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The Round Table Agreement in Poland as a Case of Class Compromise: An Attempt at a Model

Krzysztof Brzechczyn

This article aims to conceptualize the political compromise made at the Round Table in 1989 Poland, in light of the theory of power in non-Marxian historical materialism. Although, the above-mentioned theory was successfully applied to the evolution of the communist system in Poland, it does not serve well as an explanation of this part of Polish history. There are two reasons for this state of affairs. First, the above-mentioned theory of power is a materialistic one. It means that all fundamental social changes are explained by the activity of ordinary citizens and rank and file members of the ruling class. Whereas, the authors of the Round Table agreement belonged to the elite of both classes. Second, non-Marxian historical materialism is a conflict theory which means that all fundamental social changes are introduced by mass revolutions and protests. Whereas, the political changes leading to the decline of communism were initiated by class compromises made in conditions of relative social peace. I will expand this theory in order to capture mechanisms of social compromise. Namely, I build the model of class balance which led to a choice in the adequate strategies by leaders of both classes (rulers and citizens). Finally, the political development of Poland during the years 1988-1991 will be analyzed in the light of the presented model of class compromise.

Introduction

The aim of this article is conceptualization of the political agreement reached during the Round Table Talks in Poland in 1989, which saw the onset of the period of so-called "contract democracy" that would last until autumn 1991. The conceptualization implements the theory of power in non-Marxian historical materialism. It is argued that, although fully applicable for explanation of evolution of socialist societies, the above-mentioned theory does not seem

particularly useful for interpretation of this particular period of "real socialism" in Poland (Brzechczyn 828). There are two fundamental reasons for this; the theory of power in non-Marxian historical materialism is:

- (i) Materialistic: the basis of divisions in politics is the disposal of material means of coercion by a specific social minority (class of rulers); social changes in model I of the theory of power result from mass actions by rank and file members of the apparatus of power or by ordinary citizens. In our case, the Round Table compromise was authored not by the civil masses but by the civil elite;
- (ii) Antagonistic: model I of the theory of power assumes that all fundamental social changes are imposed by lost revolutions. In order to avoid the repetition of another social upheaval, the ruling class gradually liberalizes the system of power. In our case, the political transformations in Poland after 1989 were initiated not by a mass revolution but by a social compromise between the elites of both classes.¹

This article discusses a certain development of the above-mentioned theory of power, which allows accommodation of the mechanism of class compromise. The section "Theory of Power in non-Marxian Historical Materialism: Basic Concepts" discusses the basic concepts of the theory of power in non-Marxian historical materialism, while the section "Mechanism of Class Compromise: A Model" is devoted to an extension of the theory encompassing characteristics of the material and institutional structure of the civil class and a model of class compromise in its material and institutional dimensions. Finally, the section "From the Martial Law to the First Free Elections in Poland: A Historical Illustration of Model" constitutes an interpretation of the political developments in Poland in the years 1988-1991 against the above-mentioned theoretical framework.

Theory of Power in non-Marxian Historical Materialism: Basic Concepts

The theory of power in non-Marxian historical materialism assumes that individuals possess a range of preferences which govern their actions. The whole of civil actions can be divided into autonomous actions and regulated actions. Regulated actions are taken by citizens for the fear of coercion used by the authority. Autonomous actions are taken regardless of sanctions by the disposers of means of coercion. The interest of the authority consists in maintaining and expanding the sphere of regulation, whereas the interest of a civil class consists in maintaining and expanding the sphere of civil autonomy. The notion of class interests allows the conceptualization of the force of a class. The force of a class, at a given time, is its ability to realize its own interest by way of

¹ The assumed concept of theory of power is presented here with no detailed explanation. A full presentation of the model can be found in Nowak (55-67) and its abbreviation: Brzechczyn (828).

maximization or optimization of selected parameters of social life. The maximization of the interest of the class of rulers aims at the establishment of the largest possible range of regulation, which leads to a limitation of the range of civil autonomy and to civil resistance. The optimization of the rulers' regulation is maintenance of the power regulation (or its extension) which does not lead to civil resistance and, at the same time, guarantees a certain degree of autonomy to the class of citizens.

Similarly, two forms of realization of the civil class interest can be distinguished: the maximization of the civil class interest is the extension of the range of its autonomy, which leads to a limitation of the rulers' regulation and their counteraction; the optimization of the interest of the class of citizens is maintenance (or extension) of civil autonomy which does not provoke the authority's reaction and guarantees the realization of the ruling class interest.

The assumed theory of power stipulates that the extension of regulation by the ruling class foments civil resistance, which in extreme cases may turn into a revolution. The theory discerns three types of revolution: *victorious*, *lost* and *balanced* (Brzechczyn 277). Victorious revolutions end in removal of the old ruling class and temporary limitation of regulation. Lost revolutions lead to oppression of the revolutionary elite by the rulers and - for fear of their reoccurrence - to concessions made by the ruling class to the class of citizens. A balanced revolution is strong enough to prevent repressions by the ruling class, but too weak to enforce political concessions from the authority. In this type of social conflict, the forces of both classes are more or less equal, and no side gains a decisive advantage. This stalemate creates conditions for reaching a class compromise between the authority and the civil society. This article considers only one form of class compromise which ends in absorption of the civil elite.

The authority has always a certain institutional structure in the form of a state pyramid. The constituents of this pyramid of political power are the supreme ruler and institutional positions within the elite of power and the apparatus of power. The supreme ruler is an institutional position ascribed the largest sphere of influence. The elite of power is a set of positions with ascribed spheres of influence, each one smaller than the supreme ruler's but larger than any of an apparatchik's. However, the sum of the spheres of influence of members of the elite of powers is greater than the sphere of influence ascribed to the supreme ruler. Other positions in the state pyramid are occupied by apparatchiks of different levels, each with a smaller sphere of influence than those of the elite of power and the supreme ruler. However, the sum of spheres of influence ascribed to all apparatchiks is larger than the range of regulation ascribed to the positions within the elite of power and the position of the supreme ruler altogether.

There are four different types of the state pyramid forming four basic state systems. The criterion of their distinctiveness is whether a given pyramid allows their bottom constituents to decide who will occupy the top positions, in other words, whether it contains institutional channels of control of the:

- (i) official authority by the civil society;

Table 1 Types of state systems

	Control of the official authority by the civil society	Control of the elite of power by the apparatus of power	Control of the supreme ruler by the elite of power
Democracy	YES	YES	YES
Autocracy	NO	YES	YES
Dictatorship	NO	NO	YES
Despotism	NO	NO	NO

- (ii) elite of power by the apparatus of power; and
- (iii) supreme ruler by the elite of power.

Accordingly, the following types of state systems (Table 1) can be distinguished (Nowak 75).

Mechanism of Class Compromise: A Model

Material Structure of Civil Movement

The basis of the network of autonomous civil relations is constituted by material means of social self-organization, such as premises, lecture halls, printing machines, etc. In terms of relation to these means, the civil class can be divided into the *civil leadership* and *rank and file citizens*. Members of the leadership make effective decisions concerning the intended use of these means. A rank-and-file citizen does not possess this decision-making power. As a disposer of apparently inconspicuous resources constituting the infrastructure of each civil movement, an ordinary member of the leadership is able to endorse or block certain actions. A leadership member's position in the civil society depends on how many actions of rank-and-file citizens he or she can control. In a mass civil movement, there are always some individuals willing to extend their sphere of influence for themselves. As a result of the struggle for social influences, the idealistic civil activists become sidelined. After some time, the leadership (or civil elite) of the civil class will be dominated by those who have extended their spheres of influence or have learnt effectively how to do it.

The question remains: why do citizens agree to voluntarily obey their own elites? Three factors can be mentioned. First, the civil elites are responsible for restitution and maintenance of the network of independent civil relations. Second, the rulers direct their political repressions, first of all, against the civil elites. Third, an internally structured civil class prevents social anomie and forces the rulers to make larger concessions than an unorganized class.

Table 2 Types of organization systems

	Control of the leadership by citizens	Control of the civil elite by the organization core	Control of the leader by the civil elite
Democratic system	YES	YES	YES
Autocratic system	NO	YES	YES
Oligarchic system	NO	NO	YES
Leader-oriented system	NO	NO	NO

Institutional Structure of Civil Movement

The division into the leadership and the civil masses becomes established following an institutionalization of the class of citizens. It can be thus assumed that the class of citizens has a certain organizational structure² featuring the organization authority and ordinary members. A concept of *organizational pyramid* can be then introduced, which is similar to that of *state pyramid*. The organizational pyramid consists of the *leader* (the counterpart of *supreme ruler* in the state pyramid structure), *civil elite* (*elite of power*), *organization core* (*apparatus of power*) and rank-and-file organization members. The first three components of the civil class organization form the *civil organization authority*. The range of civil authority's regulation can be called the sphere of social regulation.

Similar to the classification of state systems, several types of organizational pyramids can be distinguished. The criterion of their distinctiveness is whether a given organizational pyramid allows their bottom constituents to decide who will occupy the top positions, i.e. whether it contains institutional channels of control of the:

- (i) official civil organization authority by rank and file citizens;
- (ii) civil elite by the organization core; and
- (iii) leader by the civil elite.

Accordingly, different types of organization systems shown in Table 2 can be distinguished.

The question remains as to why citizens choose to obey their own organizational authority. In fact, obedience to the organization authority is beneficial for the citizens since an effective civil organization can force the authority to make greater concessions, can maintain the gained range of autonomy for much longer, and - in case of a victorious revolution - secure the civil society against the threat of social anomie (Banaszak 388).

² It is assumed here that there is only one civil organization in a civil society. Thus the impact of inter-organizational relations on the actions of the civil class and leadership is not discussed here.

Mechanism of Class Compromise: Material Aspect

The question of participation of class elites in the process of making a class compromise must involve at least a rudimentary definition of relationship between social classes and their own elites. The elite lay out long-term strategies of realization for the interest of a given class. The ruling class can be a good case in point. In general, three strategies of realization of the ruling class interest can be identified:

- (i) maximalist strategy, consisting of maximizing the ruler's range of regulation;
- (ii) compromise strategy consisting of maintaining a certain range of regulation; and
- (iii) minimalist strategy consisting of ceasing to maintain a certain range of regulation.

The feasibility of a given strategy depends on the force of both antagonistic classes, which determine class conditions in a society. This can be illustrated by different types of revolutions. In a political revolution in which the domination of the rulers over the citizens is considerable, the most optimal strategy for the ruling class is the maximalist strategy. Its implementation can lead to crushing of civil resistance and enslavement of citizens. In the case of a victorious revolution, the domination of the civil class can be so extensive that, in order to survive, members of the ruling class would have to adopt a minimalist strategy. At the cost of relinquishing a specific sphere of influence or simply joining the victorious revolution, the rulers can at least save their lives. In a balanced revolution, the most optimal strategy for the rulers is the compromise strategy which guarantees the maintenance of the sphere of influence and averts the danger of a wide-scale social revolution.

Non-Marxian historical materialism assumes that the application of a given strategy in the specific class conditions involves the adaptation mechanism.³ From the historically available pool of strategies of class interest, a particular ruler chooses one, which would secure for him the broadest range of regulation in the specific class conditions. In this setting of relations, it is assumed that all rulers make their independent choices of the most appropriate political strategy by trial and error. Otherwise, the rulers' selection of the most optimal class strategy would be unbelievably long, expensive, and time-consuming before it became widespread. If this fairly simplified view of a social class, which ignores its internal structure is, however, rejected, it turns out that the recognition of class conditions and choice of appropriate strategy are not made by individual members of the ruling class but by its elite of power. If a specific strategy of realization of class interest is effective, it will become widely accepted by the

³For the use of adaptation in non-Marxian historical materialism see: Nowak, for the use of adaptation in social studies see: Nowak (110), Klawiter et al. (121), Klawiter (129).

ordinary members of the ruling class *via* imitation. Only when the class strategy proposed by the class elite is ineffective, would individual rulers seek their optimal strategy of realization of class interest on their own. The most successful ones would constitute a new class elite which would promote the most optimal - in specific class conditions - strategy that becomes widely adopted within the class. The existence of the elite of power is advantageous for the entire class of rulers, because it reduces the time of choice and adaptation of an optimal political strategy in particular class conditions.

A similar role is played by the elite of the civil class. In its social function, it also chooses the most optimal political strategy in specific class conditions. In general, three strategies of realization of the civil class interest can be identified:

- (i) maximalist strategy consisting of maximization of the range of civil autonomy;
- (ii) compromise strategy consisting of maintaining a certain range of autonomy; and
- (iii) minimalist strategy consisting of ceasing to maintain the certain range of civil autonomy.

The maximalist strategy is the most optimal when the civil class clearly dominates over the ruling class, e.g., in the event of a victorious civil revolution. The minimalist strategy is the most optimal in the case of a lost civil revolution, resulting in enslavement of the civil class. In order to survive in conditions of enslavement, citizens must relinquish their range of autonomy.

In a balanced revolution, the most optimal strategy for the class of citizens is the compromise strategy. A compromise with the rulers secures a certain range of autonomy for the civil class, without bearing the cost of a widespread political revolution. A compromise is also advantageous to the civil elites for two reasons. First, if a class compromise results in the absorption of the civil elites into the system of power, their social influences increase. Secondly, each revolution is, in fact, a process of forming networks of autonomous social relations directed against all elites (also against the civil elites, especially those that have undergone institutionalization) which hold monopoly over coordination of social life. This sudden emergence of independent social relations threatens the position of "professional revolutionaries" who are forced to stand side-by-side with independent animators of social life. From the only representatives of social life, the revolutionaries become the only ones of many such representatives.

Institutional aspect. A class compromise is not made between entire social classes but between their representatives called class elites. The impact of class conditions on the choice of an optimal class strategy by the class elites was a subject of the previous part of this article. Let us examine now the feedback influence of institutionalized class elites on the process of making a class compromise.

Reaching a class compromise depends on the:

- (i) balance of power between the class of rulers and the class of citizens;
- (ii) choice of the compromise strategy by the civil elite following proper recognition of the force of the civil class; and
- (iii) choice of the compromise strategy by the elite of power following proper recognition of the force of the ruling class.

The balance of power between social classes is maintained when the force of the civil class is sufficient to prevent repressions by the ruling class, but too weak to enforce political concessions from the ruling class. On the other hand, the force of the ruling class is sufficient to prevent the civil loop, but too weak to suppress the network of independent civil relations. However, a compromise is reached only when the balance of power between the classes is recognized properly by the class elites, which choose the compromise strategy. A compromise is not found when the class elites incorrectly recognize the class conditions and choose a wrong political strategy. There are two possible types of erroneous identification of class conditions:

- (i) the class elite overestimates the force of its own class and underestimates the force of the opposing class elite - in this case, it chooses the maximalist strategy;
- (ii) the class elite underestimates the force of its own class and overestimates the force of the opposing class - in this case it chooses the minimalist strategy.

Furthermore, the recognition of forces of both classes by the class elites can be true to a different degree, which affects the compromise-making ability of both class elites. Four types of relations between the degree of true recognition of class conditions by the class elites and the level of their compromise-making ability can be distinguished:

- (i) the more the civil elite underestimates the force of its own class and overestimates the force of the ruling class, the more it is ready to compromise with the ruling elite;
- (ii) the more the civil elite overestimates the force of its own class and underestimates the force of the ruling class, the less it is ready to compromise with the ruling elite;
- (iii) the more the ruling elite underestimates the force of its own class and overestimates the force of the civil class, the more it is ready to compromise with the civil elite; and
- (iv) the more the ruling elite overestimates the force of its own class and underestimates the force of the civil class, the less it is ready to compromise with the civil elite.

The class elites can choose from the three types of political strategies. A matrix of all political strategies implemented by the class elites and the impact of these strategies on their compromise-making ability are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Matrix of political strategies pursued by the elites of both classes

	Strategies of the civil class elite	Strategies of the ruling class elite	Reaching compromise
1	Maximalist strategy	Maximalist strategy	NO
2	Maximalist strategy	Compromise strategy	NO
3	Maximalist strategy	Minimalist strategy	NO
4	Compromise strategy	Maximalist strategy	NO
5	Compromise strategy	Compromise strategy	YES
6	Compromise strategy	Minimalist strategy	YES (<i>rotten compromise</i> for the ruling class)
7	Minimalist strategy	Maximalist strategy	NO
8	Minimalist strategy	Compromise strategy	YES (<i>rotten compromise</i> for the civil class)
9	Minimalist strategy	Minimalist strategy	YES (<i>rotten compromise</i> for both sides)

To reach a lasting compromise, a state of balance between the classes must be maintained (i) and accurately recognized by both class elites (ii and iii). These conditions are only fulfilled in 5. In 6, the civil elite assesses correctly the state of class relations; however, the ruling elite underestimates the force of its own class. As a result, a *rotten compromise* is reached, i.e., the concessions given by the elite of class of rulers are bigger than the social potential of this class. A rotten compromise for the rulers leads to a crisis within the ruling class, which may conclude in removal of its old elite and replacement with a new class elite that will try to renegotiate the compromise.

A reverse situation can be noted in 8 where the concessions of the civil elite, i.e. its agreement to constrain civil autonomy, are too big for the social potential of the civil class. A rotten compromise for the citizens leads to a crisis within the civil class, which may conclude in removal of the old class elite and its replacement with a new elite that will try to renegotiate the compromise.

If one class elite implements the minimalist strategy, a compromise is not reached, regardless of the strategy implemented by the other class elite. Instead, the social conflict intensifies: the growth of civil resistance leading to a revolution, or increasing repressions of the ruling class leading to the growth of civil resistance.

Consequences of Class Compromise

In its institutional dimension, the mechanism of class compromise resulting in the absorption of the elites enhances two simultaneous processes: democratization of the state system and oligarchization of the civil organization.

A consequence of class compromise is a specific range of political concessions, which include the incorporation of some mechanisms of civil control over at least some levels of authority into the state system. Under such political

circumstances, the democratization of the state system is advantageous to the entire ruling class as it allows the removal of ineffective rulers or improvement of their efficiency. On the other hand, reaching a compromise enforces the institutionalization of the civil class and reinforces the natural oligarchization tendencies of the civil organization. Those distinguished members of the civil elite privileged to negotiate with the rulers are in a better position than those with whom the authorities are not willing to talk. Achieving a compromise requires, however, surrendering maximization of the range of civil autonomy. Once the rank and file citizens accept this, internal criticism can be forestalled, alternative political actions can be sidelined or all internal dissidents can be isolated, etc. The fewer concessions for citizens there are in the compromise, the greater the oligarchization of the civil movement is. It can be assumed that:

- (i) the less profitable the compromise is for the civil class and more profitable for the authorities, the faster the oligarchization of the civil organization proceeds and the slower the state pyramid undergoes the process of democratization;
- (ii) the more profitable the compromise is for the civil class and the less for the authorities, slower the oligarchization of the civil organization and faster the democratization of the state pyramid proceed.

On Certain Simplifications

The above observations are valid providing certain simplifications are made. These simplifications include such extra factors as:

- (i) the sense of timing for reaching a compromise;⁴
- (ii) ideological views condemning "deals with the Devil" or recommending making compromises at all costs.

The main simplifying assumption is that the forces of classes are steady. In fact, they are not. The force (or weakness) of a given class can increase or decrease in the course of social development. A premature agreement made by the civil elite in conditions of growing force of the civil class results in fewer concessions made by the rulers. Under such circumstances, reaching the compromise later can be more advantageous to the class of citizens and more disadvantageous to the class of rulers.

As far as (ii) is concerned, it can be noted that, generally, various political ideologies function as filters of perception of social life for the elites of particular classes. For example, followers of anarchism would overestimate the force of civil masses and be less prone to make class compromises. On the other hand, adherents to the conservative ideology would underestimate the force of civil masses and be more willing to reach class compromises. Depending on the

⁴ This particular factor of political processes is discussed by Godek (117), who analyzes a situation in which the ruling class initiates concessions anticipating the outbreak of a revolution, before the state of class balance is reached.

scale of propagation of a given ideology or political utopia among members of social classes (or - more precisely - their elites) they recognize the status of social relations faster or slower. In the case of widespread, historically groundless ideologies, the proper recognition of the status of these relations, may not take place at all.

From the Martial Law to the First Free Elections in Poland: A Historical Illustration of Model

Let us now exemplify the aforementioned model, focusing on two dimensions of social processes. The first dimension is the process of democratization of the state system and oligarchization of institutional structures of the civil class. It should be kept in mind that the less profitable a compromise is for the civil class, the faster the oligarchization of the civil masses and the slower the democratization of the state system proceed. The second dimension is the question of choice of the optimal strategy of interest realization by the civil society in Poland in the years 1988-1991.

One of the most noticeable tendencies in the Polish Solidarity movement was the growth of centralization and autocratization of the trade union authorities. The Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarność" (*Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy Solidarność*, NSZZ Solidarność) was clearly divided into the apparatus of power and rank and file union members. The leadership of NSZZ Solidarność acted like a typical civil class elite: the Solidarność leaders tended to maximize their influence on social activities of the trade union masses. However, between 1980 and 1981, the pressure of the rank and file union members was considerable enough to curb such tendencies, e.g. the development of competencies of the Solidarność National Commission (*Komisja Krajowa*).⁵ It was only due to the martial law repressions in Poland after 13 December 1981 that the civil masses withdrew from social activities. One of the objectives of the Solidarność Interim Coordinating Commission (*Tymczasowa Komisja Koordynacyjna*) established in April 1982 was to hold a general meeting of the union statutory authorities. After the amnesty in Poland in September 1986, a meeting of the National Commission members became entirely possible. However, instead of it, Lech Wałęsa and some groups around him appointed a number of extra-statutory bodies supervising the trade union activities. In October 1986, the Temporary Council of NSZZ "Solidarność" was established. Since some of the Council members were not completely loyal to the Chairman Lech Wałęsa (for instance, Wałęsa was criticized by the Council members in 1987 after he gave one million dollars to the authorities of the Polish People's Republic, which NSZZ "Solidarność" had obtained from the US Congress), the

⁵ The process of concentrating prerogative powers in the hands of the Chairman of National Commission and central bodies of Solidarność is presented in the memoirs of the union "dissidents" Anna Walentynowicz and Andrzej Gwiazda (1990).

Temporary Council and the underground Interim Coordination Commission were dissolved and replaced with the National Executive Committee (*Krajowa Komisja Wykonawcza*), with all its members appointed by Lech Wałęsa himself (Gwiazda 142). Along these developments, in the years 1982-1986, the foreign aid for the trade union was centralized and came under the supervision of the Coordinating Bureau of NSZZ "Solidarność" in Brussels.

Lech Wałęsa's authoritative actions led to the emergence of opposition inside the union. In March 1987, the Workgroup of the National Commission of NSZZ Solidarność (*Grupa Robocza Komisji Krajowej*) was created, which included democratically elected members of the Commission: Andrzej Gwiazda, Seweryn Jaworski, Marian Jurczyk, Zbigniew Romaszewski (who later resigned his membership of the Workgroup), Jan Rulewski and Andrzej Słowik. With no access to national large-circulation periodicals (e.g., *Tygodnik Mazowsze*) and foreign aid the Workgroup was unable to block the growing oligarchization of the union structures. By 1989, regional and factory sections of NSZZ Solidarność had been established all over Poland. In a number of Polish cities, such as Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Łódź, Szczecin and Wrocław the union had dual regional authorities - some were appointed by Lech Wałęsa, and the other consisted of union activists democratically elected in 1981. In June 1989, the Democratic Elections Agreement within the NSZZ "Solidarność" was signed, which postulated elections of the union authorities with all Solidarność members given the right to vote. Such free elections were held in most cities where the dual union leadership had been in place. The two exceptions were Szczecin and Tricity (Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot). In Gdańsk Solidarność activists led by Joanna Duda-Gwiazda, Andrzej Gwiazda and Anna Walentynowicz reactivated the Free Trade Unions (*Wolne Związki Zawodowe*), while in Szczecin, in February 1990, Marian Jurczyk officially established Trade Union Solidarność 80.

In the late 1980s, besides NSZZ Solidarność, a number of more radical organizations were also active, demanding free general elections, removal of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP; *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR*) from power and regaining Poland's independence. These organizations included Fighting Solidarity (*Solidarność Walcząca*), the Confederation of Independent Poland (*Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej*), the Liberal Democratic Party "Independence" (*Liberalno-Demokratyczna Partia "Niepodległość"*), and the Movement of Alternative Society (*Ruch Społeczeństwa Alternatywnego*) associated with anarchist youth and questioning the necessity of state system in general.

This internal division of the "independent Polish civil society" of that time into constructive and radical opposition groups can be interpreted with the aid of the theoretical framework discussed earlier. The activities of the union structures loyal to Lech Wałęsa, which implemented a political program developed by a group of advisors originating from the left-wing Workers' Defense Committee (*Komitet Obrony Robotników*) and Roman Catholic circles, can be interpreted as a type of compromise strategy. It stipulated reaching a compromise with the PZPR that would secure retaining power by the communists on the one hand and

guarantee the society real political influence and control on the other. At the same time, the political program of the opposition inside the union and the "right-wing independence" opposition groups can be interpreted as a maximalist strategy assuming complete removal of the PZPR from power after fully democratic and free parliamentary elections.

The other side had been gradually preparing for a social compromise since 1986 by incorporating institutions known from Western European democracies into the state system of the late Polish People's Republic. These institutions were to monitor the legality of the communist authorities' actions as a watchdog without undermining the "state system principles of the Polish People's Republic." In 1987, the Office of Ombudsman was created and the second nationwide referendum was held in the history of communist Poland. The Polish citizens were asked two general questions: the first was about their support of economic reforms, the other about their endorsement for "the Polish model of deep democratization of political life." The referendum was to be successful providing more than 50% of eligible voters (not actual voters) answered YES to both questions. The voting took place on 29 November 1987 and, according to official data, 67.3% of eligible voters took part in the referendum. Sixty-six percent of actual voters (44.3% of eligible voters) answered YES to the first question; and 69% of actual voters (46.3% of eligible voters) answered YES to the second question. From the standpoint of the communist authorities' high-aim strategy, the referendum was a fiasco.

Another example of "controlled openness" in the Polish People's Republic was the appointment of a 56-member Consultative Council to the Chairman of the Council of State in 1986. The Council members included a number of "independent" individuals, and the Council permitted publication of former underground magazines such as *Res Publica* and *Konfrontacje*, which were the forums of the democratic opposition.

A factor which greatly contributed to the success of the compromise strategy on both sides of the social conflict was a series of strikes in April, May, and August 1988. By the end of April 1988, a strike of city transit employees demanding pay rises began in Bydgoszcz. The next day the staff of one of the departments of the V. Lenin Steelworks in Kraków went on strike, demanding pay rises but also re-employment of union activists from NSZZ "Solidarność." On April 29, workers of the Huta Stalowa Wola steel mill went on strike demanding the restoration of the Solidarność Factory Committee. A strike in the Gdańsk Shipyard followed on 2 May 1988, which, however, ended eight days later after the strike in the Kraków steelworks was crushed on the night of 4 May 1988.

The second wave of industrial strikes took place in the second half of August 1988, commencing with a strike in the Manifest Lipcowy Coal Mine in Jastrzębie-Zdrój, which at some point spread to 14 different mines. Strikes began also in the Port of Szczecin on August 17 and in the Northern Port in Gdańsk on August 20. Two days later, the Gdańsk Shipyard and Huta Stalowa Wola went on strike again.

Under the impact of the strikes, a meeting between Lech Wałęsa and General Czesław Kiszczak took place on 31 August 1988 to resolve the conditions of opening the Round Table Talks. After the meeting, the Solidarność Chairman called on the workers to end their strikes, which met with protests. According to historian Antoni Dudek, "Despite accusations of defeatism and treason, the strikes were ended swiftly. Wałęsa's position was already very strong and his radical critics, who claimed that calling off the strikes without sufficient concessions from the communist authorities was wrong, stood no chance of convincing the workers to continue their protests. At that time they were too few to enforce any significant concessions from the authorities" (Dudek, 17). This peculiar stalemate in the autumn of 1988 paved the way for implementation of compromise strategies on both sides of the social conflict in Poland.

The next meeting on September 15-16 resulted in an impasse which was not resolved until the end of 1988. The communist authorities were against the legalization of NSZZ Solidarność, following the principle "one trade union per factory" and approved of only those opposition Round Table negotiators who "accepted the existing legal order in the state." The representatives of the authorities justified their arguments with the official stance of the communist party apparatus hostile toward the re-legalization of Solidarność. The discrepancies between the representatives of the government and Solidarność were so serious that both sides were not even able to agree on the content of a joint communiqué. During the discussions with the authorities, Lech Wałęsa decided to accept the government version of the communiqué, which informed that the main subject of the Round Table Talks scheduled to start in mid-October would be "the structure of the Polish trade union movement." Wałęsa's decision ignored the instructions of the National Executive Committee, which clearly stipulated that the prerequisite to start negotiations was a "solemn declaration of the communist authorities concerning the legalization of the Union (Dudek 18, Skórzyński 105)."

The crisis in the pre-Round Table negotiations lasted two months. The government questioned 12 names of negotiators on the opposition list and refused to legalize Solidarność (Skórzyński 124). In the meantime, a new communist cabinet led by Mieczysław Rakowski tried to push their own version of the compromise, which included such proposals as four "independent" members in the future cabinet and preparation of legislation aimed at liberalization of business. The Polish communist authorities also showed their toughness by putting the Gdańsk Shipyard into liquidation and dispersing November 11 demonstrations in Gdańsk, Poznań, and Katowice using the Motorized Detachments of the Citizens' Militia (*Zmotoryzowane Odwoły Milicji Obywatelskiej, ZOMO*). Finally, the impasse was broken in early December after the famous television debate between Lech Wałęsa and Alfred Miodowicz (leader of the pro-government trade union, the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions). On 6 December 1988, the spokesman of the Polish cabinet Jerzy Urban announced that the authorities considered Lech Wałęsa to be a credible negotiator. After that, the events began to unfold rapidly. On 18 December

1988, the Citizens' Committee (*Komitet Obywatelski*) was established with 15 thematic sections. The Committee membership list consisting of 119 people was arbitrarily drawn up by a team of the closest associates of Lech Wałęsa; Bronisław Geremek, Jacek Kuroń and Adam Michnik, and was granted the Chairman's full approval. It was another sign of the oligarchization of the Solidarity movement. As J. Skórzyński noted, "After September 1988 the opposition governing bodies had a free hand and could have embarked on the process of internal democratization. Outside the National Executive Committee remained important factions and figures of the Solidarity movement and anti-communist opposition. Marian Jurczyk, Andrzej Gwiazda and Jan Rulewski also used arguments of statutory character. The internal struggle was not procedural but political. The conflict between the Workgroup of the National Commission and the National Executive Committee was about the problem of internal democratization but also about compromising and sharing political power with the communists. The group advisors and leaders of the underground around Lech Wałęsa wanted to avoid stalling of their moderate policy lines, naturally, to promote the cause. They did not intend to surrender their authority and power of appointment either, as it gave them full control over the most important institutions of *Solidarność*" (Skórzyński 181).

In the opposing camp, the communist party leaders used the two-month break to convince the Party apparatus that compromise with the opposition was necessary. For this purpose, the party top brass used internal bulletins to point to the threat of a new social upheaval unless the compromise was reached. In January 1989, the Ministry of Interior Affairs registered 49 strikes in which 15,000 people participated. It was seven times more strikes than in December 1988. In February 1989 there were 67 strikes (with 60,000 participants) and in March - 260 strikes (Dudek 243, 2004). Finally, at a two-part general assembly of the PZPR Central Committee (20-21 December 1988 and 16-17 January 1989) Wojciech Jaruzelski, Czesław Kiszczak, Mieczysław Rakowski, and Florian Siwicki threatened the members of the party apparatus with dismissal unless they accepted negotiations with the Solidarity opposition.

During the two-month Round Table talks, the PZPR leadership exerted an influence on the course and pace of the democratization process and secured its own place in Poland's political life. They agreed to hold partially-free and non-confrontational parliamentary elections, with 65% of the seats in the lower chamber (Sejm) reserved for the Communist Party and its satellite parties, Democratic Party (*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*) and United Peasant Party (*Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe*). The remaining 35% of the seats in the Sejm were to be democratically elected. In addition, 35 seats were to be elected *via* the country-wide list of the PZPR candidates with no possibility of runoffs. The term of office of the newly elected parliament was four years. Another institution guaranteeing the continuity of the state system was the newly established office of President with quite extensive powers, i.e., power of veto, exercising the function of commander-in-chief of the armed forces, presiding over the Committee of National Defense, and appointing the Director of the

National Bank of Poland (NBP). The President could also dissolve the Parliament, if the Sejm failed to pass the budget bill within three months, failed to appoint the Cabinet or passed an act of law "threatening the President's constitutional prerogatives." The President was to be elected by the National Assembly to a six-year term of office. During the talks, the leaders of opposition agreed for the PZPR candidacy of General Wojciech Jaruzelski. On 17 April 1989, NSZZ Solidarność was officially re-legalized by the Warsaw Provincial Court; however, the Union statute was supplemented with an accessory contract, which limited the Union's right to strike on the basis of the Trade Unions Act from 1982.

The campaign for the June elections stimulated social mobilization, especially in the provinces. Due to it, the level of opposition of Polish citizenry to real socialism could become more visible. The election of 4 June 1989 brought a landslide victory to Solidarność, with the turnout of 62% of voters. The Solidarność candidates won 160 out of 161 possible seats in the Sejm and 92 seats in the Senate. The government failed to secure a single seat in the Senate, while only three candidates reached the required majority of popular vote. Out of 35 seats on the country-wide list, only two were gained by the government.

Although the Round Table compromise brought a considerable increase in civil autonomy in Poland, especially in the political and cultural spheres, the concessions made by the Solidarity side appeared too big in relation to the civil support made during the June elections. The proportions of electoral victory came as a surprise. Although good election results had been expected, in fact, Solidarność had only hoped to win 50-60% of seats eligible in the Sejm and the Senate (Paczkowski 581). The results of elections and did not radicalize the stance of the Solidarność leadership during later negotiations. Two days after the election the Solidarność representatives, under pressure from Czesław Kiszczak, who threatened to nullify the election results, agreed to make amendments to the electoral regulations during the campaign. These changes made it possible to enter 33 country-wide list candidates to the Sejm (Dudek 48). In protest, the organizers of the election campaign of the Citizens' Committee in Warsaw resigned before the second run, in which only 25% of eligible voters took part (Skórzyński 273). This decision may be interpreted as a critique of the compromise strategy accepted by Solidarność leadership. All in all, Solidarność won one extra seat in the Sejm and seven out of eight Senate seats.

The compromise strategy of the Solidarność elite, keen on maintaining at all costs the Round Table political status quo and ignoring the rise of opposition to the system by the majority of Polish society, was continued. On 19 July 1989, Wojciech Jaruzelski was elected the President of the Republic of Poland with the support of Sejm deputies from the Citizens' Parliamentary Club (CPC; Dudek 55, Skórzyński 283). On 29 July 1989, Jaruzelski designated Czesław Kiszczak for the post of Prime Minister which was accepted by parliament, on 2 August.

At the turn of July and August 1989, there appeared two political options among the Solidarność elite: the alliance of the CPC with reformist wing from PUWP supported by influential members of CPC, Bronisław Geremek, Jacek Kuroń, and Adam Michnik or the alliance of the CPC with the Democratic Party

and United Peasant Party supported by Jarosław Kaczyński and Lech Kaczyński. The majority of Solidarność leaders from CPC opted for alliance with reformists from the PUWP, some of them counseled a wait-and-see policy. However, on 7 August, Wałęsa supported the second option and entitled the Kaczyński brothers to negotiate with leaders of satellite parties. These negotiations were accompanied by a wave of strikes and conflicts. In the third week of July, there were 13 strikes, in the fourth week of this month - 27 strikes but in the first week of August 85 strikes in which 56,000 people participated (Dudek 38, 2004). The PUWP's leaders realized that Kiszczak's governments would not be able to calm the situation. On 14 August Kiszczak resigned from forming a government. During the night rally of the CPC on 16 August, Mazowiecki was accepted as a candidate for prime minister and nominated by the President Jaruzelski.

Against all appearances, the nomination of the Tadeusz Mazowiecki cabinet did not revert the compromise strategy of Solidarność camp; it was, however, an important correction (in comparison to the idea of an alliance with the reformist wing of the PUWP). The communist PUWP took over the ministries of defense, internal affairs, international economic cooperation, transport and communications. A PZPR nominee became Director of the NBP. In the budget proposal for 1990, the government assigned 5 billion zlotys for the Office of Control of Press and Shows and prepared a new "democratic" state censorship bill. The Polish Prime Minister delayed his appointments of undersecretaries of state to key cabinet ministries for over six months. On March 7, Krzysztof Kozłowski became the undersecretary in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, followed by Bronisław Komorowski and Janusz Onyszkiewicz in the Ministry of Defense on April 3. Only in April was the communist Security Service (SB) was dissolved and replaced with the Office for State Protection (*Urząd Ochrony Państwa, UOP*). The new UOP employees were mostly former SB agents, who had passed positive vetting procedures (10,000 out of 14,000). By June 1989, only 23 out of 49 province governors had been replaced. Nothing prevented the destruction of files of the communist Internal Military Service (*Wojskowe Służby Wewnętrzne, WSW*) and Ministry of Internal Affairs (Dudek 81-85).

The maintenance of the Round Table political arrangement deviated from the dominant public expectations and eventually led to splits in the Solidarność camp. In May 1990, the Center Agreement Party (*Porozumienie Centrum*) was founded, which advocated stepping up political reforms in Poland: free parliamentary elections (in spring 1991 at the latest), presidential general elections (in summer 1990, Lech Wałęsa was to be elected the President by the National Assembly) and preparation of a new Polish constitution. Due to the pressure of radicalized Solidarność factions, Wojciech Jaruzelski's term of office was shortened. In autumn 1990, Lech Wałęsa was elected the President in national general elections, and almost one year later, the first fully democratic parliamentary elections were held in Poland.

In the adopted conceptualization, the political platform of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government and its supporters can be viewed as a compromise strategy aimed to maintain the status quo and the Round Table Agreement.

On the other hand, the political platform of the center Agreement Party (*Porozumienie Centrum*), let alone the opposition right-wing independence parties, can be interpreted as a maximalist strategy aimed at the growth of civil autonomy.

Conclusion

The model of class compromise presented here still leaves aside a number of significant factors of social life in Poland. One of them was the Polish Roman Catholic Church, which, in the assumed model, would have taken the role of a mediator: during negotiations the elites of both classes are not thrown back on their own resources, but at critical moments can make use of third party mediation. Furthermore, the above analysis does not account for the economic aspect of social processes. The growing crisis of communist control and command economy as well as the failure of economic transformations greatly influenced the adoption of a compromise strategy by the ruling class. Finally, an important dimension was the international situation.⁶ The Autumn of Nations in 1989 triggered by the Spring of *Solidarność* and subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union soon rendered the Round Table political arrangement obsolete and unfit for the new system of power.

It thus appears that, between autumn 1988 and summer 1989, the *Solidarność* elites around Lech Wałęsa recognized the class forces more effectively and chose their political strategy (compromise strategy) more accurately. One can argue about the size and character of concessions made by *Solidarność* and the way the compromise itself was reached. The emergence of opposition inside *Solidarność* proves that there was a possibility of initiation of another political strategy and taking a more uncompromising position. However, the June election turnout of more than 50% of eligible voters was undoubtedly an indication of social support for the *Solidarność* elites around Lech Wałęsa, resulting from the accurately chosen political strategy.

Paradoxically, the compromise political strategy which the most effectively contributed to the growth of civil activity gradually appeared to be dysfunctional in the social conditions of the growth of civil mobilization and contestation. Namely, between autumns of 1989 and 1991, owing to the rapidly changing international situation and the growth of social activity of Polish society, the parties advocating stepping up political reforms in Poland generally recognized the class forces better. Their political platform can be interpreted as maximalist aimed at the growth of civil autonomy. A good illustration of the fact can be Lech Wałęsa's victory in the presidential elections - for whom the maximization of political transformations in Poland became the main plank in his later political

⁶ See more on the economic dimension of the transformation in non-Marxian historical materialism in Brzechczyn (105, 529) and Siegel (363); the international dimension involving the collapse of the Soviet Union is discussed in Brzechczyn (529).

platform - and the electoral defeat of Tadeusz Mazowiecki who lost to a maverick presidential candidate Stanisław Tymiński.

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