

THE FREEDOM UNION.
THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE PARTY IN
POSTCOMMUNIST POLAND

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THE FREEDOM UNION IN POLISH POLITICAL SYSTEM

Emergence of parties and party systems in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism, in comparison with the emergence of parties and party systems in Western Europe, was different in at least two ways. First, they were forming up in the time of crisis of political parties in general. Western political parties, as Martin Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan indicated were a result of sociopolitical cleavages (Lipset, Rokkan 1967), which enabled them to formulate their programmes and define their electorates. However, since the late 1960' there have been many changes, due to new socio-political context. Relations between parties and their electorates started to diminish as a result of new sociopolitical differences and the parties themselves started to look for new supporters (tried, with the help of media, to become *catch all* parties). Parallel to this, ideologies stopped playing the main, defining role in the process of voting for the party. But still, as Lipset claims in an article describing party systems in postcommunist Europe, parties must have steady voter alignments based on sociopolitical divisions in order to successfully take part in consecutive general elections, until then they are unstable (Lipset 2000: 49).

There have been many attempts to find and to define these divisions in Central and Eastern Europe. Most authors see them in four major areas: firstly, in assessing the old political regime (that is in support and opposition to the old, communist regime, which derives mainly from citizens' location in the socio-political networks

of party and mass organizations¹, secondly, in support of liberal or distributive economy (those who expect to lose on market economy are in favour of more distributive economy, and those who expect to win are more in favour of liberalization), thirdly, in socio-cultural outlook (those who support socio-cultural liberalism are more likely to view themselves as winners of economic transformation), and finally, in the attitude towards nationalism and cosmopolitanism (the young and well educated accept cosmopolitanism attitude much more often than nationalism) (Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, Tóka 1999: 64-67). These divisions inevitably have structured party alignments in Poland. Especially the first one seemed to be unchangeable for many years. As research proves those who voted for the communist party in founding elections of 1989, were prone to vote for postcommunist party in consecutive elections, and those who voted for “Solidarity” were prone to vote for postsolidarity parties. However, still the voter’s vacillation was high (especially on the solidarity side which was by far much more divided than the communist side, where only the Left Democratic Alliance – SLD, was a strong party). On the other hand, Polish political parties were formed mainly by elites, which instead of defining their electorate and pointing to possible distinctions very often tried to become catch all parties, which meant that their programmes were eclectic, that is in some aspects conservative, in others liberal or socialist. Thus they have rarely offered a comprehensive ideological approach.

The other difference between Western and Eastern European parties is the lack of trust in them, which is a result of communism’s legacy, when only one party dominated over the political scene. For example in 2004 only 3% of Poles trusted political parties (Antoszewski 2006: 111) in comparison with 16% of 15 “old” European Union countries (European Commission 2004: 19). Also when participation in political parties is considered we see that only 0,91% of Poles belong to any party (Bartkowski 2002: 52), whereas in western democracies this participation can reach a level of more than a dozen. Against all the odds, political parties in Poland do exist and try to win elections. Among them was the Freedom Union.

HISTORY OF THE FREEDOM UNION

History of the Freedom Union starts in 1990 with a split in the Solidarity movement. On the one hand, a right wing party: Centre Alliance (PC) emerged and on the other,

¹ But also from their economic status within the old system and experience of repressions and injustice under communism.

the Freedom Union (UW)² was formed. The latter party was composed mostly of members of intelligentsia who (while still in opposition against the communist government) played the role of Solidarity's experts and advisers, and this role, as Aldona Jawłowska points out, had never satisfied their thirst for power (Jawłowska 1995:80).

The Freedom Union was an exception among parties that were formed after 1989 on "Solidarity's side" of the political arena: none of the other parties, such as the Centre Alliance (PC), the Christian National Union (ZChN), the Non-Party Block to Support Reforms (BBWR), the Movement for the Republic of Poland (ROP) or any other smaller parties were able to survive in politics for longer than several years. It does not mean however, that politicians who formed them were disappearing from political life as well. Quite the contrary, as is widely acknowledged because of personal ambitions they would cause splits and divisions in the existing centre-right parties, but were never capable (till 2001 election) of creating a stable political party which would successfully take part in at least two consecutive general elections. The Freedom Union, on the other hand, was present in every parliamentary election since 1991 up to 2001, when its representatives did not get enough support (with 5% threshold of legislative representation) to get into the Sejm, one of the two chambers of the Polish Parliament. However, it put in few representatives into the Senat, the other chamber. Moreover, the public opinion polls showed, till the year 2000, that the Freedom Union had quite a steady support of about 10%. In 2004 when the first European Parliamentary elections took place in Poland, the Freedom Union seemed to have its big come back. In that election it got the support of 7,7% and got 4 representatives into the European Parliament. But as it soon turned out, it was mostly due to the fact that only well known and widely respectable people appeared on its list, like the former foreign affairs minister Bronisław Geremek or the former Defence Minister Janusz Onyszkiewicz. Before the next national elections, which took place the following year, the party united with some separatists from the Alliance of the Democratic Left (SLD) (successor of the communist party) and created a new formation: the Democratic Party which got a bit more than 2% of all votes in the election. Now the party practically does not have any support and therefore any impact on Polish politics.

² To be precise Freedom Union was formed in 1994, when Democratic Union (UD) and Liberal Democrats Congress (KLD) decided to join together. However, in the context of this paper the fact that these two organizations were separate before that date does not seem relevant. Thus throughout the paper I am using the name "Freedom Union" to describe both periods before 1994 and after.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE FREEDOM UNION

The Freedom Union had always seen its roots in the Solidarity movement, and in its programme and actions it had been constantly appealing to them and underlining them. The basic values of the Freedom Union were: freedom, ownership, responsibility, equality of opportunities, patriotism, law and order, competence, tolerance, moderation and security. It is worth emphasizing that “freedom”, which, according to the party’s members, leads towards individual initiative and development, was considered a more important value than equality.

The party was liberal both in economic and in socio-cultural terms, so the main impact was put on economic growth, a factor which would allow for every family to improve its material status (Wilczyński 1997: 15). In order to accomplish this economy must be based on free market, competition and private ownership principles. It also must be open to foreign investors. Then, what the state must ensure is: economic freedom, clear and simple law, privatization, environment for private business to develop. Contrary to many other parties, the Freedom Union did not promise more welfare and state’s intervention in economy (Balcerowicz 2000: 19). Private initiative can not be restricted by over extensive state. However, there were voices in the Freedom Union which were more concerned about social aspects of politics. For example the former Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki was convinced that market “does not regulate everything”, thus state intervention, reasonably limited is necessary in order to ensure social development. He wished Freedom Union be more friendly and compassionate to those who might have lost on transformation (Mazowiecki 2000: 19).

According to the Freedom Union, the state system should be decentralized, so that the local government is “closer to people”. On the other hand, it was supportive to all the civic society organizations and actions, in accordance with an idea that “everybody should have an ability and opportunity to act for the common good”.

On other issues vital to Polish politics such as relations between the Church and state or vetting and decommunization, the Freedom Union’s stand was pretty moderate. It believed in separation of the Church and state and believed that a state should be neutral in socio-cultural outlook, however, it should respect some basic Catholic values. When it comes to assessing the communist period the Freedom Union thought that crimes committed during that time should be made public and should be judged, but it was against that type of vetting that took place in the Czech Republic, that is banning the communist party’s officials from all public functions. When running for an office it was enough for them to tell whether they collaborated with the secret police or not. Then it was left for the voters to decide if they would vote for them or not. Only when lying on that issue, one should be punished by loosing their public function and exclusion from political life for some years.

THE FREEDOM UNION AS A PARTY COMPOSED OF INTELLIGENTSIA³

There are many controversies with terms “intellectuals” and “intelligentsia” as used in this paper. On the one hand, there are scholars who think that these two terms can be used alternatively (Szacki 1991 a and b), on the other, there are those who claim that these two terms cannot be confused in any way (Gella 2001). There are also those, among them is the author of this paper, who stay somewhere in between these two stands. They would appreciate a distinction introduced by Ryszarda Czepulis-Rastensis, who divided intelligentsia into two categories, one was intelligentsia as elite (which we can call intellectuals) and another category intelligentsia as a social class. In the first case intelligentsia-elite is the group which has an ambition to influence opinions of others and to initiate changes and reforms, and in the latter case intelligentsia is just a professional group (Szacki 1991a: 373, Domański 2002: 110–112). But there are some factors which are specific to both “groups” of intelligentsia: a university degree, certain occupations, liberal outlook on economic and socio-political issues and engagement in a public sphere. However, if we try to compare the ethos of intelligentsia elite and intelligentsia as professionals, we would also notice certain dichotomies. When the first considers education as a value in itself, another ascribes to it an instrumental value, when the first treats money as an instrument, another sees it as a value in itself, and finally when the first sees value in community, another value more individuality (Palska 2004).

Intelligentsia as a social class has always been diverged, and the 1989 transition made the division even more profound. However, after the fall of communism it did not stop the intelligentsia in democratic opposition – “Solidarity” to establish a political party, whose main aim was to create and back up pro-democratic and pro-market reforms in Poland. In the founding act we could read “we citizens of independent Poland, who stems from the “Solidarity” movement (...) have followed the path which gave the country freedom. We share the same understanding of democracy. We want to act towards common good of our country” (*Kalendarium Unii Wolności* 2004).

Since its beginnings the Freedom Union was described, without overusing the term, as an “intelligentsia’s party”. There were at least three reasons why it deserved

³ One reservation has to be made while talking about intelligentsia’s engagement in the Freedom Union in the postcommunist Poland I mean here those representatives of intelligentsia who took part in opposition against the communist government or those who were not devoted communist party members. Because as research indicates the majority of the former communist party members supported the Alliance of the Democratic Left.

such a name. Its members, as well as its electorate, fulfilled socio-demographic description of intelligentsia, they shared beliefs characteristic for that group, and finally they were engaged in creating the basis for civic society.

At all the Freedom Union's conventions over 90% of delegates had higher education (the most distinguishable trait of intelligentsia). As Mirosława Grabowska and Tadeusz Szwieli pointed out, the party's delegates were the best educated people among delegates of all other parties (1993: 125). Most of the delegates worked as highly qualified professionals and lived in cities. Scientists, engineers, businessmen, lawyers, MD doctors, teachers and students were the main occupational groups. There were hardly any workers, farmers, unemployed or retired people represented (appendix tab. 1 and 2).

Polish intelligentsia is far more liberal than members of any other social class. More often it supports privatization and reprivatization, promarket reforms, a role of the limited state in the economy, a linear tax, personal freedoms and a right for abortion. It is also more tolerant for different minorities or religious groups (Domański 1999: 87). Not only were such values present in the Freedom Union's programme, but they also were expressed by its delegates during the party's conventions and by its parliamentary representatives. Members and representatives of the Freedom Union considered fast and firm privatization as the core aspect of Polish reforms, irrespective of the social costs. They were supportive to favourable regulations for private businesses, whose task was, according to them, more important than redistribution of goods and social privileges (Grabowska, Szawiel 2001: 342, Wesołowski 2001: 47). Furthermore, they were convinced that human beings are responsible for their own fate, were in favour of liberalization of the abortion law clear cut separation between the church and state (Grabowska and Szawiel 1993: 79–83, Haman 2001: 67, Wesołowski 2001: 47).

Since the communist era a majority of founders and members of the Freedom Union were very active in public life, performing traditional intelligentsia's roles (outside the censorship), such as organizing opposition groups, issuing underground publications, teaching the Polish and world history as well as other liberal sciences in privately organized lectures. In the 1980's they attempted to establish independent political elite and after the collapse of communism they felt responsible for the transformation process. It is being emphasized that the Freedom Union was the most effective force which promoted market reforms, democracy and the idea of civil society (Wesołowski 2006). It was easily noticeable both in the party's programme and in attitudes and convictions of its members who believed that low civic activity would put the young Polish democracy in danger (Wesołowski 2001: 57). Moreover, as one of the local party members said, "the Freedom Union environment gathered those who honestly and without compromises treated their political engagement as

a duty towards the country (...). In their majority - he continued - they had higher goals in politics (...). The party was composed of many people who established foundations, societies, local organizations, and who devoted their time, and not rarely political career in order to build the bases of civil society" (Lenz 2005). Also a multitude of socio-political publications by the Freedom Union members allow to draw a conclusion that they were deeply engaged in rebuilding the country and in explaining changes of the modern world.

THE FREEDOM UNION'S ELECTORATE

Not only members are these who decide about the party's character, but also voters. Martin Seymour Lipset in "Homo Politicus" pointed out that class membership is the most vital indicator of voting patterns, (Lipset 1998: 235-297) and although in modern democracies voting patterns are not as obvious as they used to be, still while analyzing the statistical data on voter's preferences some conclusions based on social status and career can be derived. In Poland after 1989, there were two parties which had significantly different electorates than all other parties. The first one was the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) which in the 1997 elections won about 55% support from the farmers (OBOP 089/1997), and in 2001 the support grew to 72% (Raciborski 2002: 240). Another was the Freedom Union which for a long time attracted votes of the better educated, those in freelance occupations and in business, as well as the votes of students. The Freedom Union's electorate represented values characteristic for intelligentsia, that is economical and socio-cultural liberalism.

The future Freedom Union's electorate emerged in the 1990 presidential elections when Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a prime minister of democratic opposition background, decided to run for presidency against the legend of "Solidarity" – Lech Wałęsa. This "battle" is often considered to be a battle between intelligentsia – represented by Mazowiecki, and antyintelligentsia – represented by Wałęsa, who described Mazowiecki's supporters as "egg headed" unable to control the country's business (Dudek 2004: 151). In this campaign, Mazowiecki won the strongest support from the biggest academic centres in Poland: Warsaw, Kraków, Łódź, Wrocław, Poznań, and Toruń.

The Freedom Union's electorate was always well-educated, lived in cities, and included mainly of intelligentsia and private business. In the first "free elections" (1991), for instance, 42% of the Freedom Union's supporters belonged to intelligentsia (none of the remaining parties had such a high support rate from any other social class), and another 34% were private owners. As Henryk Domański put it "the Freedom Union for the whole period of its existence represented the middle class in the broad sense of this term, with overwhelming majority of intelligentsia and professionals" (Domański 1999: 93). Starting from 1991, the support from the freelance

occupations and students, however still high, was constantly declining in comparison with the first general elections, which is illustrated in tables 3 and 4 (appendix). But still it was higher than the average support for the party. The party the biggest lost faced in 2001, when most of the students and private owners (but also members of intelligentsia) voted for a newly created party, formed mostly of secessionists from the Freedom Union – the Civic Platform (PO).

Socio-political beliefs of the Freedom Union's electorate were liberal. According to surveys, people who voted for the party supported economic reforms and privatization, were in favour of foreign investments in Poland and of cutting down on public expenditures for social purposes. In 1999, 73% of the Freedom Union's supporters found the first Balcerowicz economic reform (1989-1990) as successful, 68% of them were in favour of privatization and 67% thought that international companies investments in Poland were beneficial for the economy⁴ (OBOP 071/99). Furthermore, those who voted for the Freedom Union were, in favour (47%) of reducing expenses on social benefits in order to allot that money for economic development. They also advocated the cut on welfare policy of the state, because they believed (51%) that the individuals themselves, not the state, should support their families⁵ (OBOP 093/97). As for socio-cultural matters, the Freedom Union's electorate can be described as liberal or conservative-liberal. In 1999, more than a half of the party voters (54%) found the restrictive abortion law a failure of Polish democracy, but at the same time 42% of them decided that introduction of religion classes to school curriculum was the right decision (OBOP 071/99).

The Freedom Union, as many other Polish political parties at that time, had an ambition to become a "catch-all" party and to represent the whole society (Grabowska, Szawiel 2001: 340), but surveys revealed that it was seen as a party who represents mainly intelligentsia and private owners (OBOP 132/99). These surveys' results are confirmed by independent observers of Polish political scene and the Freedom Union's politicians, who now see that the party's electorate recruited mainly from these two groups (Lenz 2005, Onyszkiewicz 2006). The question remains why they did not see it earlier?

All in all, the Freedom Union was supported mainly by intelligentsia, among them scientists, writers, lawyers, MD doctors, students, and also by owners of private businesses who were all slowly developing into a middle class. Its main strengths lay in people who mostly stemmed from democratic opposition and thus were often

⁴ None of the other major parties electorate's support was above 50% to any of these questions (OBOP 071/99).

⁵ Freedom Union was the only party, in whose electorate there were more supporters than opponents of these two statements (OBOP 093/97).

associated with “Solidarity” ethos. They were also unique for their style of handling politics, temperance, deliberation and pragmatism. The Freedom Union was also praised for its proreformist and pro civic society political programme.

WHY DID THE FREEDOM UNION COLLAPSE?

The answer to this question lies in two factors (1) in inevitability of a historical process, changes in the Polish social structure after 1989, and, associated with that, change of values recognized in the society (among them, the declining role of intelligentsia in society) and (2) in ineffectiveness of the party elites, that is unskilful political game played by the party, and poor political marketing.

INEVITABILITY OF A HISTORICAL PROCESS

The transformation brought about not only deep economic and political changes, but also changes in the social structure of Polish society which during the communist regime was in theory “classless”, and in reality the most distinct and perceptible division was between the ruling elite and their supporters (described as “they”) and the rest of society (described as “us”). Thus social stratification was based on political, not on socio-economic criteria. Due to this situation, the basic conflict in society was between the state and different groups, not between the groups. It was the state that was an addressee of all social claims (see Mokrzycki 2001: 87–108). After 1989 with reducing the state’s involvement in politics and with introducing market reforms it was believed that new mechanisms automatically would create a new social stratification which would be similar to the one that already existed in the West. To some degree this belief proved true as new social categories emerged, among others, the most distinguishable the private owners and the unemployed. However, the most desired middle class is still deemed to be in the process of formation.

After 1989 it was widely believed that a change in mentality would come along with the system transformation. The founding elections (in June 1989) proved that support for socialism as a system and for the communist party itself was extremely low, so the conclusion seemed obvious: people should become more rightist, individualistic and democratically oriented. Passivity should be replaced by social activity through which a civic society would emerge. At first it seemed that these changes would take place. Approval and support for the reforms were high, even among those who were the most vulnerable to their side effect, such as the unemployed or the industrial workers. However, it soon turned out that the tendency was reverse and that there was a contradiction between the political and economic changes and

people's mentality. Along with prodemocratic and promarket reforms there came a longing for the state's responsibility for economy and the progressing social inequalities and new social stratifications brought growing support for egalitarian solutions⁶, etc. Soon it became obvious that many groups still consider the state as the main addressee of all complaints and expect it to play an active role in economy.

The transformation also brought about changes in intelligentsia. Two Hungarian sociologists György Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi, in a 1991 article *Intellectuals and Domination in Post-Communist Societies*, put forward a thesis that intelligentsia, which had a major role in overthrowing the communist regimes in postcommunist countries, would play a fundamental role in the course of social, political and economical reforms. They also claimed that intelligentsia would be able to use its ability to monopolise political discourse, and thus would win power, due to a "discursive victory" over the communist's elites. This was done mainly by well founded and convincing critique of the old regime. However, it did not happen, at least not in the anticipated manner. Admittedly, intelligentsia engaged profoundly into politics, and in some of the postcommunist countries, for example in Poland, it created its own political representation. However, Freedom Union present at the theatre of Polish politics for about 15 years, finally got completely marginalised.

Intelligentsia as a social class has always been diverged, but since it emerged in the middle of 19th century it has shared some common values and beliefs. First of all, when Poland lost its independence (from 1795 to 1918) or sovereignty (after the World War II) intelligentsia decided to fulfil the tasks which in democratic countries are performed by political elites: education of people, creation and preservation of national culture, and contribution to advancement of the backward country. Intelligentsia, because of its education and mission it adopted – leaders of the nation, felt responsible for its faith, survival and wellbeing. In the years 1918-1939 when Poland was an independent country, intelligentsia created the basis for the country's development. A historian, Jacek Żarnowski, called the II Republic of Poland an "intelligentsia's state", because then not only civil workers but also many politicians came from that class. It is estimated that at least half of all intelligentsia worked for the state at that time (Żarnowski 2000: 123).

With the transformation, initiated by the "round table talks" (February 6 – April 5 1989), the role of intelligentsia evolved in two directions. On the one hand, there emerged a group which wanted to sustain its traditional role and to create

⁶ For example in 1990 and in 1999 surveys the same question was asked, whether the earnings should reflect the effort or should be more egalitarian. In 1990 the support for the first option was 74% and for the second 13%. In 1999 for the first only 50% and for the second 29% (Marody 2002: 95).

norms and values of the new society, and on the other, there formed a group which got rid of “tiresome mission obligation”, still present in the former group’s ideology. The latter group just wanted to make their own careers and serve society only with their specialised knowledge. As a writer Tedeusz Konwicki put it, “after 1989 I felt released from an *opposer function*. In this relatively sovereign state, I wished to leave all the worries of our country to politicians, and non governmental organizations. Finally, let somebody else, not an intelligent, take care of Poland” (cited after Kowalski 1994: 192). It was said about them, that under the pressure of market, they became professionals who are practical and who wish to succeed financially (Domański 2000: 578)⁷.

Besides the changes in intelligentsia itself, transformation brought significant changes in a way in which people saw its socio-political role in society. During the communist time it was anti-communist intelligentsia that, (in a context of non-existence of other socially recognised elites) was given moral authority to lead social resistance to the regime (especially after 1976). But after 1989 when intelligentsia entered the realm of politics and expected to get voters’ legitimization, it raised their distrust and aversion. Firstly, because, as a sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis put it, the society “was very sensitive to the new hierarchy” (Staniszkis 2005), and secondly, it soon discovered the inevitable, but negative results of reforms, conducted by the intelligentsia’s government, such as unemployment or inflation. Moreover, when communism collapsed, people regained their subjectivity (one of the major aims of the Freedom Union)⁸. Since then they have been keen on making their own decisions in the situation of democratic state rather than on looking up to someone (an authority) to tell them what to do and what is best for them. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that research held in the middle of the 1990’ showed that only 3,5% of respondents, thought that intelligentsia had a major role in society. On the other hand 14,5% declared that it did not have any role at all (Kempny 2004: 231). Another research proved that one in three respondents considered the word “intelligentsia” as having negative connotations (Filas, Janecki 1998). Furthermore, there were repetitive calls heard for intelligentsia to withdraw from politics and to finally concentrate on their own work. Sergiusz Kowalski called the described phenomena “a cancellation of intelligentsia’s public voice”. The reasons for this he saw

⁷ Intelligentsia did not only change into professionals but individuals also left traditional intelligentsia’s occupations. For instance about 30% of scholars decided to change their careers after 1989 (Mokrzycki 2001:45).

⁸ Bronisław Świdorski points out that there is an immanent contradiction between democratic rules and the ethos of intelligentsia who would like to have power because of its high education, and thus high competence. In democracy, however, what really counts are votes, not what the scholars claim” (Świdorski 2000: 75).

in: the lack of interest in intelligentsia's "services" on the side of those who are in power, the lack of interest in intellectual thought from society⁹, dissolution of intelligentsia's clubs, places where they met and established social ties¹⁰, and in pluralisation of intelligentsia's beliefs which, in the past were concentrated mostly on how to resist communist government (Kowalski 1994: 194-197).

All in all, we see a process of declining role of intelligentsia in the sphere of public life. On the one hand, because of disintegration of the class itself, which enters free market as specialists, who not always see their common interest and thus does not see the necessity of having their own political representation. And on the other hand, we see that in the democratic state where everybody is allowed to express their interests and arrive at their own decision, intelligentsia does not seem to be considered as an inevitable "leading group" any more, especially that the intelligentsia's party, the Freedom Union, proved to be so state centered that it earned the image of not being interested in and understanding of "ordinary people".

INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE PARTY ELITES

Socrates in his defense speech, said "this sign, which is a kind of voice, first began to come to me when I was a child; it always forbids but never commands me to do anything which I am going to do. This is what deters me from being a politician. And rightly, as I think. For I am certain, O men of Athens, that if I had engaged in politics, I should have perished long ago, and done no good either to you or to myself. And do not be offended at my telling you the truth: for the truth is, that no man who goes to war with you or any other multitude, honestly striving against the many lawless and unrighteous deeds which are done in a state, will save his life; he who will fight for the right, if he would live even for a brief space, must have a private station and not a public one" (Plato 2004). As if against to what Socrates said some of the intelligentsia's members decided to get involved in politics and to establish a political party – the Freedom Union. But, in contradiction to most other politics participants they attempted to act in Socratic way, which is in harmony with ideals and values, instead of looking for temporary solutions which bring short-term popularity. In their

⁹ One of the respondents who took part in the research on "condition of Polish intelligentsia" said: "you want to move the hills, but nobody is interested, they want the hills to stay in place" (Jawłowska 1995: 95).

¹⁰ Marcin Król, as historian of ideas, once said: "normalization means the collapse of intellectual centres and bringing them to their professional roles. When I taught in Yale, I was greatly disappointed when at weekly professor's meetings they talked when and with whom they spent their vacation, instead of, what I anticipated, discussing some vital socio-political matters (cited after Kowalski 1994: 194).

policy they chose and backed up initiatives which, according to them, were beneficial for the country as a whole (for example introducing the VAT bill in 1993 by the Freedom Union's Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka just before the parliamentary election, or supporting the budget bill in 1999, just after leaving the coalition with the Electoral Action "Solidarity" - AWS). They had a programme which they thought would be good for Poland. But, as Lord Chesterfield put it "who wants to be a politician, must master the art of appealing to others" (after Ossowska 1983: 554), which the Freedom Union never acquired. "In the Freedom Union – one of the top party's politicians said – there was this conviction that being in politics means to serve the country and to serve others. It is not an opportunity to care for one's own career and, to tell the truth, this was something that turned out to be our disadvantage, because building up political support in other parties is very often based on promoting different people to different public functions, then when one has such an "ally" he or she may expect some gratitude and back up in return. We have never practised such behaviour, and thus we had many people alienated" (Onyszkiewicz 2006).

On the other hand the Freedom Union had many faults and did many political mistakes. First of all, it did not represent well enough or even, as some say, it neglected its main supporters, that is intelligentsia. The Freedom Union, as one intellectual said, simply ignored the group's interests (Salmonowicz 2006), that is the interests of scholars, teachers, doctors, artists, etc. These groups were in a way "victims" of the free market reforms (before 1989 most of them worked in the state founded institutions) and although most of them (being well educated and highly mobile) took care of themselves in the new reality, the institutions they worked for (universities, schools, hospitals) were not sufficiently reformed and financed, and therefore prepared to cope with the free market rules. Also private business was, to some extent, dissatisfied with a complicated law system and with extensive labour costs. The question remains open to what extent it was Freedom Union's negligence and to what extent it was impossible for the party to solve these problems. But as one of the major Freedom Union's politicians admitted "it is true that by looking only for interest of the state we did abandon the interests of those groups which supported us most" (Onyszkiewicz 2006).

Still another weakness of the Freedom Union was its inability or even reluctance to communicate with people. The party leaders behaved as if they did not see the fact that one of the main factors of leadership in modern world is the ability to conduct a dialog between the party and its potential voters. Instead, they seem to have believed that the base for their support was their knowledge, competence, experience and work for common good of citizens. The communication problems were noticeable on two main planes. One was the difficult and esoteric language of the Freedom Union's politicians, which was very often incomprehensible to ordinary people. The other, was a lack of will and patience to meet people and explain them why certain decisions

must be made¹¹. Janusz Onyszkiewicz and Grażyna Staniszevska justified it by being up to their eyes with work in the parliament, which left them no time at all to participate in political gatherings (Onyszkiewicz 2006, Staniszevska 2006). All in all, as Onyszkiewicz believed “we, the Freedom Union, were convinced that rightness and honesty would defend themselves so there was no need to talk and to discuss these matters with the public” (Onyszkiewicz 2006). But this lack of communication was felt by local members of the Freedom Union who very often complained that it was extremely difficult to have someone come and talk to local party organizations and supporters (Wyrowiński 2006). Also other people, who, very often, perceived the Freedom Union as a party of intelligentsia which treated them with considerate respect but, which was most important, looked down on them¹². Freedom Union had an image of an exclusive party. As one of the opposition leaders – Jerzy Jaskiernia observed, “the party behaved like a top student: intelligent, a bit conceited, and who finds himself to be the brightest and most good-looking, but others do not like him, because he is not easy going and friendly enough” (Jaskiernia 2006).

Finally, the leaders of the party did not see the need to work on marketing campaigns in order to create the party’s image or to get the party’s message across. Most of their electoral campaigns were rather unsuccessful. The Freedom Union did try to present itself as a party which has a programme for everybody. So, for example, in the campaign of 1991 it tried to create a bond with farmers and workers by designating people of these backgrounds who were supposed to represent them. Moreover, to win support of groups disappointed with the reforms, the Freedom Union decided not to expose the achievements of two governments in which it co-ruled and not to criticise the communist time, believing that a lot of people who suffered most from transformation, longed for the old regime (look also Dudek 1995: 315). This strategy was all the more surprising for two reasons. Firstly, the Freedom Union received the biggest support from intelligentsia and private business, the two groups satisfied with the reforms. And secondly, such groups as workers and farmers had already blamed the Freedom Union for the decline of their living standard.

Every party which won elections in Poland, the Alliance of the Democratic Left in 1993 and in 2001, the Electoral Action “Solidarność” in 1997 or the Law and Justice in 2005, did it on their pro social message and on criticising the liberal economic reforms. The Freedom Union never, in its electoral campaign, used such

¹¹ For example, before the 1993 elections the Freedom Union spend only 2,9% of its campaign budget on public meetings, and before the 2001 elections it was only about 1,5% (Winclawska 2006).

¹² For exapmle in one of the Freedom Union’s spots in 1993, Bronisław Geremek, one of its leaders, started it with words: “Ladies and Gentlemen let us talk about what the elections are” (after Pietrzyk-Zienkiewicz, Zienkiewicz 1995: 104).

rhetoric or even attempted to use it. As Henryk Wujec, one of the top members of the party said, “there was this inner conviction among the Freedom Union’s members that if any of us tried to use demagoguery in his or her campaign, he or she would be simply laughed at for promising impossible and irrational things which could not be fulfilled, or which would not be in the person’s competence, this person would be disgraced” (Wujec 2006). Instead, in all its campaigns the party tried to present itself and its programme in long, usually boring (especially for laymen) complicated lectures. It seemed as if the party adopted a wrong model of electoral campaigns, in which it treated the potential voters as students who have unlimited time to spend on reading the party’s programme and on analyzing every bit of it very carefully. Moreover, in its campaigns the Freedom Union tried to prove its rationalism and pragmatism and as it is widely known, the victory is rarely won through honesty, openness, reason, through detached and scholarly style. It means that it is not enough to be right, but in order to be successful one must want and know how to convince others that he or she is right and how to make them vote in a desirable way. To do so, politicians and political parties need to raise emotions (Mouffe 2006) and need to launch professional electoral campaigns. And, as some of my interlocutors admitted the Freedom Union had a great potential. On the one hand it was based on the extraordinary intellectual capability of creating a vision and programme of the party and on the other, it was the ambition of young, well educated people who knew how to conduct such campaigns properly. But although the former potential was fully used, the latter one never got recognition among the party’s leaders (Antonowicz 2005, Lenz 2005) and thus it never got the chance to activate itself.

CONCLUSIONS

The example of the Freedom Union allows us to draw broader sociological conclusions: firstly, the transformation of the system brings the diminishing of traditional role of intelligentsia in the Central and the Eastern Europe. As it was argued above, on the one hand, intelligentsia itself slowly evolves into a “knowledge” class, more interested in their careers and making money than in active participation in public life. Since the countries are democratic, the intelligentsia do not feel obliged by their traditional mission any more. On the other hand, people who gained their subjectivity in democratic countries and who want to make their own political choices, do not look up to intelligentsia as to experts on political life, but only as experts on their own, narrow field.

In these circumstances one last question comes up, namely whether in a modern, democratic country intelligentsia in its traditional role is at all necessary, and moreover, should it establish a political party? Andrzej Walicki wrote that intelligentsia “as an

autonomic group, joined together by common values and mission, is a typical phenomena for underdeveloped countries which has just started economic, social and political modernization and *westernization*" (Walicki 2004). In the 19th century, intelligentsia as a social class was burdened with responsibilities unknown to intellectuals in Western Europe. Poland, in comparison to Western countries which underwent the dramatic change due to the Industrial Revolution and democratization, was underdeveloped and provincial. It was still a feudal state with peasants in serfdom, backward industry, and divided territory between three empires: Russia, Prussia, and Austria. In Western Europe people who work in occupations which in Eastern Europe are traditionally considered as intelligentsias (such as teachers, lawyers, office workers, writers, artists, etc.), never formed a separate class with a mission to fulfil. Gordon Marshal in 1994 asked a question whether "with the advent of market economies, capitalism will finally transform parts of the intelligentsia into its Western equivalent; namely a loose category of intellectuals rather than a solid social stratum" (Marshal 1998: 321). From our perspective in the year 2006 it seems that this process took place. Former intelligentsia has transformed itself into professionals on the one hand, and intellectuals on the other. They take part in political life or just comment on it, but they do so as individuals, not as members of a certain class. However, the declining role of intelligentsia or intellectuals is not a specific Polish (or even Eastern European) trait. It becomes a part of what Michel Foucault described as replacing a "general" intellectual by a "specific" one, which phenomena is characteristic for the late modernity. In Western Europe, Foucault says, "old" intellectuals are taken over by the new *knowledge class* who hold their positions only because of their highly specialised knowledge.

Secondly, during the time of transition from communism to capitalism, the political life becomes more instrumental than value-oriented, as it was expected. Ronald Inglehart introduced a materialist-postmaterialist theory. He noticed that more developed societies, value the quality of life (environmental protection and appropriate life style) more, even if they are in conflict with economic growth, while poorer societies, at early stage of development emphasise economic growth and economic achievements above all (Inglehart 2000: 219, 223). His thesis proved right. In Western democracies there is a systematic growth of postmaterialists, while in countries with lower GDP per capita this increase is much slower or there is no increase at all. Poland however, is distinguishable among the countries where Inglehart held his research. In 1980 and in 1984 the level of postmaterialist values in society was close to the level of Western societies, and even in 1989 it was relatively high¹³. This ostensible contradiction between theory and reality was due to some

¹³ However it must be indicated that because of a different political situation, slightly different variables were used in Poland as indicators of postmaterialistic values. Moreover in

extraordinary events in the Polish history: the birth of Solidarity and the martial law. It was the time when society, in spite of not being wealthy, had high political ambitions, higher, than in most of the other soviet block countries. The Poles demanded civil liberties and democracy. It was not before the early 1990 that the situation “got back to normal” and materialism became more valued than postmaterialism, exactly how the Inghelhart’s theory assumed. This placed Poles closer to other postcommunists’ societies.

At first it seemed natural that people backed up liberal reforms, since liberalism was considered the system in which freedom, but also economy, can develop best. As Grażyna Staniszevska remembers “at the begging of the transformation, when I was coming form the Sejm to give a detailed report on what was going on in the government, most people, among them workers with elementary education, were telling me that the only way of transforming the Polish economy is by implementing Jeffrey Sachs’ shock therapy” (Staniszevska 2006). But as it soon turned out the liberal parties in Eastern Europe (among them the Freedom Union) won hardly a mediocre popularity which was to fall further in time (appendix tab 5). They attracted voters mainly by advocating liberal democracy as the political system. However, their economic programme, that is liberalization of economy, soon became unpopular among people who were afraid of loosing their social privileges, gained still under the communist regime and, which is more important, of lowering their living standards. In order to maintain their positions, the liberal parties had to shift their programmes towards conservatives or leftist ideologies. This was a case with the Civic Democrats Party (ODS) in the Czech Republic, the Alliance of Yong Democrats (FIDESZ) in Hungary, the Civic Platform (PO) in Poland, which adopted the conservative approach, or the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) in Hungary, the Liberal Democrats in Slovenia which moved towards the left side of the political scene. The Freedom Union was unable to use its chance and to transform in time in either of these two directions, even though it tried to adapt a more leftist approach after the 2001 elections, but it was too late. The price which it paid was its disappearance form the theatre of politics, the fate it shard with liberal parties from the Baltic States.

Recently it has been observed that the changes in political parties, at least in Poland, go even further. Not only did they have to declare themselves as social democrats or conservative in order to survive, but most of them changed into leader-centered types of parties. This process goes along with the declining support for the Polish democracy in society.

1989 Poles saw the possibility of fulfilling the postmaterialistic values only along with economic reforms (Siemieńska 2004: 188).

APPENDIX

Table 1. Vocational structure of delegates for I and II Democratic Union's Congress (UD) and III Liberal Democrats Conference (KLD)

Vocational category	Percentage share			
	UD 1991	UD 1993	KLD 1991	KLD 1993
Scholars	25%	10%	8%	8%
Engineers		12%		8%
Private owners	8%	7%	21%	19%
Office workers	5%	9%		13%
MD doctors	8%			
Teachers	8%	7%		
Lawyers	6%	10%		7%
Students	7%	6%	7%	7%

Source: adopted from Grabowska & Szawiel: 1993, pp. 62, 125–126, 77–78, 85–86, 154–155.

Table 2. Vocational structure of delegates for Freedom Union Congress in 1995 and 2002

Vocational category	Percentage share	
	UW 1995	UW 2002
Economists	6%	6%
Humanists	14%	3%
Engineers	23%	8%
MD doctors	6%	6%
Teachers	7%	9%
Scholars	9%	4%
Lawyers	13%	5%
Private owners	6%	15%
Students	3%	5%
Office workers	5%	13%

Source: Grabowska 2004: 267

Table 3. Declared support for the Democratic Union and the Liberal Democratic Congress vs. elections' results 1991 and 1993

Social and vocational category	1991	1993
Intelligentsia and freelance occupations	47%	42%
Technical intelligentsia		39%
Private owners	56%	23%
Students	75%	34%
<i>Elections results of both parties</i>	<i>19,81%</i>	<i>14,58%</i>

Source: adapted from Grabowska & Szawiel 2001: 270–276.

Table 4. Declared support for the Freedom Union vs. elections' results 1997 and 2001

Social and vocational category	1997	2001
Professionals	20%	8,5%
Private owners	37%	6%
Students	12%	1%
<i>Elections results of the Freedom Union</i>	<i>13,37%</i>	<i>3,1%</i>

Source: adapted from the research reports by INFAS OBOP "Party's preference", 089/97 & 121/01.

Table 5. Support for the Freedom Union in consecutive elections

Year	Number of votes	Percent (1990=100)
1990*	2 973 264	100
1991	1 382 051	46
1993	1 460 957	49
1995*	1 646 924	55
1997	1 749 518	59
2001	404 074	14
2004**	446 549	15
2005***	289 276	10

Source: adapter from election's results (www.pkw.gov.pl)

* presidential elections (in 2000 freedom Union did not have a candidate),

** European Parliamentary elections,

*** parliamentary elections, but when Freedom Union united with separatist from Alliance of Democratic Left and changed into Democratic Party (PD).

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