

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL ELITES IN POST-COMMUNIST POLAND

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This paper analyzes the disintegration of communism in Poland and the formation of a new socio-economic and political system. The actions of political elites have been pivotal in this process. One of the basic conclusions of the analysis that follows is that, because of the weak articulation of the structures of civil society, political elites were not subjected to precise social demands and pressures.

This paper also addresses the issue of circulation of political elites, where the ouster of one group by another is not always the result of the actions of the elites themselves. The Polish case is interesting because it provides examples of both exogenous and endogenous causes of the circulation of elites. The communist elite was ousted when external support for it weakened substantially, whereas the subsequent phase in the circulation of elites was conditioned solely by a power struggle within a national elite relieved of external pressures.

CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH ON POLITICAL ELITES

Studies of political elites are generally concerned with three sets of issues: the composition and background of elites, their actions, and the consequences of their actions. The classical theories of Pareto (1935) and Mosca (1939), which are predominantly theories of ruling elites, concerned all three sets of issues. It can even be said that their central focus was the search for links between composition and background on the one hand, and actions and their consequences on the other.

Following the "classical" period, sociological studies of elites became increasingly specialized. Some researchers became interested in the composition and background of elites, particularly social origin, typical career paths, and the internal structure of elites. Others addressed the issue of elites' actions and their consequences; they encountered difficulties in determining in what groups and institutional frameworks decisions were made in complex capitalist societies. These difficulties were clearly stated in the well-known discussions that followed the publication of works by Floyd Hunter (1959), C. Wright Mills (1956), Robert Dahl (1961), and Bachrach and Baratz (1970).

As a result of these discussions, as well as of the arguments advanced somewhat earlier by Harold Lasswell (1952), there arose a proposition, which became widely accepted by sociologists, to analyze power as the most important resource of the political system. This proposition rejected the definition of elites in terms of stratification in favor of their

definition in terms of decision-making processes and structures. In theories of stratification, the elite is composed of those who have accumulated the most wealth, power, and prestige. These people, together with their families, make up the elite stratum, in which membership is long-term, if not hereditary. In the decision-making structural approach, the decisive factors determining the membership of individuals in the political elite are their positions in the system of political, primarily governmental, institutions and the amount of socio-political influence they have accumulated "from society," for example, through elections. (Weber 1948) This approach has given rise to the modern concept of the political elite that brings together in a single group all those who make or influence the state's decisions that have significant consequences for society. If we recognize that in modern democratic societies, "those in the government" have their own "opposition," then it is useful to conceive of the political elite as encompassing those who are on both sides. The extent to which these two sides cooperate or oppose one another varies from one democratic system to another.¹

A new element in the concept of elites as decision-makers was formulated recently by G. Lowell Field and John Higley (1980). Their hypothesis can be paraphrased as follows: political elites are autonomous in relation to all factors that may potentially exert an influence on them. The elites' decisions cannot be interpreted as reflecting the interests of the dominant economic class, as Marxists would argue, or the demands of public opinion, as classical democratic theorists would argue. Field and Higley argue that, contrary to "reductionist" theories, elites' decisions have a high degree of autonomy and are a harbinger, indeed a cause, of political change.

Despite the differences in the views of Mills, Dahl, Field, and Higley, their works constitute the theoretical basis for this paper because these authors concentrate on the elites' actions and their consequences. This approach to the study of elites is particularly relevant during periods of great historical change, when ideas and external pressures are much more important in determining elites' behavior than are their sociological characteristics.

THE ROUNDTABLE NEGOTIATIONS AND THEIR BACKGROUND

The development of parliamentary democracy in Poland began with the roundtable negotiations of February-March 1989. These negotiations also constituted the starting point for the transformation of political elites. Before the creation of the roundtable, two elites existed, the communist and the anti-communist, which were in fundamental opposition to one another. Only the former took part in official politics, but because of the strength of Poland's anti-communist elite, the notion of political life needed to be broadened, perhaps more so than in any other country of Eastern Europe, to encompass far more than just official politics. The ruling communists had long recognized the existence of public resistance and the fact that this resistance had given rise to a sizeable group of intellectuals willing to represent that resistance publicly. This realism in political life on the part of the country's rulers could be seen, for example, in the fact that off and on a small group of

Catholic deputies who had close ties to the Roman Catholic Church and who were continuously and openly critical of both the communist system and its individual institutions held seats in the Sejm. While this group was small, they were there, nonetheless. As another example, there emerged an organization, KOR, the Committee for the Defense of Workers, that openly opposed the political repression of workers who had taken part in the strikes and demonstrations of 1976. The names of those who belonged to it were publicly known. The fact that its members were not arrested serves as further evidence that the ruling group de facto recognized the opposition.

The formation of the oppositional elite had, in fact, been a continuous process. The factors contributing to this included the independence of the Church and its lay institutions--such as the Catholic press which, albeit small in circulation and number of publications, was extremely influential--as well as the relative independence of the universities and their research programs, and the relative independence of creative associations and their publications, for example, the journals published by the Writers' Union. The moment that this elite joined forces with the workers' movement in 1980 to form the Solidarity labor union, there emerged a nationwide political force in opposition to communism. The indestructibility of this force made the roundtable negotiations inevitable.

The roundtable agreement signed in April 1989 ended the communist party's monopoly of state power and constituted a grudging but real recognition of the bipolarity of Poland's political life. The complete schism existing between the ruling group and the opposition politicians was a reflection, at the political level, of the deep division between the rulers and the ruled. In everyday speech, this division was expressed as "them" and "us." Despite the fact that those who represented the communists and the opposition reflected this deep social and political division, sitting down at the negotiating table the two groups enjoyed complete autonomy in relation to the social groups and organizations which they claimed to represent. The communist side had neither a mandate nor explicit instructions from the party base to enter into discussions or to achieve a specific goal. A small group in the party's Politburo made decisions as they came up during the negotiations and as the degree of the opposition's intransigence became clear. Similarly, the representatives of Solidarity had no instructions from their membership.

Hence, the roundtable negotiations were a prime illustration of the extent of the elites' autonomy during the first step--the breakthrough--on the road to democracy. Autonomy, of course, is relative when the general course of negotiations is known to the public and becomes the product of public pressure. Nevertheless, such pressure does not necessarily affect the decisions of the negotiators or help them to determine which of the many roads to democracy to choose. The choice is left to the two groups that sit down to negotiate. We should refer to these groups as negotiating politicians whose decisions are not subject to any specific social constraints. In sociological terms, this represents an environment that is an "indeterminate" sphere of political decision-making.

A NEW SUB-TYPE OF THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

The roundtable agreements—not only those in Poland, but also those in other countries of Eastern Europe—belong to the same general category as the pacts between the military juntas and the democratic forces in Latin America. Compared with these pacts, however, the East European agreements have their own characteristics, the products of differences in both the political actors involved and the economic background. O'Donnel, Schmitter, and Whitehead (1986) write that concluding a pact in Latin America is like playing a game of chess in which there is only one hard and fast rule: the king and queen cannot be threatened, because if they are, the game is over. The king is the army, and the queen private property. In Eastern Europe, the game is being played without the queen, which makes the role of both elites easier, since they are not being subjected to pressure from a powerful interest structure outside the political arena. On the other hand, the king, i. e., the army, initially seems to be a powerful force because of his special relationship to a foreign power. This was the situation during the roundtable negotiations in Poland, when the army was a factor insofar as it played the role of the "hired" king, dependent on and subordinate to a foreign power. And yet by the autumn of 1989, when this foreign power revealed its lack of interest in the changes inside its satellites, the army ceased to count as a force in the game and disappeared as a factor capable of determining the limits of political evolution. (Wesołowski 1990)

Another characteristic specific to the evolution of Eastern Europe becomes evident when we compare this evolution with Burton and Higley's (1987) thesis concerning "elite settlement." In their opinion, the breakthrough to democracy resulted from an agreement between two hitherto hostile, or "disunified," elites who concluded that through a pact they would secure their interests and lay down the rules of the political game for the future. The rules were based on democratic principles, whose effective articulation was the key to the emergence of a democratic system in Western Europe.

To be sure, the abandonment of communism began with an agreement similar to the one outlined above. But when we examine the historical examples that provide the basis for the models of Burton and Higley (Field and Higley 1980; Burton and Higley 1987), one important characteristic becomes prominent. Societies in which elites came to an unprecedented agreement had stable class differentiation and elite articulation, which remained unchanged after the agreement. The situation in Eastern Europe has been different: the agreement there prompted profound changes in the economic class structure because of the reinstatement of private property, as well as leading to a major transformation in the position of the political elites who subscribed to the agreement. The changes were such that one group, the communist elite, not only fell from power but also lost its political identity. The agreement, unlike any of those analyzed by Higley and Burton, proved to be the death sentence for one of its signatories.

Eastern Europe represents a new sub-type of the transition to democracy. It is different from the transitions which took place in the countries of Western Europe as they

evolved from an absolutist, post-feudal system, and in the countries of Latin America and southern Europe (Greece, Portugal, Spain) that made the modern transition to democracy from authoritarian regimes.

TRANSLATING THE GENERAL WILL INTO PARTICULAR CHOICES

The events that led to Solidarity's takeover of the national assembly and the government are well known.² Once Solidarity gained political control, new legislation initiated by both the government and the Solidarity parliamentary caucus aimed unambiguously at creating democratic parliamentary institutions, a market economy based on private ownership, and an independent judiciary. These developments expressed the Solidarity elite's goal to launch a peaceful revolution that would transform all aspects of the political and economic system.

One unusual feature of the political situation of the elite deserves particular attention: the elite that had until now been in the opposition represents the will of society, a will that is politically undefined. It is difficult for this elite to know exactly what society wants, and this difficulty stems from a deeper problem: society itself finds it difficult to define its own interests. To be sure, society knows that it wants to entrust political power to a particular group, Solidarity, without knowing what decisions it wants this group to make. This feature characterizes the indeterminate nature of the political mandate of deputies and, more broadly, of the leadership of the former opposition. This situation would seem typical of all revolutions in which a new social system is being constructed. But in the post-communist societies, this problem is particularly acute because communism has destroyed the structures of civil society. As a result, there currently exist no channels for articulating the material interests and political orientations of various groups.

In fielding candidates in the 1989 parliamentary elections as a single anti-communist bloc, Solidarity perpetuated this lack of internal differentiation. This decision did nothing to hasten the restructuring of society into new interest groups and political orientations. The old articulations of interests existing under communism either were a sham (for example, the communists' satellite political parties) or gradually began to lose their relevance in the wake of economic reforms (for example, the old specialized labor unions). (Wesołowski 1991) All this has created a situation in which the public does not send out to the political elite strong and specific signals about what it expects of it. This gives the political elite considerable freedom to choose a path of reform and to determine how the "general will" ought to be translated into specific decisions. The elite's decisions are thus characterized by a high level of social indeterminism. There are many different roads to a market economy and to democracy and there are many different models of their final form. The choice of both has been left up to the political elite.

This situation contains the danger that the elite will make incorrect decisions not so much because of public pressure, but because of its own state of mind. Several analysts have paid particular attention to the phenomenon in which specific social problems are not

resolved because their discussion would threaten the interests of powerful groups or classes. (Bachrach and Baratz 1970; Lukes 1974) No class with well-established and powerful interests and a well-organized system of public relations, however, confronts the political elite of the immediate post-communist period. Limitations on the decisions of the post-communist elite, their absence or non-decisions, are due to the psychological and political limitations of that elite.

Do these limitations derive simply from the elite's perception of reality? The collective psychology of the revolutionary period is an important factor in this perception. The opposition elite sees itself as holding not only the mandate of ordinary people who have wanted it to abolish communism, but also the mandate of history, which has rejected communism as an inviable system. This often subconscious tendency to think in terms of historical necessity gives many in the elite a basis for great commitment, activity, and self-assurance. Moreover, during the first months following Solidarity's 1989 electoral victory and the formation of the government headed by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the belief in the need for systemic change constituted a bonding agent, linking the former opposition elite with the masses emotionally and intellectually. All of the elite's contacts and political discussions with ordinary people were rooted in the unexpressed conviction that Poland needed to change the entire system of government. It was not necessary to ask "how?" or "in what form?" because this seemed unimportant. Hence, the task at hand appeared to be simpler than it would have been without this assumption.

This assumption about shared historically determined goals influenced the attitudes of many of the Sejm's communist deputies, whose number remains significant, and many of whom have participated in this realization of "historical necessity." They have voted for the privatization of the economy, a fixed state budget, the liquidation of industrial subsidies (which has reduced the wages of industrial workers), and reductions in spending on social programs. It is surprising that these deputies have not defended the principles of social democracy more vigorously, a stance due either to a genuine change in conviction or to political opportunism. Whichever the case, it is remarkable that in the course of the current revolutionary systemic change, this group within the elite—the last, albeit atypical, representatives of the ancien régime—finds itself allied with history.

This peculiar alliance with history is significant if we define elites as those who "make decisions on behalf of society" or who "make decisions with macro-social consequences." If these decisions are made under the Diktat of history, the role of the decision-makers is diminished. In addition, the profundity and originality of their thinking is questionable.

TWO SOLIDARITY ELITES

It appeared at first, following the formation of the Mazowiecki government, that the Solidarity elite which had formed that government and subordinated the national assembly would remain in power longer than it did. After all, it had the unlimited public support, and no other force appeared to challenge it. The many small parties were simply a group of

would-be leaders, and society had not yet articulated any group-specific material interests and was slow to activate organizations for the defense and promotion of such interests. Society was thus passive, in large part because Solidarity, as a labor union, was active in factories restraining the drive to strike, heeding the government's appeal for trust and patience.

This state of calm, however, lasted only half a year. The sudden and violent break-up of Solidarity's unity as a political movement was initiated by Lech Wałęsa. The break-up was sealed when the Mazowiecki government collapsed, Solidarity's parliamentary caucus broke up, the country's political initiative was transferred to Wałęsa, and he was elected to the presidency.³ Wałęsa is currently attempting to create a new governing elite.

Poland's political situation has evolved quite differently from Hungary's and Czechoslovakia's. In Hungary, the former opposition split into political parties prior to the parliamentary elections, and the division between power and opposition became a normal phenomenon inherent in the functioning of democracy. While in Czechoslovakia the Civic Forum opted to become a party, in Poland, a coup of sorts took place inside Solidarity bringing to power a new elite, which filled governmental posts and gained a decisive position in the national assembly.

How did this come about? An analysis of the governing elite formed by Mazowiecki in August 1989 will offer an answer. Mazowiecki's government was composed of intellectuals who dominated, directed, and established the style of its work. The prime minister himself was an intellectual, as were a number of his ministers, including Aleksander Hall, Henryk Samsonowicz, Leszek Balcerowicz, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Jacek Kuroń, and Jerzy Osiatyński. Several other intellectuals were appointed vice-ministers and heads of governmental agencies (for instance, Andrzej Drawicz headed Polish Radio and Television). Well-known intellectuals wielding great political influence dominated Solidarity's parliamentary caucus, which in turn set the tone in the national assembly, despite the fact that Solidarity did not constitute a majority in it. Among the most notable deputies have been the liberal Catholic intellectuals Stanisław Stomma, Andrzej Stelmachowski, Andrzej Wielowieyski, Janusz Ziółkowski, Krzysztof Kozłowski, and Józefa Hannelowa; secular centrists Bronisław Geremek, Adam Michnik, Zofia Kuratowska; and democratic leftists Jan Józef Lipski, Karol Modzelewski, and Ryszard Bugaj.

The Mazowiecki government embodied the intellectual ideal in that it understood politics as the fulfillment of values. The ethos of Solidarity, which included an explicit drive towards national independence, political democracy, human solidarity, and respect for human dignity, set a guideline to which the prime minister often referred. Mazowiecki believed that Polish democracy should be rooted in a comprehensive system of checks and balances between the state, social organizations, and local government. He proclaimed his philosophy of systemic changes, which were to take place within the confines of the law and not through extraordinary measures, in other words, where the national assembly would draft and pass laws which would then be implemented by the government. (Mazowiecki

1990a, 1990b, 1990c)

According to Mazowiecki's Christian social philosophy, the economy was to be privatized but retain some controls of a "social market economy," including protection of the economically weak and appreciation for the working man's dignity. The introduction of private ownership is also a characteristic fulfillment of values, for according to the liberal economic doctrine, the second influential philosophy for this intellectual elite, private ownership is the basis of individual liberty and freedom of action.

Apart from espousing the fulfillment of values through government programs, this elite believed that political life should be guided by values. Political life should be based on pure and clear-cut principles, the elite stressed, and actions should not compromise the dignity of their participants. In all the statements made by Mazowiecki and those around him, it was evident that the prime minister and his team had decided to base their contacts with the public, as well as contacts with potential critics of their policies, on a moral code. That code meant telling society the truth about unfavorable consequences of the reform program, standing firm on policy decisions, and justifying the absence of particular decisions on theoretical grounds.

Parallel to these principles ran behavior which reflected an insensitivity to the importance of time in politics: the Mazowiecki elite often behaved as if it had unlimited time. During one six-month period, for example, it initiated no programs to restructure industry, revive the disintegrating and virtually obsolete housing construction, or reorganize the disordered health services, all areas crying out for immediate reform. Slow but thorough, the Mazowiecki team appreciated the importance of expert reflection more than of executive action.

This elite's style of government was well exemplified by the length of its deliberations on the statute on privatization. It not only delayed the formulation of a policy, but proceeded to study its options in an exclusionary framework, not encouraging public discussion. Alternative ideas about privatization were not used, not even marginally. Broad discussions of different models of privatization and practical experiments in the field could have created a tangible link between social groups and the government, but this option was overlooked by the elite. As a result, society's sense of distance from the government continued to grow.

The Mazowiecki government appeared to have subconsciously assumed the existence of ideal solutions, expecting that it alone, or together with the national assembly, would find the optimal, rational, and effective solutions. This turned out to be far-fetched rational optimism, especially in view of the complex and inherent disorder of the social fabric.

The external situation, namely the lack of a mature social organization composed of interest groups and political parties, fostered the Mazowiecki elite's methodical approach to government. Threats of worker and peasant strikes constituted the only external force.

Both classes defined their interests in the old, communist terms: higher wages for inefficient labor and subsidized farm prices. In the first months of the Mazowiecki government, when the prime minister's popularity was rising and his public approval rating was 80 percent, it was easy to ignore the indicators of the "old mentality," which conflicted with the direction of the reforms. There were no other disturbing signals that society was growing impatient.

It is not unlikely that the policies of the Mazowiecki elite would have gained momentum. It was not in power long enough, however, to gain enough political experience to transform itself from an intellectual elite performing a political role into a political elite par excellence.⁴ Perhaps the political evolution of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, whose governments and parliaments are staffed largely by intellectuals, will continue along this path. But in Poland, political history took a different turn.

When Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa began to criticize the Mazowiecki government, it became apparent that the intellectuals in the national assembly and government would not be able to uphold the public demand for their leadership. At the same time, Wałęsa and his associates were able to create a situation in which the public clearly wanted a new leadership.⁵ Hence, Wałęsa played a decisive role in promoting the emergence of a new governing elite. His much-publicized "war at the top" was designed to displace the leaders in the upper echelons of the Solidarity political movement. He was a catalyst for the growing, though still unarticulated, public impatience, the crystallization of opposition in the Solidarity labor union, and the manifestations of displeasure among those politicians who did not find themselves in either the national assembly or the government. Wałęsa's repeated calls for a political "airing out of Warsaw" and the need for "new faces" proved very appealing. (Wałęsa 1990a, 1990b, 1990c)

During the 1990 presidential campaign, Wałęsa used to his advantage the existing social structures, the Solidarity labor union and the citizens' committees, with which the Mazowiecki government was unable to make meaningful contact. But when these weak organizations did become more active, this was not because they had a crystallized political program, but rather for a strictly political reason: the desire to wield power. Political interest, the desire to win positions in political and governmental structures, was the foundation of the unity of interests of Wałęsa and his new allies. For the most part, his allies were not the most important and memorable Solidarity leaders of 1980-81, and so this new elite was born out of pure political interest. It aimed to change the people at the top and to shift the direction of the political evolution. The irony of this shift lay in the fact that the new elite, having formed a government, proceeded to espouse the economic policies of its predecessor.

In contrast to that predecessor, this elite consists of politicians with varied social roots, among whom Weber would have detected a tendency to become the "professional politician." Pareto, to cite another classical sociological theorist, would have found in it characteristics justifying the name "elite of foxes," since its members have substantial resources of the "residua of combination." Wałęsa himself is a prime example of those

entering this elite. (Staniszkis, Kaczyński, et al., 1990)

The previous intellectual governing team emphasized that politics must—and for them did—fulfill values. If this does not always happen or if that is not its primary motivation, at least in the final consideration politics must be backed by values as a criterion for evaluating its ends and means. Common good and individual good are the highest aims which must not be left out of politics. Bronisław Geremek, a prominent member of this elite, stressed this: "What really matter to me in politics are fundamental values. If I have been involved in politics, it is to prevent its becoming solely a power game." (Geremek 1991)

The new governing elite has changed the emphasis in the definition of politics, understanding politics in a modern way, as "demystified." To them, politics is, above all, competition for power and interests, which includes the political interest of the elite to keep itself in power and to be assessed favorably by society. Inherent in this view is the belief that a periodic substitution of governing elites is necessary. Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of the Center Alliance, expressed this view in an interview in March 1991: "The aim of Center Alliance is to create [a new] political elite, and several people have already fought their way into it. It is true that [in our party] only Jan Olszewski, Stefan Kurowski, and Jacek Maziarski are well-known politicians. One might envisage a rapid and fundamental exchange of elites." He continued more philosophically: "In Poland, elites get worn out very quickly. It is possible that history will cut us all down, to a man." (Kaczyński 1991) His second statement echoes Pareto's contention that "history is a graveyard of aristocracies."

Who, then, is joining the new elite? So far we can only observe its very narrow inner circle, which is composed primarily of Wałęsa's closest political advisors from Gdansk. Among them are Jarosław Kaczyński and his brother Lech, whose ideas helped to create the president's victorious electoral campaign and political strategy. They are economists and long-time associates of Wałęsa's who founded the Liberal Democratic Congress, a small party of which Krzysztof Bielecki and three of his ministers are also members. The Congress, as a Warsaw joke has it, is the smallest governing party in modern history. Others gradually entering this elite are the new vice-ministers and provincial governors. As members of local citizens' committees and regional divisions of Solidarity, they helped the president to win his election at the provincial level of the voivodship. Thus, the new governing elite is being recruited not only from Gdansk but also from other provincial cities. From the start, the Bielecki cabinet has included one new minister each from Poznań, Toruń, and Cracow.

In addition to having a large say in the creation of the government, the president has already determined the composition of his chancellery, which includes four ministers (Jacek Merkel, Janusz Ziółkowski, Sławomir Siwek, and Jarosław Kaczyński as the chief of staff), a body certain to be very influential. Moreover, Wałęsa has appointed a group of personal advisors, three of whom are members of the Center Alliance, one of the National Christian Federation, while the rest belong to no parties but have been associated with Wałęsa for some time.⁶

Some of the deputies belonging to the Solidarity parliamentary caucus who left Mazowiecki for Wałęsa have also entered the new elite, so that in the course of the election campaign, their number increased until they became a majority in the caucus. These Solidarity deputies are now able to become the new leading group in the national assembly. They have a good chance of reelection in October 1991, since they enjoy the support of the president.

It should be expected that new businessmen and successful managers of the large, newly privatized industries will move toward the political elite. They are likely to be welcomed in it as valuable experts and heroes of the new times. Leaders of some of the small political parties, whom Wałęsa has invited to join the presidential council, will also gradually join this elite, and those whose views will correspond to the president's will move toward its nucleus. Activists of the Center Alliance, which has virtually become the president's party, are already members of that elite.

THE ELITE'S CHOICES FOR A NEW ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ORDER

On the economic level, the new elite has continued to build a capitalist economy, but it is more pragmatic and flexible than its predecessor. It has absorbed Minister of Finance Leszek Balcerowicz and his vice-ministers, who defended the theoretical purity of their anti-inflation plan within the framework of a different elite, that of the previous cabinet. While implementing this plan, they have rejected corrections based on social considerations. For example, they have not implemented measures to avoid a drastic lowering of the standard of living, a decrease in the profitability of agricultural production, and widespread social discontent.

The new elite has considered making modifications in the anti-inflation plan that would take into account its potentially severe social consequences. For example, to forestall a sense of political alienation among workers, the new government has decided to reduce the damage of excessive wage taxation to their interests. Likewise, Lech Kaczyński, deputy chairman of the Solidarity labor union and a candidate for its presidency, has announced his support for a privatization plan that would allow workers to acquire substantial shares in their factories. This, Kaczyński said, proves that the new elite is considering various policy options, including those acceptable to the workers. (Kaczyński, L. 1991)

The Wałęsa elite, aware that long-term programs must be launched and not merely discussed, has a deeper understanding of the time factor in economic policy than did the Mazowiecki elite. Politics without tangible results is not politics at all, since it is not socially effective. Thus, Prime Minister Bielecki, in one of his first interviews told Poland's most popular daily, Gazeta Wyborcza, that he will rapidly speed up privatization and create the tools necessary for it. In a critical reference to the previous government, he said that "the time of generally correct slogans has ended" and announced the immediate publication of an accessible textbook about the techniques of privatization. Based on this simple manual, representatives of local government who are not familiar with economic theory will be able

to sell off the numerous small nationalized enterprises in their districts. (Bielecki 1991)

There are signs that the Bielecki government, composed of advocates of pure liberalism who remain pragmatists, will ultimately build a model of capitalism with strong elements of state support for private business, especially big business. A new class of managers, financiers, and private owners will cooperate with the state. This new class will be created by the processes of privatization, especially those involving the transfer of the administration of large factories to new professional managers, and their placement under the control of financial institutions such as pension funds, mutual funds, and commercial banks. This could lead to a symbiosis of private business and state elites on institutional and personal levels. If so, the political elite that initially proclaimed the need for an economy as loosely connected with the state as possible will, under the pressure of real circumstances, have modified its policy appreciably, manifesting its realism.

The coalition of business and higher echelons of the state apparatus may also be joined by a third partner, the labor unions. Many are leaving the Solidarity labor union because it has acted equivocally in situations where belt-tightening and ownership transfers were imminent. The union has worked consistently to restrain strikes and support political reforms. Michał Boni, until recently chairman of Solidarity's Mazowsze region and today minister of labor, described this scenario clearly and emphatically: in order to gain a new identity, Solidarity needs to become a professional union that negotiates wages, work conditions, and workers' promotions expertly and competently. His notion brings to mind the role of the German unions, which place more importance on cooperation than on militancy. (Boni 1990) It is also possible that economic relations favorable to the formation of new corporatist elements will emerge. (Lehmbruch and Schmitter 1979)

What kind of a political system will the new elite create? Wałęsa has declared repeatedly that he will not continue to create a parliamentary-cabinet system, Mazowiecki ideal, but will begin to build a new system based on presidential power. There are two kinds of presidential system, one authoritarian, the other democratic. The greatest uncertainty in Poland's current situation lies in the fact that the public does not know which kind of presidentialism Wałęsa will choose. During the presidential campaign, he offered visions of a political system that combined both authoritarian and democratic elements. There were some indications, however, that he would favor a system that is more authoritarian than democratic, although it was possible that events outside his control would lead to the creation of a genuine democratic system.

Wałęsa's campaign statements were clearly attempts to merge contradictions. Even more important, they were signals that Wałęsa intended to do just that, in accordance with his understanding of his role and image as a genuine and resourceful leader of the nation. Following are three examples of contradictory campaign declarations by Wałęsa. First, Wałęsa said repeatedly, "I do not want to be president but I must be," and "a car can only have one driver," referring to the importance of his role in the state. At the same time, however, he said that he would learn from the people, do everything together with them,

and call on them to take public matters into their hands.

Second, Wałęsa postulated a strong personal presidential authority ("I will keep an eye on the government every day," "I will invite experts to advise me"), while repeatedly expressing the need for a pluralistic social and political structure which would entail creating political parties and interest groups from below. He envisaged an influential role for these groups in the political and social life of the state.

Third, he urged people to develop a "businessman's mentality," which he believed the country lacks, and to use rational calculation in every action. But he also exploited stored up national emotions and frustrations, egging on irrationality and implying that threats to the national interest were posed by neighboring countries and "outside forces."

Everyone who considers him- or herself a charismatic leader, as Wałęsa does, thinks that his uniqueness includes the ability to harmonize fire and water, if only these two elements would submit to him. He believes, above all, in the possibility of stimulating the creation of new political attitudes and new conditions for political life. Certainly, making contradictions work together is possible only on the condition that the ideas and will of an extraordinary leader will permeate social and political life. When this happens, the government governs, but it is broadly guided by the president's ideas. Likewise, political parties are autonomous, but they promote and institute policies determined by the president. This paradoxical situation results from the talents of charismatic leaders.

As a rule, nonetheless, the political visions of unrestrained charismatic leaders materialize as authoritarian systems. (Linz 1990) In Poland today, an authoritarian presidency is likely to emerge if three events take place: (1) if the president is granted powers allowing him to intervene in almost all governmental decisions; (2) if the presidential party gains a majority, or even a substantial share, of seats in the October 1991 parliamentary elections; and (3) if the Center Alliance and Solidarity labor union's regional chapters and citizens' committees form a political bloc that manages to penetrate and control society.

There are organized groups in Poland that are sensitive to circumstances which could lead to authoritarianism. Among them are the Forum of the Democratic Right, ROAD, and the Democratic Union, which are likely to unite as an umbrella group called Democratic Union, of which Mazowiecki will be the leader. These groups' strength will also be determined by the parliamentary elections.

There also exists a widespread but largely unorganized democratic sentiment which, if better articulated, may become an active and potent anti-authoritarian force. The number of people who espouse democratic principles is large, and many of them have been active in local government, universities, and the small political parties. The problem of mobilizing these diffuse forces consists primarily in providing them with efficient organizational tools, skilled leadership at the middle level, and program guidance. The current absence of these

resources makes the authoritarian threat real.

Wałęsa's presidential camp may yet reverse its course. Nothing, after all, is predetermined in politics, not least in Polish politics today. Wałęsa is an intelligent man with remarkable intellectual flexibility, who may yet decide to learn the nuances of democratic theory and policy. This would restrain his temptation for personal power and increase his confidence in democratic institutions. It could also lead to a disassociation from a single party and a single political bloc. In learning about democracy Wałęsa can be helped by his political instinct and his advisors, several of whom believe more strongly in the French democratic presidential system than in the authoritarian one. Among these associates are Jan Olszewski, Janusz Ziółkowski, and Zdzisław Najder, whose influence may help him choose the way to genuine democracy.

The outcome of the political process in Poland will also be influenced by events outside the country. Two factors deserve mention. First, in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, where forces supporting an authoritarian system of government are virtually nonexistent, parliamentary democracy is likely to be established, bolstering the democratic groups in Poland. Second, Poland's effort to join the Council of Europe and the European Economic Community will have a moderating influence on its internal political developments. Western Europe would not look favorably on an authoritarian system in Poland, a fact the opposition will use against forces heading toward authoritarianism.

These external circumstances may play an important role in strengthening democratic forces within both society and segments of the political elite. They may also affect Wałęsa's political decision-making, since he is a pragmatist who will have good reasons to align himself with democratic forces. In such circumstances, it is possible that a new governing elite free of authoritarian tendencies will emerge as a leading political force. This elite could help to strengthen civil society by seeing to it that strong parties with diverse programs are created.

The range of choices is extensive. Some have already been made and others will follow shortly, the new ones not necessarily corresponding to ones made in the past. In any case, the activity of the groups of people engaged in politics at the highest level will shape the outlines of the political system. It is difficult to tell today to what degree all this will happen under pressure from articulated, definitive, and crystallized opinions of the public, and to what degree this process will be a political game between people free from such pressure.

NOTES

1. I will use the terms "governing elite" or "elite" when referring to the segment of the political elite that actually holds power.
2. Here we need only remember the following: Solidarity won the elections of June 1989 because it won all the seats in the Sejm that were open to competition (35 percent), and 99 percent of the seats in the senate, all of which were filled by genuine elections. In the new political and psychological situation, those parties that had hitherto been satellites of the communist party no longer wished to form a coalition with the communists and changed sides to link up with Solidarity. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a Solidarity intellectual, was entrusted with the formation of a government dominated by former members of the opposition. The establishment of this government was possible because former satellite parties of the communist party allied themselves with Solidarity in the national assembly, gaining an unexpected majority.
3. In the first round of elections, Wałęsa received 40 percent of the vote, votes cast truly for him. The 75 percent of votes he received in the second round came from many voters switching from Mazowiecki and other candidates in alarm that Tymiąski would defeat Wałęsa. From the 40 percent who originally voted for Wałęsa, we should single out two groups. The first group believed in Wałęsa's ability to speed up economic reform and build a new political system, even at the cost of democracy. The second group was more skeptical. Without any certainty that Wałęsa was a good candidate, they voted for him on the following principle: he promises a lot, so let's give him power and maybe he will succeed. In the first round, no one received a clear majority, and the 20 percent of votes cast for Tymiąski showed the electorate's susceptibility to unrealistic promises; Wałęsa did not shy away from such promises either. A Western journalist offered a harsh judgment: "Poles prefer to believe in miracles rather than reality and both Wałęsa and Tymiąski were promising miracles, each in his own way." (Polen, 1990)
4. The Mazowiecki government's achievements were substantial. The constitution was revised on some important issues, including the removal of clauses attesting to the government's communist character. The judiciary was reformed, making the courts fully independent of the executive and legislative branches, censorship was eliminated, freedoms of speech and assembly were introduced, the police was depoliticized, and new rules for creating the state budget were introduced, including one to stop unlimited printing of money and subsidies for unprofitable enterprises. New market and privatization bills were passed, as well as new laws on local self-government. Poland's foreign policy was made independent of the Soviet Union and practical steps were taken toward integration with Western Europe.
5. The differences between the personalities, political philosophies, and talents of Wałęsa and Mazowiecki were debated extensively during the presidential campaign. The following articles drew some of the most interesting portraits of the candidates: Adam Michnik (1990), Stefan Kisielewski (1990), Aleksander Malachowski (1990), Bronisław Geremek (1990), Karol Modzelewski (1990), Jadwiga Staniszkis et al. (1990).
6. This group includes Jan Olszewski, Zdzisław Najder, Lech Kaczyński, Andrzej Kostarczyk, Stefan Kurowski, Antoni Macierewicz, Wojciech Włodarczyk, and Jan Winiecki.

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