TITLE: Democracy, Interests and Corporatism in Poland

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COUNCIL CONTRACT NUMBER: 806-02

DATE: June 10, 1992

The work leading to this report was supported by contract funds provided by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research. The analysis and interpretations contained in the report are those of the author.
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Executive Summary:

Democracy, Interests and Corporatism in Poland
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summarized by Michael Kennedy

Democracy is more than elections and the public interest requires more than the free for all of pluralistic politics. Both require the development of new forms of rule and representation. The new dominant form in today's Poland is state corporatism, where the state simultaneously coopts and represents associations of people.

These associations of people have different origins; they were organized originally in resistance to communism, or subsequently on the basis of private foundations, but they all reinforce state power given that their elites are associated with the state and its relevant ministries. Even foreign aid and organizations reinforce this state power by channeling their funds through the state. This state power can contain conflict, but it has its dangers if and when the rank and file grows disappointed and feels to be deceived by a conspiracy of elites, an outcome increasingly likely as these elites lose their contact with the grass roots. And in these cases, state corporatism may prove more dangerous than unrestrained pluralism.

State corporatism exists also because interest articulation remains muted in politics; the ill definition of parties and their conflicts means that the normal
political process is not a good place to express one’s needs, especially as parties seem interested only in votes, not in gaining new members. But new parties or reformed parties will likely emerge to represent these interests that are as of yet not well expressed in parties. In particular, along the lines of Tyminski’s Party X or of Solidarity ’80, we might find a party for the dissatisfied and disappointed forming with considerable support. A new mass party could be formed, for while there remains passive support for reforms in general, most will argue today that they don’t want these reforms at their expense. Privatization yes, but not where I work.

State corporatism, this pluralism based on state cooptation, might prevent the eruption of mass opposition to continued economic reform. But it is unclear whether it will promote democracy, for the passivity of the public might turn into alienation and fuel the formation of a new mass populist movement opposing the market and democracy together.
Democracy, Interests and Corporatism in Poland

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March 1992

Paper to be published in the International Journal of Political Science, special issue on Eastern Europe, edited by Michal Dobry and Georges Mink. This paper was written as part of a project funded by the National Council for Soviet and Eastern European Research on the creation of expertise in post-communist Poland.
DEMONCRACY, INTERESTS, AND CORPORATISM IN POLAND

The relations between the state and society can take a variety of forms. In theory, democracy should reign when democratic procedures are in force. Society supervises the government and state administration through its elected representatives in the Parliament. From time to time, free and open elections offer the possibility of social validation or political change; should the representatives of the nation fail to act in accordance with the wishes of their constituency, they can be replaced. The practice, however, is often quite different. A good electoral system, with fair rules and regulations, is simply not enough. Even more important than elections are clear alternatives and responsible people for whom one might cast a vote.

Democratic procedures should make possible, indeed favor, the emergence of new leaders and a variety of political choices, an elite with both ears attuned to public discourse and popular opinion, who are capable of articulating the popular will, who seek public office in order to represent interests and constituencies that are still in the making, and who both personify and help to shape these interests. Such a leadership should further the creation and the expression of new aims and aspirations. Just as a market economy cannot be installed simply by removing price controls, so a democratic polity depends fundamentally
on traditions of rule and representation, not just the opportunity to vote freely.

Stanislaw Tyminski, neatly described by Wałęsa — at the time only a candidate for the Polish presidency — as an "illuminating accident on the road to democracy," was originally a nobody, even for the majority of his own electorate. He surfaced at the very end of a brutal presidential campaign, as the unexpected first runner-up. Tyminski's primary appeal was to young workers in small towns, who had neither lived through nor could fully appreciate the Solidarity legacy. These young voters proved to be quite loyal, however. Despite concerted efforts by the media to portray Tyminski as a fiend or a psychopath, he received 25 percent of the votes for president. His constituency persists as a group of disappointed and dispirited people for whom he seemed to be the only possible alternative to the squabbling candidates who shared a Solidarity background. For similar reasons, the KPN (Confederation for Independent Poland) was quite successful during the last election campaign. Although a relative newcomer on the political stage, it appealed to voters with the slogan, "Try something else."

Elections and the campaigns that precede them are periods of the greatest equality in the people's contacts with the authorities. At such times, each potential voter — be it the Speaker of the House or a coal-miner — has an equivalent vote.[1] Yet the citizens' contacts with the authorities are not limited to electoral campaigns. Outside these periods, those who are able to organize and act effectively in their own interests achieve some
prominence and visibility. Like any other society, Poland can be divided into the young and the old, women and children, those who wait too long to be allocated a flat and those who pay excessive taxes, coal miners and transportation workers, intellectuals and veterans of the opposition, farmers, the police and many other groups. Almost any one of these groups or collectivities might form, as many have already done, their own organizations demanding a raise in wages, reduced taxes, fees or interest rates, or a host of other benefits, special subsidies, grants or credits from the State. When such groups are numerous and constituted as competing, voluntary associations, with diffuse memberships, informal patterns of leadership, and little official recognition from the state, the configuration of structures mediates group interests with a result that can be described as pluralism.

The characteristic form of interest mediation in post-communist societies is much closer to state corporatism. Among the more important and enduring legacies of communism are numerous corporate structures, representing large industries, economic monopolies of various sorts, trade unions and worker councils with the exclusive, officially ordained right to represent their members, who include the totality of employees in a specific sphere. The claims made and the bargains struck over the years between the communist leadership and the various industrial sectors created the enduring conviction that state benefits, from wage increases and special bonuses to access to well-appointed stores, flowed through these employment channels. Moreover, work sites were the critical
organizational locus for the opposition as well. These characteristics lead to a peculiar form of interest mediation.

For at least a decade, respondents to a series of sociological surveys[2] have mentioned having their own flat as the single most important social problem, and much more pressing than a pay raise for miners or railwaymen; yet in public discussion the issue of salary increases for organized groups, easily prevails over the housing shortage. In all bargains struck between society and the authorities, organized interests are likely to be dominant for many years to come. As might be supposed, interests that are lodged in the division of labor, or that share a well-defined position in the production of socially important goods and services, stand a much greater chance of being heard. As many analysts have noted, it is far easier to communicate and organize at the workplace, where existing contacts and interests can be mobilized, than in other social contexts outside of work. And it is easier to extract concessions when one can threaten to limit or obstruct production in essential spheres of life. The issue is the same whether the group that is organized in its own interests works in a mine or in a hospital, as a skilled worker or as a physician. Those waiting to be allocated a flat are dispersed all over the country; they can neither organize nor strike. Thus far, they must rely on their individual contacts and efforts, rather than any collective form of political pressure.

This situation might change during a close election, in which a candidate has to be
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numerically strong in order to win, but does not necessarily represent a well-organized and well-placed constituency. For that to happen, some additional conditions have to be met: the housing issue has to be included in a party's platform in such a way as to distinguish that particular party from its competitors and thus to gain a plurality of the votes of those concerned. Those who need flats should also be sufficiently organized to demand that successful candidates endeavor to make good on electoral promises after the fact, and resist competitive pressures from more powerful groups, such as the transportation workers.

It follows from the above that outside of free elections, democracy does not necessarily mean an equal chance for all. The individual's actual chances depend on his or her participation in specific interest groups, lobbies, or groups capable of applying collective political pressure. The interests of groups that are better-organized and able to monopolize or control important resources in social life have, as a rule, a considerable advantage. Could we imagine a more auspicious position than that of say, a medical trade union, with members of the profession fully united, demanding salary raises during a cholera epidemic?

It is already obvious that in Poland today, the pluralism of group interests, freshly liberated from the patronage of the Communist State and taking advantage of the combination of democratic guarantees of freedom of association and the right to freely pursue individual and group aspirations, does not necessarily lead to political outcomes that correspond to the public interest. It is clearly in the interests of society to enjoy public
transportation that is as cheap as possible and that functions without interruptions or
disturbances caused by strikes; the organized interests of bus drivers and railway workers are,
however, rather different. Nor have group interests led to a more equitable distribution of
state-controlled resources. The salaries and stipends dispensed by the state have both
deteriorated in real value and also become more unequal; moreover, traditional inequities
persist. Pensioners and teachers are still drastically underpaid.

Finally, interest-group democracy does not necessarily promote a rapid transition
to a democratic society with a market economy, even though these are universally-desired
goals. It is by no means certain that the aspirations of the most powerful and best-organized
workers promote market reforms to the greatest extent possible. We can all fear
developments in Poland should a genuine "labor party" come into power with its internal
structure dominated by the most powerful categories of employees deriving their might from
free trade unions organized by industry. Then we could all be victimized by workers'
self-management organizations and self-government councils and by the middle-rank union
oligarchy engaged in privatization and under the control of the largest and most obsolete
industries, no matter how democratic their intentions. On the other hand, it is comforting
that the so-called working classes, excluding peasants and those with a university education,
constitute a mere 25 percent of the potential electorate.

But fortunately --- or perhaps it is not fortunate at all --- an open, free game of
interest groups and pluralist politics is not taking place in Poland. What prevails is what might be called a corporatist solution.[3] The state controls and places restrictions on the autonomy and activities of the most powerful groups through the inclusion and co-optation of their elites within the structure of state authority and administration, in the same way and using the same means, as the state does in promoting and subsidizing changes in public life and the economy. It would take a much longer study to analyze this problem thoroughly; yet a good example is the fate of the Solidarity trade union, as manifested by its national structure based on a federation of regional organizations. Strengthening the branch organizations, which represent particular industries or enterprises, could occur only at the cost of the power held by the regional structures. This would no doubt greatly add to the bargaining power of the union as a whole; but this strategy would, first and foremost, make branch interests more powerful and autonomous than they are at present. Taking the transportation workers once again as the central metaphoric threat to the public welfare, if their organizations became more autonomous within Solidarity, they would have far more possibilities for independent political activity, as well as the power to escalate their demands. They would also enjoy a much greater influence among the union rank and file. Incorporation or co-optation of the elite is always done at the expense of influence among the membership. As shown by sociological studies of late last year, the proportion of Solidarity members among hired workers rarely if ever exceeds ten percent; for that matter,
the same applies to the membership of the once dominant pro-Communist OPZZ union.

At the same time, many members of the government and of President Walesa's office have been, or still are, union leaders. Many activists in local government, most of the founders and organizers of new parties, and a great many other participants in public life have had a similar union background. The very fact of having arisen from a very large, popularly-based social movement creates the potential for many co-operative networks across formally opposed sectors of the economy and polity. It seems only natural that Solidarity leaders themselves stress the union's twofold task: the expression and protection of workers' interests as well as broader, more corporatist aims, such as the moderation of employees' aspirations in the public interest, supporting activities that can lead to or foster reform, and so forth. The debates reegarding the union's political role is characteristic of these dual viewpoints. Should Solidarity strive for independent representation in the Sejm, the lower house of the new bicameral parliament? And if so, how large should that representation be? Should it operate through existing political parties? Could it take a stance that differed from that of the executive branch of the government and still be credible?

Many of the reforms and transformations that can be observed in post-communist Poland have taken place in a similar manner, through the inclusion of formal and informal interest groups in the process of decision-making, by incorporating their leadership into the
structure of power. There is the Council for Rural and Agricultural Development, which is attached to the Government and which includes both peasant activists and members of the former Cabinet. This Council co-operates with the relevant ministry in preparing a program for agricultural development; in the interests of the "whole," however, it seeks to moderate farmers' demands and to pacify rural discontent.

The opposition in Poland after 1980 had penetrated virtually every social institution; hence, a loose coalition of activists associated with, if not allied to, the new government can be found in a great many places. The Ministry of Culture, for example, absorbed the erstwhile underground publishing houses into its structure very quickly, along with the network of political and social groups that had lent support. The ministries of transportation and mining have co-opted former protest leaders within their respective branches. The situation was similar within the Ministry of Defense and the activists of the Movement for Freedom and Peace, or with the commission for liquidation of the Workers' Publishing Cooperatives and the reforms of the state-controlled broadcasting organizations. The actual structural reform in many organizations, such as in the Polish Academy of Science, have taken place with the advice and consent of the new government, even though explicit guidelines for restructuring such institutions were never handed down.

Another clear reflection of the expansion of corporatist control by the state over public life and social institutions is the creation of foundations. In order to promote the
transformation of both the public sphere and the economy, a large number of private foundations have been established, with money and technical assistance coming from both their respective sectors of public administration and from western donors. Among others, one finds a cultural foundation created by the Minister of Culture, the foundation for the development of local government, a foundation for the development of rural areas and agriculture, a small business foundation and many more. Under the ancien régime, a quite popular phenomenon was the appropriation of state resources for one’s own private benefit. A job provided both a fixed salary and fringe benefits, but more important, it allowed the worker control over certain goods and privileges that were in short supply. Such control over resources or access to resources could be bartered, traded or, less likely, sold. These benefits contributed a significant amount to an individual’s economic well-being.

Nowadays, high positions in the state administration can be used to start private or quasi-private foundations. In this way high-ranking political and administrative figures add belonging to a foundation board as a part of their formal responsibilities. In this way, they can influence and set the course for policy in a semi-official or semi-private way, as well as through official channels. Developments in a given public sphere can be fostered and funded; activities, research, and conferences can be sponsored. Such foundations are by definition autonomous and independent of state administration, although their exact legal status is not clear. Positions on the board of such foundations may of course be held —
indeed, are meant to be held --- even if one loses one's job in the state administration. Despite the potential for corruption that such institutions provide, they also substantially extend the sphere of public activities possible on a limited state budget, while enhancing the rudimentary private sector. Foundations are becoming in-between bodies, agencies of change in a given field that are attached to the administration through personal ties, and through the shared tasks of administering, controlling and sponsoring social transformations. They also significantly extend the influence of the state apparatus into public life.

Foreign aid and foreign organizations tend to reinforce state corporatism in a similar manner. Most international assistance is channelled through the central government; as a consequence, the state remains the primary source of funds and direction, which undermines efforts to decentralize public authority and privatize institutions. Money and technical "know-how" from abroad are usually transferred through state agencies, to these private or "mixed" institutions. Such hybrid public-private organizations are primarily controlled by the state administration, although they do have greater freedom of initiative and control. The importance of these arrangements for corporatism is obvious. The leadership shifts very often and very easily between formally autonomous organizations and state administration. Personal contacts, agendas, and objectives blend with official government policy, both facilitating the transition to a market economy and in many ways buffering individuals and institutions against the risks, potential dangers, and the high costs of transition. In Poland,
such corporatist arrangements are clearly functioning as the "institutionalized pattern of policy formation."[4]

Although corporatist settlements are not the most democratic procedures one might envision, they seem to be operating more effectively than unrestrained pluralism. They are, at least by intent, a step towards democracy, after the collapse of Realsozialismus. The authorities have welcomed corporatist solutions when they guaranteed or at least promoted some measure of effective conflict resolution; the incorporation of leaders makes it possible to control interest groups and organizations that are potentially dangerous to the fledgling state. On the other hand, the leaders of virtually all formally independent organizations are quite set on becoming involved with the authorities, as this is invariably seen as the most effective way to secure benefits, both for their rank and file and for themselves. Consequently, all parties to a potential conflict, and their leaders in particular, profit by creating and participating in a variety of "mixed," public-private, conciliatory, or consultative commissions. The potential membership of a union prefers to join an organization that is represented by mixed bodies affiliated to the authorities, because such unions are seemingly able to secure more for their members. This could, of course, operate in the opposite direction, if the rank and file grew disappointed or felt deceived by a conspiracy of elites. Meanwhile, with the strengthening of corporatism, it is more and more natural for state officials to become somewhat isolated from their role as representatives of interests.
connected with one another and with the authorities. Their goals become increasingly inconsistent or at odds with the aims of their original constituency. In such a situation, one can sometimes hear leaders on both sides of a settlement accused of either being or acting like a "nowe politburo." Members of organizations perceive the new pacts and agreements between hitherto competing groups as a collusion between the leadership, aimed at controlling them rather than fulfilling their aims.

Although corporatist solutions need not disenfranchise the rank and file, in Poland the leadership of organized trade union interests are often perceived as unduly passive or compliant, as following the direction of authorities too readily. In the political confusion that commonly occurs in the aftermath of a popular revolution, it is difficult to identify distinctive interests, even when they are one's own; it is difficult to know when one is being well-represented in the circles of power, or what to do if one is not. Consequently, the members of particular interests resign themselves and either join their rivals or stay aloof if such rivals have already associated with the authorities, and there is no other option. The alliance of Solidarity trade union with the OPZZ unions from the Communist era is one example of the latter tendency. When the membership refuses to accept corporatist solutions, conflicts break out outside of any structure whatsoever, they fail to follow the defined procedures, and they often take a much more impetuous and potentially dangerous course. Thus, in certain kinds of situations, corporatism cease to function effectively and

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may prove more precarious than any kind of unrestrained pluralism.

For corporatism to be efficient, the elites associated with the authorities must necessarily exercise effective control over the masses and maintain the appeal of their organizations in order to prevent resignation. There are two other reasons conducive to the development of state corporatism in Poland. The first consists of the lack of clarity regarding interests related to the workplace, as well as the fact that mechanisms for introducing or reintroducing interests into the political arena are limited. The evidence presented in several recent studies suggests that the interests created at work situations are not translated into electoral preferences. Voters choose candidates irrespective of the interests one might infer from individual career prospects or socioeconomic positions. What appears to be more important in voting intentions is the perceived legitimacy of government leadership and the values and feelings that are residues of the Solidarity movement and its aftermath.[5]

The second reason is that the political transition has mostly been promoted from above by the central authority: the new institution of democracy, such as the local governments and the decentralization issue as a whole, as well as market mechanisms and supports, are introduced either by the state administration or by semi-autonomous bodies affiliated to the state or tending to gravitate to state affiliation.

Corporatism is frequent in Poland today not because it is necessarily the most
efficient way of exercising power and control, nor simply because it has been imposed from above. It seems doubtful, in fact, that this particular style of ruling is even the conscious choice of elites. In a country that routinely managed virtually all aspects of social life through personal networks, any other system seems forced and unnatural to both leaders and followers alike. One might wonder whether any other form of leadership was possible in a situation in which the majority of the former opposition were all members of the same salon. The friendships of many people now in power extended from school, to underground political and social organizations, and then continued through imprisonment together. By definition, most of the new leaders have never held an official state post before. Polish society elected them "on trust," so to speak, based on their ideals, and despite little previous administrative experience. In the past, the major channel of recruitment was anti-communist political activity; this channel is no longer viable. Each new crisis, from October 1956 to December 1981, moved subsequent waves of "revisionists and dissenters" from the circles of the social elite toward the opposition ghetto. Recent "supplies" of new blood and fresh leadership came from the leaders of the strikes that occurred under martial law; unlike many other revolutions, however, the victorious opposition forces in Eastern Europe are today perilously close to advanced middle-age. In a democratic polity, the very ease of proclaiming positions or interests, of forming organizations or alliances, undermines credibility. It is difficult to forge bonds of support with a new leadership who, by definition, did not fight in
the heroic battles of the past. Hence, the ease of recruiting an entirely new elite or developing inventive new forms for representing interests — the sine qua non for democratic pluralism — would require very different traditions and customs, as well as stable ways of reaching and listening to public opinion.

For the time being, the new elite together with their closest associates are rather an exclusive circle, despite the apparent internal divisions within Solidarity. Internal divisions result not only from the struggles for power but also from the feeling that quite a large sphere of social aspirations and interests still remains outside the political process. Potentially important social options are lacking, as well as parties that genuinely represent labor, Christians, or Social Democrats. The citizenry would not accept another party that is organized or imposed from above. In order to create a party, you do not simply announce a slogan and a program and wait for followers to turn up. As we all know, spontaneous social movements provide the most natural base for the formation of parties and the allegiance of members. In the absence of such new movements, the founders of new parties must seek legitimation in a tradition assuming, rightly or not, that the patterns from the past that have left a relatively permanent trace in the historical consciousness of Poles should correspond to modern political options or styles of political thought as well.

The Polish situation cannot be compared to that in the West, where new elites inherit handy political options and strategies that have existed and competed with one another for
many decades. In such a situation, the elite might be composed of people who know each other and who went to the same schools. The cultures of Eaton, Cambridge, or West Point may create a harmonious elite, but they do not prescribe political consensus except in terms of form. Leadership is defined by specific organizational roles, not by interpersonal associations or individual biographies. The organizations headed by elites have their own structures of control and their own traditions that support them; they are not, nor could they be, created out of whole cloth.

We could think of a great many slogans that might appeal to different categories of voters, from the struggle against Communism or the nomenklatura to that against the Church. The point is rather to find the proper language and forms of communication to reach those whose interests and values are being addressed. It would be more difficult, however, to found a party based on such options, values or ideologies. This is not a problem peculiar to Poland; traditional political life is said to be on the decline in the West as well. Large parties are losing their membership, while movements and organizations representing narrow interests or specific solutions enjoy an increasing popularity. Parties that want support for their particular ideology or utopian vision of the future have suffered a decline; the differences between the Left and the Right are blurred, and parties that base their programs on coalitions of special interests and local matters begin winning the upper hand. The once stable electorate in many Western countries is today composed of a much
larger proportion of hesitant or uncommitted voters, even in those societies where political parties have existed for a long time, complete with loyal members, steady funding, and established traditions.

In Poland today, one can scarcely think of any reason whatsoever why the average citizen, with little hope of becoming a political leader himself, should join a party based on a rational calculation of his or her interests. The expected profits, in the sphere of values if nowhere else, would never exceed the expenses incurred; moreover, the usefulness or durability of political parties have yet to be proven. If what you have in mind is to promote an interest of your own, to accomplish a social aim or to implement collective values, it is hardly worthwhile to join a fledgling party. On the one hand, no one expects that the vast majority of the hundred or more registered parties in Poland will last a second year. The potential member cannot be sure that a party he or she joins will actually emerge victorious or will even survive. The new parties are not well-defined --- no matter whether their names are traditional, like the liberals or Christian Democrats, or new and exotic like "Party X" or the friends of beer drinkers --- and they are not tied to specific programs, platforms or even predictable tendencies. Candidates are often indistinguishable and programs are hard to decipher from each other. Even the party formed by ex-communists, the new Social Democratic Union, advocates a rapid advance to a market economy. It might make sense to join a particular party if some of your friends are also members, but to join a party of
which you know next to nothing appears idiotic. Finally, most parties have concentrated on
elections, not on inducting and educating new members. The potential member should be
forgiven for being frankly baffled by the substance and meaning of the political terms used
nowadays. Why join a party if you do not know why, how, or where to do it. Voters can
usually locate polling places, but no one advertises where to apply if you want to join a party
or what membership fees or responsibilities are involved. Imagine a person, however rare,
who has some money to spend and is trying to decide how best to spend it: he might buy
an ice cream cone for his child, contribute to building a new school, help the poor, send a
contribution to Lithuania, or join a political party. The latter option still seems by far the
least rational in Poland, unless you want to become a party leader or the leader's friend.
Thus far, Polish parties are in fact primarily composed of leaders and their friends. Even
if what you wanted to do was not so much contribute to a specific party or program, but
invest in the formation of Poland's future political life, joining a party seems a rather
far-fetched idea, even if existing parties offered particularly attractive alternative views of
the future. We do not intend these comments to be malicious; nor do we blame voters for
their apathy. One must remember where we are. The genesis of political life in Poland is
quite simply lodged in attitudes and conditions that are determined by the past.

One can assume that genuine, mass political parties will emerge in the future. The
pressing question is when, and what kind of parties will they be? The answer to these
questions is crucial but the future is very difficult to foresee. However boring and tiresome the next elections may be for society, they will prove a powerful reinforcement for an emerging political life and the formation of parties that reach beyond a narrow political strata. After all, elections shape public opinion; they provide an increased exchange of information and viewpoints, create a language of political interests, and the number of followers between the voters and between the elite and voters. Let us remember that the one and only genuine mass party since Solidarity --- that of the followers of Stanisław Tyminski --- emerged as a consequence of nothing but the elections themselves.

What will the future Polish parties be: electoral machines chiefly assembling coalitions for a variety of practical matters and local solutions, or will they also offer comprehensive visions of the future and definite ideologies? Perhaps both. The seeds that have been planted so far favor parties representing particular interests and values. This is surely the case with the peasant party which openly demands guaranteed prices for agricultural products. The farmers calculate their expected gains by converting cattle to the price of tractors and milk to increases in the cost of fuel. No doubt a mass party will evolve representing the interests of workers and affiliated to the union movement. The origins of intellectual parties (Liberal Democratic Congress, Democratic Union and Center Agreement), now divided by their struggle for power --- the only organized actors on the Polish political scene today besides the peasant party --- are in fact parties of interest related
to the transformation of the system, despite an ideological smokescreen. All those parties provide framing for a new establishment that is still in the making. The changes now in progress no doubt offer many opportunities for a rather small group to establish themselves and to realize rich benefits. The replacement of the state administration, extensive new contacts abroad, privatization and restructuring, joint ventures and new companies --- all of this gives opportunities to members of the upper strata who can introduce and give shape to the processes of change. These groups are represented on all commissions and bodies engaged in the reform of the system. As is only natural, such bodies create not only new legal provisions but also new ideologies of change.

Over time, one side effect of reform may develop in opposition to these parties of interest. A party for the dissatisfied and disappointed, for example, who cannot find a place for themselves in the new social order may be formed. The people's enduring loyalty and adherence to the phraseology and discourse of discontent might give rise to a mass party with a populist ideology, such as party "X" or Solidarity '80.

Entering a period of revolutionary changes, Poland as compared to the other East European countries perhaps had a more distinctive vision of what had to be overthrown but also of what should be created.[6] The latter included democracy, liberal institutions, privatized enterprises, a market system and institutions that aimed to join or rejoin Western civilization. That very vision legitimated the steps that were taken by the new authorities.
But perhaps precisely because it was more distinctive, the Polish program of transformation was also more unrealistic than elsewhere in the region. We already know that Poland's actual destination point on the road of change is by no means as certain as most of us thought; we know neither when it can be reached, nor where exactly we might actually land. After all, the distance between rich and poor countries elsewhere in the world is not being reduced, but even grows. Crisis-related problems of agriculture and persistent recession emerge. But above all, the people have realized somewhat later than in the rest of the post-Communist world that their interests were shaped by the former system and do not necessarily converge with the above vision of the future. Privatization, unemployment, restructuring of heavy industry, cutting down the state budget, as well as the recession resulting from free prices and the struggle against inflation --- all of these threaten nearly all categories of state employees. Moreover, the difficulties and fall in standards of living caused by the changes have reduced the "credits" of the authorities, in terms of trust and legitimacy. Doubts arise about not exactly the direction of change or the transition itself but about the proper way of changing things.

For all that, as shown by sociological surveys, most people still give their support, if only passively, to the directions chosen. They believe that an introduction of the market is bound to lead sooner or later to prosperity through which the whole of society will profit more or less. What is becoming more and more important, however, is the problem of
reaching that stage: how long the transformation will take, how much it will cost, and who will pay for the bulk of it. The more and more universal awareness of such dilemmas leads to a spread in the attitude that could be summarized as, "I am for changes and reform, provided it is not made at my expense." Thus, one finds people endorsing privatization, the dismissal of excessive staff, and frozen wages --- but not where they work.

Those who express the aims thus formulated are often the employees' councils and trade unions of the separate firms; their antagonists, and the advocates of reform include sometimes the management and relatively small groups that profit by the introduction of changes. These in fact conservative attitudes --- otherwise most rational [7] --- may result in a barrier that would jeopardize the reform when group interests represented by the unions are formed and organize into larger coalitions. The above-mentioned corporatist settlements and the co-option of elites will prevent the association of interests into strong professional groups and mitigate the escalation of workers' demands. It is also probable (an assumption supported by the findings of sociological studies) that the authorities engaged in reform will further receive passive support from the majority in their fragmentary conflicts with a succession of groups representing employees' interests at different stages of reform. In all probability, though, this will entail only the passive support of most of society, expressed first and foremost during elections.

How to replace this passive support with a social movement promoting change, one
in which agencies can create the new regulations and patterns of behavior and in which autonomous individual activity of different kinds aimed at achieving prosperity will, when aggregated, contribute to the process of transformation? Can a corporatist state administration achieve these goals? And, perhaps most important for Poland's future, are the corporatist arrangements that further an economic transition compatible with stable democratic institutions for the longer term? These are the questions that will determine the future of Polish democracy.
NOTES

1. This is, quite obviously, an over-simplification. With the country divided into unequally populated electoral districts, each electing one and the same number of deputies, the votes from the less populated districts weigh more. This was the case in Poland in the last elections to the Senate where the small and mainly peasant south-eastern provinces and the larger, more densely-populated ones in central Poland all elected the same number of Senators. See Heyns and Bialecki (1991).

2. See the series of sociological surveys: Polacy '80, Polacy '81, Polacy '84 and Polacy '90, edited by W. Adamski, et al., at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences. In this research the answers to the question, "What is for you the most important thing to be done?" were generally answered with the response "getting an appartment" as the first choice.


6. In the Soviet Union, for example, the road of change was never clearly stated or agreed upon; everyone realized that political and economic liberalization involved the direct threat
of the disintegration of the empire, an eventuality which not all advocates of progress were willing to tolerate. In Czecho-Slovakia and Hungary, for different and rather specific reasons, there seem to have been from the very beginning more advocates of the state sector in the economy, and more support for the welfare state and for social democracy than in Poland. East Germany, of course, limited its program of change to the single act of unification, abdicating the need to creating institutions mediating interests.

7. This is generally described as the "free rider dilemma" in the sociological analyses of rational choice and the calculation of the profitability of participation in collective action.


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