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Similarities and differences of main left-wing parties in Poland and Hungary: The case of SLD and MSzP in comparative perspective (1989—2014)

Abstract: The article presents Polish and Hungarian main left-wing parties in the period of political transformation. There are a few sections in the article that develop the research problem: the genesis and development of the parties from 1989 to 2014, a comparative analysis of the two parties based on quantitative indices.

One can say there are some similarities between SLD and MSzP. The parties were transformed from communist hegemon formations, then participated in free parliamentary elections with some successes, created several governments and both have recently faced considerable loss of support. SLD and MSzP belong to the parties that influenced Polish and Hungarian transformation greatly.

Key words: political parties, Poland, Hungary, SLD, MSzP

Introduction

Some years have gone since central-right parties started to rule and dominate the state politics in Poland and Hungary. In Poland in 2005 Law and Justice (Pol. Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) won the parliamentary elections, and then Civic Platform (Pol. Platforma Obywatelska, PO) achieved electoral victory twice. In Hungary Fidesz won in 2010 and 2014. It would be interesting to define past and contemporary position of the left side of both political scenes as the one which makes the opposition now. It seems that Poles and

Hungarians have recently preferred more traditional and conservative values and do not support social-democratic appeal. To understand this phenomenon I decided to choose to follow the development of the most relevant left-wing parties in Poland and Hungary and search for the reason why the left is not dominant any more.

The main aim of the article is to show the role and significance of one of important sides of party system in two chosen countries of Central Europe. I am going to present the relevant and dominant parties of the left that took important position throughout the period of political transformation in Poland and Hungary. Contemporary position of Polish and Hungarian leftist parties does not reflect their significance as it used to in the past. A few recent years were harsh for these organisations and they lost their privileged role in the political and party systems. Although we can observe that in post-modern world the traditional division in politics into the left and the right diminished, it is still possible to point to leftist and rightist values in the programmes of political parties. That is why we can say that the left- and right-wing organisations can search for support of electorate and then influence state policy.

The thesis of the article is that despite social, historical and other differences of Polish and Hungarian left-wing parties, there are some similarities as well. To verify the thesis I put forward some research questions: 1) How did the dominant social-democratic parties emerge and enter to contemporary party system? 2) What made them successful during parliamentary elections? 3) Why they have been recently less popular and is it a constant trend?

My analysis begins in 1989, the year when political transition started. Next, I shall try to search for crucial moments for Polish and Hungarian left, times of successes and failures. Finally, I am going to focus on contemporary position of the parties. My analysis concerns parties which received parliamentary mandates and were relevant over 25 years of political transformation. The two main examples of the parties are Democratic Left Alliance (Pol. Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD) and Hungarian Socialist Party (Hun. Magyar Szocialista Párt, MSzP). I decided to divide the article into three sections, comprising respectively: 1) the parties' genesis, 2) profiles of the parties and important points in the process of development, 3) a comparison of the strength and position of Polish and Hungarian left-wing parties.

The justification of choosing SLD and MSzP refers to a theoretical concepts that place the two parties in the same group of Central European political organisations. They belong to the same family of parties which is obvious. Such scholars as Paul G. Lewis, Herbert Kitschelt and Katarzyna Sobolewska-Myślik call this family social-democratic.[1] They are even in

[1] P.G. Lewis: *Political Parties in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*. Routledge 2002, p. 56; H. Kitschelt: *Party Systems in East Central Europe. Consolidation or Fluidity?* Glas-

the same social-democratic family, as described by Andrzej Antoszewski and Jerzy J. Wiatr.[2] Both Polish and Hungarian left-wing dominant parties are similar in many ways which is more obvious if we compare them to Czech and Slovak leftist parties. To make a contemporary comparison of the strengths and influences of SLD and MSzP, I will present quantitative analysis based on three indices.

The genesis

Poland and Hungary started to reshape their political systems 25 years ago. In 1980s communist ruling elites were unable to cope with worsening conditions in the society, economics and political spheres due to internal and external factors. There was a totally different situation on political scene at that time. Both communist Poland and Hungary had a solid and hegemonic communist parties: Polish United Workers' Party (Pol. Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR) and Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Hun. Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSzMP). In Poland there were also two other parties that were allowed to exist during communist era: United People's Party (Pol. Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe, ZSL) and Alliance of Democrats (Pol. Stronnictwo Demokratyczne, SD). In Hungary there was only MSzMP. So, Polish and Hungarian communist systems followed two different paths. It is necessary to make an assumption that there were no free party systems in communism and other parties than communist like ZSL or SD played a role of submissive and weak satellites.[3] Apart from Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and East Germany also had quasi-multi-party systems, while USSR and Romania had hegemonic party systems.

Analysing the ancestors of contemporary leading leftist parties in Poland and Hungary one could make a comparison of a few important data and situations that happened in the two countries under communism regime. They can reflect some factors of position and social perception of the parties throughout genetic period of transformation in Poland and Hungary after 1989 and 1990.

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gow 1995, Working Paper, No. 241; K. Sobolewska-Myślik: *Partie i systemy partyjne Europy Środkowej po 1989 roku*. Kraków 1999, p. 159.

[2] A. Antoszewski: *Partie polityczne Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej*. Poznań 2005, pp. 51—63; J.J. Wiatr: *Europa pokomunistyczna. Przemiany państw i społeczeństw po 1989 roku*. Warszawa 2006, pp. 166—171.

[3] J. Wojnicki: *Kształtowanie się systemów wielopartyjnych Europy Środkowowschodniej*. Pułtusk 2004, pp. 38—40.

First of all, in both countries communist parties gained power through illegal and anti-democratic means. Before the Second World War communist organisations were banned and during the war they acted in the underground. They could not count on big social support, partly because Polish and Hungarian societies were traditional, conservative, religious with majority of agricultural class. So, after the end of the war the communist parties were unable to seize power on the way of legal democratic elections. They benefited from Joseph Stalin's supervision. Because of narrow social support for communist ideas, communist parties used the socialist ones as political allies and a vehicle to make Poles and Hungarians vote for them, because socialists were more popular. The first parliamentary elections reflected the weak electoral support for communists. During the 4 November 1945 elections the Hungarian Communist Party (Hun. Magyar Kommunista Párt, MKP) was third with 17.0% of votes. Yet, before the elections communists anticipated that they could receive even 70.0%.[4] The second elections in post-war Hungary were held on 31 August 1947. Although MKP won, its advantage over the opponents was small. MKP received 22.3% of total votes while second Christian Democratic People's Party (Hun. Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt, KDNP) obtained 16.5% and third Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party (Hun. Független Kisgazda, Földmunkás és Polgári Párt, FKFPP) got 15.3%.[5] First Polish post-war elections were held on 19 January 1947. The official results for Democratic Bloc, which included communist Polish Workers' Party (Pol. Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR), was 80.1% of total votes, but these results are questioned and they are believed to stem from an electoral fraud. Historians state that the most popular party was Polish People's Party (Pol. Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL). The same phenomenon occurred in Hungary where peasant's party also dominated at the time. Popularity of PSL and FKFPP reflected the dominance of traditional values in mostly agricultural societies. These data show that without external and illegal actions the communist parties would not have been unable to garner social support in the post-war period.

But, in the later period, communist parties became hegemons and their structures encompassed entire states. When it was obvious that communist regime was solid, people understood that to obtain a better job and social position, it was necessary to be a communist party member. Nonetheless, there remained groups that were dissatisfied with the new power and instigated some rebellions. In 1956, a national revolution took place in Hungary, and in Poland there were several consecutive social outbursts: 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, and 1980, respectively. How did the party manage to survive

[4] C. Gati: "From Liberation to Revolution (1945—1956)." In: *History of Hungary*. Eds. P. Sugar, P. Hanák, T. Frank. Indiana 1995, p. 371.

[5] A. Czyż, S. Kubas: *Doświadczenia węgierskiej transformacji ustrojowej — od Jánosa Kádára do Viktora Orbána*. Katowice 2011, p. 21.

after the military troops had pacified rebels? The official method of the communist party development was the strengthening of the social control. The party officials almost always expelled or otherwise eliminated the "uncertain members." As Richard F. Staar claims, after the June 1956, PZPR expelled 300,000 members and after the 1968 and 1970 rebellions, another 300,000 members were forced to leave.[6] After the 1956 national revolution was pacified, János Kádár managed to purge the "dangerous elements" of the party and in the beginning of 1960s Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Hun. Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSzMP) amounted to 500,000 in comparison to about 1 million members at the beginning of the 1950s.[7] The hegemonic parties entered the last decade of the communist regime with 2,942,000 (PZPR) and 811,833 (MSzMP) members respectively.[8] There were 35,746,000 Poles and 10,710,000 Hungarians, which meant that PZPR members made 8.2% of total population and MSzMP members 7.58%.

Despite the solid social background of communist parties, their structures started to tremble. Why did workers, peasants and so-called working intelligentsia withdraw their support for the parties that aimed at representing them? It was because the communist hegemons turn their backs on the people and closed themselves. Human needs were less important than organisational and structural questions. Overwhelming control over social life led to social criticism and questioning of the communists' power in Poland and Hungary. People felt their freedom was limited and started to rebel.

During the time of the regime decline, Polish and Hungarian elites decided to negotiate with opposition. There were two main wings in PZPR and MSzMP which opposed each other. One wing, called the reformists, wanted to talk to opposition and include some of their members to legislative and executive powers, while the orthodox group were closed and did not trust the oppositionists. Without the reformists a peaceful and quick transition in both countries would not have been possible. MSzMP reformist members such as Imre Pozsgay, Miklós Németh, Rezső Nyers, who decided to initiate the talks with oppositionists and convinced communist party elites to the necessity of changes in political system, would still respect the socialist guidelines. In PZPR a group of reformists was headed by Wojciech Jaruzelski and Mieczysław Rakowski. Herbert Kitschelt counted Poland and Hungary among the national-accommodative communism, which was connected with liberalization and reforms undertook by communist elites because of the anti-communist social mobilization. He uses the term reformists to describe communists who became leaders in the 1980s, but were unable to change

[6] R.F. Staar: *Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe*. Stanford 1984, p. 158.

[7] Report to the Second Congress of the Hungarian Working People's Party from 25 February 1951 [http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/archive/rakosi51.htm (accessed 20.8.2014)].

[8] R.F. Staar: *Communist Regimes*..., p. 342.

history.[9] The actions of reformists lead to the negotiations with the oppositionists: Polish Round Table (6 February—5 April 1989) and Hungarian Round Table (13 June—18 September 1989).[10] After negotiations and before the first free elections, which took place in 1990 in Hungary and 1991 in Poland, both communist parties changed their profiles. MSzMP dissolved its structure on 7 October 1989 and transformed into Hungarian Socialist Party (Hun. Magyar Szocialista Párt, MSzP). Some orthodox members decided to rebuild Hungarian Communist Worker's Party on 17 December 1989 (Hun. Magyar Munkáspárt, MM). Atilla Ágh thinks that the emergence of MM helped MSzP to create a new and modern profile of social-democratic party because radical socialist ideology was taken and maintained by MM.[11] In Poland, in turn, PZPR was dissolved in January 1990 and then transformed into Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (Pol. Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, SdRP). SdRP and MSzP became main successors of communist formations.

They decided to change their profiles into a social-democratic ones. As András Bozóki and John T. Ishiyama state, Polish and Hungarian communist parties became so-called reformed and non-transmuted parties, while in other Central and Eastern European countries there were also post-communist parties that were non-transmuted and non-reformed, partly transmuted and non-reformed, transmuted and non-reformed, partly transmuted and partly reformed, transmuted and partly reformed, non-transmuted and reformed. The authors say that reformed parties became pragmatic and modern organisations, while non-reformed were clung to an orthodox-communist identity. They explain that transmuted parties decided to break with their typical leftist tradition and background and managed a nationalist turn to gather social support.[12]

Jerzy J. Wiatr analysed the examples of emerging new socialist forces in Central and Eastern Europe chronologically and he pointed at Hungary as a country where communist reformed themselves before the first free elections, while PZPR transformed itself after the elections in 1989. But if we

[9] H. Kitschelt: "Constraints and Opportunities in the Strategic Conduct of Post-Communist Successor Parties. Regime Legacies as Casual Argument." In: *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe*. Eds. A. Bozóki, J.T. Ishiyama. New York 2002, p. 19.

[10] R.L. Tökés: *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution. Economic Reform, Social Change, Political Succession*. Cambridge 1998.

[11] A. Ágh: "The Early Freezing of the East Central European Parties: the Case of the Hungarian Socialist Party." Budapest Papers on Democratic Transition 1995, no. 129, pp. 7—8.

[12] A. Bozóki, J.T. Ishiyama: "Introduction and Theoretical Framework." In: *The Communist Successor Parties…*, pp. 6—7.

agree that first entirely free elections took place in Poland in 1991, then Polish and Hungarian post-communist parties would be in the same group.[13] Jacek Wojnicki divides post-communist parties into reformed ones which he calls social-democratic and nostalgic (socialist) ones. Both Hungarian and Polish post-communists belong to the first type.[14] Andrzej Antoszewski writes about leftist parties in Central and Eastern Europe using the criteria of their origin. He divides leftist parties into: reformed post-communist parties, reactivated social-democracies and new social-democratic parties founded after 1989.[15] SdRP and MSzP are reformed post-communist parties.

The development process of Polish and Hungarian relevant left-wing parties

Of course, the main successors of communist parties were not the only political forces trying to present socialist and social-democratic values during the transition period. Apart from SdRP, there were new leftist organisations in Poland, such as Labour Solidarity (Pol. Solidarność Pracy, SP) or Democratic and Social Movement (Pol. Ruch Demokratyczno-Społeczny, RDS). Some former PZPR members under leadership of Tadeusz Fiszbach's created the Polish Social-Democratic Union (Pol. Polska Unia Socjaldemokratyczna, PUS). In Hungary there were communist MM, reshaped MSzP and a historical social-democratic party: Hungarian Social-Democratic Party (Hun. Magyarorszagi Szociáldemokrata Párt, MSzDP), but the first parliamentary elections showed that only MSzP and SdRP obtaine drelevance among the left. In 1991, SdRP created a broad electoral coalition called Democratic Left Alliance (Pol. Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD) with parties and organisations which did not hide their participation in public life during communism like: All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (Pol. Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych, OPZZ), Alliance of Polish Socialist Youth (Pol. Związek Socjalistycznej Młodzieży Polskiej, ZSMP), Women's Democratic Union (Pol. Demokratyczna Unia Kobiet, DUK) and Polish Socialist Party (Pol.Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS).

Mass membership went down in both parties. From about 2 million PZPR members SdRP dwindled to just 20,000 members in 1990, and of about 700,000 MSzMP members MSzP inherited 30,000 at the end of 1989. With

[13] J.J. Wiatr: *Europa pokomunistyczna*..., pp. 166—171.
[14] J. Wojnicki: *Kształtowanie się systemów politycznych*..., p. 96.
[15] A. Antoszewski: *Partie polityczne*..., pp. 51—63.

many changes both post-communist parties reshaped their organizational structures. They were hierarchical, homonogeneous, oligarchic and new internal institutions were weak with controlled membership. Decentralization was partial. There were fractions inside MSzP and SdRP, but central apparatus exerted strong control over party affairs.[16]

It occurred that many previous communist party members returned their party cards, which resulted from several factors. First of all, the post-communist party affiliation was no longer needed since it was possible to live and fulfil socio-political and economic needs without being a SdRP and an MSzP member. Secondly, post-communist party affiliation became even a handicap because free society perceived post-communists negatively. Thirdly, many former communist party members withdrew their support due to the total failure of PZPR and MSzMP in the 1980s. These ruling parties were unable to heal worsening economics and it made Poland and Hungary plunged into crisis. Fourthly, initially communist party was responsible for representing working class. Later, it wanted to represent peasants and working intelligentsia and finally whole society was under communist party surveillance. It meant that post-communist forces had to reshape their political appeal and describe the electoral segment they were reaching for. Fifthly, after 1989 people could express their political preferences and choose their party from the list of multiple organisations. This situation naturally made many communist party members withdraw. Although there was a massive membership resignation trend seen during the transformation from communist to post--communist parties, the latter did not fall.

As Iván Szelényi and János Ladányi suggest, Polish and Hungarian post-communist parties managed to succeed in 1990s because they accepted new social democracy programmes: in economics they balanced between demand and supply economics and in politics they decided to clean their attitude of etatism. Another factor that strengthened post-communist organisations was the weakness of liberal parties.[17] Let us shortly look at the political programmes of SdRP and MSzP in 1990s. Polish SdRP emphasized the market reforms, favoured general privatization policy but with amendments aimed at better life conditions for employees. Polish left supported combating the negative side effects of transformation, promoted the idea of secular state and limited role of the Church. SdRP wanted to review abortion law. In for-

[16] R. Markowski: *The Polish SLD in the 1990s. From Opposition to Incumbents and Back. The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe*. Eds. A. Bozóki, J.T. Ishiyama. New York 2002, p. 59; A. Körösényi: *Government and Politics in Hungary*. Budapest 1998.

[17] I. Szelényi, J. Ladányi: "Prospects and Limits in New Social Democracy in the Transitional Societies of Central Europe." In: *The Communist Successor Parties…*, pp. 43—48.

eign policy this party was initially a bit reserved to "western opening," but then accepted the plan of European integration.[18] Although MSzP decided to present itself as a social-democratic party, a lot of effort was put to underline deideologization attitude. That is why MSzP presented pragmatic point of view and modernization values.[19] In economics MSzP favoured market reforms but with support for lower class and it presented a moderate axiological attitude.

Both parties won second free elections. SLD won in 1993 and MSzP in 1994. The success of the left resulted from social disappointment with previous years of right-wing and centre parties' dominance. They were new non-experienced formations that came into being after the fall of communism. They governed the countries simultaneously consolidating their structures. They were splitting and merging which caused a constant chaos. Former communist parties benefited from that unstable situation and finally captured power. András Körösényi reports in 1994 and 1998 the electorate of MSzP consisted not only of people who were dissatisfied with bad condition, but also of upper class who derived from former nomenclature.[20] Radosław Markowski reveals surveys made during elections which say that in 1990s the electorate of SLD represented following groups: in 1991 — 26.3% pensioners and 25.8% white-collars workers, in 1993 — 23.7% intelligentsia and 26.0% white-collars workers, and in 1997 — 25.9% pensioners and 29.4% white-collars workers.[21]

Another common factor for SLD and MSzP was the participation in government. The leftist parties initiated coalitional governments though MSzP did not have to, since it won the 1994 elections and received more than 50% of the mandates. The two coalitions consisted of post-communist party and an additional one. In Poland, it was Polish People's Party (Pol. Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL), while in Hungary, the Alliance of Free Democrats — Hungarian Liberal Party (Hun. Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége, SzDSz). PSL was a satellite party in communism era before 1989. It was an agrarian and partly Christian-democratic organisation. SzDSz was one of the three main oppositional parties that emerged before 1989 in Hungary and its profile was liberal. It was dissolved at the end of 2013.

MSzP wanted to legitimize its position and governance that is why SzDSz was invited to take part in a coalition as a former anti-communism opposition party. It was possible because SzDSz moved from clear liberal position towards social-liberal one. SzDSz remained liberal in economics but lost a bit impetus of preferring human rights values. During first years of the

[18] R. Markowski: *The Polish SLD in the 1990s*..., p. 63.
[19] A. Körösényi: *Governement and Politics in Hungary*..., p. 48.
[20] Ibidem, p. 49.
[21] R. Markowski: *The Polish SLD in the 1990s*..., p. 60.

MSzP-SzDSz coalition there was a lot of tension and breakup possibilities. But then the cooperation improved. Prime minister was the MSzP leader Gyula Horn. The governmental partners agreed on several points: European and NATO integration, developing good relations with neighbours, continuing economic reforms. That time Hungarian economy was crippling and the MSzP-SzDSz coalition partners knew they had to rescue it because otherwise the country would have gone bankrupt. Economy was the most important problem. The then Hungarian minister of finance László Békesi proposed a very liberal plan that was disapproved not only by his socialist colleagues, but also by the prime minister. Just after seven months from the government appointment Békesi was forced to dismiss. SzDSz was shocked because although Békesi was a socialist, his attitude was liberal. His position was taken by Lajos Bokros. But he prepared another liberal plan of economic reforms which was as much radical as Békesi's. The "Bokros package" contained restrictive fiscal policy measures, gradual devaluation of the forint, introduction of tuition fees, increase of prices and reduction of real wages, as well as acceleration of privatization. However, some radical points were withdrawn later. After a year Bokros was dismissed and replaced by Péter Medgyessy.[22]

The situation with economic reforms showed an attempt to change the post-communist party. The top leaders knew that only liberal reforms could heal economics, but majority of lower rank members still believed in necessity of socialist and gradual reforms. The concept of liberalization won although it was stopped several times.

Polish harsh economic reforms were introduced earlier than in Hungary by the minister of finance Leszek Balcerowicz who served in cabinets of Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Jan Krzysztof Bielecki. After 1993, SLD and PSL decided to continue the reforms. SLD ministers of finance were Marek Belka and Grzegorz Kołodko. The gains were quite good: annual inflation went down from about 34.0% in 1993 to 14.0% in 1997, a budget deficit was kept below 3.0%, public debt dropped below 50.0% and unemployment rate decreased from 15.0% in 1993 to 12.0% in 1997. Yet, some steps like restructuring rural areas or privatizing giant industrial unprofitable enterprises were halted. SLD-PSL coalition created ineffective holdings and paternalized administration. Similar to the Hungarian case, Polish post-communist party was more liberal, especially in economic terms, than socialist. SLD elites could introduce macroeconomic liberal reforms because the society was involved in axiological dispute over abortion, role of the Church, religion at school. It distracted Poles' attention from liberal economic modernization.[23]

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[22] B. Góralczyk: *Węgierski pakiet*. Warszawa 2000, pp. 154—160.

[23] R. Markowski: *The Polish SLD in the 1990s*…, p. 60.

In both cases after four years of governance SLD and MSzP lost elections and became opposition. MSzP criticized the first Fidesz government (1998—2002) for conservative and traditional policy which divided Hungarians. MSzP paid attention to extremely high funds sent to rural districts and emphasized that too much money was given to Hungarian companies which halted foreign capital flow. MSzP thought that the law act on Hungarian ethnic minorities living abroad would give them too much rights, but generally agreed on the necessity of introduction of such law.[24]

After losing elections in 1997, SLD had to make efforts and fight in order not to go down and be marginalized on political arena. New central-rightist cabinet offered four packaged reforms of: local government, health care system, education and pension system. But to introduce those reforms the AWS–UW coalition needed opposition support. Therefore, SLD negotiated some aspects of new arrangements. Social reception of AWS–UW reforms was unseccessful which partly strengthened SLD. Another problem that SLD had to face during opposition time was vetting process (verifying the past of politicians in terms of their possible co-operation with communist secret services). AWS–UW cabinet returned to its campaign promises in this respect, and that is why all forces in SLD started to combat that idea.[25]

After the 2002 elections MSzP created a government with SzDSz, even though it was Fidesz that won. But there were only three parties in the National Assembly: MSzP, Fidesz and SzDSz and Fidesz was unable to make a coalition with SzDSz. Péter Medgyessy became a prime minister. In 2004, it was revealed that Medgyessy worked for secret service in communism and he was forced to resign.[26] He was replaced by Ferenc Gyurcsány. New social-liberal government implemented changes in the law act which guaranteed rights for Hungarians living in neighbouring states and decided to cooperate with the USA in the war in Iraq. In 2004, Hungary became EU member, but first elections to European Parliament were won by oppositional Fidesz.[27]

In 2006, MSzP won consecutive parliamentary elections and regained power with SzDSz as a coalitional partner. But only few months later prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány provoked the greatest mass protests in post-

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[24] L. Benda: "System partyjny Węgier". In: *Partie i systemy partyjne Europy Środkowej*. Red. A. Antoszewski, P. Fiala, R. Herbut, J. Sroka. Wrocław 2003, pp. 99—100.

[25] A. Materska-Sosnowska: *Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej — dostosowanie syndykatu władzy do zasad demokracji parlamentarnej*. Warszawa 2006, pp. 188—194.

[26] J. Darski: "Węgry." *Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia* 2001/2002, nos. XI—XII, p. 264 [http://www.ceeol.com/aspx/issuedetails.aspx?issueid=57be2817-bef4-4cff-8516-40e7b9cefad5&articleId=9d983ef6-3f28-41ce-9057-47eea9de9d9b, (accessed 8.4.2014)].

[27] A. Czyż, S. Kubas: *Doświadczenia węgierskiej transformacji ustrojowej…*, pp. 85—87.

communist Hungary. From a closed-door meeting of MSzP leaders it was revealed that he had been lying for about last two years about Hungarian economic measures. They were devastating, but Gyurcsány was assuring they were quite good. Even though prime minister's words were openly published by mass media and he admitted they were his, he did not decide to resign until 2009. In 2008 social-liberal government introduced a reform package which was to alleviate bad situation in state financial sphere. When Ferenc Gyurcsány dismissed minister of health, member of SzDSz, the party suddenly withdrew its support for the government and left it. It finally made Gyurcsány to resign. He was replaced by Gordon Bajnai who formed a minority government with MSzP and independent ministers. This step was to help MSzP to hold social support, but it did not prevent from slow decline in public opinion polls, and finally led to socialist failure in the 2010 elections.[28]

Polish parliamentary elections in 2001 were won by the SLD–UP coalition. On the one hand, electoral coalition SLD–UP resulted from similar party programmes and UP was afraid of being totally marginalized. On the other hand, SLD wanted to make a coalition with a party whose background would not have been communist at all.[29] After 2001, SLD promoted Polish integration with the EU, which has been reflected in the party programme from 1999 on. SLD thought that Polish participation in NATO should be developed. Another vivid problem which was present after 2001 was women's participation in party and party elites.[30] Leszek Miller's cabinet was best known for finalizing Polish accession to EU and scandals involving SLD members' participations. As a result of scandals support for the party dropped to 10% and tended not to rise. The best known scandal was the Rywin affair (also half-jokingly called "Rywingate"). Lew Rywin wanted to take control of media market in Poland and probably acted on behalf of SLD elite members. When Adam Michnik revealed the problem of money fraud, SLD started to loose support. It was rumoured that Leszek Miller was one of the elite members participating in the fraud affair. Just after EU accession Leszek Miller resigned from leading the cabinet and was replaced by Marek Belka. The latter's cabinet was left by previous coalitional partner PSL, but remained on the basis of SLD–UP. As time went on, Marek Belka's government released from SLD surveillance. On 6 March 2004, Leszek Miller resigned from party leadership being followed by Krzysztof Janik, and then by Józef Oleksy. But

[28] Ibidem, pp. 88—91.

[29] W. Wojtasik: "Stamtąd do wieczności. Ewolucja programowa SLD. 1991—2006." In: *Polska lewica u progu XXI wieku*. Ed. Ł. Tomczyk. Wrocław 2008, p. 57.

[30] Ł. Tomczyk: "Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej — od koalicji do partii, od rządu do opozycji." In: *Partie i ugrupowania parlamentarne III Rzeczypospolitej*. Eds. K. Kowalczyk, J. Sielski. Toruń 2006, pp. 77—86.

both leaders did not symbolize generational changes that were needed then. In March 2004, Marek Borowski announced the creation of a new centre-left party, the Social Democracy of Poland (Pol. Socjaldemokracja Polska, SDPL).

After 2010 the position of MSzP changed dramatically compared to the role played by this party since 1994. The number of socialist members in the Hungarian parliament dropped from 186 to 59. The breakdown of the MSzP resulted in new divisions within the party. Katalin Szili who had served as a Speaker of the National Assembly from 2002 to 2009 decided to form a Movement of Alliance for the Future in 2010. Then, she run for a parliamentary mandate, which she finally received. Afterwards she formed a new party Socialist Union (Hun. Szociális Unió, SU). It is worth mentioning that Katalin Szili was a socialist candidate for the post of president in 2005. The profile of the party was social-democratic. Another important MSzP politician who left the party was Ferenc Gyurcsány. In October 2011 he announced his decision on leaving the party. Then, he created Democratic Coalition (Hun. Demokratikus Koalíció, DK). Initially, Gyurcsány's idea was to push a new party towards liberal and conservative ideas, but finally it was decided to stand in the centre-left position. Ferenc Gyurcsány wanted DK to represent those who in 1989 were social-democrats without communist legacies.

In October 2012 a former socialist prime minister Gordon Bajnai formed a leftist party Together 2014 (Hun. Együtt 2014). One of the decisive reasons to form the party was the unconditional disagreement with Viktor Orbán's policy. Later on the party was joined by Dialogue for Hungary (Hun. Párbeszéd Magyarországért, PM) which split from Politics Can Be Different (Hun. Lehet Más a Politika, LMP) giving the new coalition a social-liberal profile.

Due to the fact that after 2010 Fidesz appropriated public area for its own ideas and did not want to share the state decisions with anyone else, some left-wing and liberal organisations decided to join forces. In September 2013, MSzP signed an electoral agreement with DK and Hungarian Liberal Party (Hun. Magyar Liberális Párt, Liberals). This coalition was accompanied by Together 2014 and Dialogue for Hungary. In January 2014 the coalition submitted a joint list for the parliamentary elections. The coalition head was MSzP leader Attila Mesterházy and it received 26.0% of total votes.

SLD lost parliamentary elections in 2005 and has never repeated its successes from 1993 nor 2001. Jerzy Hausner left SLD and joined a new social-liberal Democratic Party (Pol. Partia Demokratyczna, PD). In 2004, SLD appointed a new chairman Krzysztof Janik, and after him this post was taken by Józef Oleksy. But both of them represented members of the old guard. These nominations did not present needed image change, so in 2005 the party board decided to put the leadership in the hands of young Wojciech

Olejniczak. He convinced the fragmented left camp to build a coalition Left and Democrats which entered 2007 elections, but split afterwards. In 2008, Wojciech Olejniczak was replaced by another young social-democrat Grzegorz Napieralski. But polls still revealed weak position of SLD. Leszek Miller regained leadership in 2011 and he is currently the SLD chairman. In 2005, SLD received 11.35% of total votes, in 2007 — 13.15% and in 2011 only 5.87%. As Katarzyna Sobolewska-Myślik claims, the main problem for SLD after 2005 is decomposition and the combat to retain social support.[31]

A quantitative analysis of MSzP and SLD. Chosen aspects

The role and position of a party in any party system can be described by different measures. Quantitative analysis shows the extent of a party and its possible influence on public life which is derived from social support. Because party system creates a dynamic structure it changes different aspects of its functioning. The quantitative measurements describe real strength of a party. Moreover, they can be used as comparative tools to show how the party changes in a given aspect and to compare different parties. Altogether these measurements serve to build a complex and coherent vision of a party system.

There are numerous indicators which reveal the strength of a party, such as number of parties, number of relevant parties, fractionalization index and aggregation index. Other indicators focus on ideological distance within political scene: right-left score, polarization index, the size of anti-system parties as a measure of ideological distance. Dynamic function of a party system can be measured by indices of volatility and party change. There are indices that measure occurrence of social cleavages in a party system.[32] Real party influence on public life can be described by using an index of government relevancy of a party which consists of a party participation in governments and governmental responsibility of a party.[33]

Unfortunately, it is not possible to discuss all of those measurements in order to present position of MSzP and SLD within political systems in a short analysis. That is why I decided to choose only few of them which, in my

[31] K. Sobolewska-Myślik: "Przekształcenia systemu partyjnego RP." *Athenaeum — Polskie Studia Politologiczne* 2009, No. 22, p. 160.

[32] S. Ersson, J.-K. Lane: "Democratic Party Systems in Europe. Dimensions, Change and Stability." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 1982, Vol. 5 (2), pp. 71—73.

[33] R. Herbut: "Systemy partyjne." In: *Demokracje zachodnioeuropejskie. Analiza porównawcza*. Eds. A. Antoszewski, R. Herbut. Wrocław 1997, pp. 180—181.

opinion, can offer us a quite general image of leftist parties in Poland and Hungary. First two refer to governmental relevancy and show approximate position of a party not only in a party system, but also in state public politics. Unfortunately, this index has a disadvantage, which I will mention later.[34] That is why it is necessary to supplement it with an analysis of the strength of left-wing parties measured by the extent of electorate support given in parliamentary elections.

Let us start with a measurement of government relevancy of a party connected with the index of party participation in governments. As Ryszard Herbut states, this index is derived from Giuseppe Iearci's theory. The index presents a real impact of a party on governmental politics by dividing how many times a party participated in a government by all created governments: Ip = P/G (Ip — index of party participation in governments; P — number of cabinets with a given party participation; G — number of all cabinets). The value of this index is within the interval from 0 to 1. When it equals 0, it means that a party did not participate in any government, whereas when it equals 1, a party participated in all governments.[35]

In the Polish case I decided to take into account the cabinets beginning from the first free elections in 1991. There were 12 cabinets with the following prime ministers: Jan Olszewski, Hanna Suchocka, Waldemar Pawlak, Józef Oleksy, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Jerzy Buzek, Leszek Miller, Marek Belka, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, Jarosław Kaczyński, and Donald Tusk (2). SdRP/SLD participated in six cabinets (Józef Oleksy, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Waldemar Pawlak, Leszek Miller and Marek Belka). It should be noted that Marek Belka's cabinet freed from the surveillance of SLD after some time. But more important is the fact that this index does not fully present the strength of a party relevance because it can show better results for a party which participated in more coalitional cabinets in shorter period than for a party which created a long-term, yet only one cabinet. The index for PO is 0.16, but it has been a governmental party for seven years (SLD for 8 years). The index for SLD is 0.42.

It is worth comparing the position of SLD to other parties. Let us present the data referring to chosen parties that participated in more than one cabinets: UW/UD — 0.25; Solidarność/AWS — 0.33; PSL — 0.42; ZChN — 0.25; PC/PiS — 0.33; PO — 0.16. So, from 25 years of political transformation, SLD is the party with one of the best results, second only to PSL. On

[34] An interesting view of the governmental relevance index, yet presented in a bit different way is given by: K. Patkowski: "Pozycja i znaczenie partii wywodzących się z systemu niedemokratycznego na scenie partyjnej w Polsce, Czechach, Słowacji i na Węgrzech po 1989 r." *Środkowoeuropejskie studia polityczne* 2001, No. 1, pp. 113—131.

[35] Ibidem, p. 180.

the other hand, SLD played initiating role in creation of the cabinet, while PSL was only a pivotal party.

In Hungary there have been 10 cabinets: József Antall, Péter Boross, Gyula Horn, Viktor Orbán (1), Péter Medgyessy, Ferenc Gyurcsány (1, 2), Gordon Bajnai, Viktor Orbán (2, 3). The indices for the parties are: MSzP — 0.5, Fidesz — 0.3, SzDSz — 0.4, KDNP — 0.3, FKgP — 0.3, MDF — 0.3. But here, again, it has to be said that although the difference between indices for MSzP and Fidesz is 0.2, the length of cabinets with the two parties participation is similar. MSzP ruled for 12 years and Fidesz has already been governing the country for eight years and won April 2014 elections with perspective for next four years. MSzP and SLD have quite high indices of party participation in governments which result from the electorate support given in parliamentary elections.

Now, let us take a look at the index of governmental responsibility of parties. This index refers to number of prime ministers and shows how many chiefs of cabinets belonged to a given party in relation to the total number of cabinets. This index reflects better the real influence of a party because it reveals the direct responsibility of a party in a cabinet. Not always the leader of a winning party becomes a prime minister, sometimes a smaller party appoints his leader to govern a country. The index is calculated in following way: Ir = Np/G (Ir — index of governmental responsibility of a party, Np — number of cabinets with a prime minister from a given party, G — total number of cabinets). The value of the index is within the interval from 0 to 1. When it equals 0, it means that a party did not have any prime minister, whereas when it equals 1 a party appointed all prime ministers.[36] The index for SLD is 0.4, while for MSzP is 0.5. To compare the results of the SLD and MSzP to other parties it appears that they are quite high. In Poland the results of other parties are: PO — 0.17, PC/PiS — 0.25, UW/UD — 0.083, PSL — 0.083, Solidarność/AWS — 0.083. In Hungary the results of other parties are: MDF — 0.2, Fidesz — 0.3. Although Péter Medgyessy and Gordon Bajnai were formally independent they were appointed by MSzP and served as socialist prime ministers.

The accumulated index of government relevancy of a party can be achieved by summarizing and dividing two indices: the index of party participation in governments and the index of governmental responsibility of a party. For both left-wing parties equals respectively: SLD — 0.41 and MSzP — 0.5. Results for other Polish parties are: PSL — 0.25, Solidarność/AWS — 0.18, UD/UW — 0.16, PC/PiS — 0.29, PO — 0.17. Results for other Hungarian parties are: MDF — 0.25 and Fidesz — 0.3.

[36] Ibidem, p. 180.

Table 1.
Voters' support for SLD and MSzP in consecutive parliamentary elections: 1990—2014 (%)

Party	Poland: 1991/ Hungary: 1990	Poland: 1993/ Hungary: 1994	Poland: 1997/ Hungary: 1998	Poland: 2001/ Hungary: 2002	Poland: 2005/ Hungary: 2006	Poland: 2007/ Hungary: 2010	Poland: 2011/ Hungary: 2014
SLD	11.99	27.69	27.13	41.04	11.31	13.15	8.24
MSzP	10.90	31.30	29.80	40.05	43.21	19.30*	26.00**

* LiD (coalition SLD, SDPL, PD and UP).
** Coalition of MSzP, Együtt 2014, DK, PM and MLP.

During the 25 years of transformation Polish and Hungarian successors of communist parties gradually strengthened their position on political arenas. They started from the level of about 10% of voters' support (SLD — 11.99% in 1991, and MSzP — 10.90% in 1990) then rose to more than 40% (SLD — 41.04% in 2001 and MSzP — 43.21% in 2005), but in the last decade they lost their high position almost simultaneously and the electoral support dropped to 8.24% in case of SLD (2011) and MSzP 19.30% (2010). Hungarian Left tried to consolidate and formed a broad coalition which received 26.0% of total votes in 2014, but was unable to seize power from Fidesz.

Conclusions

The role and position of SLD and MSzP changed over the 25 years of political transformation. In the introduction of the article, I put forward three research questions: 1) How did the dominant social-democratic parties emerge and enter contemporary party system? 2) What made them successful during parliamentary elections? 3) Why have they been recently less popular and is this a constant trend? To answer the first one, both parties transformed themselves from former communist hegemons and inherited their organisations. After 1989 it was a big advantage while other emerging parties could not count on such structures. Only post-communist parties (SLD, MSzP) and former satellites (ZSL, SD) could be called typical parties in the time of breakthrough because others could not build institutional forms in such a short period of time. Yet, the post-communists lost first parliamentary elections and then were isolated by other parties which blamed them for their communist ancestors' background (PZPR and MSzMP). Then they succeeded in the second elections (1993 in Poland, 1994 in Hungary). Afterwards they lost, but then regained power (2001 in Poland, and 2002 in Hungary) and

lost again. SLD and MSzP became modern contemporary social-democratic parties and impacted patterns of democratization.

Now let us answer the second hypothesis from the introduction. Parliamentary victories of the Left had many causes. Firstly, there were still many believers in socialism who opted for these political ideas. Secondly, early years of freedom brought disillusionment and apathy. People felt they were cheated by former oppositionists who quarrelled and split. The electorate changed their opinions and supported the left. Thirdly, post-communist parties were able to use their experience and unity to present themselves as organisations which could help people in those harsh times. Fourthly, in the beginning the right camp was divided in Poland and in Hungary. Some attempts of its unification were made, yet just after a decade of political transformation Fidesz and PiS were able to organise more solid right-wing parties which could compete with the left. While the right camp was divided, the Left benefited.

The third hypothesis is connected with the worsening position of Polish and Hungarian left-wing parties after 2005 and 2010 elections? The natural reason of immediate failure in the parliamentary elections was economic downturn and disclosure of scandals and corruption affairs. It was obvious that leftist parties took a major role in shaping party systems in both countries over the first decade of transformation. Afterwards, they deepened in politics that did not take into account huge social dissatisfaction caused by effects of wrong decisions and actions. After losing the elections the electorate that supported left-wing parties shifted to other parties and only loyal voters gave their support in following elections. When the parties wanted to strengthen themselves they suddenly faced new challenges. Splits of existing parties and newly created parties received votes of former leftist. Worsening of the left-wing parties position made centre-right parties dominate. What remains is the following question: Will the leftist parties regain power?

The thesis of the article was that despite social, historical and other differences of Polish and Hungarian left-wing parties there are some similarities as well. The analysis made in the article verified the thesis positively. Apart from the facts explained and developed in the first two sections of the article and summarised above as answers to the hypothesis, the similarities can be described by reference to quantitative indicators. They were presented in the last section of the article.

Electoral support for main leftist parties in Poland and Hungary shows some similarities referring to the whole period of transformation. In the beginning it was average (SLD — 11.99% in 1991, and MSzP — 10.90% in 1990) then rose to more than 40.00% (SLD — 41.04% in 2001, and MSzP — 43.21% in 2005), but then in the last decade it dropped (SLD — 8.24%

in 2011, and MSzP — 19.30% in 2010, and the leftist coalition with MSzP — 26% in 2014).

The index of party participation in governments which aims at revealing the influence of a party on state politics for SLD equals 0.42 and for MSzP 0.5. It is quite high. The index of governmental responsibility of a party refers to the posts of prime ministers taken by party members. It is for SLD 0.4 and MSzP 0.5 and is higher than for any other parties in both countries. The accumulated index of government relevancy which is achieved by summarizing and dividing the two above indices is for SLD 0.41 and MSzP 0.50. It means than both leftist parties influenced public politics throughout the period of political transformation.