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THE 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN POLAND

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Abstract

In the October 2000 presidential election in Poland, the incumbent, Aleksander Kwasniewski, won his bid for reelection by a very comfortable margin. This paper offers an account of the candidates and the campaign, followed by an analysis, based on a post-election survey, of the demographic, social and ideological factors that contributed to Kwasniewski's victory. The survey reveals a strong ideological division in the electorate, one that is less a matter of differences in economic or social status, than of a cultural and axiological split between a secular "left" and a "right" that embraces Catholic and nationalist traditions. All major contenders and parties, left and right, embraced the continuation of market-oriented economic reform, European integration, and democratic political procedures, indicating that Poland's post-communist economic and political orders enjoy a broad consensus and are very likely to be sustained.

Introduction

In the October 2000 presidential election in Poland there were no dimpled chads, no looming deadlines, no split court decisions: there was no need for recounts. The incumbent president, Aleksander Kwasniewski, won his bid for reelection by a very comfortable margin. It was the third presidential election by a popular vote since the emergence of democracy in 1989, and for the first time a runoff round was unnecessary: Kwasniewski mustered a majority in the first round, conducted on October 8.

Still, the Polish election, like that in the U.S., revealed a deep ideological polarization of the electorate. This polarization, however, is not related to any major policy choices facing the president or the government as a whole, and it is unlikely that it would hamper economic and social developments or undermine the sustainability of democracy in Poland.

In this paper, the results of the election will be examined in the context of prospects for political stability in Poland. It will begin with a report on candidates, the campaign, and the vote itself, followed by an analysis of the demographic, social, and ideological composition of the major contenders' constituencies. In particular, it will try to explain the sources and the meaning of Kwasniewski's victory as well as of Krzaklewski's defeat and look at the prospects for creation of a strong political center. The empirical data used in this analysis come from a post-election survey conducted on a representative sample of all eligible voters.

The candidates

Thirteen candidates contested the election. They were:

Dariusz Grabowski, a deputy to the Sejm from the Coalition for Poland (a coalition of a few minor rightist parties);

Piotr Ikonowicz, also a Sejm deputy, the leader of the tiny Polish Socialist Party (PPS), firmly placed at the left extreme of the political spectrum;

Jaroslaw Kalinowski, the leader of the Polish Peasant Party (PSL), the fourth largest group in the parliament;

Janusz Korwin-Mikke, the leader of the libertarian Union of Real Politics (UPR) and an unsuccessful candidate in 1995;

Marian Krzaklewski, the leader of both the trade union Solidarity and Electoral Action Solidarity, an umbrella organization of several parties and groupings stemming from the Solidarity movement;

Aleksander Kwasniewski, the incumbent president, in the early 1990s the leader of the post-communist Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), and, earlier, in the late 1980s, a junior minister in the communist government;

Andrzej Lepper, the leader of Self-Defense (*Samoobrona*, a radical organization of peasants opposed to economic reforms), a candidate in the 1995 election;

Jan Lopuszanski, the leader of the tiny Polish Alliance (*Porozumienie Polskie*) faction in the Sejm;

Andrzej Olechowski, a former minister of finance (1991-92) and of foreign affairs (1993-95);

Jan Olszewski, a former prime minister (1991-92), a 1995 presidential candidate, and the leader of the Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland (ROP) party (a few days before the election he withdrew and endorsed Krzaklewski);

Bogdan Pawlowski, a businessman, who run also in 1995;

Lech Walesa, the former leader of Solidarity and president from 1990 to 1995;

Tadeusz Wilecki, a retired general and a former Chief of the General Staff, endorsed by the nationalist National Democratic Party (SND).

The campaign

As stipulated by the electoral law, the official campaign was short, although the major contenders (Kwasniewski, Krzaklewski, Olechowski) were in fact campaigning for about a year. Nonetheless, legal regulations prevented them from access to mass media, even in the form of paid advertisements, until 15 days before the election. Some of the candidates challenged this limitation on technical grounds (whether

it should cover only the public media or private ones as well), but nobody questioned the constitutionality of this rule as a possible violation of the freedom of speech.

The campaign was rather lukewarm, focusing much more on personalities of the candidates than on any substantial programmatic issues. The candidates seemed to agree with one another on the general direction of all major policies, domestic (continuation of market reforms), as well as foreign (integration to European and Atlantic structures). The only exceptions were Lepper and Ikonowicz, both highly critical of the economic and social policies of all post-1989 governments, and Lopuszanski, strongly opposed to Poland's membership in NATO and the European Union.

The major differences among the candidates emerged in their assessment of Poland's communist past and the roles played by some of them in the times of the old regime. In this context, two of the most prominent candidates, the incumbent President Kwasniewski and his predecessor Walesa, were formally accused of lying in their obligatory sworn statements that they never were "conscious undercover collaborators" of communist secret services.¹ (A third candidate, Olechowski, admitted collaboration with an economic intelligence agency in the 1970s and 1980s.)

Rumors about Walesa having been tricked or blackmailed to sign a collaboration agreement with secret police in the 1970s have been circulating for more than a decade. Walesa has always denied the charges, although he has admitted to signing some papers when he was interrogated by the police about his involvement in the 1970 workers' revolt. Certain potentially relevant documents mysteriously disappeared from the Ministry of Internal Affairs files during Walesa's presidency. Eventually, he was cleared of all accusations by the court, but not before the humiliation of a public controversy and a closed-door trial. The same court did not find any evidence to question Kwasniewski's sworn statement. The value of allegations against the incumbent president was best summed up by Walesa, who said of his adversary: "He didn't have to be an covert agent, as he was an overt apparatchik."

Even more controversial than these trials proved to be a brief video showing certain more recent events. The Krzaklewski campaign showed – during its segment of free time on public television allotted to each candidate – a video composed of two parts. One showed President Kwasniewski moving

somewhat erratically during a ceremony in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, commemorating Polish officers killed by the Soviets during World War II. In the other, the national security advisor to Kwasniewski, Marek Siwiec, was shown making the sign of the cross and kneeling to kiss the ground upon exiting the presidential helicopter during an official visit to the city of Kalisz, to the obvious amusement and even encouragement of the president. The off-screen commentary pointed out that a person who participates in acts mocking John Paul II and appears intoxicated during solemn ceremonies dedicated to Polish victims of Soviet repression insults core Polish values and traditions and does not deserve to be president.

The video received mixed reviews. Some commentators recognized it as a legitimate form of political argument, while others condemned Krzaklewski for negative campaigning and an instrumental approach to the admiration of the Pope common among Poles. Many saw the decision to use the video as a sign of Krzaklewski's desperation. Krzaklewski, Walesa's successor as the leader of Solidarity and the major architect of Electoral Action Solidarity's (AWS) victory in the general election of 1997, was perceived as the only serious challenger to Kwasniewski, but throughout the campaign trailed badly in the polls. Our survey data show that despite all the controversy and publicity, the "Mock the Pope" video had a negligible effect on the results of the election. Of the almost 80% of respondents who admitted familiarity with the video, only 8.5% said it had any impact on the way they voted, and the flows of voters from Kwasniewski to Krzaklewski and back caused by the video offset each other.

The election

The election took place on Sunday, October 8, 2000. Of the 29,122,304 eligible voters, 17,789,231, or 61.1%, cast their ballots. The number of invalid ballots was 190,312, or 1.1%. The voting was conducted in a peaceful, even solemn atmosphere. No major irregularities were reported. The results of the vote are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Presidential Election, October 8, 2000.

Name	Party	No of Votes	% of Votes
Aleksander Kwasniewski	ind (SLD)	9,485,224	53.90
Andrzej Olechowski	ind	3,044,141	17.30
Marian Krzaklewski	AWS	2,739,621	15.57
Jaroslav Kalinowski	PSL	1,047,949	5.95
Andrzej Lepper	Self-Defense	537,570	3.05
Janusz Korwin-Mikke	UPR	252,499	1.43
Lech Walesa	ChD III RP	178,590	1.01
Jan Lopuszanski	ind (PP)	139,682	.79
Dariusz Grabowski	ind (KdP)	89,002	.51
Piotr Ikonowicz	PPS	38,672	.22
Tadeusz Wilecki	ind (SND)	28,805	.16
Bogdan Pawlowski	ind	17,164	.10

(Ind = independent; names of parties that endorsed a given independent candidate are indicated in parentheses. Party names' abbreviations: SLD = Democratic Left Alliance, AWS = Electoral Action Solidarity, PSL = Polish Peasant Party, UPR = Union of Real Politics, ChD III RP = Christian Democracy of the Third Republic, PP = Polish Alliance, KdP = Coalition for Poland, PPS = Polish Socialist Party, SND = National Democratic Party)

Kwasniewski's outright victory in the first round was hardly surprising. His popularity rankings have been high throughout the entire term (1995-2000), and he consistently led by large margins in pre-election opinion polls. The relatively strong showing by the runner-up, Andrzej Olechowski, the former minister in a couple of post-1989 governments, who ran as an independent and a self-described centrist, indicated the strength of moderate, middle-of-the-road attitudes among the electorate. Marian Krzaklewski, the candidate who attempted to rally behind him all the post-Solidarity forces, was dealt a humiliating defeat, failing not only to force a run-off, but even to finish second. Yet for many observers, most devastating was the fate of Lech Walesa, the legendary ex-leader of Solidarity, who collected barely 1% of the vote, losing not only to the leaders of major parties, but also to such fringe candidates as Lepper or Korwin-Mikke. To interpret these fortunes and misfortunes we have to examine first the demographic and social composition of candidates' constituencies, as well as their ideological preferences.

Demographic and social factors

The following six tables show how the major candidates in the election, Kwasniewski, Olechowski, and Krzaklewski, fared among major demographic and social groups.

Table 2. Vote by sex (in %)

Sex	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other	(turnout)
male	60.3	16.2	11.7	11.7	(72.0)
female	58.5	18.8	12.8	9.8	(72.2)

Table 3. Vote by age (in %)

Age	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other	(turnout)
18-29	64.5	19.1	4.5	11.8	(65.1)
30-39	57.9	14.0	18.2	9.9	(66.9)
40-49	51.4	25.7	10.1	12.8	(72.5)
50-59	59.1	16.5	11.6	12.8	(80.0)
60-69	67.3	15.4	11.5	5.8	(82.5)
70 and older	57.7	13.5	18.9	9.9	(67.3)
Median (in years)	46.07	43.84	48.53	43.91	

Table 4. Vote by place of residence (in %)

Type and size of community	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other	(turnout)
village	56.3	11.3	12.6	19.8	(64.3)
town less than 20,000 inhabitants	58.7	11.9	22.0	7.3	(75.2)
town 20,000 to 50,000 inhabitants	69.3	20.0	5.3	5.3	(75.0)
town 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants	64.8	16.9	16.9	1.4	(71.0)
city 100,000 to 500,000 inhabitants	62.9	23.8	7.7	5.6	(75.3)
city more than 500,000 inhabitants	52.3	28.4	10.1	9.2	(85.8)

Table 5. Vote by education (in %)

Education	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other	(turnout)
elementary	64.3	8.6	15.7	11.4	(64.7)
vocational	67.4	10.0	12.1	10.5	(63.8)
high school	55.5	23.6	10.3	10.6	(82.4)
some college	48.4	35.5	12.9	3.2	(66.0)
college	47.2	29.2	11.2	12.4	(89.9)

Table 6. Vote by occupation (in %)

Occupation	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other	(turnout)
professionals	50.4	29.2	10.9	9.5	(86.7)
workers	66.7	16.4	10.9	6.1	(67.9)
farmers	33.3	0	25.0	41.7	(62.1)
self-employed	37.0	29.6	18.5	14.8	(69.2)
students	50.0	25.0	6.3	18.8	(69.6)
pensioners	64.5	13.6	14.5	7.3	(70.5)
unemployed	71.4	10.7	6.0	11.9	(75.7)
other	51.2	19.5	17.1	12.2	(69.5)

Kwasniewski won the election among all major demographic groups and social strata, with the exception of farmers (where he tied with Kalinowski, the leader of the PSL). The two other major candidates, Olechowski and Krzaklewski, enjoyed more diversified support. Olechowski did particularly well among professionals, the self-employed, and students, those with at least some college education, and the dwellers of big cities. Krzaklewski was able to beat Olechowski for the number two spot among the elderly, those with at most elementary education, and the dwellers of villages and little towns. As these categories tend to overlap with one another, it is safe to say that Krzaklewski was supported most strongly by culturally and socially traditionalist milieus, while Olechowski's constituency is more modern and urbane.

Economic factors

According to conventional wisdom, mass political behavior (in particular voting behavior) in post-communist nations is driven mostly by economic factors. Societies undergoing rapid social and economic change bifurcate into winners and losers, haves and have-nots, causing massive feelings of relative deprivation, which in turn generates political populism. The hardships of transition feed retroactive sentiments – longing for the times of full employment and a reliable, if merely minimal, social

safety net. Such attitudes have supposedly accounted for the remarkable comeback of former communists to political prominence across Eastern Europe, of which Kwasniewski's rise to presidency in 1995 and his 2000 reelection are, arguably, the most spectacular illustrations.

The analysis of our survey data does not confirm this supposition. The constituencies of major candidates do not differ much from one another with respect to their economic situation. The median monthly family income per capita is almost exactly the same for Kwasniewski's and Krzaklewski's supporters, and only slightly higher among Olechowski's supporters (at the exchange rate on the day of election \$1.00 = 4.56 PLN)

Kwasniewski	515.96 PLN (\$113.15)
Olechowski	593.41 PLN (\$130.13)
Krzaklewski	512.70 PLN (\$112.44)
others	422.63 PLN (\$92.68)

A more direct relationship can be found between the vote and the subjective assessment of one's economic situation. A series of questions measured respondents' assessments of their household's current economic situation, perspectives for change in the near future (one year), and the actual change of economic status over the course of the last year. The breakdown of the vote by answers to these three questions is given in tables 7, 8, and 9.

Table 7. Vote by assessment of current economic situation of the household (in %)

Current economic situation	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other
very bad	71.8	10.7	8.4	9.2
bad	63.7	16.7	10.8	8.8
neither bad not good	56.2	17.2	14.9	11.7
good	58.0	23.5	9.2	9.2
very good	45.5	25.5	14.5	14.5

Table 8. Vote by assessment of future economic situation of the household (in %)

Future economic situation	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other
worse	64.2	16.0	10.2	9.6
no change	57.4	17.4	13.6	11.6
better	60.2	21.3	9.3	9.3

Table 9. Vote by assessment of recent change in the economic situation of the household (in %)

Change in economic situation during last year	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other
for worse	67.8	13.9	9.2	9.2
no change	54.8	19.1	13.5	12.6
for better	52.9	25.5	17.6	3.9

While Kwasniewski remains a clear winner among those satisfied and those unhappy, the optimists and the pessimists alike, the more satisfied and optimistic with regard to their economic situation were the voters, the lower was the margin of his victory. Among the other candidates, it is Olechowski who profits at Kwasniewski's expense. This finding is consistent with the argument that Olechowski's popularity is strongest among well-educated urban professionals, who seem to be the major beneficiaries of the economic reforms implemented after the fall of communism. Support for Krzaklewski does not reveal any consistent pattern in relation to the self-assessment of voters' economic situation.

Ideological factors

Krzaklewski's campaign was focused on the ideological differences between himself and Kwasniewski. The latter, an ex-communist apparatchik, was depicted by the former's partisans as an opportunist and a populist demagogue, whose only real concern and objective is to place his cohorts – the old communist nomenklatura – in positions of power. Krzaklewski, on the contrary, was portrayed not only as a skillful and effective politician, but also as a statesman guided in his behavior by an inner

compass of the core moral values derived from Polish national traditions and the teachings of the Roman Catholic church.

The voters seemed to have accepted this message but did not draw the conclusions Krzaklewski and his people had hoped for. As indicated above, Krzaklewski fared better than elsewhere among socially and culturally traditionalist constituencies. This observation is confirmed by data in tables 10 and 11, showing the relationship between religiosity (measured by frequency of one's participation in church services as well as by a self-declaration) and the vote.

Table 10. Vote by religiosity (church attendance; in %)

Participation in church services	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other
more often than once a week	35.5	19.4	32.3	12.9
once a week	51.7	20.4	15.8	12.1
a couple of times a month	67.5	16.7	6.1	9.6
a couple of times a year	70.3	15.9	4.1	9.7
never	85.9	9.8	1.6	4.7

Table 11. Vote by self-declaration of religiosity (in %)

religiosity	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other
deeply religious	42.7	13.5	30.2	13.5
religious	60.0	18.8	10.3	10.9
not religious	83.3	12.5	2.1	2.1

While Krzaklewski did not defeat Kwasniewski even among the most religious segments of the voters, his popularity among those attending church frequently and declaring themselves as deeply religious is several times (15 to 20) higher than among those who don't go to church and/or consider themselves agnostics or atheists. Inversely, support for Kwasniewski diminished with the rise in religiosity. For Olechowski, there is no clear pattern here.

Even more vivid is the relationship between the vote and the self placement of voters on the ideological (left to right) continuum, shown in table 12.

Table 12. Vote by ideological self-placement (in %)

Self-placement	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other
extreme left	94.6	2.2	0	3.2
moderate left	89.9	3.1	0	6.9
center	56.8	24.6	4.0	14.6
moderate right	15.7	43.1	29.4	11.8
extreme right	5.4	25.7	60.8	8.1

Unlike in the case of economic factors, ideological self-declarations of voters coincide almost perfectly with their choices in presidential election 2000: Kwasniewski captures virtually all the vote on the left and wins by a landslide in the center; Olechowski is the candidate of choice of those perceiving themselves as moderate right (with a respectable showing among the centrists); while Krzaklewski enjoys firm support on the extreme right. The lack of correlation between views on one's economic status and the ideological self-placement indicates that the left-right dimension is defined in Polish politics (by the voters and the elites alike) not in terms of social and economic policies, but rather as a cultural and axiological divide, with the left being more secular and often (albeit not necessarily) post-communist, and the right embracing Catholic and nationalistic traditions.

Of course, ideological self-placement has a very general and abstract character and does not have to translate automatically into support for or rejection of given policies. Table 13 illustrates how support for selected policies relates to the vote in the 2000 election. Support or rejection of these policies was measured here on an eleven-point scale, where 0 indicated complete rejection and 10 full support for a given policy.

Table 13. Support for selected policies among constituencies of major candidates (mean values; 0=minimum, 10=maximum)

Policy	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other
increase the role of the state in the economy	6.68	5.83	7.22	5.87
separate the church from the state	8.78	8.15	4.98	8.30
ban former nomenklatura from public offices	3.35	6.53	8.07	4.26
eliminate unemployment	7.89	7.31	7.64	8.27
enter the European Union	5.26	5.39	5.64	4.32
legalize abortions	7.48	6.16	3.62	5.91

Again, Kwasniewski's and Krzaklewski's constituencies seem almost poles apart on issues of ideological or axiological nature: the separation of church and state, abortion, and the treatment of former communist officials (nomenklatura). There is virtually no difference between them as far as economic and social policies, such as the extent of state interventionism or limiting unemployment, are concerned. They are also equally, albeit only lukewarmly, supportive of Poland's entry to the European Union. The followers of Olechowski more strongly than other voters are against increasing the role played by the state in the economy, while on the ideological issues they place somewhere between the extremes, leaning toward Kwasniewski on issues related to secularization and toward Krzaklewski on the question of de-communization.

Winners, losers, and democratic sustainability

The Polish Constitution gives the president only limited prerogatives, with the major executive powers vested in the prime minister and his cabinet. Hence, regardless of intense interest the 2000 presidential election aroused among the public, its political significance is limited. The real redistribution of power is expected in 2001, the year of the next parliamentary election (due to take place no later than September).

Four dominant actors (parties and coalitions) will contest this forthcoming election: Electoral Action Solidarity (AWS), a coalition of the trade union Solidarity and four major (in addition to several

minor) Christian-democratic and conservative parties, all having roots in the Solidarity movement of the 1980s; the liberal-democratic Freedom Union (UW); the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), the social-democratic successor to the communist party; and the populist Polish Peasant Party (PSL). Table 14 shows how sympathizers of each of the major parties voted in the presidential election.

Table 14. Vote in presidential election by party preference (in %)

Party	Kwasniewski	Olechowski	Krzaklewski	Other	(turnout)
AWS	5.4	20.3	71.6	2.7	(83.1)
SLD	95.5	2.3	.6	1.7	(85.5)
UW	29.2	56.3	4.2	10.4	(88.9)
PSL	31.3	3.1	6.3	59.4	(76.2)
other	59.1	20.6	8.2	12.1	(64.8)

While Kwasniewski captured virtually all votes of the SLD supporters, his popular base exceeds that of his old party, perhaps by twice as much. (He did well among the followers of the UW, the PSL, and other, minor parties.) Such enormous support for a former communist apparatchik in a country where the communists were swept from power by a landslide electoral victory of Solidarity only 11 years ago still puzzles many observers, Polish and foreign alike. Kwasniewski's popularity escapes sociological interpretations, as the demographic and social composition of his constituency is exactly the same as the composition of the whole society. He is rejected by those for whom the overriding consideration is the condemnation of communism on moral and/or ideological grounds.

Among factors explaining the "Kwasniewski phenomenon" one may point to a widely shared belief that he is a moderate, a true middle-of-the-roader, a leader committed to the continuation of political and economic reforms, but also a politician who doesn't lose the plight of the ordinary man from his sight. The SLD won't be able to duplicate in 2001 the size of Kwasniewski's 2000 triumph, but it seems set for an electoral victory anyway.

Kwasniewski's major opponent, Marian Krzaklewski, was able to mobilize the core base of the AWS coalition: staunch anti-communists, Catholic fundamentalists, and the nationalistic right. Those who tried to compete with Krzaklewski for the votes of this very constituency (Walesa, Lopuszanski,

Wilecki, and Grabowski) fared miserably, each gaining no more than one per cent of the vote. But Krzaklewski's strength on the far right proved to be his weakness among more moderate voters. His message, emphasizing the alleged moral superiority of his political milieu and the need to purge former communists from Poland's economy and political system, sounded vindictive, exclusionary, and out-of-pace with the mood of the public.

Krzaklewski's cause was also hurt by certain actions of the government he helped to create in 1997 (from October 1997 to April 2000, a coalition of the AWS and UW, since April 2000 an AWS minority government). In 1999, the government launched a cluster of four major reforms of public administration and welfare state services. These reforms, while unquestionably necessary (and long delayed by the inaction of successive SLD/PSL governments in the 1993-1997 period), were, by and large, poorly prepared and implemented. The growing dissatisfaction of the public was reflected in the government's dwindling popularity ratings and contributed to Krzaklewski's defeat. His share of the vote among those highly critical of the four reforms was barely half the size of his share among voters approving the reforms, with the number of the former much higher than the latter. (For instance, the reform of the health care system was evaluated positively by 10.9% and negatively by 66.1% of respondents in our survey; in the first group Krzaklewski won 17.6% of the vote, in the second 10.6%.)

Krzaklewski's poor showing in the election prompted challenges to his leadership within the AWS. Regardless of the expected personnel changes and internal restructuring, the AWS will enter the 2001 campaign as an underdog. To achieve even moderate success it would have to reach beyond its traditionalist, conservative base.

The runner-up in the 2000 election, Andrzej Olechowski, ran as an independent. He filled the void created by the UW, which refrained from fielding a candidate. Olechowski managed to rally behind him almost 60% of the UW supporters, but his appeal extended even further, to the AWS and other parties' constituencies. In another words, he was able to reach out to certain voters who have been skeptical towards the UW (often blamed for its alleged elitism). Olechowski's relative success points to a real opportunity for political actors who commit fully to the free market/free enterprise economic policies,

while adopting a modern, moderate, secular standpoint on cultural and ideological issues. Their potential constituency, which may be labeled for shorthand as young urban professionals, will grow with the expansion of the free market economy and increased access to higher education. It is up to Olechowski and the UW (who recently have been negotiating specific terms of political cooperation) whether they will succeed in attracting this constituency in 2001 and in the more distant future.

The three candidates discussed above collected together almost 87% of the popular vote. Despite the obvious ideological differences among them, all three have demonstrated strong commitment to democracy and the market economy. In addition, each of them is not only a declared enthusiast, but above all an accomplished contributor to Poland's integration with European and Atlantic structures. Regardless of electoral rhetoric, they all opt for balanced, moderate policies. And the leader of the PSL, Jaroslaw Kalinowski, who finished fourth with almost 6% of the vote, did not deviate much from this pattern.

In contrast, the candidates who expressed extreme views on major or minor issues, did not attract any significant following. Among them were Andrzej Lepper, a radical peasant leader and the notorious organizer of protest actions on streets and highways; Janusz Korwin-Mikke, the eloquent advocate of nineteenth-century style libertarianism; Jan Lopuszanski, whose fundamentalist Catholicism prompted him to reject Poland's accession to NATO and the EU; Piotr Ikonowicz, the critic of the new economic and social policies from ultra-leftist, anti-capitalist positions; and the nationalists of various shades, Dariusz Grabowski, Tadeusz Wilecki, and Bogdan Pawlowski. Their fate in this election is a very strong indication that among the moderate Polish electorate, balanced attitudes dominate overwhelmingly, a critical element of democratic stability and sustainability.

Among the also-rans one name deserves special attention. Lech Walesa, the leader of Solidarity from its beginnings in 1980 to its ascent to power in 1989-1990 and the nation's president from 1990 to 1995, should not be lumped together with the fringe candidates. When he first ran for president in 1990, he won comfortably (40% of the vote in the first round, 74% in the runoff). Once elected, Walesa proved

to be almost as bad at being president as he had been brilliant as leader of a peaceful revolution. In his bid for reelection in 1995, he lost due to his own arrogance.

Since 1988, Walesa gradually severed ties with all those advisors and staffers who could effectively stage his campaign and coach him for the final confrontation. After winning his first term, he never seriously attempted to build his own political machine. Without apt advisors and without a political machine, he still recorded a remarkable comeback in 1995 as he rallied behind himself almost half of the voters (33.1% in the first round and 48.3% in the runoff). He was perceived by many voters as a flawed but effective leader, the only one who had a real chance to stop the former communists and their leader Kwasniewski in their march for power. The loss to Kwasniewski stripped Walesa of his charisma. To put it metaphorically, he became a St. George who failed to kill the dragon. In 2000, even his most devoted supporters of the past turned away from him and kept looking for another savior. Most ended up in Krzaklewski's camp. Around Walesa, there was nobody to advise him against this attempted comeback.

To sum up, the prospects for political stability and sustainability of democracy in Poland are strong. In the 2000 presidential election, the electorate overwhelmingly rejected candidates representing any extreme positions, whether from the left or from the right, in favor of moderate leaders. Even if within mainstream politics one can observe a deep ideological divide (between traditionalist Catholicism and modern secularism), this split remains unrelated to major economic and social policies. On issues such as the consolidation of the market economy and further economic reforms, social welfare policies, or European integration, there is a potential for a multi-partisan consensus, and any debate on policy choices is likely to focus on details rather than on fundamentals.

Furthermore, the orderly conduct of this election (as well as previous ones) and the absence of challenges to the legitimacy of the chosen president demonstrate that democratic procedures are well-conceived, well-defined, and strong, and that they enjoy a universal allegiance among both the elites and the public. It is not an overstatement to say that a decade after the fall of communism Poland is a consolidated, stable, sustainable democracy.

Endnotes

¹ According to a law approved in 1997 and amended in 1998, all officials in the central government, both elected and nominated, have to submit sworn statements regarding their affiliation or collaboration with the secret services of the communist state (from July 1944 to May 1990). A 2000 amendment to the electoral law extended this practice to all candidates in the presidential election. The statements are reviewed by a specially created office of the Spokesman for the Public Interest. If discrepancies between a statement and the existing records are found, the case is referred to a designated court. If a person is found guilty of lying about his past (and the decision is upheld on appeal), he loses his current office (or eligibility to run for president) and is barred from all public offices for a period of ten years. Among many criticisms of the law, it has been pointed out that it relies too heavily on the unreliable and incomplete records of the former secret police.