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Party system and media in Poland – dependences and relations

KEY WORDS

political party, political parallelism, media bias, relation party–media, the adversary model, the exchange model

ABSTRACT

Transition toward democracy is a fundamental phase when political parallelism can appear between media and political systems. Parliamentarization of political parties is an effect of democratization in Poland and the Central Europe. Mass media are campaigning tools for objects of political competition and for this reason political parties and candidates have a tendency to media instrumentalization in communication with voters. This is easy with public media but not with private media apart from ideological media, such as Radio Maryja.

In Poland, as well as in other Central-Eastern countries, the party and media systems are a result of the political, economic and social transformation which began with the fall of communism in 1989. In this region, the party and media system condition, their mutual relations and level of political parallelism are the outcome of a more or less effective democratization process. Let us try to answer the following questions: How has the democratization process influenced political parallelism in Poland?, How did political parties behave and how did they build their relations with media?, Which factors stimulated the level of political parallelism¹ over the last 20 years, since the fall of communism?

Political system democratization and political parallelism

Media functions, roles and objectives in mature democracies have already been researched and written about, with extensive literature available on the subject². Meanwhile, the problems and issue of mass media during the transformation process and consolidation of democracy still remain to be researched. These issues are beginning to be discussed in various political science, media studies, economic and sociological works but as Patrick J. McConnell

¹ Political parallelism is the level in which political system structure is reflected in the media system. It regards media relations with not just political parties but all political actors, i.e. public administration institutions and who they are managed by. Political parallelism takes place when media are pressured by political actors i.e. the government, parliament, president, local authorities etc. and when they are not able, for various reasons, to oppose.

² *Democracy and the Media. A Comparative Perspective*, ed. By R. Gunther, A. Mughan, Cambridge 2000.

and Lee B. Becker³ noted, it is largely happening on the side of other discussions. We are still lacking complex studies which would integrate knowledge from different disciplines and theoretical reflection enabling us better understanding of transformation mechanisms and the role of media in democratization processes. There is practically no research on political parallelism whose level is decided by the changes which take place during the transformation process and democratic consolidation. One collective work which is worth mentioning here is *Media Reform* edited by Monroe E. Price, Beata Rozumilowicz and Stefan Verhulst⁴. Comparative studies carried out by the authors enabled them to formulate a thesis that existent are direct and complex relations between mass media reforms and political system democratization. Rozumilowicz divides the process of media reforms into four stages – pre-transition stage, primary transition, secondary stage and late or mature stage⁵. The pre-transition stage will not be discussed here since it took place before 1989. Questionable is also whether Polish media are in the mature stage. Therefore, this analysis will focus on the basic (primary stage) and secondary (democracy consolidation) stage.

In Central Europe, the transformation of electronic media took place much faster and more dynamically than in Spain, Portugal or Greece, after their dictatorships were over turned in the 1970s. Fundamental to Polish media transformation decisions were discussed during Round Table talks in April 1989. On the one hand, they opened the way to de-monopolize the press market, on the other, they blocked radio and television reform. One of the first strategic decisions was to do away with censorship and to free the press from under state control.

This way, began the process of differentiating political content leading to pluralism of media. In May 1989, “Gazeta Wyborcza” entered the market, which was a breakthrough event. In 1990, liquidated was the communist monopolistic press concern RSW “Książka–Prasa–Ruch”. Within this time, just like in Spain, registered were dozens of new dailies and magazines. Some of these never went into print, others fought hard to find readers and survive on the free market. Stabilization and normalization of the press market took place in 1993. It was then when new market structures, based on free market economy and external pluralism of press content, were shaped. Meanwhile, reforms of electronic media were enforced much slower and more carefully. This was true both in Southern and post-communist Central-

³ P. McConnell, L. Becker, *The Role of Media in Democratization* [Paper presented at the 23rd International IAMCR Conference, Barcelona, 21–26.07.2002.]

⁴ *Media Reform. Democratizing the Media, democratizing the State*, ed. M. Price, M.B. Rozumilowicz, P. Verhulst, London 2002.

⁵ B. Rozumilowicz, *A Democratic Change: A Theoretical Perspective*, [in:] *Media Reform...*, p. 12–13; B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Przejście do demokracji a transformacja systemów medialnych w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej po upadku komunizmu*, [in:] *Transformacja systemów medialnych w krajach Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej po 1989 r.*, ed. B. Dobek-Ostrowska, Wrocław 2004, p. 17–19.

Eastern Europe countries. Radio and television were too attractive from the point of view of political communication. New governments, afraid of losing control or influence over reformed public media, purposely blocked change in this area. The Sejm passed, in December 1992, the Radio and Television Act but the market had to wait until 1994 to see its effects. This means that legislative changes took place three and a half years after the collapse of communism. In comparison, other Iron Curtain countries were faster – Czechs and Slovaks introduced changes in 1991 and Romanians in 1992, but some were slower – Hungarians (1996) and Bulgarians (1996, 1997) as change was blocked by ruling parties. In Hungary, there was even the so called “war over television”⁶. Even though electronic media reforms in Central Europe were much slower than those of the press, they were still carried out faster than in Southern European countries. The Radio and Television Act from 1992 allowed for the transformation of state broadcasters into public ones, closed the market for pirate television and permitted only legal private broadcasters. As a result, what did not take place is the so called wild de-regulation, characteristic of Italy and Greece. What began was a slow process of building a dual model of electronic media, modeled on solutions adopted in mature European democracies⁷.

Structural and institutional changes on the media market were fundamental to the creation and consolidation of political pluralism in media and connected to it bias phenomenon. Political organizations and parties were aware of the fact that mass media are powerful in reaching the people, especially in a situation in which media were gaining public trust faster than the new establishment. Politicians became highly interested in building relations and contacts with media because that would allow them influence over media content. As W.L. Bennett⁸ notes, in societies which have not previously had experience with pluralism of opinions, there is a selection problem. People are not used to making choices and, hence, they easily assimilate nationalistic and populist slogans. In this phase of political transformation, responsible media should explain to the people democratic change, support democratic values and discuss new procedures. Polish media were not exactly aware of the role they should have played. Since the beginning of the transformation, they were highly engaged in the political process, explicitly choosing which politicians and parties they

⁶ B. Ociepka, *Dla kogo telewizja? Model publiczny w postkomunistycznej Europie Środkowej*, Wrocław 2003, p. 126–139; B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Przejście do demokracji...*, p. 22; ibidem, *Miejsce i rola mediów masowych w procesach demokratyzacyjnych*, [in:] *Media w demokratyzujących się systemach politycznych*, ed. B. Dobek-Ostrowska, Wrocław 2006, p. 27.

⁷ B. Ociepka, *Dla kogo telewizja...*, p. 101–103.

⁸ W.L. Bennett, *The Media and Democratic Development: The Social Basis of Political Communication*, [in:] *Communicating Democracy. The Media and Political Transitions*, ed. P. O’Neil, Boulder, CO 1998, p. 38.

supported and which they did not, such as “Gazeta Wyborcza” in 1990 and 1995. Such attitudes by owners, publishers and journalists did not exactly support the development of internal pluralism.

The secondary stage of media reform corresponds to consolidation of democracy. Researchers believe that this stage begins when old regime institutions are eliminated and there is acceptance for political pluralism. On the institutional level, this moment is considered to be free elections for parliament and the creation of new government, according to democratic procedures or passing of a new constitution. In case of Poland, the evolution into consolidation of democracy began between elections in 1991 and 1993. The passing of the Constitution in 1997 marks the end of political transformation on the institutional level. Entering the phase of consolidation of democracy had a huge influence on processes taking place on the Polish media market. Private owners, including Polish and foreign investors, took advantage of the stabilization of the political and economic situation, and strengthened their positions on the market. This is when market mechanisms became fully shaped and intra-media competition on the print market and later on the electronic market set in. As a result of diversification and ownership concentration, first media and multimedia groups, holdings, foreign companies and concerns entered the market. The process of media internationalization, which originated in the previous phase, begun to speed up.

Social changes, however, could not keep up with economic ones. One common problem of Central-Eastern European countries is a deficit of democratic values, underdevelopment of civic society, imperfection of the public sphere and a general low quality of democracy. All these issues resulted in unhealthy relations between political actors and the mass media, and were reflected in media content. Analysis of specific cases illustrates how complicated and difficult was the process of gaining autonomy by the mass media. Politician and party aspirations can be found in various media subjectivity or bias, often considered a communist legacy⁹. However, the problem is much more complex and cannot be explained just by communist legacy. Politicized media should be considered an element of a more complex process which Ryszard Herbut combines with political party strategic orientation onto public institutions and calls the colonization of public administration by ruling parties¹⁰. This phenomenon can be explained by the specific and different from Western European political party situation as basic subjects of rivalry. According to Herbut,

⁹ A. Láncki, P. O’Neil, *Pluralization and the Politics of Media Change in Hungary*, [in:] *Post-Communism and the Media in Eastern Europe*, ed. P. O’Neil, London 1997, p. 83.

¹⁰ R. Herbut, *Teoria i praktyka funkcjonowania partii politycznych*, Wrocław 2002, p. 10.

due to a low level of electorate identification with a given party, a weak party member base and the process of party “parlamentarization” in post-communist countries dominant has become the model of election party. Political parties in these countries are, in some aspects, similar to party-cartels¹¹. One way to influence undecided voters and to ensure a strong position is to take control of public organizations, local government, non-public institutions, etc. by putting party people in positions there. Having loyal people in such organizations, it is easier to use state sources in order to promote one’s own party, its leaders and programme. This, in the phase of decision making and election process, gives a given party a huge advantage over the competition. Public media are one such attractive institution, which political parties would like to control and which ruling parties ‘colonize’. It is a field of constant battle, since Radio and Television Act took effect in 1993. As far as private media, politician influence on their programme line and content is much more limited. They are controlled by their owners who, according to market logic, do not wish to be tied politically, like TV Polsat, Radio ZET or RMF FM. Being clearly for or against a party could alienate viewers or listeners, which could then affect advertising profits. However, it should also be noted that the fate of private broadcasters, in a situation when they have to extend their concession for broadcasting, is dependent on public authorities and their organs. The situation of private broadcasters is like balancing between political elites on the one hand and recipients on the other. When comparing the situation of private broadcasters in Poland with those in Southern Europe, it should be noted that our concession processes are transparent and open. Although, some decisions may have been controversial (i.e. Walesa was outraged when TV Polsat obtained concession in 1993), the processes were carried out legally and without corruption, which cannot be said of those in Greece or Spain where concessions were obtained as a result of strong friendship ties or common interests with the ruling elites.

After 20 years of mass media transformation in Poland, we are dealing with deeply politicized public media, bias and the press being involved in the political process, all barriers blocking Poland’s entrance into the phase of mature media. Tomasz Goban-Klas is of the opinion that the development of our media system is similar to the Italian model¹². Paolo Mancini sees Italy as one of the most backward Western countries in the area of public sphere development. One, predominant reason for this is a high level of political parallelism, lack of

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 110.

¹² T. Goban-Klas, *Politics versus Media in Poland: A Game without the Rules*, [in:] *Post-Communism and the Media...*, p. 40.

professional journalism, historical distortions of relations between party systems and media and, in consequence, dependence of mass media on ruling parties¹³.

Analysis of relations between political parties and public media in Poland allows us to come up with the thesis that interactions between the two are more similar to the model of polarized pluralism (i.e. in Spain, Italy) than to democratic corporatism (i.e. in Germany, Sweden) or liberal one (US, Great Britain). In case of Southern European countries, there are journalist autonomy limitations in both types of broadcasting media, public and private, and in print media as well. In Central Europe, predominantly at risk are public radio and television. Private media, of both domestic and foreign capital, with increasing stabilization on the market, seem to be a lot more resistant to political influences, being similar to the liberal model. Activity of various holdings and media groups such as Agora, Polsat, ITI, Bauer (Broker FM until 2006), or Eurozet indicates that it is these subjects which decide what media content they present, in accordance with their programme line. It does not mean, however, that they are truly objective and impartial. Some private media owners in Poland have specified ideological opinions and political preferences which they do not conceal from public opinion. It is visible in their programme line (i.e. "Gazeta Wyborcza", "Wprost" (until April 2010)) despite the fact that it is not in accordance with market logic. In the private media segment, we do not have, what is characteristic to Southern Europe, integration of political elites and media personnel. This is a positive trend which may, in the future, help overcome politicization processes, limit subjectivity and result in consolidation of ethics in this profession. However, there is also a threat that private media, similarly to those in Italy, will refuse to take part in the public sphere.

Transition to democracy as well as consolidation of democracy are difficult and complex processes. As mentioned above, they take place on two levels – the institutional and social. The first of these, post communist Central European countries, including Poland, carried out rather quickly and successfully, incorporating democratic constitutions and entering into NATO and EU structures. On the second level, this process is unfinished. Obviously, it is much simpler to create institutions, pass laws and sign documents than to change social and political attitudes, and to build a civic society in which the media would play a key role in strengthening a democratic public sphere, in which the media are not biased and can withstand political and economic pressures. More advanced in this area are: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and the Baltic countries, somewhat more

¹³ P. Mancini, *Il sistema fragile. I mass media in Italia tra politica e mercato*, Roma 2000, p. 28.

backward are Romania and Bulgaria. However, all of these countries, according to A. Agh¹⁴, are facing difficulties. The quality of democracy is low, parties are weak and the development of civic societies leaves much to be desired for. Research shows that 20 years after the collapse of communism, public media are still tangled up in political dependencies. Meanwhile, private ones are balancing between public responsibility and their owner interests. In this context, it would be appropriate to agree with Colin Sparks who is of the opinion that media in Poland and other countries in this region are, on the one hand pluralized and set in the market system but, on the other, subordinate to elites and various interest groups rather than the idea of public service¹⁵.

Media and party relations

It should be noted that there are party system differences between Central and Southern European countries which influence the level of political parallelism. For example, in Spain the main opposition parties such as PSOE or the Communist party were established long before the fall of the Fascist regime. They existed throughout the entire dictatorship, either abroad or underground. After Franco's death, their leaders and key activists returned to Spain and continued their activities. It can be said that there existed party system continuity, with these parties being rooted in society. In Central Europe, the process of building political parties and party system began in 1989, after the fall of communism, and was very complicated. Aside from parties which were derived from the old system and were somewhat transformed to fit new reality, created were numerous, often weak, new parties, without much of a member base (so called couch parties), public support, necessary financial means or any parliamentary experience whatsoever. Such institutions were, however, indispensable, to the new system. They allowed ambitious individuals to advance in the world of politics, either via entering parliament or through a career in public administration institutions. Adoption of democratic standards lead to the above mentioned "parliamentisation" of political parties¹⁶, forced politicians to create and register formal party organizations and strive to gain seats in parliament. The process of party consolidation and the elimination of smaller and ineffective parties lasted in Poland for about 15 years. Around 2005, shaped was a configuration of two strongest and most relevant parties, both tied to Solidarity circles, centro-liberal PO and

¹⁴ A. Ágh, *Early Consolidation and Performance Crisis: The Majoritarian-Consensus Democracy Debate in Hungary*, "West European Politics" Vol. 24 (2001), No. 3, p. 89.

¹⁵ C.P. Sparks, *Comparing Transition Poland, Russia, China*, [in:] *Democracy, Technology, and Freedom of Expression. Articles and Documents of the Council of Europe*, Sofia 2006, p. 26.

¹⁶ R. Herbut, *Teoria i praktyka funkcjonowania partii politycznych*, Wrocław 2004, p. 110.

conservative PiS. Additionally, there are two other, smaller parties; left-wing SLD and peasant PSL, transformed parties from communist times. Over the last 20 years all four parties had an opportunity to rule in government and their own Prime Minister, all of which left governing more or less disgracefully, being replaced by their opponents.

What differentiates Poland from Southern European countries which became democratic 20 years earlier, is a frequent change of governing party rule, which took place with every new parliamentary elections. In Spain and Greece, after the dictatorships were overturned, there has been little change in political party balance, with two main, opposing parties – a socio-democratic one and a conservative one. In Spain, PSOE was in government for 14 years (1982–1996), while PP – for 8 years (1996–2004), then PSOE again, since 2008. In Greece, there is a similar situation.

As far as Southern European countries, it was their leaders who determined their positions. In Spain there were leaders with very strong positions in party structures: in PSOE – Felipe González, and in PP – José María Aznar. In Greece, family clans are at the head of different parties: in PASOK – Andreas (1974–1996), then his grandson Georgios Andreas Papandreu, and in ND – its founder Konstandinos Karamanlis (1974–1997), and then his nephew Kostas Karamanlis. Strong leadership and long years in power are factors conducive to nepotism, corruption and clientelism. The longer one party in power, the more unpunished it feels. It was particularly in those two countries where authority pathology has reached levels unprecedented before. Meanwhile, in Poland between 1989 and 2009 there were 12 different governments, with a average time in office for Prime Minister at 15.7 months. Only one party rule (AWS) and one PM (Jerzy Buzek) were in government for the entire four year term in office. Since 2005, left wing presence is minute in Parliament, even though there is a large number of left-wing voters.

Over the last 20 years, all presidents, Prime Ministers and ruling parties have attempted to control the media. While it is relatively easy when it comes to public media, it is not so obvious regarding private ones. One factor which limited the development of power pathology among the parties was their short terms in office. In Poland, this trend was limited by frequent alternation of ruling elites on both national and regional levels. It was not the case as much on the local level where in small communities family and friendship ties as well as common interests play more of a role. Let us analyse, then, the relations between political parties and the media. Let's ponder where they fit in political strategy. This is not an easy task since there is dynamic change within the party system, with frequent personnel changes and politicians also switching their affiliations. As a result, the focus of research was on the time

period after 2000 when party system became consolidated to four main parties – PiS, PO, SLD and PSL.

The right wing of the political scene is all about **PiS**. In its relations with media, more so than in any other party, predominant is the uncompromising and overbearing personality of Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the party leader, who decided which media are “good” and which are “evil”. No party since 1989 had such distinctive relations with the media, neither ruling nor opposition. After PiS lost the parliamentary elections in 2007, Jaroslaw Kaczyński said that the reason for its loss was the fact that they were not able to break the “old media arrangement” which, together with special services, was very critical of his party. According to Jaroslaw Kaczyński, the majority of private media and the press were part of the “arrangement”. In fact, it is the only party which, over the last 20 years, has entered into such severe and destructive conflict with the media.

Friendly to PiS media are those connected to f. Rydzyk – Radio Maryja, TV Trwam and “Nasz Dziennik”, as well as public television between January 2006 and spring 2009, (when there were problems with dismissal of TVP president A. Urbanski), and “Rzeczpospolita” after G. Gauden left in August 2006. Hostile media, according to PiS, are: the entire TVN group and “Gazeta Wyborcza”. With other private media, such as Polsat, Radio RMF FM and Radio Zet, PiS does not have such tense relations but they are rather disapproving of the Kaczynski party.

After gaining power in autumn 2005, PiS started behaving just like all previous ruling parties, by colonizing public institutions. It was not a coincidence that one of the first acts which Sejm approved and president signed was the media act. This way, PiS ensured itself control over the institution regulating the broadcasting media market, the National Broadcasting Council (Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji – KRRiT), as well as public radio and television, by installing their people as presidents of KRRiT and TVP such as B. Wildstein and later A. Urbanski. PiS used legislative means to take control over public media. The daily “Rzeczpospolita” found itself in an analogous to TVP and PR situation. In September 2006, Kaczynski’s government used changes taking place at the Presspublika company, in which the State Treasury has 49% ownership, to install as chief editor and president of the Supervisory Board Pawel Lisicki, a pro-PiS journalist. Content analysis, carried out by Sylwia Swiderska, shows that the paper’s programme line was modified then and the daily became more supportive of PiS than other parties¹⁷. Public media as well as

¹⁷ P. Świderska, *Stronniczość dzienników „Rzeczpospolita” i „Gazeta Wyborcza” w kampanii parlamentarnej 2007 roku. Analiza zawartości*, Wrocław 2009, p. 87 (Master’s thesis, not published).

“Rzeczpospolita” became tools in the hands of PiS, which cannot be said of Rydzyk’s media. As governing party, supervising State Treasury companies, Kaczynski used available legal means to ensure himself control of the above.

PiS relations with Rydzyk are more complex even though PiS values and those of Radio Maryja, TV Trwam and “Nasz Dziennik” are similar in terms of tradition and Catholic-nationalist ideals, stances on abortion, the death penalty and sexual minorities. They have comparable attitudes to our neighbouring countries and criticize the model of a liberal state. On the other hand, contrary to media subordinate to PiS, these are Rydzyk’s media, autonomous of party influences. It is PiS politicians who care more about good relations with Rydzyk than vice versa. This is predominantly because they care about Radio Maryja listeners who are famous for being a conservative, loyal and well disciplined electorate. This electorate is very valuable to PiS, used as an element of their political strategy. One example to show how deeply PiS cares about their common interests was Radio Maryja and TV Trwam exclusive right to transmit reports on talks between PiS, LPR and Samoobrona, the signing of the Stabilization Pact and the press conference. Representatives of other media were not allowed into the conference room. They were invited later on but as a sign of protest, with the exception of TVP, they boycotted the invitation. This is an imperative event in an analysis of media and politics in Poland since it was the first time, since 1989, that the governing authorities divided media into “good” and “bad” and blocked equal access to information, at the same time breaking a fundamental rule of democracy.

Since the fall of communism, PiS is the only party which has entered into such acute and spectacular conflict with media. Many politicians and various parties have had to deal with unfriendly or even hostile media environment but not one of them decided to go into such open conflict. Neither one of the Kaczynski brothers have media personalities and make good impressions in front of the camera. They do not do very well in contacts with media or journalists who ask inconvenient questions on difficult issues. They do not feel comfortable in relations with media, are nervous, tend to use emotional language and even verbal aggression. Relations with private TV and radio stations are more difficult since, by nature, they are more independent and harder to control, and the Kaczynskis have never done too well in this area. After the lost elections in 2007, their relations with TVN have deteriorated completely. In mid 2008, PiS decided that the party will not take part in any programmes by TVN or TVN24¹⁸. J. Kaczynski justified the decision by stating that these stations lack objectivity and are

¹⁸ www.wirtualnemedial.pl/article/2395346_Kaczynski_w_TVN_PiS_to_rzynstokowe_gnidny.html [accessed: 29.07.2008].

generally after PiS and its politicians. The conflict calmed down in mid 2009, PiS politicians renewed contacts with the TVN but after some time there was another wave of hostility. This time, the reason was hidden camera materials, broadcasted in the *Teraz my* programme, from the closed party Congress meeting. The party spokesperson reported the incident to the Media Ethics Council. The question on TVN journalist ethics still remains just as the reason as to why the party Congress was closed to media.

Politicians in democratic countries are used to the fact that media await for them to make errors, faux pas, emotional outbursts and slips of the tongue, since even though they may be minute, they could be politically costly¹⁹. They can influence the politician's image, both on the domestic and international scale. The Kaczynski brothers are a perfect example, with many of their peculiarities reported by the media such as Jaroslaw not having his own bank account, also discussed by American television or a provocative article by the German "Die Tageszeitung" (TAZ) in June 2006²⁰. Later on, the brothers' PR specialists and consultants had to work hard on trying to change the negative image of the politicians, especially among younger and better educated voters, by announcing that Jaroslaw has opened a bank account, uses the Internet to buy books and CDs and is considering getting a mobile phone.

These incidents and nervous reactions to media reports show that PiS leaders do not understand well the mechanisms of political communication and the role of media in democratic societies. In PiS relations with media created were two contrasting models, discussed by Blumler and Gurevitch²¹. On the one hand, there is the adversary model, with PiS in conflict with private media which are more independent and critical. On the other, there is the exchange model, with politicized public media, based on a transaction arrangement with father Rydzyk's media.

Liberal **PO** is in the centre of the political scene. Similarly to PiS, it was established in 2001, before parliamentary elections, by representatives of liberal AWS and members of UW. It can be said that this party has also got post-Solidarity roots. According to typology by Katarzyna Sobolewska-Myślik, this party, just like PiS, is a new party, created by activists from anti-communist opposition circles and those engaged in democratic reforms²². It was established by three ambitious politicians Andrzej Olechowski, Maciej Płażyński and Donald

¹⁹ J. Thompson, *Political Scandal. Power and Visibility in the Media Age*, Cambridge 2000, p. 141–149.

²⁰ Reactions of Polish right wing politicians resulted in strained Polish-German relations. The issue was taken to court, then dismissed due to not enough evidence against the journalists.

²¹ J. Blumler, M. Gurevitch, *Crisis of Public Communication*, London 1995, p. 27–31.

²² K. Sobolewska-Myślik, *Partie i systemy partyjne na świecie*, Warszawa 2004, p. 51.

Tusk. The third, seemingly least experienced, within a short time advanced to become the leader of the party in 2003, was a presidential candidate in 2005 and is the Prime Minister since 2007, with relatively high opinion poll ratings. PO politicians, being the governing party are, by nature, more exposed by media. However, their contacts with media are much different than those of PiS. Analysis of Tusk and his associates relations with media shows that they do not have a specific media strategy but are rather a result of daily practices. The difference lies in PO members' personalities and political temperament. These politicians are not afraid of journalists, they like to meet with them, do interviews and they do not accuse media of ulterior motives or conspiracy. On the contrary, they even play football with them. The media like that and it results in the party's better image, especially in situations in which it is in conflict with PiS. It should be noted that during the election campaigns in 2005 and 2007 a new arrangement was created, in which PiS divided media into "good" and "evil". Those media considered by PiS "hostile", like TVN, private radio stations, "Gazeta Wyborcza" and some weeklies of opinion became more pro-PO, little by little emphasizing their support. Meanwhile, PO did not have support of Catholic and conservative media and public broadcasting which were controlled by PiS. Noted at this point should be the relationship between PO and TVP and PR. PO is the only governing party, since 1989, which has not been able to colonize these public institutions. The passed by PiS Radio and Television Act from 2005 does not allow PO to make personnel changes in media companies. Attempts to change legislation by PO in 2007 were not successful.

With the exception of media supporting PiS (Rydyk, public media, "Rzeczpospolita"), PO can count on moderate media friendliness, conditional liking or neutrality. The media may be critical of the party and its leaders but it is generally balanced criticism and definitely not as sharp and relentless as in the case of PiS

The left side of the political scene is occupied by **SLD**, registered in 1999, a transformed post-communist SdRP party. In the 1990s, SLD could not count on media support. It was considered by all a new post-communist party and, therefore, treated with much reserve or even attacked by majority of media, including all national television and radio stations, both public and private. It could only count on the support of some left-wing press such as "Trybuna", "Przegląd" or "Nie", and, at times, "Polityka". What is worth noting, despite the negative media, Aleksander Kwasniewski won the presidential elections. His presidency, with high public opinion poll ratings, as well as Kwasniewski's communication skills (developed as a journalist), had a positive influence on media attitudes toward the president and SLD. Interesting, in this case is "Gazeta Wyborcza"'s change in

programme line which evolved from a definitely hostile attitude toward SLD to a medium rather supporting the president and SLD. During his first term in office, there were personnel changes in KRRiT and public media which allowed the left to increase their influence over TVP and PR. Presidential elections in 2000 and parliamentary elections in 2001 took place in conditions much more friendly to SLD. As the governing party between 2001–2005, by carrying out the usual personnel policy, it ruled KRRiT and controlled the public media. Its control over appointments continued the policies of its predecessors, since 1989, by maintaining politicized public media. After it lost public trust and the elections in 2005, a new division of media politicization took place. This party has ceased to be a major player on the political scene, it lost its coalition abilities and, at the same time, became less attractive to media. Content analysis of media in Poland shows that issues related to this party went down on the media agenda. Less attention was focused on SLD and attitudes toward it became more negative. Media which were definitely hostile to this party, focusing on its negative attributes such as scandals, corruption, internal conflict, etc, were: “Dziennik Polska Europa Świat”, “Wprost”²³, Radio Maryja, TV Trwam, as well as conservative Catholic and nationalist press. Radio RMF FM was also famous for its criticism of SLD governing²⁴. Stations such as Radio Zet, TVN and Polsat were somewhat more gentle in their critique. Content analysis carried out by Swiderska during the parliamentary elections in 2007 shows that in contrast to “Rzeczpospolita”, “Gazeta Wyborcza” refrained from criticizing SLD and its leaders²⁵. Generally, SLD does not enjoy great support from Polish media, which may seem surprising since the majority of journalists are members of RP Journalist Association which is definitely left-wing.

PSL, established in 1990, is a party with roots dating back to 19th century²⁶ which has managed to survive the communist period. On the one hand, similarly to SLD, it is characterized by a high level of institutionalization, while on the other it has frequent difficulties in meeting the electoral threshold. Despite little support, it has maintained to stay alive on the political arena for the last 20 years. PSL has the best coalition abilities. It has twice been in coalition with SLD (1993–1997, 2001–2003) and since 2007 – with PO. PSL politicians have been speakers and vice-speakers in Sejm and Senate. Since 2003, after the break of the coalition with SLD, the party has gradually shifted itself toward the right wing,

²³ M. Dutkiewicz, *Relacjonowanie kampanii wyborczych 2005 r. przez polską prasę opiniotwórczą*, Wrocław 2007 (Master’s thesis, not published).

²⁴ A. Kostro, *Pozycja holdingu Broker FM i Radia RMF FM na polskim rynku medialnym*, Wrocław 2006 (Master’s thesis, not published).

²⁵ P. Świdorska, *Stronniczość dzienników...*, p. 77–80.

²⁶ K. Sobolewska-Myślik, *Partie i systemy...*, p. 51.

emphasizing its conservative values, attachment to religion and agriculture, stances against abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty or the legalization of homosexual marriages, placing itself closer to PiS. In communist times, the party had its own newspapers, which it lost after RSW was liquidated. The party's secondary position within the political system results in media not particularly interested in it, as proved by the statistical analysis. In 2005, only 6.7% of information on the election campaign reported on by news services *Fakty TVN*, *Wiadomości TVP1* and *Wydarzenia Polsat* regarded PSL²⁷. During parliamentary elections in 2007, "Gazeta Wyborcza" and "Rzeczpospolita" included hardly any information about this party²⁸. PSL, out of all the four major parties, is reported on in the least emotional manner, which does not mean that it is mostly positive information. Most frequently, it is mentioned in connection with accusations of corruption, nepotism, old-boyism and business activities of its members, while after 2007 – regarding its coalition dealings. Interesting in this context is the attitude of Rydzyk's media toward this party. Even though TV Trwam, during the 2007 campaign, devoted this party least attention (PSL and Samoobrona – 9% while PiS – 36%), it was presented in neutral (70%) or positive (30%) light²⁹. This is a result of PSL's strategy to avoid conflict with other parties, especially PiS.

Having low public support ratings and being somewhat on the side of main stage of the political scene, PSL is not that attractive to media which are always looking for sensational and out of the ordinary information. Moreover, it may also be a result of its leadership, not particularly appealing to media. Waldemar Pawlak is not a great speaker and he does not do all that well in front of the cameras. Additionally, he is known for expressing his dislike of media (his famous shoo! to persistent journalists). Out of the four major parties, in this case we cannot speak of a division into "good" and "evil" media. It is only Radio Maryja and TV Trwam which are reasonably approving. In other cases, there is no hostility or sympathy, perhaps only indifference, which does not mean that there is lack of criticism.

Conclusions

Twenty years is not a long enough time to state whether any regularities or permanent system characteristics have developed. Party systems in mature democracies took hundreds of years to shape. The same is true regarding constitutive media systems, such as in Great Britain or in other Western European countries, with frameworks dating back to 19th century. It is a

²⁷ B. Łódzki, *Formowanie agendy mediów podczas kampanii wyborczych w 2005 r. Analiza zawartości głównych telewizyjnych audycji informacyjnych*, Wrocław 2008, p. 149 (PhD thesis, not published).

²⁸ P. Świdarska, *Stronniczość dzienników...*, p. 70–80.

²⁹ P. Dudek, *Analiza zawartości TV Trwam*, Wrocław 2009 [results not published].

known fact that political parallelism is the effect of mutual interactions between the two systems. Of course, the system is changing but it is not a radical change which can take place over several years. On the other hand, twenty years is a long enough time to amass empirical material in order to delineate certain tendencies and directions of change. Polish political parties have a short history, with too little time to develop tight relations and connections based on friendship or other ties between politicians and media owners, such as is the case regarding some British, Spanish or Greek dailies, not to mention the case of Italy and Berlusconi's Mediaset. Polish media are either indecisive regarding their sympathies (commercial ones), incapacitated (public) or extremely ideological (Rydyk's). They conditionally and for opportunistic reasons provide support to parties which may be in existence shorter than media on the market. In countries where, according to Hallin and Mancini's model, present is polarized pluralism, the consolidation of party system and parties are rooted in society on a higher level. Also, the mass media do not change their political preferences between one election and the next, such as "Gazeta Wyborcza", "Wprost" or public media (depending on who controls them at the time). In Poland, what we are dealing with is wavering electorate, unstable political behaviour and frequent changes in election decisions but also with similar behaviour of media toward the politicians