

From Protest to Party

The Transformation of Post-Communist Opposition Movements in East-Central Europe

Victor Gomez
PhD candidate in political science
University of Toronto
victorczech.gomez@utoronto.ca

The founding elections of a new democracy often pit some kind of anti-authoritarian opposition movement against the remnants of the former authoritarian regime. Such founding elections tend to have the character of a referendum on the authoritarian regime, a situation in which opposition movements perform well simply by demonstrating their anti-regime credentials and promising democratic reforms.

Subsequent elections, however, tend to be more complex and require a different approach. History has shown that some former opposition movements are good at adapting themselves to the specific rigors electoral politics. Others, like the revolutionaries of old, end up being “swallowed” by the very transition they helped set in motion. The failure of such pro-democracy movements is significant because it could open up opportunities for members of the former regime to succeed or for democracy itself to be questioned. What are the factors that enable some former opposition movements to transform themselves into viable political parties, while others fail to do so?

This paper will examine this question in the context of the democratic transitions in East-Central Europe. While it is true that in virtually all of the post-communist countries of that region, the original opposition movements that took power in 1989 ended up splintering, the extent of that fragmentation and the institutionalization of parties with roots in the initial anti-communist umbrella movements have varied significantly across the region. In some countries, more than 15 years after the collapse of the communist regime, the offspring of the original anti-communist movements that swept to power in 1989 have managed to establish strong and viable parties. In other countries, they remain fragmented and organizationally weak.

The primary purpose of this paper will be to outline a model to explain the variation in the fates of the anti-communist groupings across different countries. Why did some of the original anti-communist movements dissolve into a shifting assortment of relatively weak and small parties, while others have spawned relatively strong parties?

The puzzle is even more striking if we look more closely at some of the cases in the region. Why did Poland’s Solidarity movement, which was a strong and large anti-communist movement with relatively deep roots in society, end up failing to produce even one stable and successful political party that would have staying power over the course of the post-communist phase? Why did Hungary’s relatively small, divided, and isolated anti-communist opposition groups end up producing a strong, centralized party with wide and deep popular support?

Scholars have traditionally pointed to the importance of electoral institutions or underlying cleavages in determining the degree of fragmentation in party systems.

(Duverger 1954; Lipset and Rokkan 1967) But electoral institutions in new democracies tend to be endogenous to the political transition itself. It may in any case take several rounds of elections for the proto-parties and movements of new democracies to understand and adjust to the specific incentives embedded in particular electoral rules. (Kitschelt et al. 1999; Elster et al. 1998) In that sense, there will be a delay in the effect of electoral institutions. Similarly, decades of communist rule in the region meant that whatever cleavages existed in the early to mid-1990s were not very strong. (Lawson 1999: 31-32)

Scholars working on post-communist Europe have also examined the impact on party systems of ideological concentration in the electorate (Horowitz and Browne 2005) or the timing and sequences of various aspects of the transition (Reich 2001). Much of this work has sought to explain party system attributes. Others have stressed the importance of elite strategies in some combination with critical junctures during the transition for determining the stability of political parties and party systems in the region. (Szczerbiak and Hanley 2006; Bakke and Sitter 2005) While the model developed in this paper will also focus on elite decisions and strategies, it will differ from those arguments by systematically incorporating two specific historical factors that either constrained or opened up the critical choices for those elites.

Finally, many scholars have examined the impact that historical developments and legacies from communism have on contemporary politics in East-Central Europe, especially with regard to the competitiveness of communist successor parties (Kitschelt 2002; Grzymala-Busse 2002) But if the fate of the communist successor parties depends on the pre-1989 histories of those parties, then it may be logical assume that the fates of the parties that emerged from the anti-communist opposition may also be affected by the histories of those movements.

This paper will posit that the organizational legacies of these opposition movements and their genesis in different late communist conditions had an impact on their subsequent development once party-based competition was established.

In particular, this paper will focus on two factors from the communist phase: first, the extent to which the anti-communist opposition movements were able to organize before 1989; and second, the degree of antagonism between the anti-communist opposition and the communist regime before 1989. This paper will contend that variations on these two factors established constraints or opened up opportunities for party leaders in the post-communist phase that affected the institutional development of their parties.

Intuitively, one might expect a strong and well organized opposition movement that had an antagonistic relationship with an authoritarian regime to have the resources and motivation necessary to stick together and set up a strong political party in the post-authoritarian phase. Indeed, early on in the transition, various observers posited that the Polish anti-communist opposition was most likely to develop a set of parties with strong representative capacities. This was because the Solidarity movement had deep roots in the country's civil society, a large number of members, and a tradition of mass-level participation. (Stark and Bruszt 1991; Grabowski 1996) In contrast, the parties that emerged from the Hungarian opposition were viewed as having no deep connections to society. (Stark and Bruszt 1991)

But an examination of the cases suggests that the opposite has, in fact, occurred. Poland's Solidarity movement, which endured a harsh crackdown from the communist regime, has dissolved into incoherent shards many times over since 1989. Hungary's organized but weaker opposition movement, which faced a relatively milder communist regime, has produced two viable post-opposition parties. In the Czech Republic, the relatively weak opposition movement, which had little opportunity to organize itself under the harshly repressive Czechoslovak communist regime, was all but completely superseded by a group of technocratic reformers after 1989. (Cf. Szczerbiak 2003: 744; Innes 2001; Kiss 2003)

Toward an explanation

a) The key actors

The explanation posited in this paper focuses on the leading figures in the opposition movements and their motivations. These were people who were important in the sense that they played prominent leadership roles in the opposition movement before 1989, subsequently engaged in negotiations with the regime to establish a democratic system, and acted as leading figures in the movement during the early 1990s. This project will be based on the assumption that their strategic decisions turned out to be crucial for the future organization of the political parties that emerged from the original anti-communist movements.

Once they came to power, the political elites of the opposition movements had to make fundamental choices that would end up having an important impact on the development of political parties in their country. These choices were made difficult by the diversity of political viewpoints and stances among the opposition leaders. United before 1989 by their common opposition to the communist regime, they were actually very diverse collections of conservatives, liberals, Christian democrats, social democrats, and a host of other tendencies. After 1989, they were quickly racked by acrimonious disputes over what policies to adopt in government and what kind of political party to establish in the new post-communist conditions (or whether to even establish a party). In the face of such disputes, the leaders could engage in a power struggle for control of the movement. Those that failed to gain control of the movement and its agenda were faced with either falling in line under the leadership of their opponents within the movement or leaving to form their own movement. In other words, after using "voice" in a failed attempt to seize control of the movement, they could remain "loyal" to the new leadership or "exit" the party entirely, to use the terminology of Hirschman. (Hirschman 1970)

The exit of some of the movement leaders would effectively resolve the disagreements among the post-opposition elites. However, the disputes might resurface in coalition governments if the newly created post-opposition parties chose to work together governing coalitions. The point here is to focus on the options that were available to these actors as they saw them. These options operated within the constraints imposed by the two factors outlined above: the strength of the anti-communist opposition and the degree of antagonism between that movement and the communist regime.

b) Organizational experience under communism

The opposition movements of East-Central Europe had varying degrees of organizational experience and depth prior to the collapse of the communist regimes in 1989. Some were able to organize relatively coherent pressure groups or political movements several months or even years before the collapse. Others did not have such opportunities, and they remained essentially loose and amorphous collections of intellectuals who engaged in the traditional dissident activities of contributing to samizdat and signing petitions. To a great extent, the variations in the ability of the region's anti-communist opposition groups to organize and press demands on the regime before the collapse of communism mirrored variations in the regimes.

It is possible that those opposition groups which did have an opportunity to organize before the collapse of the regime had something of an advantage over those which did not. All political parties are faced with the twin tasks of resolving social choice and collective action problems. (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 46-49) In the first case, they must resolve conflicts between various viewpoints on the myriad of possible policies they could adopt and prioritize. In other words, they must arrive at a consensus on which policies they will promote in the electoral competition with other parties. In the second case, they must also be able to resolve collective action problems stemming from the need to coordinate the activities of various party members, including parliamentary representatives and activists. (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 46) In other words, parties operate best when they have some means of resolving internal disagreements and ensuring that members respect and abide by party decisions and strategies once they are adopted.

In East-Central Europe, opposition groups that were able to begin the work of transforming their loose opposition networks into firmer and more party-like organizations before the collapse of communism, had the proverbial "head start" over their counterparts in countries that did not afford such an opportunity. If mechanisms for dealing with the social choice and collective action dilemmas could be set up before the collapse of communism, and before the opposition movement was compelled to assume the task of actually governing the country, they may have had a better chance of surviving the transition to party-based electoral competition. In contrast, organizations that were cobbled together just as the regime was collapsing had to deal with these issues while they at the same time negotiated the terms of transition with the regime and then assumed a governing role.

Grzymala-Busse's analysis of communist successor parties in East-Central Europe points to another factor involved here. Communist officials who had to engage in interactions and formal or informal negotiations with the anti-communist opposition movements were able to develop specific "portable skills" that helped them reform and renew their parties after the collapse of the communist regime. (Grzymala-Busse 2002) This logic can be applied in the same way to anti-communist opposition activists. Those activists who had a chance to engage in formal negotiations with the regime or some other form of overtly political activity (other than the circulation of samizdat or other such protest activities) before the collapse of the regime had an advantage in terms of developing specific political skills relevant to party-based competition. Their less fortunate counterparts in more repressive systems had to develop such experiences and skills on the fly during and after the collapse of the regime.

c) The regime divide

The nature of the anti-communist opposition in each country is related to the nature of the communist regime that the groups had to operate under. Scholars such as Kitschelt and Grzymala-Busse, among others, have pointed to important differences between communist regimes. This paper will zero in on one particular aspect of the regime alluded to above: its relationship with the opposition.

In Kitschelt's typology of communist regimes, "bureaucratic-authoritarian" communist regimes, such as those that existed in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, emerged in countries that went through a pre-communist phase of early industrialization, had some experience with democracy, and featured a strong Communist Party along with a relatively vibrant civil society before the regime was established. Such regimes are more directly repressive toward the opposition. (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 24-27) This kind of regime leads to a deep divide between the successors to the communist party and opposition movements.

"National-accommodative" regimes, such as those in Poland and Hungary, were less industrialized before the regime, had some experience with democratic institutions, and tended to feature a weak Communist party before the establishment of the regime. Such regimes were never as sure of their control over society and they were forced to permit a small amount of civic life to exist, at least "episodically," and often had to resort to co-optation of the opposition as opposed to direct repression. (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 24) Countries in this category are likely to have a shallower regime divide between the post-communist and post-opposition parties.

This typology suggests that the wider degree of latitude for the development of the opposition movements in Poland and Hungary is likely related to the kind of communist regimes present in these countries. In contrast, the suffocation experienced by Czech opposition groups reflects the form of communism that existed in Czechoslovakia.

In general terms, then, Kitschelt's typology does map onto the differences between the opposition groups in the three countries. But it only takes us so far. The typology glosses over the potentially disruptive effects of "episodic" breakdowns in the less repressive stance of the national-accommodative regimes. A major, violent crackdown on the opposition, such as the imposition of martial law in Poland in 1981, can have a devastating impact on efforts at a more cooperative approach later on. Certainly, this impact will fade with time, as a new generation of regime officials and opposition activists appears. But the more recently it happened, the more intensely the impact will still be felt. Ferocious crackdowns on the opposition are likely to increase the antagonism between the regime and its opponents, and thus contribute to a deepening of the regime divide.

Various scholars have suggested that these regime divides are likely to fade with time. (Bielasiak 1997: 35; Grzymala-Busse 2001) This is perhaps true, but it is possible that the nature of this original divide, as it emerged from the communist era, will continue to exert influence on the party system for some time. One might surmise that the more antagonistic this relationship between the opposition and regime was during the communist era, the deeper the divide and the less likely that any form of cooperative behavior will be possible between the successor parties of these two camps in the first years of the post-communist period. The evidence in fact suggests that parties on opposite sides of the regime divide in post-communist countries tend to avoid forming governing

coalitions with each other. (Grzymala-Busse 2001) This is particularly true in countries with a deep regime divide caused by highly antagonistic relations between the opposition and the regime. Countries with a shallower regime divide, by contrast, have seen some cooperation at the national level between post-opposition and post-communist parties. (Grzymala-Busse 2001)

To summarize, while repression of independent opposition groups existed everywhere in East-Central Europe, the degree of antagonism in the relationship between the regime and the opposition varied in different countries. This relationship ranged from highly antagonistic to less antagonistic, or a deep divide to a shallow one. The deeper the divide between the regime and the opposition, the less likely is there to be cooperation of any kind between the parties that emerge from those two camps in the post-communist period. Conversely, the shallower the divide, the more likely are the boundaries that separate the communist successor party from the former opposition parties to be porous.

d) Exit, voice, and loyalty within the constraints of history

Once these diverse anti-communist opposition groups have assumed power they are bound to face internal conflicts over policy direction, political and economic reforms, and even the internal structure of the movement itself. While all former anti-communist opposition groups face these kinds of internal disputes during the transition to democracy, some are better prepared to handle the vagaries of electoral competition in the post-communist phase. Those groups which have had some opportunity to organize under the communist regime, however small, have an advantage in the sense that they have developed organizational structures with some ability and experience in dealing with both social choice and collective action problems. These groups will have a better chance at surviving under the fire of electoral competition. While splits and fragmentation over policy questions or other differences may be inevitable, the offshoots of these movements will still be competitive.

In contrast, opposition movements that have had no chance to organize under the communist regime must tackle these problems while at the same time negotiating an end to the communist regime and assuming a role in government. Splits and fragmentation among these movements may be more difficult to overcome and former opposition groups might have more trouble in electoral competition.

Once the initial set of elections are over, the role of the regime divide will increase in importance, as it begins to structure electoral competition and coalition politics in the post-communist phase. The regime divide will be even more significant in countries where the former communist party has managed to reform itself and become more appealing to the electorate, and therefore more competitive.

A deep regime divide effectively limits the options of parties emerging from the former opposition. As the original opposition movement splinters, those members of the group who might want to give up and exit it entirely will have trouble finding a coalition partner for the purpose of forming a governing majority in parliament. They will not be able to easily cross over to join forces with the former communist party, even if it has managed to credibly transform itself into a social-democratic party and even if they share the views of the latter on any number of policy questions. Instead, such ex-dissidents will be faced with the unsavory choice of either remaining in some form of coalition with their erstwhile allies from the former opposition, with whom they may have very little in

common in terms of policy preferences, or assuming an isolated stance with no realistic coalition partners in sight.

In effect, then, the deep regime divide serves to stuff such groups back into the increasingly acrimonious and fragmented space left by the former anti-communist opposition. In such a situation, the disgruntled members of the anti-communist movement can choose to exit the group and form their own party, but they will be forced to continue to work with the remnants of the original group in a coalition if they want to remain in government. While this resolves disagreements over organizational issues, it does not resolve the problem of intense disagreements over policy and future direction for the country. Thus, the problem is not resolved and acrimonious fights continue, only this time they are between different parties that emerged from the original anti-communist movement but are forced to work together in governing coalitions.

Such coalitions are likely to undermine the stability and institutionalization of post-opposition parties in part because of the major policy-based compromises that will be necessary to keep such disparate groups together in a coalition will be significant. A major compromise, for instance, by a post-opposition party with secular liberal policy preferences in order to mollify a coalition partner from the same post-opposition movement with conservative religious could provoke a split in the former party as some disgruntled members will view the compromise as having gone too far.

Such a scenario is likely to be evident in a party system that has emerged in a country with a deep regime divide. These party systems will exhibit two dimensions of competition: a strong one between the former communists and the former opposition forces, and another shifting one between the various strands of the opposition that cannot come to agreement on various issues.

A shallow regime divide should lead to less fragmentation among the post-opposition parties. A less antagonistic regime division between the opposition and the regime will ensure that the opposition will feel less of a need to mount a united front against the regime. In the post-communist phase, the influence of the regime divide will continue to be felt because groups that splinter off from the opposition parties will feel less inhibited from exiting that group entirely and taking the risk of joining ranks with the communist successor party because the latter party will not be viewed with as much antagonism as in other post-communist countries. The exit of such splinter groups or parties from the original anti-communist camp will act as a pressure valve to ease tensions among the parties remaining in that camp. This should enable greater cohesion among those parties because it will decrease the amount of diversity that the anti-communist camp will have to deal with and the extent of the compromises they will have to make to form coalitions.

In other words, some of the post-opposition parties may be closer to the post-communist party in ideological terms than they are to their erstwhile counterparts in the former opposition. If those post-opposition parties do not feel inhibited from joining forces with the former communist party, the remaining post-opposition parties can more easily achieve unity among themselves.

The cases

a) Opportunities to organize

The parties that emerged from the anti-communist opposition of the region can trace their roots as far back as the 1970s. (Falk 2003; Pollack and Wielgohs 2006) Earlier opposition movements in the region were either of a different kind or were relatively isolated.

The only country in which an alternative organization gained organizational significance before the late 1980s was in Poland, where the Solidarity trade union movement grew into a mass-member organization with the ability to pressure the regime into concessions in 1980-1981. (Pollack and Wielgohs 2004: xiv) While it was harshly suppressed after December 1981, the remnants of the Solidarity movement managed to survive in a loose, underground form for several years. It re-emerged as a smaller, but still powerful, movement in the late 1980s, managing eventually to push the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) into roundtable talks on a transformation of the regime. Uniquely in the region, the Solidarity movement had experienced both significant opportunities to organize and to negotiate directly with the regime but also periods of harsh reprisals from the regime. The organizational and political experiences gained by Solidarity members as well as their memories of the harsh reprisals would impact subsequent developments.

In Hungary, the opposition had nowhere near the breadth and depth of its Polish counterpart, but it did have some not insignificant opportunities to organize toward the late 1980s. While the opposition in Hungary was relatively small during the 1970s and early 1980s, the deepening economic crisis of the mid- to late 1980s and the loosening of the regime, as it sought a way out of the crisis, created an increasingly large space for oppositional activities. (Jenkins 1992: 2) Toward the end of the 1980s, groups of independent intellectuals started to form organizations with specific demands and alternative political and economic reform proposals. The first of these, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), emerged in 1987 with the acquiescence of reformers in the communist regime. The MDF grouped together various writers and intellectuals from the so-called national populist movement and they tended to focus on the need for national and moral renewal as well as the plight of the ethnic Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries. The creation in 1988 of the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), which emerged out of the so-called Democratic Opposition movement in Budapest, and Fidesz, a pro-democracy youth movement founded by graduates of Istvan Bibó College of Law, brought even more organizations to the fore. In contrast, to the MDF, the SZDSZ had emerged from the milieu of Budapest dissident intellectuals and tended to have a secular and liberal outlook with a focus on human rights issues. These groups had months to work on developing their policies, relations to each other, and internal organizations before the regime finally agreed to roundtable talks in 1989. The groups then engaged in roundtable talks amongst each other as well as with the regime, organized and participated in a referendum campaign in late 1989, and finally fought an electoral campaign in early 1990. (Jenkins 1992; Falk 2003: 138-154; Szabo 2004: 51-68) These developments enabled the founders of the three Hungarian opposition movements to hone their organizational and political skills as well as work on the development of their parties.

The Czech opposition groups had the least opportunities to found and organize a political party or movement. While the late 1980s saw an increase in the number of

oppositional or protest groups in Czechoslovakia (Kenney 2002; Tuma 2004: 38-40), they tended to be loosely organized and quite small, and they were all subjected to relatively severe repression from the regime. The formation of the Civic Forum movement, which led the roundtable talks that brought about an end to the regime, did not occur until November 1989, after a particularly harshly repressed student demonstration in Prague. The movement was formed by the leading dissidents of the Charter 77 movement together with a few former communists and non-party technocrats. It was formed amid massive demonstrations in Prague and other cities across the country, and several of its leading members assumed posts in the government as early as the first half of December. (Suk 2003) Civic Forum, in other words, had no time to organize itself before the roundtable talks with the regime and before it took control of the government in the country. A mere seven months later, the first free and fair elections were held in June 1990.

b) Setting up parties and negotiating the regime divide

Poland

The Polish Solidarity movement was the first opposition group in the region to gain concessions from a communist regime. After a series of strikes in the summer of 1988, the regime agreed to open roundtable negotiations with representatives of the once-banned Solidarity movement. These eventually led to an agreement in April 1989 to hold partially controlled elections to the Sejm and Senate in June of that year, in which two-thirds of the seats in the Sejm would be reserved for candidates from the communist Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) or its allies. Solidarity, which had set up a network of citizens' committees around the country for the purpose of running in the elections, (Grabowski 1996: 221) managed to sweep virtually all of the seats it contested, sending the PZPR reeling. As a result of its overwhelming victory and after some political maneuvering, Solidarity's Tadeusz Mazowiecki became the prime minister of a Solidarity-dominated cabinet. Nevertheless, the communists retained the posts of interior and defense minister as well as that of president for General Wojciech Jaruzelski.

Within months of assuming power, the Solidarity movement started to fall apart. Bitter disputes erupted between Solidarity leader Lech Walesa, who had remained outside of the government, and Mazowiecki's supporters over the reform process, the issue of the presidency, and the future of the Solidarity movement itself. Mazowiecki and his backers wanted to maintain the movement as a united group representing the "Solidarity ethos," while Walesa and others argued for a pluralization of the political scene. Eventually, Solidarity cracked under the weight of these disputes and broke up into several disparate groups. A group backing Walesa formed the Porozumienie Centrum (PC) movement, although Walesa himself would prove to be cool to this new formation. Mazowiecki's backers formed the Civic Movement for Democratic Action (ROAD). Other new formations that emerged from under the Solidarity mantle included the Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD), the Solidarity Peasant Party (PSL-S), the Christian Democratic Labor Party (ChDSP), and the Christian National Union (ZChN). (Millard 1994)

The disputes between the Walesa and Mazowiecki camps reached new levels of intensity in advance of the presidential elections. Walesa, with the broad backing of the

Solidarity trade union movement, KLD, ZChN, and the Centrum group, faced off against Mazowiecki, who had the backing of the Democratic Union (DU), a new group formed out of a merger between ROAD and yet another smaller formation. Walesa's victory in that election triggered the fall of Mazowiecki's government.

Even greater fragmentation occurred in the lead up to the 1991 parliamentary elections as more splinter groups emerged from the wreckage of Solidarity and numerous new proto-parties and amorphous groupings were formed. By the time of the fall 1991 vote, dozens of new groups had formed to run in the elections, with many running in only one or two districts. In the end, a total of 29 electoral committees gained parliamentary representation, aided by a very permissive set of electoral rules based on proportional representation and containing no minimum threshold rule. (Millard 1994: 480-481) But not all the fragmentation can be blamed on the electoral rules; even with a standard threshold of 5 percent, a total of nine groupings would have made it into parliament.

In any event, by this time, despite the tremendous organizational diversity in the Sejm, the Polish political party system started to assume at least the outlines of standard competitive dimensions. Many of the existing parties and proto-parties could be grouped into "party families" based on their electoral programs and the policies they supported in parliament. There were secular-liberal, Christian-national, and social-democratic sectors. The secular-liberal sector included the pro-market KLD and Mazowiecki's UD. The latter, however, was among the more loose formations in ideological terms, grouping together market-liberals, social-liberals, and even some moderate Christian Democrats. Second, the Christian-national or conservative grouping included the Centrum alliance, ZChN, and a range of other smaller Christian Democratic groups. Finally, the social democratic sector included the Union of Labor (UP), a small leftist group consisting of some former communists and members of Solidarity, as well as the SLD, a coalition that included the main successor to the former PZPR and the communist-era trade unions. (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 111-115) There was also a peasant-based grouping, represented mainly by the Polish Peasant Party (PSL), a successor to one of the fellow-traveler parties of the former communist regime, and some Solidarity peasant-based groupings. (Millard 1994)

Meanwhile, the former communists had transformed their party into the Social Democracy of the Polish Republic (SdRP), which was at the center of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) that grouped together various ex-communist organizations. But despite the efforts of the ex-communists to moderate their image, the regime divide between the reformed SLD and the former Solidarity groupings of both liberal and Christian-national persuasions was deep. There was little hint of contact or cooperation between the two sides in the early months of the transition, let alone talk of a coalition, despite the clear breakdown in cooperation among various shards of the former Solidarity movement. But as the acrimony within the post-Solidarity camp grew more intense, it became necessary at various junctures to rely on votes from the SLD in order to get certain bills passed. Thus, for instance, the Suchocka government had to rely on a compromise with the SLD in order to pass its Mass Privatization Program. (Millard 1994: 486) This suggested that, on some matters at least, some post-Solidarity groups were able to work with the post-communist SLD more effectively than with their erstwhile allies from the Solidarity movement.

A new set of elections were held in the summer of 1993, after the Suchocka government lost a vote of confidence and President Walesa dissolved the parliament.

These elections, which were fought under new rules that added a threshold for entry into parliament, caused a significant shake-up in the composition of the post-Solidarity parties in the Sejm. The post-communist SLD won a stunning victory with 20 percent of the vote and the PSL finished second with 15 percent. Out of the post-Solidarity parties, Mazowiecki's UD, the left-leaning UP, and Walesa's amorphous Non-Party Bloc for the Support of Reforms (BBWR) also managed to gain representation in parliament. But all of the Christian-national parties failed to pass the threshold.

The election results created a dilemma for the post-communist SLD. The alliance had clearly won the elections, but it needed at least one coalition partner to form a majority government. SLD leader Aleksander Kwasniewski immediately made overtures to the UD, saying the largest post-Solidarity grouping would be the best coalition partner for his party, especially in terms of assuaging concerns in the West about the return to power of the ex-communists in Poland. Moreover, the two parties shared a number of policy positions with regard to relations with the Catholic Church, abortion, and foreign relations. (Grzymala-Busse 2001: 94-95) The SLD also made overtures to the more left-leaning UP, with which it also shared similar policy objectives. But both of the post-Solidarity formations quickly rejected any coalition deal with the post-communist SLD. For the UD and the UP, the communist past of the SLD was too significant a factor to overcome, despite various common policy stances among the three parties. Both post-Solidarity parties preferred to remain in opposition.

This forced the SLD into a coalition with the peasant grouping PSL. The PSL had emerged from the puppet-peasant party allied with the communists under the previous regime, it was now an independent grouping with a strong social base in the countryside electorate and it was attempting to refashion itself as a party that had also been "repressed" by the communists. (Grzymala-Busse 2001) An analysis of the SLD and PSL party platforms in 1993 indicate the parties were close to each other in the policy space in terms of a broadly defined left-right scale including a range of political, economic, social, and foreign policy questions. (Klingemann et al. 2006: 13) But the data obscure the fact that the two parties had serious disagreements in various areas such as agricultural policy, relations with the Church, and privatization. (Grzymala-Busse 2001: 95) Moreover, the parties were to subsequently drift away from each other on the aforementioned left-right scale as the disagreements were to become quite acrimonious during the life of the coalition government after 1993. (Klingemann et al. 2006: 13)

The 1993 elections did spur the creation of a period of consolidation among the Polish post-opposition parties. The UD merged with the liberal KLD, which had not managed to cross the threshold in the 1993 elections. The new, merged party was renamed the Freedom Union (UW). But while this seemed to create a more pro-market liberal party, in fact the party drifted further to the left on the aforementioned left-right scale, even as the SLD moved further to the right by the time of the 1997 elections. (Klingemann et al. 2006: 13)

Meanwhile, the victory of the post-communist party in 1993 also spurred the Solidarity trade union to rally the remnants of the conservative and Christian-national groups, which had not made it into parliament, into a common alliance under the banner of Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS). At its height, the unwieldy AWS included more than 30 different parties and groups.

Thus, as the 1997 elections approached, the Polish political scene had seemingly coalesced around four discernible blocs, if not parties: a social democratic camp featuring the SLD and the UP; a peasant party in the form of the PSL; a conservative-Christian bloc in the AWS; and a secular-liberal party in UW. But this degree of consolidation was to be torn asunder once the latest incarnations of the post-Solidarity groups of UW and AWS were forced to work together in a governing coalition.

The 1997 elections were won handily by AWS with 34 percent of the vote, although the SLD came in a strong second place with 27 percent and the UW took 13 percent. Once again, although the UW and the SLD were close to each other on several policy questions, the UW leadership decided to enter into a governing coalition with the AWS. Once again UW leaders refused to enter into a coalition with the SLD mainly on historical grounds. (Grzymala-Busse 2001)

While the AWS-UW government managed to launch several reforms in various social policy areas, the coalition was fraught with tensions and acrimony. Eventually, after repeated disputes over a range of issues, the UW abandoned the coalition in 2000, leaving the AWS to govern as a minority. Moreover, the painful reforms launched by the coalition government, various corruption scandals, and the constant infighting both between the AWS and UW, as well as within the AWS itself, led to a serious loss in popularity for both formations. In the face of this, the two groups started to fall apart. The pro-market liberal wing of the UW abandoned the party to form the Civic Platform, and various conservative and Christian-national groups jumped off the sinking AWS ship to form new parties, including the conservative and *etatist* Law and Justice (PiS) party and the far-right League of Polish Families (LPR).

Thus the pattern of fragmentation of the first two periods in office of Solidarity and its offshoots between 1989-1991 and 1991-1993 was repeated in the 1997-2001 phase. Again one of the key problems was the unwieldy coalitions that were constructed between ideologically distant parties with roots in the former Solidarity movement. These coalitions led to disagreements between factions within parties over the compromises necessary to maintain the coalitions, which were resolved by one or more factions "exiting" the party to form a new movement. All the while, an ideologically closer coalition partner was available to the secular-liberal branch of Solidarity in the form of the post-communist SLD, but such a coalition was deemed unpalatable or risky by the post-opposition groups because of the historical regime divide between ex-communists and ex-opposition activists.

Hungary

The years 1988 and 1989 in Hungary witnessed an upsurge in civil society activity as various movements were formed and the public became galvanized around the issue of the environment. Amid a deepening economic crisis and pressure from reformist elements in the regime, the communist Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) gradually and reluctantly moved toward the idea that both economic and political reforms were necessary.

In the early months of 1989, the various opposition groups and resurrected historical political parties that had sprung to life in 1988 decided to create a common opposition front. An Opposition Roundtable (EKA) network was launched to coordinate the demands of the various independent groups and prepare for negotiations with the

regime. While the EKA included several new groups and associations, the three main opposition groups, the MDF, SZDSZ, and Fidesz, were to play decisive roles in the negotiations.

The Roundtable talks between representatives of the MSZMP backed by other regime associations and the opposition EKA took place between June and September. The final agreement, which called for direct presidential elections to be followed by parliamentary elections according to a mixed-member proportional system, was approved by most of the EKA members and the MSZMP in September. However, in a key indication of divisiveness within the opposition camp, the SZDSZ and Fidesz refused to sign on to the deal. They both argued that holding direct presidential elections in advance of the parliamentary vote threatened to enable the communists, with their popular reformer Imre Pozsgay, to win the presidency. They also wanted a weaker presidency elected by a parliament. (Falk 2003: 151) So rather than sign the agreement, the SZDSZ and Fidesz called for a referendum on the question of the presidential elections.

The campaign for the referendum, which took place in November and included three other questions related to reducing the role of the communist party, gave the still small organizations of SZDSZ and Fidesz a chance to gain greater public exposure and build their reputations as the most radical reformers in the EKA. By contrast, the MDF called on voters to boycott the referendum, preferring to stick to the agreement hammered out with the MSZMP. In the event, the referendum was a victory for the SZDSZ and Fidesz, as voters supported their positions on all four questions. The public profile of the SZDSZ in particular increased dramatically as a result of this key victory. (Jenkins 1992: 20)

But the campaign also signaled a deterioration in relations between SZDSZ and MDF, with each side criticizing the other with increasing bitterness. The recriminations between the always uneasy opposition allies would continue in the electoral campaign ahead of the parliamentary elections in March. The MDF attempted to portray the SZDSZ as being a party of former communists with leftist sympathies, while SzDSz responded that MDF had in fact been involved in cooperating with the MSZMP. (Jenkins 1992: 24)

In the end, the MDF scored a major victory in the elections, winning close to twice as many parliamentary seats as the second-place SZDSZ. After months of acrimonious campaigning, there was little possibility of a governing coalition between the two main opposition movements. Indeed, four days before the voting in the second round of the elections, MDF leader Jozsef Antall had announced an electoral coalition between his party and two of the resurrected historic parties, the Independent Smallholders and the Christian Democrats.

Nevertheless, the MDF and SZDSZ did conclude a key agreement to amend some of the provisions of the original roundtable deal with the MSZMP. Among other things, this agreement reduced the large number of laws called for in the original deal that would have required a two-thirds majority to pass.

But this spirit of cooperation was short-lived, as relations between the MDF and SZDSZ became quite hostile during the new coalition government's four-year term. Moreover, the ideological positioning of the Hungarian parties assumed an increasingly clear division into three distinct blocs: a Christian-national bloc comprising the MDF, the Christian Democrats and the Independent Smallholders; a liberal bloc consisting of the SZDSZ and Fidesz; and a social-democratic bloc represented mainly by the reformed ex-

communists, now operating under a new name, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP). (Kitschelt et al. 1999)

The SzDSZ became increasingly critical of the MDF government, particularly of certain far-right elements within the MDF grouped around the former playwright Istvan Csurka. While Csurka and his supporters were eventually forced out of the MDF by Antall, the SzDSZ continued to warn of the dangers of right-wing extremism on the part of the governing coalition of parties. This drew the party of anti-communist dissidents ever closer to the former communist party itself, despite the regime divide, which had served to isolate the ex-communist MSZP in the parliament during the first few months after the elections. But with its eye on what it perceived as the threat from the right, the SZDSZ leadership eventually disregarded the regime divide to forge an alliance of sorts with the ex-communist MSZP under the banner of a Democratic Charter aimed at preserving democracy against the threat of right-wing extremism. Fidesz, while initially signing on to the charter, eventually adopted more of an aloof stance toward these moves by SzDSZ, preferring to carve out its own position between the two other former opposition movements. (Kiss 2003: 742)

Meanwhile, the MDF, which had grouped together national-populist, Christian democratic, and liberal strands of activists, was falling apart, with separate factions forming in parliament. Antall's death at the end of 1993 compounded these problems, and MDF's support plummeted in the polls as the 1994 elections approached. At the same time, the former communist MSZP was experiencing an upsurge in the polls as it worked to resurrect itself with a modern, Western European, social-democratic image.

The 1994 vote saw the MSZP, like its counterpart in Poland the year before, complete a dramatic comeback just four years after having been swept from power. Indeed, the party's victory was even more convincing than that of its Polish counterpart, as it managed to win a majority of the seats in parliament. The SZDSZ finished second, followed by other parties, including the MDF and Fidesz.

While the MSZP could have governed on its own, the party followed the lead of its Polish counterpart and chose instead to invite both the SZDSZ and Fidesz to join it in a governing coalition. This time, SZDSZ, in contrast to its ideological and historical equal in the Polish Democratic Union (UD,) accepted the ex-communist MSZP's offer and joined the coalition.

The decision made sense in terms of spatial party competition. In general, the SZDSZ was far to the right of the MSZP at the time of the elections if the two parties' electoral platforms for 1994 are mapped on to a broad left-right spectrum. (Klingemann et al. 2006: 12) But the SZDSZ was substantially closer to the MSZP than it was to the MDF or the other historic parties on many policy issues, particularly those related to the cultural dimension of competition between liberal and conservative attitudes on matters such as religion, a key dimension of competition in Hungary. (Enyedi 2006: 180-182) This closeness is reflected in other studies of the parties' policy positions (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 234-239)

After the SZDSZ decided to cross the regime divide, Fidesz, under the stewardship of its charismatic and young leader, Viktor Orban, drifted increasingly toward the Christian-conservative camp of the opposition. This much-debated move appeared to be a strategic response to the alliance between the liberal SZDSZ and the social-democratic MSZP. With many of the voters still willing to support a Christian-

conservative party despite the demise of the MDF and the decline in popularity of the Christian Democrats, Fidesz seemed like it had decided to pounce on the opportunity. In fact, by the time of the next elections in 1998, Fidesz, the former liberal youth movement, had become the hegemonic power on the Christian-conservative right, having displaced the MDF, the Christian Democrats, and even the Independent Smallholders, as the most popular party in that part of the political spectrum. (Kiss 2003: 744-748)

Thus, the decision by the SZDSZ to cross the regime divide and join in a coalition with the ex-communist MSZP, and the subsequent move by Fidesz to replace the failed parties of the Christian-conservative space, effectively served to divide the party system into two coherent blocs. Moreover, the two blocs seemed to be aligned along the main axis of competition in Hungary. (Enyedi 2006: 180-182) The former Hungarian opposition groups were thus spared the difficulties of being forced by a deep regime divide to work out some sort of compromise between conflicting liberal and conservative political visions. Instead, the shallow regime divide, a legacy of Kadarist reform communism, enabled the parties to align themselves according to their dominant policy preferences and thereby avoid divisive intra-party ideological battles. These blocs have remained essentially stable to this day, with Fidesz representing the dominant conservative party and the MSZP the dominant social-democratic party generally working together with its liberal partner the SZDSZ.

Czech Republic

The Czech Civic Forum movement which, together with its Slovak counterpart Public Against Violence (VPN), led the negotiations with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in November and December 1989 emerged from the Czech opposition circles of the 1970s and 1980s. The relatively small Charter 77 human rights network, numbering just a few thousand signatories and active supporters, was at the head of these opposition groups.

On 19 November, two days after the communist security forces harshly cracked down on a student demonstration in Prague, several key members of Charter 77 as well as other movements established the Civic Forum (OF). The OF immediately placed itself at the head of demonstrations that were staged to protest the crackdown, and started to call for talks with the regime. As the demonstrations continued and various key members of the regime resigned, the OF attracted more and more members and supporters from across the country.

Early on, the core of the OF leadership, which was composed of dissident playwright and Charter 77 founder Vaclav Havel along with a handful of other key dissidents, decided to bring outsiders who had not participated in the opposition movement before 1989 into the leadership. This was a conscious attempt to legitimize the OF as a steward of the transition to democracy by making it more representative of the public at large. The members of the opposition realized that they were a relatively small and isolated group in Czechoslovak society and they needed more members from beyond the opposition ranks. (Cf. Suk 2003) Moreover, the opposition, which was predominantly composed of writers, journalists, legal scholars, historians and philosophers, needed expertise in areas such as the economy. Thus, the OF reached out to representatives of the working class, lower-ranking members of the KSC, and, crucially, to non-opposition

academics and technocrats who were members of the so-called gray zone, meaning they had never been part of the opposition to communism but had also never joined the KSC.

The regime capitulated relatively quickly in Czechoslovakia. By the second half of December, agreements had been reached to replace the government, elect Vaclav Havel to the post of president, and hold the first set of free and fair parliamentary elections in June 1990.

The OF ran in the elections as a sort of broad umbrella group that included various smaller groups and parties under its mantle. It easily swept the elections in the Czech part of the federation, winning just under 50 percent of the votes, compared with 13 percent for the Communist Party. The allied Slovak VPN also won a major victory in the Slovak part of the country.

The new OF- and VPN-dominated federal parliament faced various challenges in its first electoral term. Among the myriad economic, legal, and political reforms that this government had to tackle, constitutional questions relating to the federal status of the country and the powers of its constituent Czech and Slovak republics became one of the most dominant problems on the agenda.

At the same time, the OF was soon consumed by internal disputes over the structure of the movement as well as ideological questions relating to the extent and speed of the economic transition. Like other opposition umbrella movements in the region, the OF included pro-market liberals, conservatives, social democrats, reform communists, Christian democrats and a host of other ideological leanings within its ranks.

A group of pro-market liberals, including the finance minister and economist Vaclav Klaus, who had not been a member of the anti-communist opposition before 1989, quickly emerged. Their aim was to push for quick privatization and liberalization. They also wanted to transform the OF into a more hierarchical party-like organization.

Their opponents within the OF included a diverse group of ex-dissidents, ex-communists, and others who opposed transforming the OF into a party or set of parties, and who also, in many cases, tended to favor a less pro-market stance and tended to emphasize the need to create a market-based economy featuring mixed forms of ownership, including private and public ownership. Many in this group tended to portray their position as one that supported a “non-ideological” or ideologically heterogeneous OF, the main aim of which should be to establish a consensus around setting up basic, Western-inspired democratic and legal structures for the country.

The dispute came to a head in late 1990, when Klaus managed to get elected to the post of OF leader with strong backing among the OF’s regional managers, many of whom felt alienated from the ex-dissident core of the movement in Prague. (Cf. Suk 2003)

Klaus’s assumption of the OF chairmanship represented a major victory for those in the OF who supported transforming the forum into a political party with a “rightist” political platform. This relatively dramatic push by Klaus and his supporters effectively forced the hand of the other main camp in the OF, who reacted by establishing the Liberal Club within the OF. Its main aim was to maintain the OF’s movement structure and ethos, as well as a more consensual approach within the OF to the country’s economic and political transition.

These divisions eventually led to the dissolution of the OF in February 1991. Klaus’s group went on to form a new party called the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), while the Liberal group decided to maintain a looser structure and to name itself the Civic

Movement (OH). A third group, consisting of those OF members who had joined the forum originally as a proto-party called the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA), decided to maintain this identity and establish the ODA as an independent right-of-centre party.

The elections of June 1992 pitted the right-wing ODS and ODA against the self-described “centrist” OH, as well as a host of other parties, including the still largely unreformed communist KSC, which ran in a coalition with another minor group under the banner Left Bloc.

Of the three main successors to the OF, the ODS was the most organized. After almost succeeding in seizing complete control of the OF, the group led by Klaus had exited from the forum in the best position, securing the backing of most of the OF’s regional delegates. But the ODS was the least representative of the former anti-communist opposition in its leadership ranks. The leadership of the ODS, and indeed much of the membership (which swelled to almost 20,000 within months), did not include many ex-dissidents or former opposition activists. Instead, the party was dominated by technocrats, professionals, and some ex-communist functionaries. These technocrats had essentially seized control of the OF and set up one of the most well-organized new parties in the Czech part of the federation.

In contrast, both the OH and the ODA were dominated largely by ex-dissidents. The OH was a loose and amorphous “movement” which explicitly eschewed the term “political party” and purposefully framed itself as a “centrist” political force with loose membership rules. The ODA was led by small group of ex-dissident intellectuals and technocrats based in Prague which strove to identify itself as a small “electoral party” of professionals with pro-market liberal and conservative values. (Malíř et al. 2005).

The 1992 elections marked a major victory for the ODS and its program of rapid market transformation, and a severe blow to both the ODA and OH. The ODS won almost 30 percent of the vote, while the ODA failed to cross the 5 percent threshold to enter the federal Czechoslovak parliament and did so only narrowly in the Czech republican parliament. The OH failed to cross the threshold at both levels and so was consigned to the political wilderness.

The elections resulted in the division of Czechoslovakia as the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), which won a strong victory in that part of the country, pushed for a looser federation and greater autonomy for Slovakia. The negotiations between the ODS and HZDS on this issue eventually led to a mutual agreement to peacefully divide the country.

Meanwhile, the ODS formed a coalition government in the Czech Republic with the ODA and the Christian Democratic Union (KDU-CSL). The latter party was a coalition which included a historical party that had served as a puppet fellow-traveler to the communist regime before 1989, along the same lines as the Peasant People’s Party (PSL) in Poland. The KDU-CSL had successfully managed to distance itself from the former regime by emphasizing its pre-communist history in Czechoslovakia and by presenting itself as a moderate center-right formation. The ODS-led coalition was policy-based in the sense that the three parties were the closest to each other on the political spectrum. (Klingemann et al. 2006: 10)

The unreformed communists and their Left Bloc alliance, which had won a substantial 14 percent in the 1992 elections, remained isolated in the parliament of the

newly independent Czech Republic. The Klaus coalition government remained in power for the full term of its mandate, which ended in 1996.

Conclusion

The anti-communist opposition movements of East-Central European had differing success in their efforts to transform themselves into viable political parties after the transition to democracy in 1989. The three cases covered in this paper represented a range of different outcomes. It has been the contention of this paper that two factors from the history of the opposition movements under communism affected the ability of the opposition activists to transform their movements into viable parties after the return to party-based electoral competition in the 1990s. These factors were: 1) the extent to which the opposition was able to organize itself before the collapse of the communist regime and 2) the depth of the regime divide between the former opposition and the former communist party after the transition. The combination of an organized opposition in Poland facing a deep regime divide constrained electoral competition in the country by forcing the ex-Solidarity parties to work together, which undermined their stability and led to a high level of fragmentation in the post-opposition bloc. In Hungary, the combination of an organized opposition and a shallow regime divide enabled the post-opposition parties to align themselves according to their policy priorities, which encouraged party stability and led to low levels of fragmentation in the post-opposition bloc. In the Czech Republic, the combination of an opposition that had little opportunity to organize under communism and a deep regime divide led to the ultimate failure of the ex-opposition activists to establish a viable party of their own in the post-communist phase.

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