

Political strategies and tactics of opposition movements in a process of the system change in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the eighties of the twentieth century

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Abstract

The fall of communists regimes in East and Central European countries was one of the most serious social, political and economical processes in the second half of twentieth century. Opposition social movements played a very important role in this process. They were established in the seventies as open-ended groups of regime critics demanding respect for core human and civil rights. These dispersed circles of dissidents began gradually to integrate and took advantage problems of ruling communists parties (especially growing economic troubles) to make demands for economical and political reforms. At the end of the eighties communist parties were seriously weakened and they were unable to govern effectively. They were also riven by internal conflicts. Communist parties were losing public support to opposition movement which was well organized as (often legal) parties, associations or committees and made claims to take part in competition for power.

This dissertation contains comparative analysis of political strategies and tactics of opposition movements in three European communist states: Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Period of this analysis encompasses the eighties of twentieth century, although this is necessary to examine the origins of civil dissent that derives from contention to nondemocratic order forced after the second WW. As political context of social movements actions changed, the goals, strategies, programs and forms of their activities changed. The author formulated hypothesis that there is dependence between these phenomena. The strategy of social movement arises and changes based on response to changing characteristics of a political context. In that way, political strategies of opposition movements in the eighties were shaped by features of a political context. If all or some these features were changing, strategies of social movements were changing as well.

The process of democratization of European communist countries is well described quite well in scientific literature published in Poland, however there is very few works concerned building strategies by the opposition movements. It is clear that the opposition movement in

communist Poland became an object of many studies. Some of them made attempts to analyse strategic concepts which came from the leaders of the opposition movement essentially from Presidency of Solidarity. These works are written by such authors as A. Friszke, K. Łabędź i Ł. Kamiński. There are few books about opposition movements in Czechoslovakia and Hungary in Polish language. V. Havel in his political essays explicated the strategy of Czechoslovak opposition and its philosophical foundation. These are published in Poland as a selection of political papers. This problem also appears on a margin of a discussion about communist's states changes in the book by A. Burakowski, A. Gubrynowicz and P. Ukielski. The Hungarian democratization is well described by B. Góralczyk, while an issue of strategy of the Hungarian opposition can be only found in translated articles written by J. Kis and A. Bozóki.

The basic method used in this dissertation is a comparative analysis. Comparing political phenomena has been a common approach to learn and explain politics since political science was established up to present day. The issue of this work has imposed the acceptance of historic view. It entails using research methods and techniques typical for this discipline. Most importantly, there are such actions as setting, acquiring, selecting and using source materials. The approach of political opportunity structures is a theoretical tool used in this dissertation. This approach has been founded and successfully developed in American and West European political science since the eighties.

Theory and methods are the subject of the first three chapters. First chapter deals with the problem of comparative research and importance of the comparative politics as one of the main subdisciplines of political sciences. The content of the second chapter is a social movement and its strategy, there are solutions of essential definitional issues and discussion on the most important approaches in social movements studies. Third chapter focuses on the concept of political opportunity structures. It also centres upon a problem of contextual understanding of political phenomena. Chapters fourth, fifth and sixth deals with analysis of actions and strategies of opposition movements in particular countries: Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Each of these three chapters is structured according to the following schedule: political system analysis, description of social movement actions and analysis of strategy changes of this movement. Each chapter ends in conclusions, which shows relation between changes in political context and changes in movement's strategy. Chapter seven includes summary and general conclusions. The result of this comparative analysis is a confirmation of placed hypothesis: there is an explicit relation between changes in features of a political context and changes in movement's strategy. There is also an affirmation of approach political opportunity structures, which can be still (despite some imperfections) a useful theoretical tool,.

The main difficulty when writing this dissertation was an access to the foreign-language literature. There are many research papers in English but it's not easy to find them in libraries in Poland. Hence, it was necessary to look for books in second-hand bookstores

abroad. The same obstacles appeared when writing the chapter about Czechoslovakia. Because there are very few books published in limited edition. That is why some of these books are available only in Czech and Slovak academic libraries. All these issues prolonged completing this dissertation.

Key words: comparative politics, social movement, communist regime, political strategies and tactics , political opportunity structures