the UD, gaining 12.31% and the seventh, the KLD, 7.48%. Both the SLD, who came second, and the Catholic WAK, which came third, did far better than expected. The first ten were all national parties or groupings, followed generally by regional parties with a concentrated vote and local committees (See Table 2).

17. Millard Frances, "The Polish Parliamentary Election of September 1993", Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol.27, No.13, 1994, p.296.

Table 2: ELECTION TO THE SEJM

Party	% of vote	Seats won
Democratic Union	12.31	62
Alliance of the Democratic Left (SLD)	11.98	60
Catholic Election Action (WAK)	8.73	49
Centre Democratic Accord	8.71	44
Peasant Party-Programme Alliance (PSL)	8.67	48
Confederation for Independent Poland (KPN)	7.50	46
Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD)	7.48	37
Peasant Accord (PL)	5.46	28
Solidarity	5.05	27
Polish Friends of Beer (PPPP)	3.27	16
German Minority	1.17	7
Christian Democracy (DC)	2.36	5
Polish Western Union (PZZ)*	0.23	4
Party of Christian Democrats (PCD)	1.11	4
Labour Solidarity	2.05	4
Union of Political Realism (UPR)	2.25	3
Party X	0.47	3
Movement for Silesian Autonomy	0.35	2
Democratic Party (SD)	1.41	1
Democratic-Social Movement (RDS)	0.46	1
Union of Great Poles**		1
Peasant Unity (PL and PSL)		1
Great Poland and Poland**		1
Solidarity 80		1
Piast Peasant Election Alliance (PL and PSL)		1
Electoral Committee of Orthodox Believers		1
Krakow Coalition of Solidarity with the President		1
Union of Podhale		1
Alliance of Women against Life's Hardships*		1
Total		460

Notes: * KPN ally.

** Great Poland is the area around Poznan.

The shape of the Senate, both in the number of parties represented and in their order of magnitude was different from that of the Sejm. The UD was the largest with 21% of

the seats, followed by Solidarity (see Table 3). Of the regional parties only the German Minority gained a seat, but independent and local candidates did well.

Table 3: COMPOSITION OF THE SENATE BY PARTY

Party	Number of seats
Democratic Union	21
Solidarity	12
Centrum	9
Catholic Action (WAK)	9
Peasant Party (PSL)	8
Peasant Alliance (Solidarity)	7
Liberal Democratic Congress	6
Confederation for Independent Poland (KPN)	4
Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	4
Party of Christian Democrats	3
Christian Democracy	1
German Minority	1
Nationalist	1
Independents/Regional	14
Total	100

Though the electoral system encouraged the fragmentation of parliament, the threshold laid down for the all-Polish lists penalised small parties and benefited the medium-sized ones, which gained more seats overall than perfect proportionality would have given them.

The KPN and the Christian National Union (WAK) made a greater impact than anticipated. Similarly, the former Communists of the SDRP gained a new optimism from its rela-

tively strong performance. The elections also indicated the demise of the Democratic Party (SD), the former ally of the Communist Party. Despite nationwide organisation and a large nominal membership, the SD gained only one seat.¹⁸

The 1991 parliamentary election and campaign resulted in a deeply divided and fragmented parliament. The vast apparent immediate consequence of the political fractiousness was the difficulty in arranging a workable governing coalition.¹⁹ After a lot of speculation, Jan Olszewski managed to obtain a supportive vote for his government based on a minority parliamentary coalition. The driving force of this minority coalition was the relatively small, nationalist and Christian-democratic ZChN that had actually won merely 8 per cent of the electoral vote.

The economic ineptitude of the Olszewski government, combined with its growing activism in orchestrating a kind of right-wing cultural revolution in Poland, encouraged the hostility of a large opposition coalition, supported in principle by Walesa. Finally, in July 1992 Walesa led a

18. Millard Francs, "The Polish Parliamentary Elections of October 1991", Soviet Studies, Vol.44, No.5, 1992, p.847.

19. Zubek Voytek, "The Fragmentation of Poland's Political Party System", Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol.26, No.1, March 1993, p.61.

parliamentary vote of no confidence against the Olszewski government after it had been in power only for six months. Immediately after the dissolution of the Olszewski government, Walesa dominated Waldmar Powlak, the leader of the post-Communist Peasant Party the PSL, to serve as Prime Minister and to form a new government.

By then, Walesa's political powers had been eroded substantially. In a rare example of common political purpose, all the post-Solidarity forces opposed Powlak's attempt to form a government and forced his resignation. Subsequently, the post-Solidarity Left and some of the more moderate elements of the post-Solidarity Right managed to form a weak and precarious coalition Harra Suchocka, the Last government led by the post-Solidarity parties. The new government was a seven-party coalition of liberals, social democrats, Christian democrats, peasants and Christian nationalists.

When the shaky Suchocka government came to power Walesa attempted to reassert himself by exploiting its systemic weaknesses. This application of his presidential powers greatly contributed to bringing about the demise of the

Suchocka government with a year, in June 1993.²⁰

The formation of the Suchocka government signified the stabilization and maturation of Poland's fragmented political system. In many ways it reflected the growing institutionalization of Poland's political fragmentation. The political fragmentation had not led to the dreaded political chaos. Governments with complex and shifting coalition of small parties behind them proved capable of discharging their basic administrative duties and a balanced and predictable political equilibrium had gradually crystallized. Moreover, the fragmented system proved capable of absorbing or co-opting these political movements that originally were the threatening to stability.²¹

New parliamentary elections were called in September 1993. In the meantime, the election law was changed and a 5% threshold for individual parties and 8% for coalitions was established to weed out the numerous small post-Solidarity parties which had emerged. The law's purpose was to give the largest percentage of the popular vote to the largest segments of the post-Solidarity movement.

20. Zubek Voytek, "The Eclipse of Walesa's Political Career", Europe-Asia Studies, Vol.49, No.1, 1997, p.13.

21. Zubek Voytek, "The Fragmentation of Poland's Political Party System", Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol.26, No.1, March 1993, pp.69-70.

CHAPTER IV
REASSERTION OF THE LEFT
IN POST-COMMUNIST POLAND

The September 1993, election was the second fully competitive parliamentary election in post-Communist Poland, and it marked the end of Solidarity's initial dominance of post-Communist political development. From 1989 to 1993, first Solidarity itself and then coalitions of political parties of Solidarity provenance formed successive coalition governments. The victory of the Communist successor parties in the election of 1993, represented a turning point. However, it should not be seen as the resurgence of sympathy for the old ruling elites, nor as a reflection of nostalgia for the Communist past. However, it marked the reintegration of the successor parties, the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) and especially the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland, SDRP, into Polish political life.

Social democratic egalitarianism, and especially support for the values of the welfare state, once again became an accepted part of political discourse. It can also be said that it was the fragmented right which lost the election rather than the left which won the election. The

electoral system also played a major role by enhancing the rewards for the winner and altogether eliminating the smaller parties from the Sejm.

Political Parties in Contention

Numerous cleavages, socio-economic, historical and ideological, divided the nascent political parties after the October 1991, parliamentary election. They also reflected friendships and animosities, intensified or moderated by lobbying for power or personal status.¹ In spite of some subtle differences, the Polish party system resembled the main features delineated in Sartori's model of polarised pluralism': polarisation due to ideological reasons, centrifugal drives in partisan competition and a tendency toward irresponsibility and outbidding.²

Throughout the 1992, the parliamentary parties continued to fragment, merge and realign. During the first six months their focal point was the government of Jan Olszewski. Olszewski was a member of the Center Alliance or Centrum which was a part of a coalition of four small par-

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1. Millard F., "The Polish Parliamentary Election of September 1993", Communist Post-Communist Studies, Vol.27, No.3, 1994, p.296.
 2. Ka-Lok Chan Kenneth, "Poland at the Crossroads: The 1993 General Election", Europe-Asia Studies, Vol.47, No.1, 1995, p.128.

ties i.e., the Christian National Union (ZChN), the PL and the Christian Peasant Party (SChL), the two small peasant parties.

The Olszewski government's main opposition was the small coalition of the U.D., the Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD) and the Polish Economic Programme (PPG), an offshoot of the Polish Friends of Beer Party (PPPP).

The Left Parties: On the left of the political spectrum, the successor of the PZPR, the SLD, together with the PSL, which descended from the United Peasant Party (ZSL) were the leading parties. In an effort to acquire a legitimate role in the new era, both parties accepted the basic principles of free market economy and democracy. They were led by young and energetic figures like Aleksander Kwasniewski (SLD) and Waldemar Pawlak (PSL). The SL was actually a coalition of 27 groups and trade unions which had their roots in the old regime.

The PSL decided to remain an agrarian party, with Catholic and populist economic leanings. It tried to project a nationalist image by claiming the legacy of the old PSL, the only party against the Communist takeover between 1944 and 1947.

Despite a renewed image and a reasonable showing in the 1991 elections, the SLD and PSL were still not considered trustworthy partners in the post-Communist era. As a result, the ex-communists and their peasant allies were rejected and shunned by the post-Solidarity parties. However, marginal position was turned into an asset by both parties by concentrating their efforts on charging the Solidarity leaders with inadequately dealing with the negative aspects of the liberal economic reform and making an impression that they would pay due attention to the dismal fate of the disadvantaged groups.³

In mid-1992 a new labour party, the Labour Union (UP), was created from the merger of the two small groups of Solidarity provenance, the Democratic Social Movement and the Labour Solidarity. Its founders, like Ryszard Bugaj, Zbigniew Bujak and Aleksander Malachowski, were veteran activists. It stood against the 'neo-liberal dogmas' of the post-Solidarity governments.

The Right Parties: The right was a more complex and heterogenous group of parties. Divisions in the right were originally created from above as a result of ideological

3. Ibid., p.132.

debates about social and cultural issues, especially over the role of the Church as well as 'de-communization'. Moreover, parties disagreed over the pace of pro-market reform and how the social costs entailed should be distributed. As a result, two distinct blocs of the right emerged from these politically created cleavages. The first was nationalist, Catholic, anti-Communist and economically populist. The second was secular, liberal and pro-market.⁴

The right insisted on 'decommunization' in both the state and economic sectors. So far as economic policy is concerned, the 'right wing' parties have indeed become increasingly populist to the extent that sometimes their positions were hardly distinguishable from those of the SLD and PSL.

At the beginning of 1992 there were seven parties which could be considered as right-wing parties. Five were populist parties and these formed the coalition partners, i.e., the Centrum, the ZChN, and the two small peasant parties, together with the strongly anti-communist Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN).

4. Ibid., p.133.

The two liberal parties provided a stark contrast not only to the populist parties, but also to each other. The Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD) led by Donald Tusk and Bielecki was a secular party, committed to traditional liberal individualism, stressing tolerance and the safeguarding of individual civil liberties. The Liberals were the ones most closely associated with privatisation. The other liberal party, the Union of Political Realism (UPR), was a libertarian party, advocating the privatization of the entire economy as well as services like education and health.⁵

The right-wing parties were further haunted by fissiparous tendencies. Jan Olszewski left the Centrum to spearhead a new group, the Movement for the Republic (PdR), to publicize the continuing Communist threat to Poland's sovereignty and independence. Former Minister of Defence Jan Parys also formed a new right-wing grouping, the Third Republic Movement (RTR). The Polish Action (AP) was formed by Macierewicz (former Interior Minister) after he was expelled from the Christian National Union. By the autumn of 1992, the right-wing of the Democratic Union withdrew to form a new Conservative Party (KP) under the leadership of

5. Millard E., n.1, p.298.

Aleksander Hall.

The Center: The Democratic Union was more clearly committed to a centrist approach, liberal in regard to civil liberties and economic policy. However, it had a vocal social democratic wing.⁶

The other significant centrist element was the anti-party, the non-Party Bloc for the Support of Reforms, BBWR, sponsored by Walesa and led by his economic adviser, Andrzej Olechowski.

The other minor parties were Solidarity which had won 27 seats in 1991. Self-Defence, led by Andrzej Lepper emerged in June 1992, as a "party of working people, of the impoverished, exploited and injured."

The 1993 Election Results:

The voter turnout was 52 per cent and was higher than the 43.2 per cent turnout of the 1991 election.

6. Ibid., p.301.

**Table 1: RESULTS OF ELECTIONS TO THE SEJM,
1991 AND 1993**

Turnout 1991: 43.2% 1993: 42.06%	% of votes (1991)	No. of seats	% of votes (1993)	No. of seats
Democratic Union	12.32	62	10.59	74
Democratic Left Alliance	11.99	60	20.41	171
Christian National Union*	8.74	49	6.37	-
Centre Accord	8.71	44	4.42	-
Peasant Party (PSL)	8.67	48	15.40	132
Confederation for Independent Poland	7.50	46	5.77	22
Liberal Democratic Congress	7.49	37	3.99	-
Peasant Accord	5.47	28	2.37	-
Solidarity	5.05	27	4.90	-
Polish Beer Lovers' Party	3.27	16	-	-
Labour Union	-	-	7.28	41
Non-party Bloc for Support of Reform	-	-	5.41	16
German minority	1.18	7	0.71	4

* Main constituent of electoral coalition.

Source: Rezeczpospolita, 4 November 1991; 27 September 1993.

The ex-Communist parties eclipsed the post-Solidarity camp. In winning the election, both the SLD and PSL doubled the number of votes they received in 1991 and tripled their number of parliamentary seats. Combined, the left-wing ex-Communist parties received 35.8 per cent of the vote. The SLD leader Kwasniewski received 1,48,553 votes in Warsaw and became the most successful party leader in the elections. In the Senate election the bloc's victory was more sweeping. When parliament was dissolved in May 1993 the SLD had four

Senators and the PSL ten. In the election both parties benefitted from the plurality system and won 37 and 36 seats respectively.

Table 2: PARTY REPRESENTATION IN THE SEJM

	% of vote	seats	% of seats
SLD	20.4	171	37.2
PSL	15.4	132	28.7
UD	10.6	74	16.0
UP	7.3	41	8.9
KPN	5.8	22	4.8
BBWR	5.4	16	3.5
German Minority*		4	0.9

* The 5 per cent threshold did not apply to minorities.

Source: Same as above.

The swing to the left was even more evident in terms of geographical distribution. The SLD gained most in 29 districts and dominated the north-west, the PSL in 20 districts in the south-east. Even in Gdansk, the birth-place of Solidarity movement, the SLD received the largest share of the votes (4.9%) and took 5 out of 15 seats. The Union of Labour's result was even more impressive, given its very small membership and the paucity of its resources. In 1991 the combined vote of its two main elements was 2.5 per cent while in 1993 it secured 7.3 per cent of the vote.

The left's victory was also contributed by the bitter division of the heterogenous Polish right.⁷ The parties of the liberal right did badly. The Liberals attracted 3.99 per cent of the vote and the UPR 3.18 per cent. Though the share of the vote won nationally, by the populist right was about 22 per cent, only the KPN passed the threshold for representation in the Sejm. The results also indicated that the parties espousing religious values and strong links with the Church would find it difficult to get representation in the Sejm.

**Table 3: RESULTS OF SEJM ELECTION,
19 SEPTEMBER 1993**

Party	% of vote	Seats		
		Consti- tuency	National	Total
Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	20.41	145	26	171
Polish Peasant Party (PSL)	15.40	112	20	132
Democratic Union (UD)	10.59	60	14	74
Labour Union (UP)	7.28	32	9	41
Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPW)	5.77	22	0	22
Non-partisan Bloc for Reform (BBWR)	5.41	16	0	16
German Minority	0.44	3	0	3

Table contd...

7. Lewis Paul, "Party Development in Post-Communist Poland", Europe-Asia Studies, Vol.46, No.5, 1994, p.793.

Table 3 contd...

Party	% of vote	Seats		
		Consti- tuency	National	Total
German Social-Cultural Association	0.17	1	0	1
Catholic Electoral Committee - 'Fatherland' (KKW- 'Ojezyzna')	6.37	0	0	0
NSZZ Solidarity	4.90	0	0	0
Union of Poland-central Alliance (ZP-PC)	4.42	0	0	0
Congress of Liberal Democrats (KLD)	3.99	0	0	0
Union of Republic (UPR)	3.18	0	0	0
Self-Defence (Samoobrona)	2.78	0	0	0
Party 'X'	2.74	0	0	0
Coalition for Republic (KdR)	2.70	0	0	0
Peasant Alliance (PSL-PL)	2.37	0	0	0
Other	1.08	0	0	0
		391	69	460

Electorate: 27,677,302, Voted: 14,415,586,
Turnout: 52.08% (4.3% invalid)

Source: 'Obwieszczenie Panstwowej Komisji Wyborczej z 23
wrzesnia 1993r', Rzeczpospolita, 27 September 1993.

Elections to the Senate, with a simple majority voting system, proved more sensitive to regional variation in party support and in some cases to individual appeal. The winner-take-all system resulted in a somewhat different party profile from that of the Sejm, though the SLD and PSL were even stronger with 73 per cent of the seats.

**Table 4: RESULTS OF SENATE ELECTION,
19 SEPTEMBER 1993**

Part	Seats (100)
Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	7
Polish Peasant Party (PSL)	36
NSZZ Solidarity	9
Democratic Union (UD)	4
Labour Union (UP)	2
Nonpartisan Bloc for Reform (BBWR)	2
German Minority	1
Congress of Liberal Democrats (KLD)	1
Peasant Alliance (PSL-PL)	1
Union of Poland-Central Alliance (ZP-PC)	1
Catholic Electoral Committee 'Fatherland' (KKW 'Ojczyzna')	1
'Solidarity' individual farmers	1
Other organisations and independents	4

Electorate: 26,677,302, Voted: 14,408,367,
Turnout: 52.06% (2.93% invalid).

Source: 'Obwieszczenie Panstwowej Komisji Wyborezej z 23
wrzesnia 1993r.', Rzeczpospolita, 27 September 1993.

In both chambers the parties which won representation in the parliament were those committed to change through democratic, parliamentary processes. Those radical parties which sought to mobilize the alienated and marginalized, playing on fears and anxiety, met little response.⁸

The results also showed a wholesale decline in social support for the post-Solidarity camp. The only exception was the NSZZ Solidarity. The trade union had not only

8. Millard F., n.1, p.307.

increased its votes by 19.4 per cent since the 1991 elections, but also retained most of its seats in the Senate.

The 1993 election results also emphasised the fact that since 1989 the pro-market reform has introduced a new socio-economic dimension into party conflict that indeed cut across the old 'us versus them' dichotomy. It has been proved that Polish society is no longer divided primarily along a strict post-Solidarity versus ex-communist. The socio-economic cleavage has become more relevant than other divides for explaining what happened in the 1993 election. The electorate turned away from the post-Solidarity parties after prolonged efforts to express their discontent and failure to get a satisfying response from the Solidarity governments.

As a result, all the groups on the 'left' of the socio-economic spectrum performed well in the election. Thus both the ex-Communist 'left' (SLD, PSL) and the post-Solidarity 'left' (NSZZ Solidarity) gained from the swing to the left in society. Then came the non-Communist, non-Solidarity parties that, like the U.P., PN and BBWR, focused their campaigns on workers and ordinary citizens. Finally, the post-Solidarity 'right' experienced the steepest decline in social support. Thus, this election ended the 'post-

Solidarity, anti-ex-communist' epoch. ,

Many factors were responsible for the consolidation of the left and the success of SDRP in the Polish political system.

The SDRP inherited the formidable and extensive institutional and organizational structure of the PZPR. Its position was strengthened by the links it established with the umbrella trade-union organization, OPZZ. Both the SDRP and its ally the PSL had benefitted from skillful leadership and been successful in preserving much of its membership and organizational network. Both had the advantage of an established party press and other resources.

The SDRP has been able to purge and marginalise stand patters (hard-core Communists), which provided the party with a number of political advantages. Firstly, the party has become a very attractive coalition partner.⁹ Secondly, the party has demonstrated a remarkable flexibility in attracting to its ranks a wide variety of different supporters. Poland's new capitalist class who took full advantage of the economic opportunity afforded to them by the "Rakow-

9. Ishiyama John T., "Communist Parties in Transition: Structure, Leaders and Process of Democratization in Eastern Europe", Comparative Politics, January 1995, p.160.

ski privatization", consisted of the former nomenklatura. For many of these nomenklatura-turned-capitalists, the political presence of the SDRP contingent in Parliament became an implicit guarantor of the legality of their new gains and the continuation of the process. With its new social-democratic, pro-market reform identity, the SDRP began to enjoy the greatest and most consistent support from the business community.¹⁰

The SDRP has, under the leadership of Kwasniewski and Miller, apparently convinced Polish voters that the party has divorced itself sufficiently from the Communist past and become a credible political alternative. The Communist Party of Poland has been able to make a successful transition to the new conditions of democratic competition.

The emerging character of Poland's political left provided a unique opportunity for the SDRP as the relatively most balanced and in fact as the most moderate among these parties. Finally, the SDRP could be assigned no responsibility for the socio-economic hardships caused by the transfor-

10. Zubek Voytek, "The Rise to Power of Poland's SDRP Party", Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol.28, No.3, 1995, p.283.

mation.¹¹

With two-thirds majority in the new parliament, the SLD and PSL formed a government between them. As a result of the coalition agreement, the SLD's Jozef Oleksy was elected Marshall of the Sejm. At the same time, the parties agreed on Waldemar Pawlak to serve as prime minister to reduce the fears of the SLD taking a monopoly on power.¹² The SLD-PSL coalition has recognised the President's prevailing role in defence, internal and foreign affairs as specified in the provisional 'little constitution'.

The President Lech Walesa nominated the first left-wing government in post-Communist Poland. The Pawlak team was eventually endorsed by the Sejm on 9 November 1993. Kwasniewski was elected Chairman of the National Assembly's Constitution Commission, which is empowered to prepare a permanent constitution for the Republic of Poland.

The Presidential Election, 1995:

The second direct presidential election in post-Communist Poland was held in November 1995. The election

11. Ibid., p.295.

12. Ka-Lok Chan Kenneth, "Poland at the Crossroads: The 1993 General Election", Europe Asia Studies, Vol.27, No.1, 1995, p.140.

was hotly contested between the incumbent President, Lech Walesa and the SLD leader, Kwasniewski. As the election approached in the summer of 1995, Walesa's position was extremely weak. Polls indicated only 7 per cent supported Walesa, while 51 per cent would not vote for him under any circumstances. The Church had also distanced itself from the President.

More promising candidates, such as Tadeuz Zielinski, a leftist, Jacek Karon, left-to-centre and Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, centre-to-right, had emerged with a chance to win the election.¹³ But, by October, Walesa was left over as the only viable post-Solidarity candidate running against Kwasniewski. As a result, Walesa's support gradually increased. On 5 November, in the first round of election, Walesa had gained 33 per cent of the vote to Kwasniewski's 35 per cent. Left-of-centre candidate trailed far behind these two men. A runoff was scheduled for 19 November, giving the two major candidates an opportunity to fight it out against each other. At this point Walesa's support swelled to 51 per cent. Walesa stressed the danger of consolidating government power in the hands of a post-Communist. The fragmented

13. Zubek Voytek, "The Eclipse of Walesa's Political Career", Europe-Asia Studies, Vol.49, No.1, 1997, p.120.

Solidarity put aside their differences and rallied to Walesa. However, the intelligentsia, did not give full support to Walesa.

Turnout in the second round increased to 68 per cent, and Kwasniewski won by a slim margin of 51.7 per cent to 43.3 per cent. Walesa had so antagonised his former associates in Solidarity that many of their supporters refused to vote for him in the runoff.

With the victory in the Presidential election, the left in Poland has captured both the Parliament and the Presidency, thereby consolidating its dominant position in the Polish political system.

The holding of two consecutive elections is considered to be the minimal test of a consolidated democratic system. Since fully free parliamentary elections had taken place in 1991 and 1993, the second direct presidential election would confirm that Poland's democratic system was firmly rooted.¹⁴

14. Taras Ray, "The End of Walesa Era in Poland", Current History, March 1996.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The emergence of political parties capable of facilitating effective political choice is an essential element for the consolidation of democracy in post-Communist regimes. The formation of political parties and their structuring into mature party systems is an institutional development required for all modern democracies.¹

The problem in the post-Communist world, in general and Poland, in particular is that the linkage between citizenry and decision-makers is weak due to the absence of strong intermediary institutions of all types, including parties in political society.²

Poland did not have the time to gradually develop parties and party systems. With the collapse of Communist regime in 1989, competitive elections were thrust on Poland. Instead of patiently building party strength and gradually obtaining electoral success and parliamentary seats, politi-

1. J. Bielasiak, "Development of Party Systems in East Central Europe", Communist & Post-Communist Studies, Vol.30, No.1, 1997, p.23.

2. Ibid., p.24.

cal parties in Poland had to suddenly contest elections with little practice, organization or political skill.

The volatility of the party system in post-Communist Poland, particularly in the first few years, was due to the proliferation of numerous political parties. This situation was due to the widely open and over extended political opportunity structure brought about by the collapse of the Communist regime. This overextension rendered the linkage between political parties and the electorate or potential constituencies weak and ineffective. One reason for this position could be the high degree of uncertainty associated with the economic, social, and political transition from Communist towards the market and democracy. Interests in the transition are indeterminate, and serve poorly as the basis of collective identity and social position. Outcomes of economic and political changes are highly contingent, making even more difficult the individual evaluation of political programs and individual associations with parties. The absence of a well-defined socio-economic base results in a failure to produce the cleavages necessary to form strong group identities as vehicles for party politics.

Instead of gradually incorporating centre-periphery, state-church, and owner-worker cleavages into a party system

as in Western Europe, the voters in Poland confronted a confusing, unfocused situation in which the only fixed pole was opposition to the old Communist regime, an opposition that cannot be counted as a cleavage. The gradual evolution of social cleavages and their attendant parties and party systems was frozen by the long-term hegemony of the communist party over many aspects of societal life.

The nature of the post-Communist transition also bears directly on the assessment of party system formation in Poland. In contrast to the evolutionary pattern in Western Europe, the overarching nature of the 1989 anti-Communist movement produced a distinctive pattern of party development in Poland that has been labelled as *sui generis* or *tabula rasa*. The *tabula rasa* hypothesis accentuates the lack of historic cleavage dimensions, the chaotic social and economic environment and the unrestrained opportunities for popular mobilization by new political parties. The numerous weaknesses of political society impede the formation and consolidation of a structured party system capable of providing effective political choice to the electorate.³

3. *ibid.*, p.25.

The strengthening of party system in Poland requires the grounding of political parties in an organizational capacity that forges established links to mass membership. Democratic stability is dependent on such institutionalization and not merely on substantial alignments along social cleavages or policy preferences. For that reason, greater attention to organizational strength and institutional maturity is required in the characterization of party system in Poland.

The fluidity of party system in Poland is self-evident through the collapse of Communist domination, the founding of democratic institutions and the consolidation of democratic structures, the appearance and disappearance of political parties, the formation and breakdown of governing coalitions, the rapid swings in voter support, further testify to the evolution party and party systems during the transition period.

The path to democracy is a process built on the experience of the past. The conditions contributing to the collapse of the hegemonic party system dominated by the ruling Communist parties, and the extent of political opposition, help to define the extractive mode and the emergence of a polarised party system constituted along the poles of Commu-

nist and democratic support.. This political bifurcation was more a reflection of the past than the future and thus gave way to a fragmented party system characterized by numerous political parties competing along several dimensions of societal conflict. The unregimented, even chaotic, nature of such political interaction was gradually reduced through political mechanisms and socio-economic changes, leading to the pluralization of the party system. These conditions create the potential to form a stable, self-sustaining party environment along well-defined axes of competition, culminating in a polyarchial party system.

The hegemonic party system was a significant element in structuring the process of party evolution after the collapse of real socialism. It shaped the substantive cleavage in the emerging system along the inherited regime - society division, setting aside for the time being other political interests and aspiring political parties. Moreover, it gave an institutional frame to the new political phase.

The substantive divide between regime and society was carried over to the initial phase of the post-Communism. This is experienced in the political struggle between the successor to the ruling Communist party and an umbrella social movement embracing various sectors of society. This

stage of political development corresponds to the first election in the post-authoritarian system. In the case of the Poland it first took the form of a plebiscite on the Communist system. As such, it was essentially a reflection on the past, rather than a formation of a stable party system for the future. The first election did not resolve the political dilemmas faced by the new democracy. The main axis of the political competition did not address sufficiently the emerging problems and issues of the transition towards marketization and democratization. Under the circumstances, the polarised political system had to give way to new political cleavages and new political parties.

The factor weakening the ideological crystallization of Poland's new party system lay in the apparent inability of most political leaders and parties to properly discern the subtle and not so subtle differences between different ideologies. As a result, the parties stumbled into various ideological inconsistencies that rendered their party platforms either ideologically eclectic or outrightly confused. While socially and culturally advocating a right-wing ideology on economic matters. Poland's right exhibits a paradoxical allegiance to statist and post-socialist ideology. Thus, for example the apparently ultra-nationalist, rapidly anti-communist, professedly right-wing KPN at the same time

advocated a social agenda that included a whole host of social democratic features.

The increasing irrelevancy of the Communist-anticommunist axis of political competition in the face of systemic transformations led to a wide opening of the political arena to new claimants for power. There were two primary sources for the multiplicity of political actors in the fragmented political system. The first was due to the disintegration of the umbrella movements. The second came from the wave of new political parties that emerged to test the electoral waters. Fragmentation was the natural response to the continuing confusion produced by changes in the economic and social environment.

Uncertainty about the emerging content of politics was reinforced by an open political space characterised by low costs of entry into the electoral field. On the other hand, rules for registration of political parties and for electoral competition did not present significant obstacles to entry.

The electoral system is partly to blame for the plethora of parties, at least for the first time elections. Eager new politicians, operating in an environment of nearly

zero knowledge about their electorates, are rarely discouraged by electoral law threshold, be they high or low. For example, if Poland, had had a nationwide threshold of 4 per cent for its 1991 elections, only 9 parties would have made it to the Sejm instead of 29. This resulted in the rapid fragmentation of the political space in Poland. The new political parties that emerged had a low level of institutionalization, lacking both a membership base and an organizational infrastructure that would be used to political advantage.

The pluralization of the party structure overlapped with the fragmentation phase, when the competition for a place in the electoral system acted as a filter to define the significant political actors and arenas of competition. The second wave of elections in Poland provided such a screening, reducing the number of legitimate contenders for power and defining more visibly the principal cleavages in society.

The political process, then, acted as an important instrument in the ordering of political competition, the consolidation of political parties, and the structuring a more effective party system. The winner in the electoral contests were able to claim representation of the dominant

axes of competition. The election result forced the losing party either to abandon hopes for political support, forcing many to disband, or to seek re-entry into the political contest through a redefinition of their programme or consolidation with other parties. The end result of the political filtering was a significant step beyond the previous chaotic fragmentation of the party system.

The establishment of a pluralist party structure is the out-growth of socio-economic changes and political choices that helped to reduce the numerous political cleavages to a manageable number of important issues and to order the dimensions of political competition.

Stable democracy after all is about choice, a choice offered through a political society defined by meaningful options. From the hegemony of communism, through the polarized worlds of communism-anticommunism, through the chaos of fragmentation, the party system in post-communist Poland has come around to offer a more informed choice to the voters.

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