

**The Infirmity of Social Democracy
in Postcommunist Poland**

A cultural history of the socialist discourse, 1970-1991

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The relative weakness of social democracy in postcommunist Eastern Europe and the poor showing of social democratic parties in the 1990-91 Polish and Hungarian elections are intriguing phenomena. In countries where economic reforms have resulted in increasing poverty, job loss, and nagging insecurity, it could be expected that social democrats would have a considerable following. Also, the presence of relatively large working class populations and a tradition of left-inclined intellectual opposition movements would suggest that the social democratic option should be popular. Yet, in the March-April 1990 Hungarian parliamentary elections, "the political forces ready to use the 'socialist' or the 'social democratic' label in the elections received less than 16 percent of the popular vote, although the class-analytic approach predicted that at least 20-30 percent of the working population ... could have voted for them" (Szelenyi and Szelenyi 1992:120). Similarly, in the October 1991 Polish parliamentary elections, the Democratic Left Alliance (an electoral coalition of reformed communists) received almost 12% of the vote. Social democratic parties (explicitly using this label) that emerged from Solidarity won less than 3% of the popular vote.

The Szelenyis concluded in their study of social democracy in postcommunist Hungary that, "the major opposition parties all posited themselves on the political Right (in the Western sense of the term), but public opinion was overwhelmingly in favor of social democratic measures" (1992:125). Writing about the Polish political field at the beginning of the 90s, Włodzimierz Pankow noticed a somewhat similar phenomenon which he conceptualized as a tension between "neo-liberal elites and the social democratic infrastructure" (1990:20-29). Indeed many members of the first postcommunist government of Mazowiecki subscribed to a pure version of the liberal economic creed, whereas the members of "the social democratic infrastructure" were united by their attachment to such values as social justice and egalitarianism (key elements of the so-called Solidarity ethos) and "...strong participatory aspirations, striving to become full citizens (upodmiotowienie) and aversion to solutions imposed from the top." Moreover, "...the neo-liberal elites ignored these longings and aspirations, justifying their attitude by invoking 'the situation of higher necessity' and the lack of an alternative to the program realized by the government" (1990:24).

In this essay I will offer an interpretation of the seemingly paradoxical situation whereby the existence of a large potential social democratic constituency did not result in the creation of strong and popularly supported social democratic parties.¹ I will try to demonstrate how the discourse of socialism (social democracy) was used, abused, and misused in Polish public life from the 1970s through 1991, and turned into a very unreliable and unpredictable political weapon once communism collapsed. In particular, I will examine hidden social functions of the communist/socialist ambiguity. After (1) outlining the four modes of socialism's public existence, I will demonstrate (2) how this ambiguity was constructed and used by the communist authorities and (3) how it was "disarmed" during the symbolic confrontation between the state, the Catholic Church, and the organized opposition in the late 1970s and 1980s. Next, I will briefly discuss (4) the de-ideologization of the political discourse in the early 1980s and (5) the temporary disappearance of socialism and/or communism/socialism from the public life, particularly during the 1989 parliamentary elections. Finally, I will (6) sketch the resurrection of the communist/socialist ambiguity in the most recent (1990-91) political debates and its impact on social democracy's political infirmity.

1. Four modes of socialism's public existence

In an interview with The New York Review of Books, a famous Chinese oppositional intellectual, Liu Binyan, observed that: "Stalin was the first to ruin socialism. The second was Mao. Cambodia's Pol Pot was the third. All of these men completely destroyed the meaning of Communism."² There is an intriguing ambiguity in this statement. The entity diagnosed as "ruined" and whose meaning was "destroyed" is alternately called "socialism" and "Communism."

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²01.19.1989, XXXV (21 &22):31.

Such an interchanging of terms is not, however, unique; it has been often present in the speeches and pronouncements delivered by communist officials. One suspects that it fulfills a significant political function.

Among the many modes of socialism's public existence, four seem to be particularly pertinent to any analysis of the social and political systems where socialism dominates public discourse and socio-political praxis. Two of these modes of existence (or forms) belong to the level of social discourse. They are elaborated in the writings and speeches of theoreticians and policy makers, portrayed in the official art, and publicly manifested in the official ceremonial. They include: (1) socialism as social democracy and (2) socialism as a set of non-democratic and elitist ideals and values, for example Lenin's "dictatorship of proletariat," Kolakowski's "bureaucratic socialism," Harrington's "authoritarian collectivism," or, simply, communism. The third socialism can be found on the level of popular consciousness as a syndrome of socialist (social democratic) ideals/values, an element of the value-system of the populace in various, not only "socialist" countries. The fourth socialism, actually existing socialism, is a concept used to label the social and political praxis of the countries ruled by the Marxist-Leninist regimes.

1.1. Socialism (democratic socialism, social democracy).

The official ideology of the Polish state since 1945 through 1989-1990, propagated through the official media and countless ceremonies, was often referred to as socialism.¹ It was presented to the public as having all possible virtues one can ascribe to a perfect social system. Paradoxically, a very similar ideal was espoused by the regime's most outspoken and influential critics: Leszek Kolakowski and Adam Michnik. Kolakowski listed among the features of the socialist society: sovereignty, democracy, pluralism, the rule of law, liberalism (understood as respect for basic human rights), and finally "control of society over the means of production and the distribution of

¹In the present work I do not distinguish between various types of (democratic) socialism or social democracy. Such fine distinctions have not yet developed in Poland and their introduction would unduly complicate my analysis. For a recent discussion of such distinctions see Lemke and Marks, eds., 1992, in particular, Eley in the same volume.

the national income and over the administrative and political apparatus, working as an organ of society, and not as a master for whom society is a hand-maiden" (1971:50).

Michnik defined the oppositional secular left, an orientation he represented and helped to form, in a very similar way: "The left propagates the ideas of freedom and tolerance, the ideas of sovereignty of the human being (the person) and the emancipation of work, ideas of just distribution of the national income and equal start for everybody; it fights chauvinism and national oppression, obscurantism and xenophobia, lawlessness, and social injustice" (Michnik 1977).

1.2. Communism.

A quite different system of values easily detectable in the regime's performance and often promulgated in the official rhetoric, imagery, and ceremonial, was reconstructed by Jan Strzelecki (1989).¹ Strzelecki concentrated his analysis on the official justifications of the centralization of power in Poland. The power of the center (omnicenter - as Strzelecki called it) was presented in countless official texts as self-explanatory for five reasons. The center was (1) the only guardian of the communist/socialist idea, (2) the perfect and the most reliable tool of its realization, thus also (3) the most perfect and conscientious custodian of the public good. Moreover, since the center was able to identify in the most comprehensive (scientific) way all needs of the populace it automatically became (4) the embodiment of ultimate (socialist) democracy.² The claims to (5) absolute power by the personnel of the center were therefore only natural.³ Such a vision of the centralized

¹Strzelecki, a sociologist and social critic, represented the anti-totalitarian tradition of the Polish left. His work entitled The Lyric Model of Socialism was completed in 1979-80, but published officially only in 1989, after the collapse of "actually existing socialism" in Poland.

²W.C. Afanasjew in his Scientific Management of the Society (Warsaw 1976:207) observes, for example, that : "The policies of the party /.../ are the policies which express the most deeply concealed ideas of the nation, its thoughts, interests, and dreams. From this results the necessity, the right, and the obligation to realize [the Party's] leadership" (Quoted in Strzelecki 1989:33).

³Let me quote just one of several official statements collected by Strzelecki: "The center ... due to its class foundation, the composition of [its] ideology, the rules of [its] structure and functioning is the only power objectively able to manage all domains of life of the socialist society. Only it can assure that the scientific program of the development of the socialist society is the foundation of the functioning of the whole political system and its constituent parts and that the whole mechanism of this system is built, developed, and works according to the fundamental interests of the working class and all working people" (Quoted in Strzelecki 1989:45 from J. Matejcek, "The Communist Party and Social Organizations in a Socialist Society" in Marxist-Leninist Parties and Social Organizations in the

power was not only developed in theoretical works; it was often expounded through official ceremonies and rituals and epitomized in the slogans produced on such occasions. It was also realized, however imperfectly, in practice. I propose to call it communism.¹

1.3.Socialist values and ideals in social consciousness.

The "ideal socialism" was reflected in the collective consciousness of the Poles, in the form of a socialist syndrome of values. By 1958, the year of the first sociological surveys in Poland, four basic values propagated by the new regime as its attributes were ingrained in the minds of large (mostly urban) sections of the Polish society.² They included: (1) social justice (equality of opportunity), (2) egalitarianism (equality of outcome), (3) welfare-state, and (4) nationalization of the economy.

In the 1970s, the values of equality and social justice, prominent in the value-system of the Poles since, at least, 1956, were gradually gaining even more significance, to become in 1980 "the most important socio-political values in Poland" (Koralewicz-Zebik 1984:227).³ This increased sensitivity to egalitarianism and social justice seems to have been related to the growing awareness of two "unjust" tendencies in the social life: (1) growing distance between the "haves" and "have-nots" and (2) the emergence of unacceptable criteria of reward such as dishonest deals, swindles, participation in cliques, bribery, etc. In the second half of the 1970s, as all these discrepancies became apparent, the frustration of the Polish population rapidly escalated.

The idea of "welfare state", i.e., a conviction that the state should take care of its citizens in the most comprehensive way, was, by the end of the 1970s, also almost unanimously accepted if not

Socialist Order. Warsaw, KIW, 1979:111).

¹This definition of communism is sometimes found in dictionaries. For example, in a dictionary edited by Wilczynski (1981) one can find seven different definitions, including the following: "Communism - (5) a totalitarian system of government noted for the supremacy of the state over the individual, based on the mono-party system of all power exercised by the Communist party, as contrasted with Western parliamentary democracy."

²It is not entirely clear to what degree the widespread acceptance of these values by the populace resulted from the regime's propaganda and to what degree they belonged to the pre-1945 world-view and ethos. It is, however, clear that the new regime portrayed itself as a champion of these values (see, e.g., Nowak 1984:408).

³In the 1980s, justice became even more important than equality.

taken for granted by most Poles.¹

The ideals of a nationalized and centralized (state run) economy were strongly instilled in people's minds as well. With the exception of agriculture, handicrafts, small-scale trades and small industrial enterprises, the majority of Poles (as revealed in 1958 and 1978 surveys) supported this socialist value. For example, 95% of the respondents in 1978 were against free enterprise in heavy industry.

This acceptance of four socialist values did not imply, however, the embracing of Marxism-Leninism as an overarching materialistic world-view, which seems to have been accepted only by a minimal fraction of the population (Nowak 1981:51, 1984:411).²

1.4. Actually existing socialism (state socialism).

Socialism, as an actually existing socio-political system, rapidly disintegrated in the years 1989-91. I will not analyze this mode of socialism's existence in a work concentrating on socialism as a public/political discourse. I do, however, believe that there is still a lot of work to be done to improve our understanding of the "actually existing socialism."³ Among many recent studies devoted to this subject I would like to single out the works of Feher, Heller, and Markus (1983), Staniszki (1989), Kaminski (1991) and an interesting volume edited by Victor Nee and David Stark (1989). A common motif of these works is a conviction (which I share) that "actually exist-

¹Nowak wrote, for example: "I would suspect that people basically accept such a situation in which most aspects of their lives depend on the functioning of centrally administered institutions and decisions of political centers, rather than on their own decisions and actions; they would only like to see these institutions working better" (1979:163).

²Nowak dealt with this problem in his analysis of the declarations of identification with socialism and Marxism by a sample of Warsaw students. He concluded that the labels "Marxism" and "Socialism" represented different intensities of the same latent variable. They did, however, cluster in a symptomatic way. The scale displayed the following distribution:

Marxist socialists	12%
Non-marxist socialists	56%
Non-marxist non-socialists	31%
'Errors of the scale'	
i.e., Non-socialist marxists	1%

(Nowak 1976:128)

³I have recently completed a brief study in which I am looking into the possibility of applying the theoretical framework developed by Jurgen Habermas to the analysis of actually existing socialism (Kubik 1990).

ing socialism" is a unique social, economic, and political formation (system) and cannot be properly grasped through a simple extension of various models developed in the studies of Western societies and polities.¹

2. Social and cultural functions of the communist/socialist ambiguity.

From the inception of the communist rule until the "Solidarity revolution" in 1980, but particularly in the 1970s, Polish public life was permeated by an ambiguity, which did not result merely from a discrepancy between official and operative values of the regime, i.e., from a discrepancy between theory and practice.² It resulted also from the ambiguous character of the official discourse, which was based on (1) a hybrid of communism/socialism (best exemplified by the concept of democratic centralism) and (2) hybridized nationalism (socialist patriotism). The ambiguity was achieved by constantly switching (through time and space) the emphasis between the elements in such pairs of values as centralism - democracy, hierarchy - egalitarianism, patriotism/nationalism - internationalism.³

In June 1976, for instance, the massive ceremonial condemnations of "hooligans from Ursus and Radom" invoked the uncompromising, hierarchical, "communist" aspect of the discourse. On Thursday, June 25, 1976 workers of at least 130 factories all over Poland went on strike or took to the streets in demonstrations against unexpected steep price increases of basic food-stuffs

¹Staniszki simply claims that "conceptual categories developed for the civilizational and political reality of the West" are not applicable to socialism due to the "ontological specificity of socialism as formation" (1989:1).

²Many people, having internalized the socialist values and being favorably disposed toward a vaguely defined entity called socialism, began to judge the system in terms of socialist standards (Nowak 1979:163, Gesicki 1983:96, Adamski 1982:51). The very values the regime instilled in its citizens in order to procure authority and legitimacy for itself, were used to delegitimize this regime, since its performance was severely below aroused expectations. As Nowak put it: "Quite extensive acceptance of the values conveyed by the new system was not accompanied by identification with the political apparatus of this system. It was socialization without identification with the sender of the accepted values" (1984:412).

³Ireneusz Sekula, a former high ranking Party-state official, was asked in a 1991 interview: "Have you ever identified yourself with Communism?" His answer is a reflection of the Communist/socialist ambiguity: "No. After all, following the war (WWII - J.K.) in Poland there was no - de facto - communist party. The Polish United Workers' Party was a socialist party, incorporating various currents: from social democracy to bureaucratic socialism. I place myself in the social-democratic current," Przegląd Tygodniowy, 10.13.91.

announced a day earlier by Prime Minister Jaroszewicz at a Sejm (Parliament) session.¹ By 8:00 p.m. that very evening Jaroszewicz went on national radio and television and announced that the price reform, as it was euphemistically presented in the media, had been withdrawn. Soon afterwards in an unanimous (Bernhard 1988) response the workers ended their protest actions. The next day the police and security forces began a campaign of reprisals, including beating, arresting, firing and imprisoning (on the basis of summary proceedings of Sentencing Courts for Misdemeanors) thousands of workers, especially in the cities of Radom and Ursus near Warsaw where the protest actions were especially violent.²

On Sunday June 27, the Polish United Workers Party organized a series of mass meetings with participation officially estimated at 50,000 to 200,000 people at each rally. The purpose of these carefully organized meetings was to show the people's "spontaneous approval of the Party's policies." The biggest rally was organized in Warsaw at the Stadium of the 10th Anniversary. The official press reported that it had been attended by "the thousands of party and non-party people."³ Stanislaw Ryszard Dobrowolski, a member of the Party and a poet, often referred to as "the bard of Warsaw" reminded everyone, "that the blossoming beauty of the capital - the city in which he has lived for almost 70 years - has benefitted in the last years from the rapid development of people's Poland" and added that "it was and is both a material and a spiritual blossom."⁴ In the same speech he described the demonstrating workers as "vandals" and "hooligans." As subsequent sociological research proved, many workers would remember the insults he hurled at them for years to come (Bakuniak 1983:289).

The invocation of the conciliatory, egalitarian, "socialist" aspect of the official discourse

¹Detailed descriptions of these events can be found in Karpinski (1982), Blazynski (1979), Bernhard (1988).

²For descriptions of reprisal actions see: Blazynski (1979:261-263), Bernhard (1988), Raina (1978:252-302), Lipski (1985:41-2).

³Trybuna Ludu 06.29.1976. In the official idiom people are often divided into two categories: party and non-party people. The official media often announce that some governmental or party initiative is supported by both the party and non-party people to indicate unanimous support. I assume that the hidden message here is that a Party initiative is truly good if it is supported also by non-party people.

⁴Trybuna Ludu, 06.29.1976.

coincided with these rare moments where the Party's position was seriously undermined by the emergence of massive and organized social protests. The participation of the high Party officials in the unveiling of the Gdansk monument, commemorating the workers killed by the regime in 1970, is a good example of such a symbolic gesture. The arrangement of space during the ceremony was hierarchical, but it was an altogether different notion of hierarchy than in state ceremonies. Major public rituals in totalitarian states, such as May Day parades in the former Soviet-bloc countries, emphasized the stiff hierarchical arrangement of society: the rulers are on the viewing stands, the masses march below. Moreover, such stands were the permanent sacred centers of the systems, as is the case of Lenin's Tomb in Moscow, or at least become such centers for the duration of the ceremonies.¹ Such space arrangement emphasized the binary opposition rulers - masses. The Gdansk ceremony was also hierarchical (as all public ceremonies are) but the organizing principle was not opposition but gradation. All participants faced the monument - the sacred center, symbolizing the martyrdom of the fallen workers and the restored dignity of the working people. The first rows were occupied by the official representatives of the state, the Church, and Solidarity. The rest of the space was taken by the "masses." No living human being was therefore counterpoised to the "masses" as a "leader" or "ruler." The hierarchical order resembled that of the protestant churches, where priests are not so conspicuously placed on "the God's side" as in the Roman Catholic mass; they only mediate between the transcendental and the mundane, their power is de-emphasized.

Sometimes the Communist/socialist ambiguity would permeate a single celebration, as in the case of May Day. The general tenor of the Day's festivities (outside of the parade) was relaxed, ludic, and recreational and can indeed be seen as a holiday of the working people. The parade, however, served to assert the communist principle. It was a total media event, whose rhetorical mode was hyperbole; it portrayed communism as the victorious force in the modern world and invoked a fictional happy triumphant world of communism, to which Poland belonged as one of

¹For a detailed analysis of the symbolism of viewing stands in totalitarian states (Stalin's Soviet Union, Hitler's Germany, and Franco's Spain) see Gross (1974:213-222).

the chosen nations participating in the final realization of the utopia. The people viewing the parade from the podium were the legitimate leaders for they led the nations in this historical "march of progress." May Day celebrations also featured another official hybrid: socialist patriotism expressed through the intertwining of patriotic and internationalistic elements. As an observer sympathetic to the regime noted, "the May Holiday became an all-national holiday. The red [color of communism/socialism - J.K.] is intertwined with the white-and-red [Polish national colors - J.K.], the interests of the working class are inseparably linked with the interests of the whole society" (Ciolek et al 1976:281).¹

Gierek's ceremonies and rituals sustained another ambiguity as well. In constructing the historical discourse supporting the regime's legitimacy claims, Gierek's propagandists oscillated between two principles, stressing either continuity or discontinuity in relating the regime to Polish history and culture. Early public ceremonies of the Stalin era were the best example of the rites of discontinuity. Their aim and function were to disrupt the national tradition and replace it with the newly invented traditions of communism. Such decisions by the authorities as the removal of the crown from the national emblem, the White Eagle, or the removal of May 3 and November 11 from the official ceremonial calendar are other examples of this strategy.

The Third of May is the holiday commemorating the so-called May Constitution written in 1791, four years before the last partition of Poland. The Constitution functions in the collective memory as a symbol of Polish traditions of democracy, tolerance, and social reforms aimed at the strengthening of the central authority - a move that was supposed to save Poland, but -- according to many historians (including those servile to the Communist regime) -- came too late to be an effective weapon against the overwhelming power of the partitioning armies. The Third of May was celebrated in pre-war Poland as a State holiday and this seems to be the main reason that the Communists dropped it from the Polish ceremonial calendar. In the late 1970s the anniversaries of the May constitution were celebrated by the opposition, and the Catholic Church which observed

¹I analyzed the political relevance of May Day symbolism in Poland in the 1970s and 1981 in Kubik (1989).

on that day the Feast of Our Lady, Queen of Poland.

In the inter-war years (1918-1939), November 11 was celebrated as a state holiday. It was Independence Day, commemorating November the eleventh of 1918 when Poland regained her independence after 123 years of partitions. After 1945, Polish Communists decided not to celebrate this anniversary, presumably to demonstrate the lack of continuity between the "bourgeois" Poland of 1918-1939 and the new Polish Peoples' Republic. In the late 1970s the holiday was revived by the opposition and the Catholic Church. In 1978, the authorities realized that they would not be able to prevent the opposition from celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Independence Day and organized their own celebrations.

In the 1970s, therefore, the application of the principle of discontinuity was moderated by a selective use of the principle of continuity. Whereas the mode of operation of some ceremonies (May Day Parade) was the invention of tradition (discontinuity), other ceremonial events (July 22 - the Anniversary of the People's Republic, or since, 1978, November 11) showed a renewed emphasis on patriotism, indicating thereby the growing interest of the authorities in creating an impression of continuity. Often, a single ceremony emphasized both elements, the internationalism and patriotism of May Day celebrations being a good example.

The official public discourse of the Polish Peoples' Republic (massive, official ceremonies in particular) played a vital role in constructing "the new social reality." Interestingly however, both this discourse and the reality constructed in and by it, were essentially ambiguous. I do not know whether this ambiguity was deliberately produced and sustained by the mass media propagandist and pageant masters. It was certainly politically expedient; at times of crisis the rulers could simply emphasize one of the syndromes, according to the logic of a given situation and their judgement. This ambiguity had at least two functions. First, through the symbolically invoked ambiguity which blurred the distinction between socialism and communism, the authorities attempted (with some measure of success) to construct an aura of "socialist" legitimacy for their "communist" practices. Second, by saturating the public domain with the simplistic yet ambiguous discourse, they diminished the populace's ability to comprehend fully their situation and thus

created a quasi-legitimizing mechanism for the social and political status quo.¹ In this sense socialism functioned as a discourse of POWER cum EQUIVOCATION.

2. Deconstruction of the communist/socialist hybrid.

Whereas the main hidden function of the official discourse was to produce and maintain its own ambiguity (communism/socialism, continuity/discontinuity) and such hybrids as "democratic centralism," "socialist patriotism," or "patriotic internationalism," the main function of the discourse developed by the Catholic Church and the organized opposition appears to have been the uncoupling or destruction of these politically expedient hybrids. By observing May 3, people invoked a tradition of democracy radically different from the official socialist democracy, based on the principle of democratic centralism. By observing November 11, the oppositional groups reminded the society that there existed a "sovereignty" other than the limited sovereignty propagated by the Party-state and epitomized in the hybrid of "patriotic internationalism." By developing the tradition of "December 1970," Gdansk workers, students, and intellectuals demonstrated that the official socialism, or indeed communism/socialism, could be replaced by their own, grass-root version of socialism. During the Solidarity period the populace simply reclaimed the socialist tradition of May Day from the state.

In the symbolic confrontation with the Party-state, the opposition had a powerful ally in the Catholic Church. The Episcopate developed a discourse founded on the religious and moral authority of Catholicism and designed as an alternative to the official social doctrine. The dignity of the human person² and the dignity of human work, ostensibly belonging to the axioms of Marxism-Leninism, were the key-stones of this discourse.

¹I am using the phrase "quasi-legitimizing" to indicate that cultural ambiguity and indeterminacy cannot be properly classified as legitimizing devices. Yet due to the cognitive disorder and emotional anxiety they produced, they diminished the populace's ability to properly define their situation and therefore increased the probability of the populace's acceptance of the regime (system) or, at least, led to the prevalent mood of apathy, hopelessness, existential inchoateness, which in turn diminishes a probability of organized anti-regime actions.

²Intellectually, Polish Catholicism has been strongly influenced by the French personalism, especially Mounier and Maritain.

The Church also worked out a coherent position on human, civil, and political rights of the citizens. The biblical rule, according to which the Church should "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (Matthew 22,21; Mark 13,33; Luke 28,25) did not prevent the Polish bishops from taking a strong stance on the whole gamut of social and political issues. To be sure, the part of the Church's discourse pertaining to "God's things", including all architectural, pictorial, and ceremonial imagery, sanctioned the principle of hierarchy. But in the public statements and pastoral letters concerned with "Caesar's things" the Church strongly emphasized pluralism, egalitarianism, democracy, and freedom. In one of his Holy Cross Sermons Cardinal Wyszyński, the Primate of Poland, made it clear that the Church wanted to involve itself in all problems facing the nation. He said:

Wisdom dictates that the organization of society should not be based on the general application of a narrow scheme but on the facilitation of free and unimpeded work of various strata and social groups, according to their reasonable and healthy preferences. The courageous defense of freedoms and of the right to unite or organize for one's aims is therefore absolutely necessary, as well as the freedom of the press, public opinion, publication, discussion, deliberation, and scientific research. These are the prerequisites for creating the wealth of cultural, social, national, and political life (Karpinski 1982:173).

The oppositional groups invoked in their public statements the same values, thus their alliance with the Church was inevitable. Strong links were established especially between the catholic democratic left, represented most clearly by the magazine Wież, and those members of the opposition, whom Michnik called "the secular left."¹ The most influential underground publication for workers, Robotnik ("The Worker"), whose socialist orientation was explicitly pronounced by its editors, enthusiastically endorsed the renewal of Polish Christianity, triggered by the Pope's visit in 1979. At the same time, some activists of the democratic "secular left," related

¹Michnik's book The Church, the Left: A Dialogue, became a turning point in the rapprochement between, as Michnik called them, people of the secular left and the people of the Church.

to KSS KOR¹ such as Adam Michnik or Jacek Kuron, developed a political discourse based on socialist ideals and separated their own version of socialism from the ambiguous official communism/socialism.

The most powerful symbolic blow that undermined the official "communist/socialist" discourse's monopolistic claims on "the truth" was John Paul II's first visit to his native country in 1979. In sociological terms, the visit resulted in the renewal of what Simmel called sociability, i.e., a mode of social existence in which people "feel that the formation of a society as such is a value" (1950:42-3). Millions of people, organized not by the state agencies, but by volunteers directed by Catholic activists, came together in an orderly fashion to celebrate "their" Pope. They realized that civil organization of the society outside of the state was possible. This led to a considerable lowering of the barrier of fear vis-a-vis the state and the development of the consciousness of "we" crystallized in the towering personality of the Pope, popularly perceived as the only genuine moral, religious, and even political authority.²

John Paul reinvigorated in massive public ceremonies the symbols of the nation, Catholicism, and civil society which were accepted as genuine foci of identification for the Poles. What was particularly important, this rapid realization that the national community can be and is actually defined outside of the communist state reached all the strata and classes of the society, including the workers. Only under the impact of the Pope's visit did Polish workers (or at least significant segments of this class) achieve a considerable degree of self-identification as members of a wider "imagined community" organized around such readily acceptable symbols as the Pope, the Black Madonna, the Catholic Church, and the common national heritage (as defined by the Church and the opposition). This realization constituted an important step toward the formulation of positive

¹In September of 1976, a group of intellectuals, already involved in helping the persecuted workers who had been on strike in June, formed an organization later known as KSS KOR. For a detailed history of this group see Lipski (1985) and Bernhard (1988).

²Krzysztof Jasiewicz, one of the co-authors of the ground-breaking sociological studies of Polish society, observed that "in the end of the 1970s national identification reached a very high level, rarely observed in history. The visit of John Paul II to his native land is unanimously regarded as a breaking point in the shaping of personality of the "Pole 1980"" (1983:129).

programs of reforms developed in 1980-81.¹

The Pope also introduced to the Polish public life a language, a discourse, which made it possible to reconsider significant socio-political issues afresh. Since 1945, the regime appropriated Marxism and socialism, turning the latter into a hybrid of communism/socialism. Subsequently, those segments of the opposition which opted for non-hybridized forms of socialism found it difficult to express workers grievances and problems without resorting to the discredited "new-speak" of the officialdom.² During Pope's visit, most Poles were exposed to the powerful public presentation of the articulate (non-Marxist) discourse of Catholicism, hitherto available in usually less captivating renditions by Catholic priests. The Pope, by making human work one of the prime subjects of his sermons³, proved that there was a non-Marxist discourse in which social and political problems could be articulated in what was widely perceived as morally unambiguous terms.

The process of demystification of the communist/socialist discourse, accelerated by the Pope's visit, continued during the first period of Solidarity's legal existence (1980-81). During this period, the public predominance of the "Roman-Catholic" discourse was amplified through countless ceremonies of the new movement, which almost without exception included in their programs Catholic masses. In a programmatic statement on the national culture Solidarity's Congress asserted that:

Because it was Christianity that brought us into our wider motherland Europe, because for a thousand years Christianity has in a large degree been shaping the content of our culture, since in the most tragic moments of our nation it was the Church that was our main support, since our ethics are predominantly Christian, since, finally, Catholicism is the living faith of the majority of Poles, we deem it necessary that an honest and comprehensive presentation of the role of the

¹This fragment of my analysis is heavily indebted to Bakuniak and Nowak (1984) and Krzeminski *et al.* (1983).

²See for example, the interview with *Robotnik's* editors in *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, no. 2, 04.10.1981.

³He developed this theme in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work) from September 14, 1981.

Church in the history of Poland and of the world have an adequate place in national education.¹

In the short period between 1979 and 1981, the Roman-Catholic discourse regained all cultural authority it had lost earlier to the discourse of the Party-state. In particular, the Pope's visit and his 32 sermons, delivered in a language which was closer to everyday speech than the Church's usual discourse, was the most important step in transforming Catholicism from the externally authoritative discourse to one which was internally persuasive.²

A sociological mechanism which elevated Roman-Catholicism to such preeminence seems to have been inadvertently set in motion by the communist praxis of power exercise. Since the communist take-over, the liberal-democratic political culture, however imperfect it was, founded on the rule of law and the ideal of legal legitimacy, was destroyed. Although the communist rulers claimed to have achieved formal legitimacy it was de facto violated from the inception of the system; few people, for example, took seriously the regime's claim that it was "egalitarian." This meant a gradual atrophy of the domain of values directly pertinent to the problem of legitimacy and the corrosion of the political culture.³ In an emerging political limbo any syndrome of values could have been called to play the role of the ultimate standards in the political game. Not unexpectedly however, only Catholic Christianity could fill the vacuum; it was the only coherent body of ideas and symbols that survived the communist onslaught on Polish culture. Catholicism became the source of surrogate standards for political culture and this led to the conflation of ethics and politics, so irritating for some observers of the 1979-1989 period. By waging an assault on the liberal-democratic political culture, the communist regime inadvertently, I presume, made Catholicism the ultimate source of value standards delegitimizing their authority.

¹I quote this document in a translation published in *World Affairs*, 145(1), Summer 1982:23.

²These are Bakhtin's terms. Authoritative discourse "demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it" (1981:342). Persuasive discourse, in turn, "is ... tightly interwoven with 'one's own word.' /.../ The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is not finite, it is open; ... this discourse is able to reveal ever newer ways to mean" (1981:345-46).

³In the language of the system's theory, links between values and institutions were severed or even cut. Such links are cultivated through uninterrupted traditions.

In the 1970s, socialism assumed at least four different forms in Poland. They included: (1) a syndrome of highly popular values accepted by the majority of the Polish society, (2) the hybrid of communism/socialism - the official ideology of the regime, (3) the discourse of oppositional intellectuals belonging to the democratic secular left, and (4) an aspect of the discourse developed by a group of Christian intellectuals. Under the impact of the steadily growing social and political criticism voiced by the Church and the organized opposition, the Pope's visit, and the period of Solidarity's reforms, the official hybrid of communism/socialism fell apart. The oppositional activists from the secular left and the Christian left moved toward each other on the ideological spectrum. The values which thus far were usually labelled "socialist," therefore associated in the popular mind, even if vaguely, with the "socialist state," began drifting towards the Catholic social doctrine. In a move hardly conceivable among the socialist parties of the West, the newly resurrected Polish Socialist Party¹ proclaimed in its first declaration from November 1987:

Ninety-five years ago the Polish Socialist Party (P.P.S.) was formed, organizing Poles in the struggle for independence and social justice... Forty years ago, the Communists destroyed the democratic socialist movement. Many socialist activists died in Polish and Russian jails... Today, on the anniversary of the Paris Convention, we are restoring the P.P.S., being fully aware of the tradition we intend to carry on. We realize that the word "socialism," which has been co-opted by the communists, is currently unpopular in Polish society.

Our program will be subject to modification over time and responding to the realities of our situation. We don't want to base it on an inflexible doctrine. We don't want to tie ourselves to any specific philosophy, although we admit that we feel more affinity with the social teachings of the Church, more specifically with those of John Paul II, than with Marxism.²

Here socialism was conceived of as a discourse emPOWERing people against the Communist/socialist state.

4. The 1980s: the years of disenchantment.

The post-Solidarity Polish Peoples' Republic (1982-89) became a non-legitimate, a-ideological

¹PPS, by far the strongest party of the Polish left, was de facto destroyed and de jure incorporated into the (pro-Moscow, Communist) Polish United Workers' Party in December 1948.

²Tygodnik Mazowsze no.228, 11.18.1987.

polity in which the terms of social conflict between the Party-state and the organized opposition (underground Solidarity) were to an large extent pragmatized, i.e., the game of public displays of claims and counter-claims to legitimacy was far less pronounced than in the 1970s. The two modes of co-existence left to both sides of the conflict were either mutual rejection and confrontation or the building of a pragmatic social contract. Significantly, one prospective partner of such a contract, the Party-state, was perceived by the majority of the populace as illegitimate. The confrontational mode of co-existence, dominant in Poland immediately after the imposition of martial law (December 13, 1981), gradually gave way to the contract-building mode, which culminated in the "round-table" accords of the spring 1989 and whose results (partially contractual parliament) survived until the fully democratic parliamentary elections in October 1991.

According to the authors of the sociological surveys conducted in Poland in the 1980s, the process of erosion of the syndrome of socialist values (the third of the four forms of socialism, introduced at the beginning) in this period accelerated. The level of acceptance of the "socialist regime would seem rather low" (Marody 1987:130). Having surveyed the results of fifteen empirical studies, Marody concluded that in those studies where the question "Would you like the world to move in the direction of the kind of socialism which exists in Poland?" was asked, affirmative answers ranged from 4% to 20.5%. "The percentage of "definitely in favor" responses varied correspondingly 3.3% and 0.6%" (Marody 1987:130). She also noted, however, that "welfare security" continued to be perceived as a highly desirable feature of the social system. Since this value is related in peoples' minds to "ideal socialism," "despite the fact that support for 'real socialism' was rather weak, 'theoretical socialism' still enjoyed considerable support among respondents" (Marody 1987:145), although its popularity visibly declined (see also Nowak 1984).¹

A sample of students from Warsaw University and Warsaw Polytechnic (Technical University) were asked whether they would be in favor of allowing private enterprises to have

¹Nowak writes: "...if we look at the values which are component parts of the socialist orientation, and which express one's identification with the watchwords of socialism, then in the recent period (the 1980s - J.K.) we could observe, for the first time in over twenty years, their distinct decline" (1989:154).

unlimited access to several branches of the national economy. Their answers are summarized in

Table 1.

Table 1
In favor of unlimited access

Branch of economy	1978	1983	Difference
1.Crafts	96%	97%	+ 1
2.Retail trade	73%	77%	+ 4
3.Wholesale trade	13%	36%	+23
4.Foreign trade	9%	32%	+23
5.Small industrial enterprises	58%	82%	+24
6.Middle-size industry	15%	36%	+21
7.Large agricultural enterprises	16%	62%	+46
8.Heavy industry	2%	12%	+10

(Source: Nowak 1984:454 and 1989:155)¹

The declining popularity of socialist values in the first half of 1980s was accompanied by a polarization of the public opinion. Lena Kolarska-Bobinska distinguished two opposite orientations, emerging in the social consciousness of the Poles: egalitarian-statist orientation and non-egalitarian-market orientation. The partial results of several studies devoted to this question are summarized in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2
Acceptance of the egalitarian-statist model of the economy

Content of the principle	YEAR	Answer in %				
		Positively yes	Rather yes	Rather no	Positively no	Hard to say
Limitation of the highest earnings	1980	70.6	19.1	5.1	3.4	1.8
	1981	50.7	28.0	9.1	4.8	7.8
	1984	29.6	26.5	22.6	12.5	8.5
	1988	27.5	29.0	20.1	13.0	9.9
Policy of full employment	1980	50.6	29.2	9.8	5.4	7.0
	1981	29.1	24.5	22.6	11.3	12.5
	1984	25.2	28.2	22.7	10.8	12.6
	1988	25.3	34.5	16.0	6.8	16.7

¹Nowak claims that students' opinions approximate the opinions of the population at large since "the student samples as a rule proved to be similar in their attitudes, aspirations, and values to other socio-occupational groups in our country" (1989:155).

Table 3
Acceptance of the non-egalitarian-market model of the economy

Content of the principle	YEAR	Answer in %				
		Positively yes	Rather yes	Rather no	Positively no	Hard to say
Strong differentiation of earnings according to qualifications	1980	25.8	28.1	25.1	14.2	6.5
	1981	30.3	31.6	21.4	5.5	11.2
	1984	43.6	37.2	10.9	2.9	5.2
	1988	40.4	42.6	8.3	2.0	6.3
Admission of unemployment	1984	16.1	18.3	21.5	35.7	8.1
	1988	11.5	19.3	22.6	31.3	14.6
Economy based on market and competition	1984	55.0	26.9	4.1	1.8	11.9
	1988	46.5	33.8	3.9	2.0	13.2

(Sources: Kolarska-Bobinska 1989:115-16; Adamski, et al. 1989:249)¹

The survey results presented above illustrate two social phenomena: (1) in the time period from 1980 until 1984 the acceptance of the non-egalitarian and market-oriented model of national economy increased dramatically, but (2) as the data for 1988 indicate, the increase was halted and the level of acceptance of this model stabilized at the 1984 level. It must be noted, however, that in 1988, the egalitarian and statist model was definitely less popular than its non-egalitarian and market-oriented alternative.

5. 1989 elections: electoral campaign without socialism.

Against this background of (1) eroding popularity of "socialist values," (2) minimal legitimacy of "actually existing socialism," and (3) an euphoric mood engendered by the considerable political gains wrestled from the Party-state during the round-table negotiations and the re-legalization of Solidarity, Poles were getting ready for the first semi-democratic elections since WWII.

¹The studies under the common title *The Poles* were conducted on representative samples of Polish citizens. The sample in 1980 included 2510 (Adamski et al.1989:241) or 2495 (Jawlowski 1989:450) persons, in 1981 - 1895, in 1984 - 1911, and in 1988 - 2349. For a synthetic description of all samples until 1988, see Jawlowski 1989.

According to the round table accords, Solidarity was supposed to have access to 23% of air time on TV, and even more air time on the radio, as well as being able to promote its program and candidates in several independent papers. In practice, the opposition's access to the media was minimal and the "Coalition" (as the Party-state labelled itself for the elections) enjoyed a tremendous advantage in being able to present its views without any restrictions. Yet there was no orchestrated, uniform official election campaign.

The Party-state's electoral nome de guerre, "Coalition," was deliberately neutral to avoid any association with communism/socialism. It also indicated that the satellite parties, SD (Democratic Party) and ZSL (United Peasants' Party), were now defined as full-fledged and serious partners of the PZPR (Polish United Workers' Party). This labeling technique exemplifies what seems to have been the fundamental election commandment of the Party-state: do not reveal who you are unless you are asked. A SD chairman of a regional election commission observed: "Those who thus far emphasized their Party membership and carried the PZPR badges in their lapels, suddenly prefer not to make a display of it."¹ According to the rules agreed upon during the round table negotiations, the political affiliation of candidates on the voting cards and possibly on other documents, was not to be specified.²

Coalition candidates did not want to define themselves as Party people, and yet they had to present themselves positively to the public; so they arrived at a variety of self-definitions.

Below is a list of the most common used during the campaign:

1. Patriots.
2. Champions of democracy and self-government.³
3. Family men.⁴

¹Polityka, 06.03.89.:5.

²"In the first round of elections, each seat will be voted for on a separate election card, on which the candidates will be listed in alphabetical order, without any additional descriptions (stress - J.K.); (political symbols, the names of organizations, etc., can be, though, at the request of a candidate, placed on election lists, posters, etc." Tygodnik Mazowsze, 06.12.89.

³For example Wladyslaw Mirola in Bielsko, District 11, seat 39. He received 12.72% of the vote.

⁴"Coalition" used as its symbol a stylized representation of a family. See Trybuna Ludu from the period preceding the elections.

4. Efficient and successful managers.¹
5. Champions of ecological causes.²
6. Religious men.³
7. Local guys, good old-boys, etc.⁴
8. New to politics.⁵
9. Independently minded politicians who have been often victimized by the Party elite for their independence.
10. "People's choice" candidates.⁶
11. People of common sense.
12. Supporters of private enterprise.⁷

Other strategies that accompanied the major strategy of mimicry included: (1) the usurpation of Solidarity symbolism or the creation of an impression of connection with Solidarity and (2) the symbolic reversal: they (Solidarity) are what we (the Party-state) used to be in the past. Trybuna Ludu, an official daily of the communist party, wrote, for example: "Watching the aggressive and demagogic propaganda it is impossible not to ask: how does the bygone stalinist totalitarianism relate to the totalitarianism practiced by Solidarity" (06.02.89.).

In conclusion, the Party-state's primary electoral strategy was mimicry: the Coalition candidates ran without revealing or emphasizing their political identity and, first of all, tried to avoid any association with "socialism" in any of its four forms. They understood very well that in June 1989 such an association was a political liability and did their best to come up with public images that were clearly a- or non-socialist. The discourse of socialism disappeared from the

¹E.g., Latosinski in Cracow.

²E.g., Gajewicz in Cracow, whose electoral slogan read "O czyste niebo nad Krakowem" [For clear sky above Cracow].

³Ludwik Bernacki (Seat 188, Cracow, Polish United Workers' Party) distributed little posters depicting him with the Pope and carrying the inscription: "I am with you," the words originally uttered by John Paul II during his visit to Poland.

⁴Knoppek (Bielsko, District 11, seat 41) was pictured wearing a local folk costume from his home town of Wisla in the Beskid Mountains. Bernacki announced in his poster: "I am Cracow's man for generations."

⁵Jerzy Gajda (Cracow, seat 187, PUWP) announced in his leaflet: "I was recommended as a candidate by the Polish Economic Society. I am an economist - practicing (economist), new in the political arena, not burdened with the mistakes of the past." Gajda got 15.78% against Kubiak's 10.68%.

⁶Latosinski in Cracow: "This is worth knowing: my candidacy was announced by citizens."

⁷Bernacki in Cracow: "I am decisively for private enterprise."

public scene for a while.

6. The 1990's: the communist/socialist hybrid strikes back.

In January 1990, PZPR (The Polish United Workers' Party) dissolved itself and two new parties were formed on its ruins: SDRP (The Social Democracy of the Polish Republic) and PUS (The Polish Social-Democratic Union). The latter disappeared from public life in July of 1991 after an undistinguished existence. The former, led by several influential, younger PZPR activists, remodelled its identity through an aggressive media campaign and defined itself as a modern social democratic party. In 1991, among the political parties which explicitly subscribed to social democratic ideals were three offsprings of the oppositional, underground movement. They included PPS (Polish Socialist Party, revived in 1987), Solidarnosc Pracy (Solidarity of Work), and Ruch Demokratyczno-Spoleczny (the Democratic-Social Movement) led by Zbigniew Bujak. Also, social democratic themes were explicitly embraced by the Democratic Union, particularly its social-liberal faction led by Zofia Kuratowska.

To build one's political identity in terms of "socialist" or "social democratic" discourse proved to be, however, a much more treacherous undertaking than to assume a "liberal" or "christian-democratic" mantle. In a country emerging from forty-some years of "actually existing socialism," whose hegemonic discourse was permeated by the communist/socialist hybrid, almost everything that could be even loosely associated with "the left" turned into an unpredictable, usually negative, political weapon. A politician identifying herself or himself as an exponent of such an ideology/philosophy/worldview/program could count on some sympathy from those who found it difficult to abandon the ideals of egalitarianism and practical comforts of the welfare-state safety net or those who would like to see the reversal of history and the return of "actually existing socialism." Their numbers were not negligible. In a public opinion poll, conducted in August 1991, 32.2% of the respondents answered that they would prefer to live under the "actually existing socialism of 1989" than under the "capitalism and democracy of 1991."¹

¹Polityka, 09.14.91.

Politicians, however, had to remember that by declaring publicly their "socialist" identity, they would subject themselves to fervent negative labelling by the influential parties of the "center" and the "right."

PPS (Polish Socialist Party) openly and loudly has pronounced its social democratic and "left" identity. The postcommunist Social Democracy of the Polish Republic seems to have been more prudent. They did not deny their "leftism," yet sometimes chose to de-emphasize it. For example, in a leaflet distributed in the Fall of 1990, designed to attract new members, one can find the following appeal:

"SDRP

If you are for:

- strong Poland, based on the rule of law,
- integrity of her borders,
- territorial and working people's self-government,
- parliamentary democracy and the multi-party system,
- free market economy and elements of [state] interventionism,
- social responsibility of the state,
- equality of educational opportunities, and
- respect for every person /.../

Then come to us - Together we will carry more weight."

The "social democratic" slogans on this list, "working people's self-government" and "social responsibility of the state," were not emphasized (the third and the sixth position, respectively). Moreover, these slogans were hardly original, since prior to the parliamentary elections of 1991 similar phrases appeared in the programs of many parties.

The social democratic parties that emerged from the Solidarity movement were also cautious, if not evasive, when it came to self-definitions. Bujak, for example, described his Democratic-Social Movement (RDS) in a rather convoluted fashion:

The majority of those who listen to us [RDS - J.K.] for most of their lives associated the left with the communist party. RDS does not want such an affinity. On the other hand, social democracy is associated by the people with what is going on in Sweden or with the German SPD. Such social democracy is not socialism plus democracy, but capitalism plus fear of socialism. Out of this fear capitalism mellowed and acquired some attractive features. RDS wants to introduce [capitalism] to Poland in its most humane, agreeable forms.¹

¹Polityka 08.17.91.

All this camouflaging becomes understandable, however, when one considers the strategy of relentless attacks waged by the parties of the "right" on the parties of the "left." This strategy boiled down to a simple two-step precept: (1) keep hammering into peoples' minds that there is only one "left" - the same one they know so well from their experience with "actually existing socialism" and (2) label your political enemy as a member of the "left." The conclusion, explicitly stated or merely suggested, was obvious: if a party, person, movement, etc., was identified or identified itself as "left," it had to be classified as a successor of "actually existing socialism" (totalitarian communism) which damaged the country so badly.

A more elaborate version of this strategy was applied by the Center Alliance (PC) in its competition with ROAD, and later with the UD (Democratic Union), for primacy over the Polish political scene (PC, ROAD, and UD evolved out of Solidarity movement). In what follows I will attempt to reconstruct the logic of this strategy, which constituted the backbone of one of the most influential political discourses in Poland during 1990-91.

Thesis 1. The new political order that emerged after the collapse of communism, is fragile and constantly endangered by a counter-offensive from the postcommunist forces.

In a PC programmatic pamphlet, "Why the Center?," Kaczynski wrote:

A serious danger is associated with such a course of transformations in our country, which allows the groups, which in essence are in minority and whose orientation is anti-democratic (postcommunist), retain very significant positions in social life, exercise control over essential elements of the economic, political, and informative infrastructure (Kaczynski 1990:4).

Moreover, PC activists often argued that "the forces of the old regime [communist Party-state - J.K.] are on the offensive,"¹ thus something must be done to terminate harmful continuity between the new Polish Republic and the communist Polish Peoples' Republic. Kaczynski demanded: "The Polish state must be new, it cannot continue the traditions of the Polish Peoples' Republic."²

Thesis 2. The "left" segment of the political spectrum includes not only the postcommunist

¹Jaroslav Kaczynski, the leader of the Center Alliance, during the first congress of his party (Rzeczpospolita, 03.04.91)

²Kaczynski, Dlaczego przyspieszenie [Why acceleration?], Porozumienie Centrum, Cieszyn 11.14.90.

Social Democracy of the Polish Republic and post-Solidarity left parties (PPS, Solidarity of Work, Democratic-Social Movement), but also some significant parts if not the whole of the Democratic Union, particularly such leaders and supporters of this party as Kuron, Michnik, and Mazowiecki. Kaczynski expounded this thesis frequently:

We do not consider our political opponents to be communists, nevertheless they belong to the left - their attitude towards the Polish communist past is different from the attitude of the non-left people, it is based on the concept of "thick line,"¹ it is an attitude which rejects the uprooting of this past.²

Thesis 3. Mazowiecki, Michnik, Kuron, and the Democratic Union (formerly ROAD) as well as their allies, i.e. "the post-Solidarity left," strive to achieve the monopoly of power in the country³ and, perhaps inadvertently, create such political conditions, which allow the former communists to preserve, if not expand, their economic and political influence.

In various political writings of the Center Alliance publicists, the reasoning contained in this thesis was often taken one step further. A modified version of (3) would usually take the following form:

Thesis 3'. There exists an "objective" convergence of interests between the postcommunist and the post-Solidarity "left."

¹"Thick line," a metaphor first used by Mazowiecki, came to symbolize a policy of leniency and forgiveness towards the former Party-state officials. According to its proponents it meant, first of all, a rejection of the notion of collective responsibility; each case of abuse of power and each crime committed by the communists was to be adjudicated separately in a court of law. Many people believed that such a "legalistic" approach could not and would not bring justice, for the existing legal framework was constructed by the communists, who now were to be judged according to their own rules. As a result, the populace was strongly divided over this policy.

²Kaczynski, Dlaczego Przyspieszenie? [Why acceleration?], Porozumienie Centrum, Cieszyn, 11.14.90. In a TV show, "100 questions to Jaroslaw Kaczynski," he developed this thought: "I do not treat the term "left" as an epithet, the left has its place in Polish tradition, has its place on the present political scene...if I used the term "commune" [a pejorative term used to describe the communist regime - J.K.], that would be an epithet, when I am saying that he is a person of the left, it is simply a description, nothing more."

³Kaczynski said during a TV debate with Michnik (11.21.90): "...there was an effort made (in Poland after the round-table agreement, i.e., after April 1989, I presume - J.K.) to construct a certain new monopoly or a hegemonic party, which, in addition, would be based in its internal structures, on the hegemony of a single group. /.../ A very meritorious group...yet, nonetheless, a specific group, holding specific views, which I would call left-wing..."

This thought was fully developed in a Center Alliance pamphlet "The Essence of the Controversy. The Center versus ROAD" (Drozdek 1990):

Since the completion of the round table negotiations, the opposition group, which achieved power through these negotiations, quite naturally developed an interest in the maintenance of the division of power, designed at the round table. What has been created, then, is an objectively paradoxical alliance of the former functionaries and the groups who were earlier brutally persecuted by them. Both formations can lose their influence when the far reaching systemic reforms are instituted in this country. The Solidarity left could retain its influence through the preservation of unity of the citizens' movement, which it headed, at least until the free elections, which it would win decisively, earning four more years to strengthen its influence. In such a situation, the old apparatus would take positions next to the citizens' movement, assuming Solidarity's mantle as their own and supporting Solidarity's leadership, but at the same time blocking structural changes. The forces of the center and the right, striving for the possibly fastest transformation, became the common enemy [of this alliance - J.K.] (Drozdek 1990:18).

Finally, in the pronouncements of the more radical politicians of the Center Alliance or the "right" parties, the line of reasoning represented by theses (3) and (3') would culminate in its, politically most explosive, form of thesis (3").

3". There exists an actual political alliance between "the postcommunist left" and "the post-Solidarity left."

This idea was expressed in various forms. Adam Gwizdz, an influential Center Alliance activist in the Bielsko region, declared in an interview: "According to the public sentiment, the present authorities are not only incompetent, but also, together with the postcommunists, they oppress the nation."¹ The Supreme Council of ZChN (The Christian-National Union, a vocal representative of the "right"), issued a statement, declaring that the Democratic Union "has been, for some time now, linked through an actual political alliance" with the communists. Moreover, this "alliance of the postcommunist and Solidarity left" is driven by the desire to "reinforce in Poland a system originating in communism."² Stefan Niesiolowski, a leader of ZChN, claimed: "We do not invent the alliance of the "pinks" [the Democratic Union and its allies - J.K.] with the

¹Kronika Beskidzka, 04.25.91.:5. A statement is a curiosity, since it criticizes a government Gwizdz's party (the Center Alliance) helped to create after Walesa's electoral victory in December 1990. I believe, though, it is directed mostly against the Center Alliance's political opponents, i.e., first of all against the Democratic Union.

²Gazeta Wyborcza, 03.19.91.

"reds" [the postcommunist SDRP and its allies - J.K.]. The leaders of the "pinks" talked about this alliance already in the fall of 1989."¹

Jacek Kuron, a Vice-chairman of the Democratic Union, and Adam Michnik, the editor of Gazeta Wyborcza, commonly perceived as a close ally of this party, vehemently denied that there existed an "actual alliance" between them and the postcommunists. They also rejected the "left" label attributed to them by the Center Alliance. Kuron declared:

I would like to belong to the "left" very much. But at this moment Polish society faces the problem of building what I would call a capitalism with a human face. I cannot build capitalism, proclaiming that I am "the left" because that would be a deception. We believe that an ideological party, a "world-view" party, is not a precept for a party in the current situation of our country at all. Moreover, I will honestly confess that a party based on a "world-view" is a very bad thing.²

Michnik was even more poignant in his denial. In a TV "duel" with Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the Center Alliance leader, Michnik said:

...let's stop labelling each other. Please do not call me "the secular left," or any "left," and I promise I will not call you a "Muslim right."³

During a political rally in Warsaw he made this point in the most dramatic way: "If I am "the secular left" or "the crypto-commune," then you, dear friends, are pigs."⁴

Despite such straight-forward denials, the Center Alliance continued to depict its political opponents as "the people of the left," with all ensuing consequences I outlined above. Moreover, the Center revived a discursive strategy employed by the communist party in the 1970s; a strategy of constructing ideological hybrids which confuse the public and become potent political weapons. In the 1970s, the Party-state developed a discourse, founded on the Communist/socialist ambiguity, and used it as a quasi-legitimizing device of their authority. In 1990-91, the Center Alliance constructed a discourse in which their political opponents (1) were defined as "the people of the left" or as "the post-Solidarity left" and (2) were equated with or presented as a close ally of "the postcommunist left." Significantly, in this discourse "communism" and "socialism" were never

¹Stefan Niesiolowski, Spojrzenie z ZCHN-u [A view from ZChN], Gazeta Wyborcza, 05.06.91.

²A TV program Klincz, 03.14.91.

³The program was aired on 11.21.90.

⁴Biuletyn Informacyjny, Ruch Obywatelski Akcja Demokratyczna, 4 (November):17.

clearly defined, but meshed imperceptibly with each other. Thus, another Communist/socialist hybrid was created, this time used not to legitimize political power but to discredit a political opponent. In this sense socialism functioned as a discourse of DEFAMATION or, rather, DEFAMATION through EQUIVOCATION.

The success of this strategy depended both on the public relations skills of its proponents and on the public's readiness to accept it. It is not easy to assess the latter in the highly volatile and fluctuating social and political climate. Some approximation of this readiness may be inferred, however, from the results of the 1990 installment of the research series, "Poles." The questionnaire contained again the set of questions directly inquiring about the popularity of "the socialist syndrome of values."

Table 4
Acceptance of the egalitarian-statist model of the economy

Content of the principle	YEAR	Answer in %				
		Positively yes	Rather yes	Rather no	Positively no	Hard to say
Limitation of the highest earnings	1988	27.5	29.0	20.1	13.0	9.9
	1990	27.2	27.6	22.2	12.0	10.7
Policy of employment	1988	25.3	34.5	16.0	6.8	16.7
	1990	34.1	32.8	15.0	4.7	12.7

Table 5
Acceptance of the non-egalitarian-market model of the economy

Content of the principle	YEAR	Answer in %				
		Positively yes	Rather yes	Rather no	Positively no	Hard to say
Strong differentiation of earnings according to qualifications	1988	40.4	42.6	8.3	2.0	6.3
	1990	37.3	40.7	10.8	2.0	9.0
Admission of unemployment	1988	11.5	19.3	22.6	31.3	14.6
	1990	5.1	18.4	29.9	34.4	11.6
Economy based on market and competition	1988	46.5	33.8	3.9	2.0	13.2
	1990	45.4	37.8	3.5	1.6	11.4

(Source: Kolarska-Bobinska 1991:63-4)

Kolarska-Bobinska concluded from these results that "the non-egalitarian rules are still strongly supported by society, stronger than the egalitarian rules" (1991:64), but one also notices a slight increase in the popularity of the egalitarian-statist model. This conclusion is further supported by data generated by other questions. Thus, the "egalitarians" i.e., those who "simultaneously accept the policy of full employment and the limitation of the earnings of the top earners, constituted 42% of all respondents (38.5% in 1988)" (Kolarska-Bobinska 1991:67). The "non-egalitarians" accounted for 12% of the sample. An analysis of other responses would perhaps yield yet another picture; one must remember that we deal here with a strongly fluctuating situation. An emerging trend, however, seems to be clear: in 1990 (1) Polish society was polarized ("egalitarians" versus "non-egalitarians") and (2) the number of "egalitarians," i.e., potential constituency of social democratic parties, declining in the first half of the 1980s, was then stable and even growing slightly. Moreover, in 1990 the "egalitarian" views were more characteristic of both unskilled and skilled workers, blue-collar workers and farmers. By contrast, the "non-egalitarian" views were more often found among owners and experts, technicians and white-collar workers (Kolarska-Bobinska 1991:77). Clearly, after several years of the inter-class alliance of Solidarity (roughly 1980-88), when, for example, the majority of skilled workers had been inclined to opt for "non-egalitarian" ideals, in 1990-91, the Polish socio-political scene was slowly beginning to differentiate along socio-economic lines. This could have meant increased support for social democratic parties. There was, however, a significant obstacle preventing such a development: Polish politics was populated by various "hybrid," "Peronist" parties, whose discourse combined a loud nationalistic and religious facade (a realm of the "right") with anti-capitalist, pro-statist, and "welfarist" social programs (a realm of the "left").¹ Those were precisely the same parties which used the weapon of the "communist/socialist hybrid" to discredit the Democratic Union, whose economic program favored, paradoxically, "non-egalitarian" and "pro-capitalist" solutions.

¹On a parallel phenomenon of Hungarian "Peronism" see Szelenyi and Szelenyi 1992:125.

In the parliamentary elections of October 1991, the public, faced with such a perplexedly chaotic political field, voted in a perplexedly fragmented fashion: as a result the lower house of the Polish Parliament (Sejm) was composed of twenty nine political parties, 11 of which held only one seat. Partial results of the elections to the lower house are presented in Table 6.

No	Party	% of vote	Seats
1.	Democratic Union ("pinks" according to Nos. 3 and 6)	12.31	62
2.	The Democratic Left Alliance (postcommunists, "reds")	11.98	60
3.	Catholic Electoral Action ¹ (those who claimed that the "pinks" and the "reds" are hardly distinguishable)	8.73	49
6.	Citizens' Alliance Center ² (those who insisted that the "pinks" and "reds" conspire together or, at least, have common interests)	8.71	44
15.	Solidarity of Work (post-Solidarity left)	2.05	4
20.	Democratic-Social Movement (post-Solidarity left)	(less than 1)	1

(source: Gazeta Wyborcza 11.02-03.91.)

The "post-Solidarity" social democrats together won less than 3% of the vote and 5 seats in the lower house; the "postcommunist" social democrats won 11.98% of the popular vote and 60 seats.³ According to some observers (e.g., close to the Democratic Union), the electorate of the "postcommunist left" consisted predominantly of the former members of the Polish United Workers' Party and all those people who had drawn benefits from some symbiotic relationship with the communist regime. It was also suggested that their decision to vote for the Democratic Left Alliance was augmented by the intense "negative" campaign by the parties of the "right,"

¹This was the name ZCHN (Christian-National Alliance) assumed for the elections.

²The Center Alliance and OPZZ (former communist trade unions) entered the elections under this name.

³In the Senate, the Democratic Union 21% of the seats, Alliance of the Democratic Left - 4%. The parties of the post-Solidarity left did not win a single seat.

who not only labelled them "reds" but also opted for the institution of the stringent "decommunization" measures which would, at least, eliminate former functionaries of the Polish United Workers' Party from the public life. Others argued that the electorate of the Democratic Left Alliance comprised not only former beneficiaries of "actually existing socialism," but also all those who still cherished one or several "social democratic" ideals and did not find any other party to vote for, because the post-Solidarity social democrats entered the public scene too late and too inconspicuously.¹ At the moment of this writing, the results of more systematic sociological analyses of these elections are not available, thus I cannot precisely describe the electorates of various social democratic parties. It should be noted, however, that preliminary exit polls showed the KPN (the Confederacy for an Independent Poland), the decisively "rightist" and nationalistic party, though with a "socialist" social program, attracting larger numbers of industrial workers than either the "pinks" or the "reds."²

Due to the convoluted history of "socialism" and "social democracy" I outlined in this essay, they were not fully legitimate political identities and discourses in the Polish public life of 1991. Socialist or social democratic sentiments, cultivated by many Poles at the same time, were still decoupled from these discourses and often found institutional outlets in populist "Peronist" parties. The infirmity of social democracy in 1991 Poland was caused not by some deficiencies of social democratic institutions (as was the case of Hungary according to Szelenyi and Szelenyi 1992:133), but instead had its roots in the cultural history of the social democratic discourse.

¹See, e.g., Dawid Warszawski in Gazeta Wyborcza 11.02.91:8-9.

²Mirosława Grabowska in Gazeta Wyborcza, 11.04.91:11. See also Gazeta Wyborcza, 10.29.91:2. For a similar phenomenon in the 1990 Hungarian elections see Szelenyi and Szelenyi 1992:122.

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