

*Political Parties and Party Systems in Regime Transformation:  
Inner Transition in the New Democracies of Central Europe*

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The collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and Central Europe has provided the basis for new democracies. Competitively elected parliaments, accountable executives, independent judiciaries, enforceable civil liberties and a free press have rapidly emerged through a relatively short transitional period. The formation of political parties and interest groups, however, is taking much longer, and has proven a much more complex process than the change of the political system.

Regime transformation has been a one time, fairly quick change of the “outer” character of the formal governmental structure. To abolish one regime is not to install, much less operate, a new one (Rychard 1992b). To give that new transformed democracy an operative vitality, however, there are also accompanying lesser or “inner” transitions. One of those inner transitions—a much longer process than system transformation—is development of the party system. Writing within a year of regime transformation, a Polish sociologist noted that the formal mechanics of “democracy has managed to outrun the . . . Western model of . . . political pluralism of interest groups and political parties . . . Why?” (Wesolowski 1991, 81-2).

Political parties have been the “central actors” in earlier authoritarian system transformations and in the development of new democratic political systems (Pridham 1990). In Central Europe, however, it has also been suggested that political parties have not developed to be able to effectively accomplish those tasks (Agh 1992, 4).

This chapter will document and discuss the development and dilemmas of political parties in the new democracies of Central Europe and to a lesser degree in the former Soviet Union. We begin with their collective emergence as party systems and the vexatious question of their alignments on continua as left-right formations or on alternative sources of cleavage. The organizational forms of the new political groupings—putative parties—the uncertainties about their legitimacy and functions in both the electorate and parliament, and the question of election law and system will then be considered.

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This chapter concentrates on developments in the 1989-92 period. That short time has seen both the system transformation and a sequence of two parliamentary elections. The party system is in the process of rapid change; this chapter places parties in the wider context of regime transformation, and reports on the developmental process of parties and party systems at the beginning. These materials are drawn primarily from personal visits in several countries (especially Poland and Czechoslovakia) and utilize both a scattered published literature and the growing number of unpublished conference papers.

Parties now developing in Central Europe may very well evolve their own distinctive traits, not closely resembling those currently known in western democracies. The range of possible structure and behavior is much wider in the new democracies simply because they are starting anew. While their leaders are acutely aware of at least some western democratic practices, and while many attempt to duplicate what they see, their new circumstances have the potential to lead to entirely new political structures and behaviors than currently known and which the participants themselves cannot currently foresee. We are perhaps witnessing the “freezing moment” of the new party systems of post-communist countries (Korosenyi 1991; Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

### **Elections, Parties and Transformation**

The parties and party systems of post-1989 Central Europe have been shaped by their experience of more than a generation of communism and of their brief but intense regime transformation process. We concentrate on the more immediate of these factors, system transformation and the ensuing two elections sequence (Wesolowski 1990).

#### **The Two Elections Sequence**

In most of the Central European countries, an initial election has been followed two years later by a second in the 1989-92 period. The initial election either initiated (as in Poland) or confirmed (as in Czechoslovakia) the regime transformation. In the second election, political parties had emerged to express different views on a wide range of issues and to offer rival candidates for public office (Jasiewicz 1993).

***The Initial Election.*** In the Latin transitions, the initial election was a “foundation” election, confirming a political system transition and initiating or inaugurating a new system of political parties and their competitive relations (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986). In post-Communist countries, only

Hungary approximates that pattern. In the others, the initial election was part of the transition process. While that election may have “confirmed” the transition of the political system, it did not “found” the new system of political parties.

The Polish election of mid-1989 was the first in Central Europe under Communist government which resulted, most unexpectedly, in the removal of Communists from power. In a system of “compartmentalized competition” negotiated at a “roundtable,” one-third of the parliamentary seats were designated for non-Communist candidates, and a new Senate was created for “free” competition (Gebethner 1992b 57-9; Olson 1993a). Solidarity entered the election campaign energetically to win all seats within those two reserved compartments of parliamentary seats. While Solidarity was not the only opposition force in the campaign, it effectively trounced both those other opposition forces as well as the Communist Party (Lewis 1990; Heyns and Bielecki 1991; Pelczynski and Kowalski 1990; Sanford 1992; Olson 1993a). The election was itself the major means by which the Communist political system was transformed.

In Czechoslovakia, the Communist regime collapsed in the face of massive street demonstrations in Fall, 1989 (Garton-Ash 1990). The organizing forces of the demonstrations, Civic Forum in the Czech lands and Public Against Violence in Slovakia, had the same character as Solidarity—broad, diverse and amorphous. The initial Czechoslovak elections occurred a half year later, June 1990. These elections were part of the earlier street demonstration process, for they were, like the earlier Polish election, a referendum on the continuance of Communists in power. They were also, as in Poland, dominated by the regime transformative movements (Wightman 1990, 1991; Wolchik 1991).

This same pattern of a referendum-like initial election was repeated later in local elections. At least in one Czech village, the first local elections “were characterized by euphoria and unqualified optimistic expectations toward the future . . . based on rejection of the totalitarian system rather than on some concrete image of the future.” Social consensus, not partisanship, characterized this first post-communist local election (Illner 1992).

The other countries of Central Europe had even less time and preparation than Czechoslovakia for the replacement of the Communist regime. By the end of 1989, all communist governments had collapsed. In Romania and Bulgaria, however, the constant question, then and now, concerns the extent to which the new broad “salvation” fronts are anything other than recycled Communists. The persistence of this question is itself an indication of the ambiguousness of governmental system change in those two countries (Crowther 1993).

Both Hungary and the Soviet Union departed from this pattern of Central European elections. The reform forces in Hungary, viewing the Polish events as premature, deliberately delayed elections until the political system transformation was complete. During a year-long period of negotiation at their “roundtable,” and ensuing legislation in Parliament, political parties were developed. They became the major contestants in the first Hungarian elections, and thus better fit the Latin transition pattern. (Agh 1992; Simon 1993a). Yet, even their initial election was more a rejection of the Communists than a choice among future alternatives (Simon 1993b). By contrast, both of the Bulgarian elections are interpreted as referenda on communism (Kostova 1992).

If elections in Central Europe were transitional, and those in Hungary post-transitional, elections in the former USSR, March-June, 1989, were pre-transitional. The vast expanse of the USSR saw a wide variety of participants and candidates in elections to the Communist parliamentary structure of a Congress of People’s Deputies and a Supreme Soviet. This complicated structure was itself a departure, part of the reform-from-above of the new Gorbachev regime. For the first time in the USSR, the Communist Party fought non-communist candidates in a large number of districts, and lost in at least some of them (Hough 1989; White and Wightman 1989). The very different dynamics and transitional experiences of the Republics of the former Soviet Union from those of Central Europe require an analysis separate from this discussion, which concentrates on the events of Central Europe.

The feature which all of the initial Central European elections had in common, except the Hungarian, is that they were pre-party. The first steps toward the formation of political parties were forced by the timing of elections. During those elections, while the previously ruling Communist Party was in an advanced stage of rapid disintegration, the new democratic parties were in the initial stages of slow formation.

***The Second Election.*** The second parliamentary elections in Central Europe generally occurred two years later. The usual expectation was that the newly democratized parliament was transitional, and would serve a short term in office. The Bulgarian initial election was explicitly to a one-year term of a constitution-writing Grand National Assembly. Its second election only one year later was for a smaller continuing parliament. But even within the clear transitional and thus temporary expectation of the initial election, the pace of events was so dramatic and rapid in Central Europe, that the persons and political groupings elected initially had lost their capacity and legitimacy to continue to govern.

The typical result of the second election was a fragmented party system. The initial regime transformative movements had split, and a variety of other political formations had been created to contest the elections. In two short years, these countries had gone from a one-party authoritarianism to a multi-party fragmented young democracy.

This schematic presentation of a two election sequence is an abstraction from and also a simplification of more complex events in both countries. In Poland, an unexpected presidential election in December, 1990 was an integral part of the breakup of Solidarity and the formation of new political parties. In most countries, local elections were also held in between the two parliamentary elections.

Both Hungary and the former USSR were exceptions, at opposite ends of the continuum of completeness of the democratic transition. With a party-based Parliament in Hungary, that body served its full four year term.

As Czechoslovakia disintegrated, the federal parliament lost its authority and purpose, so that, in retrospect, the significance of the initial election was experienced more at Republic than at federation-wide levels. The latent ethno-regional divisions have been accentuated, rather than ameliorated, by the Republic-centric structure of political parties. The new parties formed within, not across, Republics (Olson 1993b, 1994).

In the disintegrated USSR, the tentative character of the USSR-level changes have left each of the newly-independent Republics in equally tentative and amorphous circumstances. The subsequent sets of elections in the Republics of the former USSR, however, will not decide the fate of the federation, as they did in Czechoslovakia, but will occur completely within the borders of the newly independent Republics.

### **Parties and Elections in Regime Transformation**

Though the sequence of two elections differs in many details among the countries, they are similar in that the first election was a regime-change election, while the second initiated and became part of a much longer process of democratic system consolidation. The two elections were very different in their placement within the transitional process. Correspondingly, the types of political organization differed, as did the party systems, between the two elections.

The initial elections concentrated on the meta-politics of regime change, while the second emphasized the more complicated process of defining the major political actors, building new political institutions and practices, and shaping the contours of public policy. The initial election became a referendum on continuation of the Communist party regime, while

the second lacked that overarching clarity of a simple polarized and morally clear choice.

The political organizations correspondingly differed from each other in the two-elections sequence. The first election was contested by a regime-change movement. The inner composition and dynamics of that movement were compatible with the external goal of repudiation of the Communist regime. The movement consciously avoided both democratic centralism and hierarchy. It was more characterized by spontaneity, friendship, and voluntary expressive behavior. Just as Lenin shaped a party in the image of his goals, the regime-change movements in 1989 embodied their goals.

The regime transformative movement itself required an inner transformation as part of the broader democratization process, for its very success in the collapse of communism removed its source of unity and its rationale for existence. The political landscape became much more complicated, however, than only the splits from the reform movement, for the newly formed political parties reflect many other cleavages in society, and also include survivors of the Communist Party.

In none of the countries did the initial election give complete support to the regime transformative movements. In all, Communists obtained sizeable proportions of the vote. For example, in none of the Polish elections (1989-1991) has more than 40 percent of the Polish electorate expressed positive support for Solidarity and its successor parties, considering both the distribution of the vote and voter turnout (Jasiewicz 1992). In both Bulgaria and Albania, the Communists won a majority in the first election.

Thus, both the internal composition of the transformative movements and the diverse voting patterns in the initial elections showed the strong potential for a highly fragmented party system in the post-Communist period (Berglund and Dellenbrandt 1992). Over the span of a decade or more, perhaps less attention will be given to specific elections than to the patterns of party structure and system which will have developed in a sequence of perhaps 5-7 elections.

This discussion places parties and elections within the transitional context, for not only do specific countries vary in their transitional event, but the transitions of post-communist countries differ from those elsewhere and at earlier times. Previous democratic transformations have had time in which political parties could develop while in opposition, and also during a protracted struggle, or perhaps negotiation, for power. There were opportunities and time for new political organizations and elites to form. How, in post-Communist countries, do political elites and organizations develop when the usual processes by which such groups, leaders, and resources could have developed are largely missing? (Rona-Tas 1991, 359).

If for western democracies the topic of party organization and party system formation is in the past tense, that topic is, in the new democracies of post-communist systems, a current question of future unknown development.

### Party System

Perhaps the fate of the regime transformative movements, like some of the independence movements of former colonies, was to split into smaller, more discrete and more self-consciously political parties. But how many parties and how many other parties? Over what period of time? Would they fit any single issue continuum?

#### Shape of the Party System

The second election in the diverse post-Communist countries led to very similar results—fragmentation—though with very different expressions.

Among six Central European countries, the number of parties in parliament varied from 5 in Albania to 18 in Poland in 1992. The number of “effective” parties in parliament (based on Taagepera and Shugart 1989) varied from 2 and 3 (in Albania and Bulgaria, respectively) to 11 in Poland (McGregor 1993).

In Poland, candidates of some 29 different electoral labels entered parliament in the second election in 1991. Of these many labels, 18 groupings obtained over 97 percent of the vote for the *Sejm*, with the two largest at about 13 percent each. They continued to split and reform up to the 1993 election. Party fragmentation and differentiation had begun during the “contract” *Sejm*, in which the ratio between Communist and Solidarity compartments of seats had been agreed to in an earlier roundtable (Olson 1993a). Table 1 shows the development of parties in the contract *Sejm*; Table 2 shows the continued fragmentation and regrouping of parties in the *Sejm* between the second (1991) and third (1993) elections.

As a single federation, the number of parties in the Czechoslovakian parliament was as high as in the Polish. That large number was produced by the Republic-centric definition of two-party systems (Olson 1993b). At the time of the split of the federation (1 January 1993), the number of parties in the legislatures of the newly independent Republics was relatively modest (5 in one, 6 in the other). The fragmentation of the parties that occurred following the initial election (1990) and prior to the second (1992), and the party results of the 1992 election, are shown in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

**Table 1. Party Formation in Polish *Sejm* by Compartment, 1989-91**

Compartment and Party	-----N Seats-----		
	June 89	July 90	January 91
<u>COMMUNIST COALITION</u>			
Pol United Workers Party	173		
Democratic Left		111	104
Pol Soc Demo Union		42	41
Independent Deputies		9	9
Military		0	7
Subtotal	173		161
United Peasant Party	76		
Pol Peasant Party		76	75
Democratic Party	27	22	21
Catholic Associations*	23	23	23
Subtotal	299		280
<u>NON-COMMUNIST</u>			
Solidarity	161		
Civic Parlm Club		156	112
Peasant Party (Small)		4	0
Democratic Union		0	43
Subtotal	161		155
<u>NON-AFFILIATED</u>	0	17	21
Missing	0		4
<u>TOTAL</u>	460		460

\*Includes three separate groups.

Source: Gebethner (1991), 243-246.

Each step of the electoral process does result in a reduction of the number of parties. Typically, many parties announce themselves and register as formal organizations. For example, in advance of the June, 1992 Czechoslovak elections, over 200 parties had registered in the country as a whole, with over 40 actually nominating candidates to some combination of the national and republic level parliaments (Olson 1993b).

Of the hundreds which announce their formation, fewer offer candidates, and even fewer are elected. Many of the self-announced groups are “phantom” parties, either local expressions lacking serious national political objectives or localized names of more national movements. The number of labels with which candidates have run has varied from a low of 11 in Albania to a high of 74 in Romania. As noted above, the number of “effective” parties in parliament is reduced considerably (McGregor 1993).



**Table 2. Polish Sejm Party Seat Changes, 1991-93\***

Parties by Origin	Polish Abbrev	1991		1993	
		N	%	N	%
<u>SOLIDARITY</u>					
Democratic Union	UD	62	13.48	57	12.39
Pol Convention	KP			28	6.09
Natl Christ Union	ZChN	49	10.65	44	9.57
Christ. Natl Deps	ChN			3	.65
Center Citzn Alin	PC	44	9.57	24	5.22
Mov Republic	RdR			17	3.70
Lib Dem Congress	KLD	37	8.04	0	.00
Pol Lib Pgm	PPL			51	11.09
Peasant Alliance	PL	28	6.09	19	4.13
Solidty Tde Union	NSZZ-S	27	5.87	26	5.65
Labor Solidarity	SP	4	.87	0	.00
Union of Labor	UP			6	1.30
Subtotal		251	54.57	275	59.78
<u>COMMUNIST ERA</u>					
Dem Left Alliance	SLD	60	13.04	58	12.61
Pol Peasant Pty	PSL	48	10.43	50	10.87
Christ. Democracy	ChD	5	1.09	5	1.09
Subtotal		113	24.57	113	24.57
<u>MINORITY</u>					
German Minority	NM	7	1.52	7	1.52
<u>OTHERS</u>					
Confed Indep Pol	KPN	46	10.00	46	10.00
Pol West Un	PZZ	4	.87	0	.00
Beer Lover Party	PPPP	16	3.48	3	.65
Union Real Politics	UPR	3	.65	3	.65
Pty Christ Democrats	PChD	4	.87	0	.00
Party X	PX	3	.65	0	.00
Silesian Auton Movt	RAS	2	.43	0	.00
Other <sup>a</sup>		11	2.39	13	2.83
Subtotal		89	19.35	65	14.13
<u>TOTAL</u>		460	100.00	460	100.00

\*Note: through February 1993.

<sup>a</sup>One-seat groups and independents.

Source: McQuaid (1991b, 16); Gebethner (1993a, 326).

**Table 3. Party Formation in Czechoslovakian Chamber of People  
by Republic, April 1992**

Region, Party	N	Seats	%
<u>CZECHLANDS</u>			
OF Civic Forum			
Civic Dem Pty (ODS)	30		20.00
Civic Dem Ali (ODA)	5		3.33
Civic Movmt (OH)	21		14.00
Soc Dem Orient (SDO)	7		4.67
Indep (NOF)	3		2.00
Subtotal	66		44.00
MORSL Morav/Silesn Fnt			
HSD-SMS I	4		2.67
HSD-SMS II	5		3.33
KDU Christ. Demo Union			
Chris Dem U (KDU-CSL)	7		4.67
Chris Dem Pty (KDS-LDS)	3		2.00
Subtotal	85		56.67
<u>SLOVAKIA</u>			
VPN Public Ag. Violence			
Civic Dem Un (ODU-VPN)	8		5.33
Mov Dem Slov (HZDS)	8		5.33
Subtotal	16		10.67
KDH Christ. Dem Movmt	8		5.33
Slov Chr Dem Mov (SKDH)	4		2.67
SNS Slovak Natl Pty	4		2.67
ESWMK Hungarian Minority			
Coexist (MKDH-COE)	5		3.33
Subtotal	37		24.67
<u>BOTH REGIONS</u>			
KSCSM Communist			
KCSM Czech Commu	13		8.67
SDL Dem Left-Slov	8		5.33
Subtotal	21		14.00
Other/Indep	7		4.67
Subtotal	28		18.67
<u>TOTAL</u>	150		100.00

Sources: Czechoslovakian Parliamentary Directory, Internal roll call documents.

**Table 4. Czechoslovakian 1992 Election:  
Party Votes and Seats in Federal Chamber and National Councils\***

Republic and Party	Federal Chamber People		Republic National Councils		
	Votes %	Seats N	Votes %	N	Seats %
<u>CZECH LANDS</u>					
Civic Dem (ODS-KDS)	33.90	48	29.73	76	38.00
Left Bloc (LIB)	14.27	19	14.05	35	17.50
Cz Soc Dem (CSSD)	7.67	10	6.53	16	8.00
Rep Ascen (RPR-RSC)	6.48	8	5.98	14	7.00
Chr Dem U (KDU-CSL)	5.98	7	6.28	15	7.50
Lib Soc Un (LSU)	5.84	7	6.52	16	8.00
Civic Dem Alli (ODA)			5.93	14	7.00
Mor/Siles Mov (HSD)			5.87	14	7.00
Subtotal	74.14		80.89		
All others	25.86		19.11		
Republic Total	100.00	99	100.00	200	100.00
<u>SLOVAKIA</u>					
Mov Dem SI (HZDS)	33.53	24	37.26	74	49.33
Dem Left (SDL)	14.44	10	14.70	29	19.33
Slov Nat (SNS)	9.39	6	7.93	15	10.00
Chr Dem Mov (KDH)	8.96	6	8.88	18	12.00
Coexistence (EWSS)	7.37	5	7.42	14	9.33
Subtotal	73.69		76.19		
All others	26.31		23.81		
Republic Total	100.00	51	100.00	150	100.00
<u>FEDERATION TOTAL</u>		150			

\*Note: Includes parties over 5% in one Republic per chamber or council. The entries "All Others" include all parties under 5% for Federal Chamber or National Council per Republic. Parties listed by size for Chamber of People by Republic. Chamber of People was lower of two houses in Federal Assembly.

Sources: *Svobodne Slovo* 8 June 1992; CSTK, "Volby 92" 7 June 1992; Federal Election Commission, "1992 Report Disk"; and *Rude Pravo* 11 June 1992.

### **Stages of Development**

The shape of the party system of newly democratic Central Europe may go through at least three stages in a rather long cycle of unity, fragmentation, and then consolidation. This cycle can be interrupted and disrupted when new and smaller states form from older and larger ones.

The first stage, the triumph of a single broad, amorphous social movement over the single ruling Communist Party, has already come and gone. In most of Central Europe, this stage was brief and distinct. In the Balkans and in the former Soviet Republics, by contrast, this stage may be protracted, as an essential element in their indistinct political system transitions.

The second stage, wherein many political organizations appear, began with the triumph of the regime transformative movement. Not only does the initial regime transitional movement fragment, but many other parties are encouraged to develop. They, their potential constituencies and their putative leaders are seeking to test their strength in a broader, but constantly changing, political system. They test themselves and their appeals both in elections and in parliament. They alternately contest and cooperate with one another. The many parties form both in the electorate and in parliament. In the “hundred party” system, the many political formations are more “quasi-parties” than “real” (Agh 1992, 18-19).

In this fragmentation stage, the constant rise and fall of “partylets,” the constant testing for support, is similar to both an open-air market and a blind auction. The outcome is beyond the capacity of any one actor to either predict or control. The very open-ended character of the current political environment is itself an opportunity for putative leaders to test themselves, and for aspiring leaders and searching followers, with varying mixtures of hope and apprehension, to approach one another. There is a simultaneous search for organizational form and political identity. As one participant noted in the midst of the 1992 Czechoslovakian election, the parties are attempting “to find their face.”

If party systems in western democracies may dealign prior to realignment, in post-communist systems the one party system and its one party have disintegrated. The large and massive has decomposed in the process of discovery of the small and personal as effective human units of social and political interaction. This observation may apply to most of the organizations created through the national fronts of the communist regimes, including labor unions, not only the Communist Party (Simon 1993a, 234).

The dynamics of transition from the second or fragmentation stage to a third or consolidation stage have begun almost simultaneously with the second (Gebethner 1991). At some later point, as in West Germany in the

1950s, we may see the gradual consolidation of the party system into a set of relatively few and large political parties. Or, the party system may stabilize in a configuration of size and number more resembling Italy than Germany, or more resembling Denmark than Sweden. Whether consolidation into a few parties, or stability at any number, is a more important characteristic of the party system for democratic survivability may be tested in the diversity of post-communism.

As an example, the several efforts in the Polish parliament to form a cabinet coalition may lead to a fairly stable alignment among the parties. Most of the cabinet formation attempts have occurred among the same set of core parties, most of which have Solidarity origins. The 1992-93 coalition was defeated, however, by defections within the Solidarity coalition only to be replaced by the opposite proto-coalition.

There is another dimension to party system consolidation beyond sheer numbers: the extent to which parliamentary parties and constituency parties are linked to each other. As parties form and form again within parliament in between elections, most have little or no supporting organization in the country. Likewise, most of the newly-registered parties in the country had no representation in parliament.

The looming second election had the effect of both increasing the fluidity of MPs among the parliamentary party clubs, and the frequency with which the parliamentary clubs and the outside fledgling party organizations attempted to forge links with each other. The leaders of the outside organizations themselves actively sought new parliamentary converts. Successful conversions were then the object of a press release and exposure on the evening TV news. The most prominent was the agreement in Czechoslovakia, for example, that Alexander Dubcek would be the main candidate and chairman of the Slovakian Social Democratic Party (CSTK 15 March 1992).

### **Multi-dimensionality**

The many parties of post-Communist countries do not easily fit into a left-right scale, conventional in Western Democracies. The very fluidity of leadership, structure, formation and program precludes any orderly placement on a single dimension. Neither has public opinion coalesced into a single dimensional structure (Jasiewicz 1992, 188).

One Bulgarian analyst writes of “the impossibility to apply the scheme ‘left-center-right.’ It is nonsensical at least . . . even though many politicians from both sides often make use of it” (Zlatkov 1992).

In Czech local elections, a study of one village judged that the programs of the electoral groups were “apolitical and it would be impossible to

locate them on the left-right continuum. Rather than the programs, it was personalities . . .” (Illner 1992).

Parliament does bring some order out of chaos. As issues arise, the parties tend to find a consistent place among the others in their attitudes and voting (Pehe 1991b). The many issues, however, may not produce a single dimension, but several. One participant-observer of the Polish Parliament has identified three separate sets of issues—economics, secularism, and decommunization—and noted that each issue set produces its own configuration of parties. Thus, the reformed Communists and the Christian National Union, who do not like to think of themselves as similar to each other, nevertheless have voted on the same side on certain issues (Wiatr 1992). Similar tendencies toward consistent alignments among parties have also been noted in the Hungarian Parliament (Toka 1993, 217-20).

In the 1992 Czechoslovakian election, parties within the Czech Republic tended to form a Left-Right continuum on economic issues, while nationalistic parties were more common in Slovakia (Brokl and Mansfeldova 1992). Historically, nationalism has competed with economic issues as the salient aligning force in Slovakia, with nationalism gradually gaining emphasis (Leff 1988). Economic issues were increasingly subordinated to nationalism, both in the National Council and in the 1992 election. When there is a resolution of this state-defining issue acceptable to most Slovaks, then it may be possible for party formation and issue differentiation to occur. The party system in Slovakia may now be at the same stage of development as were the other Central European countries following the initial regime-change election. The major party (HZDS) is beginning to split, while the opposition parties, now in a majority, began discussions with each other (RFE/RL News Briefs 7 June 1993, 13).

Within the Czech Republic since independence, the issue of restitution of former church property has produced a divergence between the Christian and secular parties within the coalition (Obrman and Mates 1993), while most of the opposition parties were reported “to be in a constant state of flux” (Obrman 1993, 5).

Several observers do note only one or two major sources of cleavage in some countries. In Poland, a western or pro-European vs. nationalist orientation defines one cleavage. The other but less important source of cleavage is defined as an economic right-left scale (Gebethner 1993). In another analysis, three continua have been identified among Polish parties: statism-liberalism; clericalism-secularism, and nationalism-Europeanism (Kubik 1993). In Hungary, the parties can be aggregated into two grand types—national-Christian-rural, and liberal-westernized-urban (Korosenyi

1991). In Romania, a similar aggregation of parties groups the collectivist-nationalist vs. the liberal-universalist parties (Crowther 1992).

### **Undefined Issues; Undifferentiated Society**

The shape of the social structure and its system of rewards is now undergoing redefinition, and might look very different in Central Europe than in the Republics of the former USSR. Central European analysts look toward the middle class as providing the essential basis for participatory pluralistic politics in the west, and lament its absence in their new democracies (Wesolowski 1991). The persistence of large state-owned factories may help retain both the union organizations and attitudinal base for a broad grouping of employees. While it is possible to anticipate a broad economic base to party system cleavage (Kitschelt 1992), it is also possible, in the relatively unformed and unshaped social and economic circumstances of post-communism, that other factors will become equally if not more relevant. The new societies may become differentiated into numerous small groups rather than broad social classes. Uneven privatization rates and uneven economic performance may lead to societies differentiated by region, by state vs. private source of employment, and by the suitability of the product for export markets.

Ethnicity and nationalism, in addition, now appear to be driving forces in some regions, as exemplified by the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and of the USSR, and by several civil wars.

Questions of construction of the state can also divide opinions and provide the base for party differentiation (Agh 1992). The clearest example is Hungary, in which the Alliance of Young Democrats grew markedly in popularity on the basis of its opposition to the proposed direct election of the president, which had been agreed to at the Communist-opposition roundtable in 1989 (Simon 1993b, 11-12). In Poland, debate over the proper authority of the presidential office, together with attitudes toward Lech Walesa, has created several splits within the original Solidarity movement (Jasiewicz 1993).

The choice of parliamentary or presidential form of state organization can reflect, as well as help shape, the circumstances of party system and organization. Strongly organized parties in Hungary opt for strong parliamentary government, while weakly organized parties encourage presidential and personal leadership (Agh 1992, 20; Simon 1992).

A further basis of party and issue differentiation concerns the pace of regime change. The Hungarian electorate responded to parties on the basis of their approach to construction of a new society (Simon 1993b, 24-5).

The broader question concerns “civil society.” In the absence of civil society under communism, how can the society participate in elections? One analyst suggested that free elections—even though legally correct—are not possible in the absence of civil society. An intermediate level of analysis differentiates between cities and villages. In urban areas, the population is more capable of participating in free elections than are villagers. It has been noted that, in the initial and second Bulgarian elections, Communist successor parties have done better in rural areas, while non-communist parties have done better in urban areas (Zlatkov 1992).

In the amorphous social structure of post-Communism, ethnicity becomes a clear source of identity, and thus of issues and political appeal. If ethnicity is always a latent factor in Central Europe, the absence of other social identities accentuates the importance of ethnicity among the minorities and of nationalism within the majorities.

### **Summary**

Currently, party leaders and candidates in Central Europe are not certain whom they could effectively appeal to, or on what basis. Likewise, the electorate seems unsure of which parties or candidates might make a tangible difference to their futures. How do candidates and parties attempt to appeal to societies with little differentiation? The parties do not know who their electorates are and thus make broad and diffuse appeals; voters do not know who their potential leaders might be, for they all make similar appeals.

Two equal if opposite laments are expressed currently about the size and shape of the party system: fragmentation and polarization. Fragmentation is the observation and complaint when there are many small parties in parliament, as in Poland. Polarization is the observation and complaint when two large parties dominate parliament, as in Bulgaria. Both the Czech and Slovakian Republics, however, have an intermediate number of parties in their parliaments, as does Hungary.

### **Sources of Political Parties**

The political parties of post-Communist countries have several different sources (Pacek 1992; Roskin 1993; Swianiewicz 1993; Toka 1993). Some have emerged from the opposition and dissident movements during the Communist period. A second set of parties consists of the surviving remnants of the Communist Party. A third and diverse set are mainly based on pre-World War II parties and movements, while the fourth reflects the



ethnic composition of society. Fifth, some parties are formed around personalities as leaders. There is also a sixth potential source of political parties: those which arise in response to the new circumstances and issues of this region, the post-transformation parties.

### **1. Reform and Opposition: The Post-Movement Parties**

Solidarity in Poland, and the Czech Civic Forum (OF) and its Slovakian counterpart, Public Against Violence (VPN), became large and diverse social movements. They included a wide range of individuals and groups with their own policy goals and organizational aspirations. Their unity consisted of their negative goal—opposition to the Communist government (Kaminski 1991, 119). In most other Central European countries, but apparently not in most of the Republics of the former USSR, the non-Communist reform movements were hurriedly but partially imitated when it became clear, after the success of the initial Polish election of June 1989, that communism could be deposed.

In both Poland and Czechoslovakia, the regime transformation movements began to split shortly after entering Parliament (Pehe 1990; Vinton 1991a), reflecting the internal diversity of the original movement. In Poland, the major division within Solidarity became symbolized by two men: Prime Minister Mazowiecki and the symbolic leader of Solidarity, Lech Walesa (Sanford 1992, 25-27). Within a year, that division had crystallized into a Walesa presidential campaign, with Mazowiecki as one of the opposing candidates. Their respective sections of Solidarity formed supporting organizations in Parliament and, with Walesa's election as President, also in the presidential office. Table 1 shows the development, in the Polish *Sejm*, of intra-Solidarity parties stimulated by the presidential election.

In Czechoslovakia, the same development occurred more intensively, but with an important complication stemming from a growing sense of Slovakian independence. The initial regime-change movements, one per Republic, split into several parties (Pehe 1991d). Table 2 shows how the spin-off parties formed within Parliament after the initial election.

Not all anti-communist political groups were willing to cooperate with the regime-change movement. In Poland, for example, the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) refused to join with Solidarity in boycott of both the roundtable negotiations in February-April 1989 and in the subsequent June elections (Olson 1993a). Within Slovakia, several parties refused to join with VPN, thereby depriving VPN of even majority support in the initial election (Wightman 1990, 1991).

Nevertheless, following the second election, the successor parties to the regime-transformative movements continued to dominate the politics of their respective countries. Together, they obtained 54 percent of the seats in the Polish *Sejm*, and are the plurality parties in the Czech Republic (Tables 2 and 4).

If the term “post-Communist” can be used to denote successors to the former Communist Party, and the term “post-Solidarity” in Poland to designate the successors of Solidarity, we could suggest “post-movement” to designate the successors throughout Central Europe of the original regime transformative socio-political movements.

## 2. The Post-Communist Parties

The Communist Party went through internal reforms and reorganizations, with new leaders, a much smaller membership, and greatly modified programs.

In Poland, the Polish United Workers Party remained the largest single party in parliament following the 1989 elections—because of the “contract” compartmentalization of seats—but quickly split both in parliament and in the country. Two successor parties were formed, with one—The Social Democracy—becoming the larger and more durable of the two (Janowski 1992). The surviving party group in the *Sejm*, called Alliance of the Democratic Left (SLD), has three components: the remaining members and younger leaders of the former party, the members and leaders of a labor movement created by communists as a counter to Solidarity, and third, individuals with skill and professions to make them prominent and useful. These three components have been the source of internal factionalism and of floor voting splits within the party.

In the second Polish election, the successor communist party became the second largest in parliament. As the other Polish parties continued to split, the post-Communist Party, by not splitting, became the largest single party in the *Sejm*. Several respondents have observed that it is only the force of attacks upon the reformed Communists by hostile parties in parliament which has kept them together.

The 1993 Polish parliamentary election, the third in the sequence, showed both the ability of the post-Communist party to retain its organizational coherence and to actually gain voter support, as well as the inability of the post-Solidarity parties to form an effective coalition at election time (Table 5).

**Table 5. Polish Parliamentary Election, 1993**

Party	Polish Abbrev	Vote %	<i>Sejm</i>		Senate
			N	Seats %	Seats N
Dem Left Alliance	SLD	20.41	171	37.17	37
Polish Peasant Party	PSL	15.40	132	28.70	36
Democratic Union	UD	10.59	74	16.09	4
Union Labor	UP	7.28	41	8.91	2
Confed Indep Polnd	KPN	5.77	22	4.78	
Non Pty Bloc Reform	BBWR	5.41	16	3.48	2
Subtotal		64.86	456		
Fatherl Cath El Comt	ZChN/WAK	6.37			
Solidarity Tde Union	NSZZ-S	4.90			10
Center Alliance	PC	4.42			
Lib Dem Congress	KLD	3.99			1
Real Politics Union	UPR	3.18			
Self Defense	SL	2.78			
Party X	PX	2.74			
Coalition Republic	KdRP	2.70			
Agrarian Alliance	PL	2.40			1
German Minority	MN	.70	4	.87	1
Others		.96			6
Subtotal		35.14			
Total		100.00	460	100.00	100

Sources: "Obwieszczenie," *Monitor Polski* No. 50, Poz. 470, pp. 610-13 (official election report); *RFE Daily Bulletin* (via e-mail, week of 20 September 1993); Krzysztof Jasiewicz (1993), "Elections" tables.

In Czechoslovakia, the surviving Communist Party quickly split into regional parties. They entered into alliances with each other but then acted separately and differently. The Slovakian Party of the Democratic Left reputedly is more reformist in program and leadership than the Czech counterpart (Pehe 1991d). Both were strongly committed to the preservation of Czechoslovakia as one country. In newly independent Slovakia, the Democratic Left increasingly is willing to consider cooperation with other parties, and *vice versa*. The Czech Communist Party officially split in 1993 (Obrman 1993).

The post-Communist parties may differ from one another among the countries. The conditions of their rule varied, and now they vary in their tangible resources, in their political attitudes, and in their capacity to function as full participants in democratic politics. It has been noted in conversations that the post-Communist members are among the most constructive and capable deputies in at least some of the current democratic parliaments.

At the other extreme, in Bulgaria, the Communist successor party was said to continue to receive subsidies from the state and also from the party's own economic enterprises. There is, further, the observation that the old Communists are in control of the successor party, now called the Bulgarian Socialist Party. Its organization has been termed "quasi-military," having retained most of the organizational features of its past (Zlatkov 1992).

### **3. Historical Parties**

Some persons currently active in Central Europe were young participants in the pre-war parties. They provided the post-transformation leadership in attempting to regenerate at least some of those parties. Some of those leaders were political exiles (from Czechoslovakia, not Poland), thus creating a potential intra-leadership split. The surviving "parties of nostalgia" include Socialists, Christians, and Agrarians, but not all traditions have generated parties in all countries (Berglund and Dellenbrandt 1992).

In Central Europe, there had been a strong tradition of socialism. It was in Czechoslovakia, not Poland, that social democratic parties were formed after the political change. The Chairman of the Czech Social Democratic Party, in exile in America during the entire Communist period, had returned to resume his previous activity in the party. A separate Slovak Social Democratic Party was formed, largely for purposes of electoral appeal in that Republic while still part of the Federation.

A Christian orientation was the basis of other historic parties. In both the Czech and Slovak Republics, parties were formed to express Christian principles. The one in Slovakia, in which Catholicism is more important as both religion and political organization, split over the question of Slovakian independence. In the initial election, the Slovakian Christian Democrats (KDH) ran separately from VPN, becoming the second largest in the Republic. It joined in a government coalition both in the Republic and in the Federal Assembly following the initial election.

Religion as personal faith and national symbol has been pervasive in Polish political life, and has been thoroughly integrated into the Solidarity movement and its successor parties. For that reason, perhaps, separately organized and named Christian Democratic parties were initially less

prominent in Poland than in Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, one such party has emerged in Poland (Christian National Union–ZChN), and has become an important component of the several post-second election government coalitions.

Peasant parties have survived in Poland, but not in Czechoslovakia. Private peasantry existed during the Communist era in the former country, while agriculture was completely collectivized in the latter. Three Polish parties have claimed to represent agriculture, one as a survivor of its satellite status during the Communist period, the other two as part of Solidarity. The former is now the largest; though it quickly changed names and attempted to shed its Communist-era past (Frentzel-Zagorska 1991, 109), it has formed a coalition government with the post-Communist party following the 1993 elections.

In Hungary, the Small-Holders Party is the historic party with a rural electoral base (Rona-Tas 1991). The electorate for the Agrarian Party in Bulgaria now is urban, suggesting rural-urban mobility during the Communist period (Zlatkov 1992).

The Republics of the former USSR, other than the Baltics, have no surviving historic parties. There is no lost democratic past. Presently in Russia, however, there are several small monarchist parties (e.g., Monarchist Rus') and religious parties (e.g., the Orthodox Constitutional Monarchist Party and the National Patriotic Front "Pamiat") that do wish to restore the nondemocratic past that preceded communism (Danilov and Zasorin 1993).

#### **4. Ethnic and Regional Parties**

In the uncertainties of economic restructuring, in the collapse of central authority in Yugoslavia and the USSR, and in the condition of a flat social structure, ethnicity and regionalism may be the most apparent sources of loyalties and conflicts within many of the post-communist countries.

Ethnic parties tend to be confined to the regions in which the ethnic populations are concentrated (Germans and Ukrainians on the Polish borders; Hungarians in Transylvania, Turks in regions of Bulgaria, or Gypsies and Hungarians in sections of Slovakia). The most important difference between parties in their ethnic constituency was in the federation of Czechoslovakia, in which the successful parties were overwhelmingly ethno-regional, confined to single Republics.

For countries with regionally concentrated ethnic populations and a form of regional government, the sequencing of elections can have an impact upon the propensity of regionalism to split the state, as illustrated by Spain on one hand, and Yugoslavia on the other, with Czechoslovakia an

intermediate case (Linz and Stepan 1992). The 1992 election in Czechoslovakia exacerbated, rather than ameliorating, the ethno-regional split of the federation, leading directly to the formation of two new independent Republics (Olson 1993c). Both Belgium (Rudolph 1989) and Canada (Gibbons 1982) present similar circumstances.

Ethnic parties are often unstable coalitions. In the Czech lands, the Moravian/Silesian Front attempts to speak for the Moravian region and also for the remaining German population. It soon split into two small groups. Potentially more important are the three parties based upon the ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia (Reisch 1992). Though they had not been able to form a united coalition, the size of the Hungarian population (more than 10 percent) makes their parties potentially important. The Bulgarian Moslems, by contrast, have a single party.

In Bulgaria, the size of the minority population makes the one party based upon that group one of the larger parties in parliament. Irrespective of size, however, ethnic parties face the dilemma of whether or not, and how, to enter the government. As of now, most ethnic parties in Central Europe are in opposition. Nationalistic parties among majority populations are perhaps a variation of the ethnic minority parties (Pehe 1991c). In at least some of the Republics of the former USSR, especially the three Baltic states, the situation of ethnic Russians is a major issue in the politics of the definition of citizenship. Are ethnic Russians entitled to become citizens and to vote (Hason 1993; Krickus 1993; Chinn 1993)? This question not only is central in the current politics of the Baltics and Moldova, but also fuels the fires of several of the 'patriotic' (nationalist) parties now emergent in the Russian Republic, such as 'Fatherland,' *Sobor*, and the Russian Liberation Movement (ROD), not to mention the misleadingly named "Liberal Democrats" of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (Danilov and Zasorin 1993).

## 5. Personality-based Parties

The initial regime transformation movements in Poland and Czechoslovakia emphasized the personal qualities of their leaders, both of whom subsequently have become presidents. Other parties based upon personalities have tended to function outside both the organizational and policy bases of the others. The presidential candidacy of S. Tyminski in Poland, whose "Party X" has had little staying power beyond his own candidacy, is the most obvious illustration.

Strong and prominent personalities have been joined to governmental offices to help create major political parties. Walesa is the prime example in Poland. His person has been the core around which different political

groups have formed. As President, he and his office staff have tended to keep at a distance from all parties, including the one formed to support his initial presidential candidacy (Vinton 1991b). In Slovakia, the colorful and strong personality of Vladimir Meciar is also one attribute of the now largest Slovakian party (HSDS). He was Prime Minister of the Republic, and was then ousted as a result of the split within VPN (Pehe 1991a). He is now again Prime Minister of Slovakia as a result of his party's win in the second election in 1992.

## 6. Post-transformation Parties

While it is hard to anticipate all of the specific problems and issues which will confront the new democracies of Central Europe, it is entirely possible that new issues will create new cleavage structures and their own parties beyond the current experience of either this region or of democratic systems in general. To transform a state-owned economy, and to learn the practices of democracy after 40 years of communism, are new tasks facing human society. It may very well be that new social structures, new issues, new cleavage bases, and new types of political organization will develop in this new and unprecedented set of social and political circumstances.

This category is prospective: it anticipates the possibility of the unknown future without any clear examples having yet emerged. If a logical category, it is also currently an empty cell.

These six sources of parties generate political formations in both the electorate and in parliament. They assume a variety of organizational forms in both arenas.

### Types of Electoral Organization

As part of the unstructured party system during and after regime transformation, there is great uncertainty about what parties are, and about whether or not a given political organization wishes to become a political party. As one of the legacies of Communist rule, the very concept of political party is in ill repute (Gebethner 1992a, 252). The personal experience of organizational discipline and self-serving careerism within that party has made at least some persons very reluctant to consider a relationship to any party. Some groups avoid the name "party" altogether. Others employ synonyms, such as *hnuta* in the Czech and Slovakian Republics, which would be loosely translated as "movement," "tendency," or "group." Similar Polish terms are *unia* and *stronnictwo*.

In the early experience of post-communist democratization, several broad types of electoral structures have developed. What parties are, and what they ought to be, are themselves, questions of both dispute and experimentation in post-communist countries.

### **1. The Forum or Consensus Party**

The breadth, inclusiveness, élan, and high moral purpose of opposition to a hated ideology and vile government united a wide variety of persons and groups on behalf of one goal. That goal had no specific policy content; rather, it was concentrated on the meta-politics of regime transformation. The regime-change movements were most clearly developed in Poland and Czechoslovakia, largely because of the ways in which regime transformation occurred in each country. This type of movement was not needed in Hungary, and, except for the Baltic states, not possible in the USSR.

The breadth of the negative goal attracted a large mass following, and the means adopted by each movement to repudiate the government (election in Poland, street demonstration in Czechoslovakia) utilized the force provided by a mass, amorphous, dedicated following. The followers could express themselves by campaigning and voting, or by appearing in the street, without at the same time undertaking the commitment required of members of an organization. “Parties are for party members,” read one enthusiastic slogan during the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution; “the Civic Forum is for all.”

These political movements were above parties and politics. The stances of both anti-politics and non-politics were viable political strategies in opposition to the Communist regime (Ost 1990).

This type of social movement on behalf of regime transformation may be termed a “forum” type of party, after the Czech Civic Forum (Skala and Kunkel 1992), or a “consensus” party, based on Solidarity (Bielasiak 1992). “Consolidated pluralism,” “big national liberation-type,” and “conglomerate” are other characterizations (Simon and Paul 1981; Agh 1992, 16). Another term is umbrella “movement party” (Batt 1991).

There were clear organizational consequences for the movements stemming from their high moral purpose and mass participatory base. To topple the ruling party and to transform the political system both required and attracted the participation of a wide variety of otherwise disparate groups.

There was simultaneously an emphasis upon the primacy of unanimity over latent internal divisions in the face of the totalitarian enemy (Olszewski 1992, 275; Frenzel-Zagorska 1991, 100). The ethic and pragmatism of internal unity prevailed until the old regime was abolished; it was only a matter



of time, respondents now observe in retrospect, until diversity would result in separate political groups. Pluralism would become painful reality, not just an appealing slogan. Some party activists now reflect upon the pleasure of anti-communist unity, and observe that people in politics at that time were genuinely pleasant to one another.

The leaders of the reform movements, because of their success, quickly entered not only parliament, but also cabinet and government. One leading dissident, who had found himself in Parliament, observed that the reformers' aspiration was to leave politics to the professionals, once the Communists had been removed from power. But, he noted ruefully, there were no professionals—"only us." What then would become of their movement?

If their organization as a name and structure were to survive, what form would it assume? Would it continue as a broadly based, heterogeneous, loosely structured movement, as a "forum" type of political party? Or, would it develop a more clearly defined internal organization on behalf of more specific policy goals and office-seeking purpose; that is, an avowed and self-conscious political party (Kaminski 1991, 120-21; Rychard 1992a, 173; Bielasiak 1992, 208-09; Przeworski 1991; Pehe 1991a)? The "nonpolitical politics" of the regime-change movements created their own problems for the transformation of the political system (Brokl 1992).

The very amorphousness of the organization of the regime-change movement, especially in parliament, created dissatisfactions among those who then created political parties. The lack of clear organizational structure meant, in their view, that the leaders could act without organizational constraint from the other members of the parliamentary group. In both the election and parliament, the movement was led by an inner core of activists.

Somewhat analogous to churches splitting more over forms of self-government than doctrine, the regime transitional movements also have split. The result is that the original organizations have disappeared, but some of their leaders, instead of disappearing, have become leaders of successor political parties, with the two prominent exceptions, Walesa of Poland and Havel of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. As presidents of their countries, they have adopted an above-politics and beyond-parties stance, consonant with their leadership of their regime transformation movements.

## **2. Political Parties**

The political organizations seeking votes in elections and attempting to organize power in parliament are not all willing to consider themselves political parties. Those which do present themselves as political parties differ

widely in their organization, leadership and membership, though they share certain features in common.

All of the parties have an organizational structure of chairman, executive committee, national and local organizational layers and conventions. They all nominate candidates on party lists for the proportional representation election system, and all issue campaign materials and use the free TV time allocated to them during the campaign. By all accounts, this elaborate structure is founded on a very small membership base. Most parties are, in effect, a few leaders seeking popular support.

None of the preconditions of mass-membership western European democratic parties exist under post-communist circumstances. Neither churches nor labor unions have so far developed the capacity, or even desire, to create political expressions. One study of a village in the Czech Republic found that the Communists were the best organized at the local level, with their core coming from the now-abolished factory party units. No other party had that organizational base (Illner 1992).

The ethnic parties rely upon indigenous networks and associations. In Bulgaria, for example, the Moslem population has a network of clubs, each of which consists of family members and relatives. The candidates of the one Turkik party conducted their election campaigns through the club network (Kostova 1992).

The regime transformative movements, by necessity, originated outside the communist parliament. The vote-seeking competitive political parties, however, have originated both in the newly democratized parliaments and in the country. The successful ones in the Czech lands all have parliamentary origins, while there is more of a mix in both Poland and the Republic of Slovakia.

### **3. Movements and Coalitions**

Some political parties were coalitions of earlier and smaller groups, while other candidate groupings have entered into various types of electoral agreements with one another.

In Romania, the leading political group, the Democratic National Salvation Front, is explicitly a movement, not a party. The second largest grouping in parliament is a coalition of six smaller parties. In Bulgaria, the largest parliamentary grouping consists of over a dozen parties. Thus, the numbers that were given earlier of contenders in parliamentary elections and in parliament are even larger (McGregor 1993, 13).

Electoral coalitions do not always form parliamentary coalitions. The Civic Democratic Party coalition with the Christian Democratic Party in the

1992 election has survived into a governing coalition in the Czech Republic, while in Bulgaria the multi-party coalition of the Union of Democratic Forces has had great difficulty in government because of its electoral success (McGregor 1993, 13).

#### **4. Interest Groups and Local Associations**

Potential political actors are not at all certain about whether or not they wish to become parties, or, if they do, how to effectively organize themselves.

One organization in Poland directly faced the question of whether or not to become a political party in the 1991 parliamentary election. The Solidarity labor union, now a separate organization from the Solidarity regime-change movement, offered candidates in many districts. Those many candidates were proposed by regional union leaders, while the national leadership preferred "limited participation" with relatively few candidates. The national leadership explicitly vowed to run candidates who would review and perhaps modify government policy, but would not enter the cabinet. That their candidates were not very successful further postponed the question of whether the Solidarity labor union would or would not become a political party (Vinton 1991a). This dilemma continued the same quandary faced by Solidarity as a union in the initial election. It was the small Solidarity labor group in parliament which defeated the Suchocka cabinet in June, 1993, leading to Poland's third election in September, 1993 (Vinton 1993). So far, interest groups with their own designated members in parliament have been observed only in Poland.

There is, in summary, a wide variety of organizational forms through which aspiring leaders and followers attempt to find each other. Whatever the form of electoral organization, candidates have no clear notions of how to approach or appeal to the electorate. Posters, slogans, rallies and use of mass media are their major means of attempting to reach a relatively undifferentiated and undefined electorate.

As they search for viable and effective means of voter appeal and inter-elite coordination, they may develop new forms of political organization. The combination of high-tech mass communications with a relatively flat social structure will encourage aspiring political leaders to experiment with both appeals and organizational devices (Simon 1993b, 22; Crowther 1993, 13; "The Media" 1993).

Parties as continuing organizations with a succession of leadership and a stable and known base of voter support do not now exist. The elites and would-be elites are uncertain about political parties as either desirable or

practical forms of organization. The preconditions of mass-membership parties of the western European model do not exist. It may be that membership will diminish in importance as an organizational resource, to be displaced (or, compensated for) by other means of supporter identification and mobilization, in which American parties, not western European, are the more apt model.

### **Party in Parliament: Organization and Functions**

In the formative stages of a party system, neither the organization nor the potential tasks of political parties are clearly defined. This lack of clear understanding is one of the legacies of authoritarian rule, and contributes to the fluidity of the party system. The place and functions of political parties, in the immediate post-transformation period, are as tentative in the parliamentary as in the electoral arena.

Parliaments have become the “central site” for the development of political parties and of the whole democratization process (Liebert and Cotta 1990; Agh 1992). In part, parliaments are the only available forum for aspiring political leaders to meet, and within which they can develop affiliations with and alignments against each other. Parliaments become the crucible of the formative democracy and its new political parties. Local government is a theoretical, but apparently not yet active, arena for the formation of new political parties.

There is no stable governmental structure or legal environment within which parties function. The constitution is quickly amended by removal of the most glaring features of the communist past, but no agreement has been reached in either country on a new constitution (Elster 1991). In particular, the office of president, the full stature of which has yet to be defined in the constitution, has been a quick innovation in both countries. Presidential elections have been held to fill undefined offices. One result of this ambiguity, coupled with the inherited existing constitution, is to make parliament the prime policy decision-maker and the prime political arena of these new democracies. The parties of post-communist societies are either in, or want to be in, parliament.

The new members of the newly democratized parliaments have been discovering and experimenting with different forms of cooperation and alignments among themselves in several regards: (1) the formation of separate parliamentary groups as political parties; (2) party support of and opposition to the governing cabinet; (3) party cohesion and discipline in voting; (4) party as an organization to manage the internal affairs of parliament, and (5) the lack of constituency party connections.

These uncertainties were particularly apparent in the parliament selected in the initial election, and were an essential part of the ferment in party structure and function leading to, and then beyond, the second election. This section will rely upon observation and interviews in Poland and Czechoslovakia (Olson et al. 1993; Olson 1993c).

(1) In both countries, the broad regime-change coalition soon split into several parliamentary clubs. For a time, the initial broad movement attempted to continue as a parliamentary caucus, within which more specific factions existed. In Poland, for example, the factions were listed in the movement's directory and organizational materials, along with their members, as authorized subgroups. The newly developing groups attempted to both organize themselves as self-conscious entities and also retain the ability to meet in a broader caucus with their former partners.

In both countries, the new parliamentary clubs which emerged from the reform movement continued to sit next to each other in the chamber, and offered to continue to cooperate with one another in the name of their initial reform movement. But increasingly, party clubs became more separately organized (with their own rooms, officers, skeletal staff and press releases), and prepared to campaign against each other in the coming election (Gebethner 1991). They also disagreed over the kind of organization they should become.

(2) Though the number of parliamentary parties continued to grow, there was no clear differentiation among them in their support of and opposition to the governing cabinet. This confusion was not only a function of the diverse range of issues considered by parliament (economic reform, abortion, church and state, constitutional structure), which could create different patterns of inter-party alignments, but persisted across all types of substantive issues.

The only two sources of consistent government support-opposition came from the post-Communist survival parties in both countries, and from the Slovakian nationalist parties in the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly. Yet, the Polish Alliance of the Democratic Left has selectively supported the governing coalition. In the Czech Republic, the non-government parties have been too divided internally to act as an opposition (Obrman 1993).

As parties split, formed, and formed again, the newly democratic governments resembled the minority governments in western democracies. Their parliamentary base was always in doubt, with each issue creating its own voting coalition. As the parties split, the governing cabinet assumed a free-floating character, for its own survival was not immediately threatened, even though the leaders of new movements might also hold cabinet posts (especially in Czechoslovakia). In neither country's initial parliament was a

vote of confidence called against the government. That feature changed markedly in the Polish Parliament following the 1991 election.

(3) There was little party cohesion. Members voted individually, often leading to split party votes. No one reported a strong sense of intra-party recrimination as a result. Party clubs did meet regularly and did discuss issues, but a strong sense of party obligation and of voting discipline did not result. In the Polish Parliament following the 1991 election, even the post-Communist party split on a critical issue of economic policy, with some members voting in support of the government.

Party cohesion varies among parties in the Hungarian Parliament elected in their initial election in 1990. The Alliance of Young Democrats and the post-Communist Hungarian Socialist Party are the most cohesive, while the least cohesive are the three parties in the governing coalition (Small Holders' Party, Christian Democrats, and Democratic Forum).

(4) In both the Polish and Czechoslovakian parliaments, there was confusion over rules and schedule. The regulation of floor debate, the role and activities of the presiding officers, and time limitations all were matters which were discussed, argued, and voted on the floor. Likewise, the agenda of a floor session was also debated and voted on the floor (Reschova 1992).

The parliamentary parties had not become a major means by which these difficult internal organizational matters could be discussed and resolved, in contrast to the parliamentary parties of Western Europe. In interviews, the members did not discuss parties as major instruments for their personal decisions either on how to vote or in how to manage the internal affairs of parliament. These dilemmas are felt even more acutely by the new leaders, who expressed uncertainty about both how they should act, and how their fellow MPs would regard them.

(5) Lack of constituency party connections. The rapid formations and splits among parliamentary party groups, and the equally rapid formation of parties in the country proceeded independently of each other. Increasingly, parliamentary deputies had no external party or known electorate to whom they could appeal, or by whom they could feel constrained.

The current Supreme Soviet of the Russian Republic displays many of these same features, perhaps at a beginning stage. The deputies cluster in various parties, caucuses and factions in a constantly changing manner. While there is little voting cohesion within any one "party", there is a clustering (albeit constantly changing) into broadly defined factional groupings (Tolz, Slater and Rahr 1993; Belyaeva and Lipekhin 1993). It is unsurprising, then, that recent (1990 and 1991) opinion polls have discovered little evidence of partisan attachments among Russian voters (Butterworth 1992; Brady et al. 1992).

### Election Systems and Laws

In the new democracies, extensive time and effort have been expended on new election laws. The struggles among parties for perceived advantage in Central Europe resembles those among Swedish parties when universal suffrage was introduced and proportional representation finally agreed to (Jasiewicz 1993).

In Czechoslovakia, the second election largely continued the proportional representation system of the initial election, while in Poland, the rules of the compartmentalized initial election were completely inappropriate to a fully competitive party system (Syllova 1992; Gebethner 1991).

One important change in the Czechoslovak law was the threshold requirement. For single parties, 5 percent of the vote within any one Republic was required to enter parliament; for coalitions, the threshold was higher. The 5 percent minimum proved fatal to several parties, including the survival organizations of the original reform movements. Since they had also provided most of the incumbent government ministers, both the parties and their leaders were turned out of office (Obrman 1992b).

Usually a threshold is justified in western democracies as keeping small extremist parties out of parliament. In this election, it succeeded in keeping out the small moderate parties (Olson 1993b). With a large number of parties offering candidates, the proportion of votes cast for the many small parties amounts to about 25 percent. That sizeable proportion of the electorate is left without direct parliamentary representation (McGregor 1993; Zlatkov 1992).

Once the higher vote threshold for coalitions was adopted in Czechoslovakia, electoral coalition formation ceased. Had either the threshold for single parties been lower (as it had been in Slovakia in the initial election at 3 percent), or had the leaders of small moderate parties formed electoral coalitions, several such parties could have entered the new parliaments at both the federal and republic levels.

Though the 1991 Polish election used two different election laws, one for each of the two chambers, they produced equal degrees of party system fragmentation. A PR system without threshold was used for the *Sejm* (lower chamber), to which cabinets are responsible, while a type of plurality system, roughly modeled on the US Senate, was employed for the Senate (an upper but less powerful chamber). The electoral law was adopted only after protracted dispute between President Walesa and the Parliament (Gebethner 1993b).

In Poland, the creation of 37 *Sejm* electoral districts of very different population size, and thus number of seats, helped splinter the vote for the

*Sejm* in at least two ways in the 1991 election. First, local electoral groups were formed to promote local candidacies. These groups, as noted earlier, did not either seek or attain the status of political parties seeking power on a national basis. While there were many such candidates, few won election. Second, the varying population size of the electoral districts meant that the minimum share of the vote needed to obtain one seat varied from a high of 10 percent to a low of 3 percent. The effect in the latter instance was to fragment the party distribution of seats from that specific district (McQuaid 1991a, 12; Jasiewicz 1992b).

The 1993 election law both introduced a threshold and increased the number of districts. The result was a marked reduction in the number of parties gaining seats. The 5 percent threshold eliminated several of the main Solidarity successor parties along with several others. The Senate retained the earlier two-member plurality election system, leading to very different party results than in the simultaneous *Sejm* election (Table 5). As in Czechoslovakia in 1992, had the moderate parties been able to compose their organizational and leadership differences, they could have taken advantage of, rather than being victimized by, the logic of the electoral system.

Most of the new democracies of Central Europe have used a combination of district and national list seats. The latter have been used to achieve proportionality in the distribution of seats in parliament. All but Albania have used forms of proportional representation, with thresholds applied in different ways, and with the seats allocated by different methods. They have also varied in the number of seats per district. Finally, Hungary's electoral system is distinctive in that it closely resembles the German system of dividing parliamentary seats evenly between single member and multi-member districts (McGregor 1993; Hibbing and Patterson 1992; Racz 1991).

Bulgaria and Romania would appear as exceptions, having a few large groups in parliament. Each large group is, however, a coalition, modeled more after the "movement" pattern than as single political parties.

Though the new democracies of Central Europe and also the Baltics have employed a variety of election and district systems, the current party system result is about the same—fragmented multi-party systems. The variations of electoral systems among these countries would suggest that the mechanics of election law may channel, but neither create nor suppress, the ceaseless efforts at party formation in the beginning stages of new democratic political systems. In the initial democratic stages following a regime transition, various forms of proportional representation and multi-member district systems may provide more flexibility and adaptability to changing party circumstances than would plurality and single-member systems.



### Developmental Paths

Most research questions about parties in post-Communist countries concern future developments. We are seeing, and they are experiencing, democratic political systems at the beginning. They are doing so under conditions largely new in the human experience (Offe 1991; Simon 1993a; Rona-Tas 1991). We have an opportunity to chronicle the present as it becomes the vital past for the future of new democratic political systems.

How political parties in post-communist countries might develop is not necessarily predicted by the experience of either western democracies or of the Latin transitions; *conversely, it may be that the new emerging party formations of post-communist societies may suggest new ways of thinking about the evolution of parties and party systems in more established democratic political systems.*

Several issues attending the future development of political parties in the aftermath of the transformation of authoritarian systems would include:

1. *Origins of political parties.* To what extent do the political parties develop in the newly democratized parliaments, and to what extent do they develop outside of Parliament? It would appear that parliaments are a critical participant in the early stages of democratization—that they are the “central site” of democratic developments (Liebert and Cota 1990). They appear to be essential in the formation of the new political parties. If this statement is accurate for the beginning stages of new democratic systems, does this statement lose its validity as democracy consolidates?

2. *Party organization.* What organizational forms will the new democratic parties assume? While the western model of mass membership parties is accepted as the ideal by new leaders, that model itself is disappearing in western democratic systems (Epstein 1967, 233-60). It may be that the relatively undifferentiated social structure of post-Communist societies, coupled with the immediate availability of mass media, will permit would-be candidates and leaders to appeal directly to electorates, without the cumbersome apparatus of large (and balky) mass membership organizations. The active distaste (not merely reluctance) for any political party may lead aspiring leaders and followers alike to experiment with new organizational forms of political action. This possibility for party organization may apply to future interest groups as well.

3. *Social structure.* The shape of the new society and its internal differentiation may become very different from either the flat social structure of communism or the broad social class structure of Western industrial society. Since neither social structure nor the party system are formed, they will develop interactively.

4. *Party systems.* To what extent will the new party systems solidify? For purposes of consolidation of the new democratic political systems, the more immediate question is, to what extent will the new party systems stabilize? A related question concerns the sources of cleavage in the new but perhaps consolidating democracies. Schooled in the western models, analysts in Central Europe anticipate a left-right continuum based upon economic class distinctions. To the extent, however, that the new social structure(s) are differentiated into numerous smaller groupings and depart from the western model, numerous potential bases of party cleavage may be in competition with each other.

5. *The new political elites.* Where do new leaders come from? What are the sources and means of recruitment from old political systems for the leaders of newly democratized systems? How are democratic leaders recruited in the absence of the typical means—parties and interest groups—of western democracies (Rona-Tas 1991, 360)?

6. *Heavy hand of the past.* While some political parties are “historic,” reflecting pre-communist origins, the more immediate inheritance is the experience of communism. To understand political parties as they are now and will become, we need to ask about the inheritance from the experience of the Communist Party. How did the ruling party work in practice? How were candidates recruited for both formal office and party positions? What was the role of the paid staff (and what has happened to their large numbers)? It has often been noted in conversations that the most effective legislators in the new democratic parliaments are the reformed Communists. What have they learned as Communists which proves useful and constructive now? This set of questions is the only one which looks backward at the past, and bears the mark of our own ignorance. Regional specialists and institutional analysts in the west neither paid attention to the formal institutions of governance, nor had access to the inside of the Communist Party (Taras 1992; Furtak 1990; Berglund et al. 1988). Thus, we now have both the opportunity and need to closely examine how government and politics really functioned under conditions of “real socialism.”

7. *Parties in regime transition.* The collapse of communism permits a replay of the historical experiences which eventuated in western democracy. The post-communist transitions, however, have not all been alike. The extremes perhaps are indicated by Hungary, with a completed transition prior to the initial election, and the USSR and successor Republics, which had a pre-transitional election in early 1989. The relatively structured inter-elite transitions of Central Europe contrast with the amorphousness of the ex-Soviets, with Bulgaria and Romania as intermediate cases. Political parties both result from and participate in these transitional events. How do

political formations develop under these dramatic and varied circumstances at the beginnings of new political systems?

This preliminary listing of seven topics for research on political parties in the changing and beginning stages of new democracies calls for a wide range of research strategies. There is ample room, and need, for both grand and micro-theory, both institutional and individual-level data, and for both elite and mass-level analysis (Przeworski 1991).

Every assertion and speculation in this chapter is, at best, suggestive of broader developments in post-communist society. Each has been suggested by at least one country, one event, one election, one debate in parliament, or perhaps just one interview. We do not have the information on which to guess either the range of events or their central (if any) tendencies in this very early stage of their post-communist future.

There is, further, ample scope and need for comparative studies—among the post-Communist countries, between them and established democracies, and—above all—through time as the new democracies develop into their unknown and unpredictable futures.

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