

BUILDING NEW PARTY SYSTEMS AFTER THE DICTATORSHIP. THE EAST EUROPEAN CASES IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE ¹.

Maurizio Cotta (University of Siena- Italy)

Transitions to democracy and the rebirth of parties.

When the crisis of a non democratic regime sets on and the transition to democracy starts unravelling two main questions are at stake. The first is whether democracy will succeed, i.e. whether the instauration of democratic institutions is followed by consolidation of the new regime ². The second is what type of democracy will be adopted and which will be the peculiar features of the new political system. This means on one side what type of institutional framework (parliamentary versus presidential, majoritarian versus consensus, etc.) (Lijphart 1984) will prevail, on the other side what configuration of political actors will emerge during the transition and become relatively crystallized in the course of the first years. A major aspect is obviously which parties and what kind of party system will develop.

The two questions are strictly linked in the real process of democratic transitions. Suggestions that different institutional arrangements (for instance a parliamentary constitution versus a presidential one) or different configurations of the party system can play a crucial role in determining the success of the democratic transition have been at the center of older and more recent discussions (Linz 1978; Lijphart, Linz, Valenzuela and Godoy 1990; Morlino 1986b; Pridham 1990). At the same time it is pretty clear that the transition process and the way it develops are bound to affect the specific institutional choices and the molding of the new political actors.

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². The distinction between instauration and consolidation is common in the discussion about transitions (see Morlino 1986a and 1986b for a thorough analysis of these concepts).

The two questions which are analytically distinguishable can be used as the starting point for two different research perspectives. In the following pages I will concentrate on certain aspects of the perspective suggested by the second question (what parties and party systems emerge out of the democratic transition) and leave aside the other one ³.

There is no need to spend many words to justify the relevance for the quality of the new democracy of which parties and what kind of party system will emerge out of the transition. There are good reasons to pay attention to this aspect since pluralistic democracy is, to our best knowledge, strictly identified with the existence of a fairly well structured party system (Sartori 1987 pp. 148 ff.), and with the ability of the latter to assert its role vis à vis other potential political actors (as the military, interest groups, etc.) and to perform effectively the crucial democratic functions. More specifically the party system and its stabilization seem to play an important role in the consolidation of a new democracy (Morlino 1986b; Pridham 1990). Finally, the shape and composition of the party system must be considered a significant factor affecting the policies of governments (Wilensky 1981; Castles 1982; von Beyme 1984). Indeed even a cursory survey of western European countries where transitions to democracy have taken place in the past (Austria, France, Germany and Italy after the second world war; Greece, Portugal and Spain in the seventies) shows rather clearly that the party variable (and this means both the characteristics of party units and the nature of the party system) has made for significant differences in all the fields mentioned above.

The demise of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the transitions to pluralist democracy now under way all at the same time in about twenty countries (or successor countries where larger units have broken apart) offers to the political scientist a fascinating addition of empirical cases for exploring the processes of building of competitive party systems. Comparatists, normally faced with the well known problem of having too few cases and too many variables (Lijphart 1971), now have to do with a bounty of cases. The advantages of the increase in the number of empirical cases available risk however to be offset by an even greater increase of potentially relevant variables if the cases are too heterogeneous. To reduce the heterogeneity of cases and to make comparisons between the new cases and the older and better known cases of western Europe

³. The other perspective is dealt in other chapters of this book.

more fruitful it is probably wise to concentrate on a subgroup of postcommunist transitions, those that are taking place in countries that have had some previous democratic or proto-democratic experiences. It is useful to remember that Western European transitions have been not just «democratizations» but «re-democratizations». This is the case also for some of the post-communist cases but not for all (the Soviet Union and most of its successor states do not share this character ⁴). This aspect is particularly relevant for the discussion about the birth of parties. In redemocratization cases parties had existed during the first democracy (or proto-democracy) before being outlawed by the non democratic regime. This raises immediately the problem of the legacies of the past and how meaningful they are.

I will concentrate here my attention on the role that continuity and discontinuity with the past play in the making of the party systems of new democracies. And I will try to bring into light similarities and differences existing between the new Eastern European cases and the older Western European ones. A note of caution is in any case required. The definition and crystallization of a new party system always requires a certain number of years ⁵. In Western European cases a sufficiently long period of time has elapsed after the transition; we are able therefore to evaluate the end results of the process. In Eastern Europe the first steps have taken place, but the process is far from concluded and we can still expect significant changes to happen in the next years. We have therefore to find a middle way between explanation of what already exists and conjectures about the future.

Birth and development of party systems: a Rokkanian perspective.

The general theme of the formation and transformation of party systems has received a good deal of attention in the past and again in more recent years. Before discussing the special problems of our cases it is worthwhile to recall the central points of that debate. In this field the name of

⁴ Baltic states are a case apart since they have had between the wars a period of democratic life (although in the end failed)(von Rauch 1970; Linz 1978, p.70).

⁵ The length may vary from country to country: for example in Italy the process starts in 1943 and is concluded with 1953; in Germany it develops between 1949 and 1953; in Spain between 1976 and 1982. Austria is perhaps the only exception: the new party system becomes crystallized almost immediately.

Stein Rokkan with his ambitious effort to elaborate a theoretical scheme for explaining the genesis of parties and the long term development of party systems occupies a particularly important place. His model is particularly interesting both on methodological grounds for the fruitful blending of the analytical instruments of the social sciences with those of the historical disciplines, and on substantial grounds for the relations it establishes between the development of party systems, societal transformations and democratization processes (Daalder 1980, Flora 1980). Although the validity of part of his views — and in particular of the so called «freezing proposition» (Lipset and Rokkan 1968) — has been questioned in recent years no other theoretical model of comparable breadth has been put forward.

Rokkan's model, to put it briefly, has two main faces. The first is the attempt to explain the creation of parties as the result of cleavage lines that were generated under the effects of the great «revolutions» taking place during the processes of state and nation building. The breeding ground for European parties are the great conflicts (and the political alignments and alliances that go with them) between center and peripheries, State and Church, primary and secondary economy, workers and capitalists, that were produced by these revolutions (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan 1970). It must be said that Rokkan does not attempt to connect these cleavages to each specific party but rather to categories of parties (conservative, liberal, agrarian, Christian, etc...). That means also that the correspondence between cleavage lines and specific parties can be stronger or weaker. For instance more than one socialist party could represent the workers side of the class cleavage. This obviously leaves an open space for adding other explanatory variables in order to make sense of the specific configuration of a party system and can be seen as a relaxation of the determinism of the theory. How and with what results different layers of conflict are superimposed to each other plays here an important explanatory role . The emergence of a new cleavage line with its specific contrapositions affects previous alignments determining new alliances and may produce a restructuring of the previous party system (Lipset & Rokkan 1967, pp. 36 ff.). How these alliances are formed, which of the old parties are able to survive and which not, are obviously crucial questions for understanding the final shape of a party system.

The second point concerns the development over time of parties and party systems. Rokkan starts here from an empirical finding — the fact that in Europe political alignments and party systems of the sixties reflect

to a great extent those of the twenties (Lipset & Rokkan 50-51). The interpretation he suggests is that, once the full extension of the suffrage has been attained leaving no more space to significant extensions of the «support market», already existing parties find themselves in a particularly strong position to reject attempts by new parties to enter in the political arena (p. 51). Political alignments tend therefore to remain frozen in spite of all the changes that may affect society.

At the center of Rokkan's analysis (both when the discussion focuses on the creation of parties and when it deals with their ability to last in the long run) are the processes of political mobilization. The major difference between the creative phase of parties and the phase of continuity has to do with the different conditions under which political mobilization operates before and after the threshold of mass politics. The first phase is characterized by an expanding support market since the full extension of the suffrage has not yet been reached: the political orientations of the new section of the citizenship that are admitted (or win entrance) in the political system are determined by the great conflicts that split society during that period. The mobilizing potential of such conflicts favors the establishment of strong political affiliations. In turn the strong mass organizations of parties that develop during that period will reinforce the stability of these political loyalties. After the stage of mass politics has been reached the mobilization of voters is fundamentally under the control of existing parties. As a consequence little space is left for innovations in the party system. Or, to be more accurate, change will be channelled essentially through the established parties rather than via the creation of new ones.

Rokkan's theses and in particular the freezing proposition have come under discussion during the last decade and it has become fashionable to speak of the «unfreezing» of European party systems (Pedersen 1979 and 1983; Maguire 1983; Dalton, Flanagan and Beck 1984; Inglehart 1984; Shamir 1984 etc.). The points at stake in this discussion are more than one. Some are just factual points. Was Rokkan correct when he found continuity for the period 1920-1965 ? and then, if Rokkan was correct for 1920-1965, have things changed after that and stability has given way to instability in party alignments ? But others are of a more theoretical nature; if the new facts are true does that imply that Rokkan's theory was wrong or, at least, that its validity is limited to a special historical period ? And then, are the explanatory variables that have to be introduced to explain change contradictory or compatible with Rokkan's perspective? It is not the place

here to discuss in a detailed way the somewhat contradictory results of this discussion. On the factual side evidence of a somewhat increased rate of change can indeed be found starting with the seventies for certain European countries . But in a more long term perspective the view that volatility and discontinuity have prevailed is unwarranted as was thoroughly proven by Bartolini and Mair (1991). For the more recent trends of change two are the main explanations proposed : 1. fundamental changes in the value systems of voters (from materialist to post-materialist values) (Inglehart 1984); 2. a decline of party as such, as a consequence of the emerging of new instruments of political communication and mobilization (television being the first and foremost) (Dalton, Flanagan and Beck 1984, p . 460). Both explanations are based upon factors that allegedly derive from transnational phenomena and are to some extent related to a globally determined developmental chronology rather than to internal national evolutions. For these reasons it is particularly interesting to pay some attention to these points in the analysis of the new democratizations in Eastern Europe that take place exactly during the era of post-materialism and television.

Tab. 1. *Continuous and discontinuous democratic developments in European countries during the twentieth century.*

| CONTINUOUS CASES | DISCONTINUOUS CASES |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| BELGIUM | AUSTRIA (1933-45) |
| DENMARK | BULGARIA (1923-31;1935-44; 1947-91) |
| FINLAND | CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1939-45; 1948-90) |
| ICELAND | FRANCE (1940-45) |
| IRELAND | W. GERMANY (1933-45) |
| LUXEMBURG | E. GERMANY (1933-45; 1946-90) |
| NETHERLANDS | GREECE (1936-46; 1967-74) |
| NORWAY | HUNGARY (1920-45; 47-89) |
| SWEDEN | ITALY (1924-43) |
| SWITZERLAND | POLAND (1926-45; 1947-89) |
| UNITED KINGDOM | PORTUGAL (1926-74) |
| | ROMANIA (1938-45; 46-90) |
| | SPAIN (1923-30; 1936-76) |
| | YUGOSLAVIA (1929-45; 1945-90) |

Within brackets are the non democratic periods. Not always the beginning and the end of the non democratic period can be established exactly because of transitional phases and periods of uncertainty.

From our point of view it is worth mentioning the fact that the whole discussion about change and continuity has had as its central focus European countries with an uninterrupted democratic history. For the other countries the analysis has been generally confined to periods of democratic continuity. Lipset and Rokkan mention indeed some of the «discontinuous» cases, such as France, Germany and Italy, calling to the attention the «striking.. continuities in the alternatives..[as well] as the disruptions in their organizational expressions» (Lipset and Rokkan 1968, pp. 52-53). But they do not discuss more specifically the problems of these countries. Twenty years later however we must give due consideration to this category of countries which has greatly expanded. Indeed more than half of the European political units (not to mention countries of other geographical areas) have experienced during this century one or more democratic breakdowns, and have finally reverted to democratic institutions only after an authoritarian or totalitarian phase of variable length which has implied the suppression of parties (to the exception of the ruling one) (see Table 1).

Table 1 about here

To what extent the general discussion about continuity and change of political alignments and party systems can be applied to the more complicated developmental patterns of these countries ? It is easy to see that countries that have experienced a regime discontinuity raise some very specific problems. In the countries that have avoided a democratic breakdown there is a fairly clear distinction between two historical phases: one that sees the successive creations of new parties and the other that is dominated by continuity and limited adaptation over time of the party system. The specific problems of the two different historical periods may be treated more or less separately. In the other group of countries the two problems are more strictly interconnected. In these countries, the problem of the birth of parties (which specific parties are created and succeed; what global configuration the party system takes, etc.) opens up when transition to democracy begins after the crisis of the non democratic regime. But the problem of the birth of new parties is coupled with the problem of continuity with the previous democratic experience of the country and with the

parties existing at that time. The point is that these transitions to democracy are not just democratizations but re-democratizations. The parties born with the transition to democracy are really new, or are they, at least to some degree a continuation of old democratic parties ? What is the space taken in the new party system by the old parties (or their successor organizations) and what is left to really new parties ? These questions require an answer. To explain the new parties and the new party system we have thus to explain also the weight of continuity (or discontinuity) with the past. With some amount of paradox it could be said that while in «continuous» countries (the problem of) the birth of parties antedates (the problem of) continuity, in «discontinuous» countries the opposite is true : the (problem of the) birth of parties (during redemocratization) comes after (the problem of) continuity.

Discontinuous countries require also a more specific attention to a problem that is latent in the discussion about party system continuity. Continuity (and vice versa discontinuity) refers to basic political alternatives — a working class party versus a bourgeois party, etc. — or rather to specific organizational expressions of these alternatives — i.e. a well identified Socialist party versus a similarly defined Conservative or Liberal party ? The point is much more relevant in the countries we are discussing because organizational expressions have been obviously disrupted by the non democratic period.

In spite of all these differences I think the rokkian model offers important suggestions from which to start our efforts to understand the rebirth of pluralist party systems after transitions to democracy. A large part of my analysis will follow broadly this perspective.

The rokkian approach to the study of party systems whatever its importance does not exhaust however all the questions that are relevant in our cases. Some attention should be paid to other approaches centered on the competitive structure of party systems or on the level of «partyiness» of political life. The rokkian approach to the analysis of party systems concentrates its attention on what we might call the overall «configuration» of the party system. What are the relevant parties and how their identities are defined; how they are related with the great societal cleavages and finally how they combine together; these are the main questions raised in this approach. This approach is particularly suited for understanding what are the specific components that make a specific party system and how they were generated. A good example of the second type of approaches is the sarto-

rian typological analysis of party systems (Sartori 1976). Here the attention is centered more than on the specific identities of the parties that compose a party system on the characteristics of the «political space» defined by these components: whether it is a polarized or a moderate space, what are the poles around which parties are located, what coalitional and oppositional relations can be established between parties, what are the patterns of competition, etc. One could say that while the rokkian approach is oriented more toward the input side of politics (how parties relate with society); the sartorian approach pays more attention (although not exclusively) to the output side (how the structure of a party system affects the crucial functions performed by parties like government building, policy making etc.). The third type of approach directs the attention to evaluating the extent to which parties penetrate and dominate the political processes (both at the mass and at the institutional and elite levels). Some of the studies on «party government» (Castles and Wildenmann 1986; Katz 1987) would fall into this category.

These approaches, centered on the competitive structure of party systems and on the level of partyness, offer as well some interesting points of views for the analysis of our cases. The problem of continuity or discontinuity with the past can be seen also from these points of view. My proposal is therefore to start first with a rokkian approach and then to complement it with some considerations derived from the other approaches.

A two steps explanatory model.

In order to understand the specific problem of discontinuous countries — i.e. how the legacy of the past affects the birth of the new democratic party system — I suggest to adopt an explanatory model based on two steps. The first step deals with the conditions affecting the probabilities of survival of the past. Depending on a number of factors that will be discussed in the next pages we may expect greater or lesser amounts of persistence of the old parties. This is bound to leave a smaller or greater amount of political space for new parties. At this point — and this is the second step of the explanatory model — we have to explain the new additions that are introduced over that larger or smaller preexisting basis of continuity. Depending on the nature of the first stage the second may be rather tightly «confined» (within the boundaries of a basic continuity with the past) or

on the contrary rather open (because little of the past survives to condition the new choices). I will accordingly articulate my discussion in two parts. The first directed to explain the weight of the legacies of the first democratic experience; the second to explain the emergence of the new in the transition process.

Although this sequence (from past to present) may seem obvious one should not completely discard the possibility of a «backward» effect: if the creation of new parties proves for reasons of its own difficult and new parties are therefore weak, the influence of the past might be enhanced and, *faute de mieux*, the reemergence of the old parties favored. «Forward» and «backward» perspectives should probably complement each other.

With regards to the cases considered (although not systematically analyzed) in the following pages it must be said that comparing the group of Central and East European countries that are in the process of transition to democracy together with Western European countries that have undergone the same process in the past raises a few problems. We must be obviously aware of the peculiarities of the two groups of countries. Post communist countries of Eastern Europe have some common background properties (more or less the same type of non democratic experience; the statization of economy; an unparalleled history of subjugation of civil society to political power, etc.) that are not shared by the other countries. It would be wrong however to emphasize only the similarities among these countries; we should not forget that their political experiences before communism had been rather diversified (Rothschild 1974; Seton-Watson 1986) and that in spite of the transnational homogeneity of the communist model certain important aspects of that regime, as the degree of its institutionalization, legitimacy, control over society, etc., were affected by specific national situations.

Western European cases are an even more diversified group. Among a number of potentially significant dimensions of variation we should remember at least the timing of redemocratization and, strictly linked to it, the political context in which this process developed. The timing of redemocratization discriminates neatly two groups of countries. The group of countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy) where transition to democracy took place during or immediately after the second world war; and the group of countries (Greece, Portugal, Spain) that saw the breakdown of authoritarian regimes during the seventies. In the first group the international political context (war defeat, external occupation, new international

alignments) played a crucial role; in the second group internal politics was the dominant factor. Significant differences emerge also when we look at the features of the first democratic experience, at the nature and the length of the non democratic regime, and at the peculiarities of the transition to democracy.

The balance of similarities and differences between and within the two groups of countries offers an extremely interesting field of research for developing and testing hypotheses about the creation and development of party systems under the special conditions of «discontinuous» countries. Given the already mentioned fact that in Eastern European cases the building of the new party systems is far from being concluded because too few years have elapsed after the fall of the communist regime, what can be done here is mainly to elaborate conjectures about the meaning of the first steps that they have moved. The style of the next pages will be therefore mainly hypothetical.

The first step: explaining continuity (discontinuity) with the past.

What factors may have affected the ability of the first democratic experience, and more precisely of its party system to survive? In the rokkian model, as we have mentioned before, once full democratic mobilization has been reached political alignments (and party systems) tend to become stable because the political market has been taken under control (through mechanisms of socialization and loyalty as political identification, but also through mechanisms of exclusion) by parties created before or during the transition to mass politics (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). The space for new parties is preempted and continuity consequently prevails. The point to be discussed is to what extent discontinuous countries with their special developmental conditions deviate from this model.

There are in fact a number of factors, at work in our cases, that seem potentially relevant because of their effects upon the ability of parties to control mass mobilization and the support market. Such factors can be seen as conditions setting limits to the maximum of continuity the original rokkian proposition would have predicted.

The first condition to be mentioned is directly related to the political turning point proposed by Rokkan in his analysis of continuity — i.e. the universalization of (male) suffrage and the achievement of mass mobilization. If during the first democratic experiment this threshold has not been

fully reached we should expect less continuity with that period. The fundamental condition put forward by Rokkan to explain continuity has not come into being. Some sections of the population will still be «virgin» to political mobilization when the post-authoritarian democracy is installed. On this basis we can formulate the first hypothesis :

H.1 The less complete the extension of the suffrage during the first democratic experience and/or the less complete the mobilization of the mass electorate the greater the chances of a weak continuity (and vice versa).

To specify more explicitly along the lines of Rokkan's reasoning the role of the organizational aspect in connecting political mobilization with the stabilization of political alternatives and party systems we may add the following hypothesis that takes into account the role of parties:

H. 2 The lower the degree of institutionalization of parties and the degree of partyness of political life during the first democratization the weaker the chances of continuity.

But the ability of the first democratic experience together with the party system it produced to persist over time should not be linked exclusively to its original strength. We must not forget that in the countries we are discussing democracy came at a certain point to a crisis and was finally destroyed. We must therefore look into this destructive process for its impact upon the party system.

A first aspect to be mentioned is that during the first democratic experience a decline of certain parties or even of larger political «areas» (for instance the old bourgeois area) of the party system may have already begun. The reason may be that certain (older) parties had not been able to adapt to the new political conditions created by universal suffrage. We could therefore suggest the next hypothesis:

H. 3. To the extent that sections of the party system have undergone a significant decline already during the first democratic experience the chances of continuity are diminished.

The transition process itself leading to the non democratic regime deserves next some specific attention. Precisely during that phase things happen that are relevant for the ability of the old parties to survive. The support to the instauration of the non democratic regime given by some of the parties that had previously participated in the democratic game is a case in point. Such a behavior by parties that do not share fully the goals of authoritarian actors originates from a mixture of factors: the confidence to be able to save in the end democracy through non- democratic means, the fear of revolution, the competitive outbidding and pressures of extremist parties, etc.. In such situations loyalty to the democratic regime gives often way to what Linz has called semi-loyalty (1978, pp. 36-37). In many European countries the twenties saw in fact a shift toward semi-authoritarian positions of bourgeois parties because of their fears in front of leftist militancy on one side and of the pressure of rightist radicalism on the other. And after the second world war in Eastern Europe some parties have been «captured» in a somewhat similar way in the Communist take-overs. After the fall of the non democratic regime the parties that have been involved in its rise will share the negative stigma of the regime. From this derives:

H. 4 Whenever parties of the first democratic regime have been involved in supporting (at least initially) the authoritarian take-over their chances of revival after the fall of this regime will be weaker; the overall chances of continuity of the old party system will be consequently reduced.

The impact of the non democratic regime is the next factor to be considered. By its anti-pluralistic nature the non democratic regime exerts during its lifetime an obviously negative effect upon the persistence of the old party system. Parties are banished from public life and their leaders and members are more or less severely repressed. The negative impact of this period upon the chances for the old parties to be resurrected after the demise of the non democratic regime should be linked to its duration and to its specific characters. And both the elite and the mass dimension of political life will be touched. The length of the authoritarian interruption seems relevant from our point of view for its potential effects upon the linkages between voters and parties : the longer the interruption of democratic life the weaker will become old partisan identifications and larger the cohorts of new voters that were never socialized by the old parties. But

also the ability of party elites to survive and preserve party traditions and images will be affected. If the authoritarian regime is short, old elites (unless physically eliminated) will be able to make a comeback. Beyond a certain duration of the nondemocratic regime their ranks will be necessarily curtailed. After forty years it is highly improbable that any top member of the old elite could play a very significant role. We can add therefore this hypothesis:

H. 5 The longer the non-democratic regime the weaker the continuity with the democratic past.

But the destructive effects of the non democratic regime are not only produced by the sheer fact of its duration. Its qualitative aspects and particularly its «intensity» seem especially relevant. There are indeed significant differences among non democratic regimes concerning their willingness and ability to erase and transform the preexisting socio-political «landscape». Differences in this field between «rightist» and «leftist» regimes, between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, etc., are well known (Linz 1975; Fisichella 1987). The impact of non democratic regimes should not be seen only in its «negative» aspects like the destruction of older political alignments and linkages. There is also a «positive» side: under that regime new patterns of political behavior, new alignments and the potential for new coalitions (for instance against the regime) may develop. For all this reasons we could say that:

H. 6 The «stronger» the non democratic regime (i.e. the greater its mobilizing potential, the more extensive its social impact, the deeper its institutionalization, etc.) the lesser the chances of continuity with the past.

The formulation of this series of hypotheses is a way to specify different variables that seem potentially relevant to build an explanatory model of continuity (and discontinuity) with the first democratic experience. It would be obviously difficult to test the impact of each variable individually. Because of the limited number of cases, but also because some variables are not entirely independent from the others ⁶. For all these reasons the best way is probably to use a more synthetic approach by building a comprehensive factor based on all the variables. We will have a strong discontinuity factor when all (or at least a majority) of the variables point in the

direction of discontinuity, and a strong continuity factor when the opposite is true. A weak democratic past with limited mass mobilization and a low degree of partyiness, the crisis of democratic parties climaxing already during that phase, a high degree of involvement of some of the original parties in the authoritarian takeover, and a prolonged and very strong non democratic regime would leave little space for the reemergence of the old party system. The opposite conditions would instead make continuity with the past much more probable. There will be also intermediate cases where some of the variables point in one direction and others in the opposite or where their values are median.

If we turn now to the empirical cases Western European countries seem indeed to offer some amount of confirmation of these hypotheses. Although an attempt to order them in terms of the degree of discontinuity between the pre-authoritarian and the post-authoritarian party systems involves necessarily a certain amount of problems, the fit with the results expected from our explanatory model is not too bad. If continuity and discontinuity are evaluated by the ability of the parties of the first democratic experience to reemerge after the fall of the non democratic regime and by the extent to which both their electoral strength and their weight in the governmental processes are preserved, there is little doubt that on the continuum between lowest and highest discontinuity Austria should be placed near the lower end and Portugal near the higher end. And between these cases we could place in an order of increasing discontinuity Germany (Weimar to Bonn), Italy, Spain. In the Austrian case the extremely high degree of continuity⁷ corresponds rather well to the strong institutionalization of parties in the first democracy, to the short duration of the non democratic period, to the relatively low «intensity» of that regime (at least in its autochthonous phase). The only factor not consistent with this picture is the strong involvement of one of the major parties of the first de-

^{6.} Certain variables can in fact influence the effects of others. This may be the case of the variables considered in the first three hypotheses vis a vis the following ones. If a fairly structured party system did not exist during the first democratic experience, the next variables, whatever their values, will not be able to do very much for the continuity of the old party system, because from the start there will be little to be perpetuated.

^{7.} The two dominant parties of interwar years make a successful comeback (with some changes in their names) in the second republic. Their electoral weight is practically unchanged: their average combined share of the vote was 84% in the twenties and 88.5 % in the forties (Mackie and Rose 1982).

mocracy (the Christian Social party) in the authoritarian takeover⁸. At the other extreme the Portuguese case, with a pre-authoritarian phase characterized by limited franchise and very weak parties (a proto-democracy rather than a true democracy), an ongoing decay of the same parties in the years preceding the coup d'état (Wheeler 1978), a very long authoritarian period, has most of the factors playing for discontinuity. The only factor which could have played in the other direction — the limited intensity of the authoritarian regime — was probably offset by the other factors. In fact the post-salazarian party system bears little relation with that of the beginning of the century⁹. Countries like Germany and Italy occupy a more intermediate position: important elements of continuity with the past (the main one to be mentioned is the renewed or even increased weight of the Christian democratic and working class parties) are balanced by significant changes (affecting in particular the old bourgeois right)¹⁰. This should not come as a surprise given the combination of explanatory factors that point in the direction of continuity (high level of institutionalization of mass politics and strong organized parties particularly in Germany, and to a somewhat lesser extent in Italy; relatively short duration of the non democratic period) and of factors favoring discontinuity (significant involvement of certain parties in the ascent to power of the non democratic regime, extreme or rather high intensity of this). Spain with a weak and unstable party system during the second republic, with a large involvement of parties (of the right) in the authoritarian takeover, with a very long non

⁸. The negative effect of the participation of the Catholic party in the authoritarian experience was probably weakened by the fact that with the *Anschluss* an externally controlled Nazi regime took the place of the autoctonous authoritarianism.

⁹. The parliamentary scene before Salazar was dominated by rather weak and personalistic bourgeois parties like the Republican party, often dividing itself into rival groups, and the Nationalist party. Those parties had no successors in the new democracy.

¹⁰. The decline of the traditional right parties which before fascism and nazism had a crucial role in the political system is a common feature of Italy and Germany. On the other side in both cases christian democratic parties managed not only to survive but to increase dramatically their influence gaining from the crisis of the bourgeois right (in Italy the rise was from 20% of the PPI in 1921 to 35% of the DC in 1946; in Germany from a Zentrum vote oscillating between 11 and 13% in the Weimar republic to the CDU-CSU 31% in 1949 and 45% in 1953). As for working class parties the increased weight coincided with opposite organizational developments: a monopoly of this area by the Social Democratic party in Germany, fragmentation in two and later three or more parties in Italy.

democratic period has as expected a lesser degree of continuity with the past than Germany and Italy (Linz 1967 and 1978). The degree of continuity with the past is greater however in Spain than in Portugal, which might be credited to the more advanced stage of democratization and mass politics reached in the inter-war years by Spain compared to Portugal¹¹.

If we turn now our attention to Central and Eastern European countries we can ask how these factors may have played and what can be their consequences in the process of rebirth of parties after the fall of communism. A preliminary point that has to be stressed when answering to these questions is that their developmental path has been particularly complex. The first democratization phase (which in a number of these countries coincided also with the gaining of independent statehood from crumbling multinational empires)¹² came to an end in the inter-war years and was first followed by rightist non democratic regimes of different types (Rothschild 1974; Seton Watson 1986)¹³ and then, after the second world war, by the communist regime. But a short-lived redemocratization (in most of the cases with one round at least of more or less pluralistic elections) was squeezed in the mid forties between the two non democratic experiences¹⁴. The problem of continuity is therefore more complicated than in other countries. Given the short duration of the democratic experience of the forties the discussion of these cases should be based primarily on the inter-war experience. This is not to say that the «second» democratic attempt should be entirely forgotten; but that it should be used to provide further elements for evaluating how strong were the roots of the original party system and its ability to survive over time.

Comparing Central and Eastern European countries as a group with «discontinuous» countries of Western Europe shows rather clearly that al-

¹¹. The Socialist party and some of the regionalist parties in the Basque country and in Cataluna are the most significant signs of continuity with the past.

¹². That is the case of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yougoslavia and the Baltic countries.

¹³. A partial exception is Czechoslovakia where in Slovakia the democratic regime gave way to an internal authoritarianism, but in the Czech part of the country came to an end only with external occupation by Germany.

¹⁴. In Czechoslovakia the elections of 1946 and in Hungary those of 1945 and to a lower degree those of 1947 can be considered fairly free elections; much less free were the elections of 1945 and 1946 in Bulgaria, the elections of 1947 in Poland, the elections of 1946 in Rumania (Seton Watson 1950).

most all the conditions we have discussed as limiting the possibility of continuity with past democratic experiences and with the old parties are stronger in the former than in the latter group. As we have seen limiting conditions operate to a greater or lesser extent in all the countries of the Western group, but none of these countries is so heavily affected by all of them.

We may start with a brief discussion of the single factors. In Central and Eastern European cases (as previously stated we leave here aside Soviet Russia and its successor states) democratic experiences following the first world war had generally been rather unstable and had not been characterized by very strong parties. The role of personalistic leadership with authoritarian penchants had played often an important role and had frustrated the emergence of well developed party systems. The main exception is Czechoslovakia (and, if we include it in the group, East Germany for which the democratic past is obviously Weimar's Germany), where a fairly strong and stable party system survived until 1939 (Mamotey 1973; Bosl 1979). With the exception again of Czechoslovakia the short years of democratic and parliamentary life saw in most cases clear signs of decay of the parties that had initially had a preeminent role (Rothschild 1974). To this should be added numerous cases of involvement of significant parties in the access to power of the authoritarian regimes of the interwar period as well as in the communist takeovers after the second world war¹⁵. In all the countries the weight of the non democratic interruption has been particularly heavy. The first reason is its length: to the approximately forty years of communist rule have to be added the periods of variable length under rightist authoritarian regimes (and in some cases also

¹⁵. Rightist authoritarianisms of interwar years were generally supported by «national coalitions» which included some of the major parties (or at least factions of them). The main examples were: in Poland after 1926 the BBWR (Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government) which saw the convergence of «converts from all the earlier political orientations in Poland» (Rothschild 1974, p. 59); in Hungary the Government block (called the Christian and bourgeois party of small landowners and agrarians) which fused Nationalists and Small Landowners (Seton Watson, 1986, p.190); in Rumania the Front of National Rebirth (1938); in Bulgaria the Democratic Concord which in the twenties included Populists, Democrats, Radicals and obtained even the collaboration of Social Democrats (Rothschild 1974, pp. 342 ff.). As for the communist takeovers after the second world war significant components of the leadership of socialdemocratic, bourgeois, agrarian and other parties were through different means coopted in the process (Seton Watson 1950; Fejto 1952; Hammond 1977).

under externally controlled occupation regimes). The second reason derives from the nature of communist rule. Its totalitarian or quasi-totalitarian aspects are especially relevant. The depth of the destructuring of the old system went well beyond the elimination of opposition parties; a full scale assault was launched against traditional class structures and organizations, professional associations, religious and cultural institutions. To this should be added also the extension of mobilization efforts and the importance of the new political and social structures created by the regime. All this suggests that old alignments and linkage systems should be in a very difficult position to reemerge.

From these observations, albeit extremely general and synthetic, our expectations are that these countries will be rather clearly located near the discontinuity extreme of the continuity/discontinuity continuum. On the basis of the first step of the explanatory model the new party systems now «under construction» in Central and Eastern Europe should bear little relation with those of the past. If we consider Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland this expectation is fulfilled. In fact a look at the first electoral results indicates that the weight of old parties is generally weak and in no case can they be counted among the largest parties. In Czechoslovakia among significant parties only the Christian Democratic Party and the Slovak National Party could be related in some ways to parties of the inter-war years; together they reached approximately 16% of the vote¹⁶. In Hungary the Christian Democrats and the Smallholders Party totalled 18% of the vote (Korosenyi 1991). In Poland the great victory of Solidarnosc in the first election round of 1989 left practically no space to the resurgence of old parties. But in the other countries the picture is less clear. In Bulgaria electoral results are difficult to interpret because most opposition forces ran in a unified front; however within that front (Union of democratic forces) (36% of the vote) a prominent place was occupied by two parties (the Petkov Agrarian Union and the Social Democratic Party) that defined themselves as the continuation of prewar parties; to these should be added the other agrarian party — BANU — which ran alone (8%) (Ashley 1990). East Germany seems at first the most clear exception to the weakness of old parties; the elections are won by parties (CDU; SPD and FDP) that are clearly linked to the most significant parties of the first democracy. There

¹⁶. If we add the small socialdemocratic parties the percentage augments a little to 21%.

are good reasons however to judge the apparent continuity with the past as spurious; the anomalous result of East Germany is the consequence of the process of assimilation to the contemporary party system of Western Germany rather than of the strength of autochthonous party traditions. There is finally the Romanian case which is also rather peculiar. On one side we can say that the main political forces not linked to the communist regime derive from prewar parties. That is the case for the National Liberal party, the National Peasants party, and other minor groups. But these parties were confined by the first elections to the role of a weak opposition. The overwhelming victory went to the National Salvation Front, a political formation that in many ways can be seen as a new incarnation of the communist party. In the end neither the old nor new parties seem able to grasp the leadership of the transition from the hands of the (renovated) communist elites.

We can summarize these first findings by saying that in Eastern Europe, at least on the basis of the first electoral results, pre-communist party systems do not provide the basic structure for the new party systems of the postcommunist era. Their legacies are in the whole marginal¹⁷ This distinguishes them clearly from some at least of the Western European cases (Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy) where the opposite was true. In order to explain the new party systems of Eastern Europe and their characters we should rather look to the next step of the explanatory model, i.e. to factors related to other phases of the political development of these countries.

The second step: what factors behind the new parties ?

The weaker the thrust of continuity of past democratic experiences the greater should be the space left for innovation, for the creation of new political groups. In some way we can conceive the political arena as an empty space that has to be filled. In our search for the factors that could explain the configuration and institutionalization of the new party systems we should look to other faces of the political transformations that went on in these countries.

^{17.} I have not discussed in this context the Communist parties which in most cases had existed in the first democratic experiments. These parties are a special case compared to other «old parties»; because of their dominant role during the non democratic regime it is more relevant to discuss them where the legacies of that period will be taken into account.

A first point to be mentioned is that the establishment of the new democracy is not only the resumption of the older democratic political course (the face discussed until now), but also the deliverance from the non democratic regime. This means that there is another «legacy problem». The non democratic regime does not simply disappear but leaves more or less significant consequences. What happens to the ruling party of that regime (where there was one) is particularly important from our point of view. The new democracy may have to face the survival of a political force linked with the previous regime. The problem will be all the more relevant when the previous regime had enjoyed a strong support at least among certain sections of the population, when the party had a strong mass organization and when the demise of the non democratic regime was not produced by a complete collapse or by a destruction from the outside. A continuous transition (Morlino 1986a), with the old ruling party able to control, at least to some extent, the turn of events, would seem to provide the most favorable conditions for some degree of survival of that party in the original version or more probably with a refurbished image (a new name, new leaders, etc.). In some way the two factors evoked by Rokkan — mobilization efforts and organizational continuity — are at stake here. We can therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

H. 7 The stronger the support basis of the ruling party of the non democratic regime and the more continuous the transition the greater the chances for such a party to survive as a significant political actor under the democratic regime.

From the point of view of these conditions the old ruling parties of East European countries are generally in a better position than those of Western European cases. In Eastern Europe the communist party have been everywhere the foundation and the keystone of the non democratic regime and the transition to democracy has been to some degree at least continuous. In Western Europe the two favorable factors are never combined. Where the non democratic party had had a strong role in the old regime (Italy and even more Germany) the regime collapse was, because of international conditions, complete and the transition discontinuous. Where on the contrary transition was continuous, as most clearly in Spain, the authoritarian party was in any case a very weak political creature. In other cases (Austria, Greece, Portugal, Vichy France) there was not even a real party.

All this being said we should not forget differences inside the Eastern group. It is sufficient to mention the fact that some of the Communist countries had had to face during their life serious political crises (Poland 1956, 1970, 1980-1; Hungary 1956; Czechoslovakia 1968), which can be seen as a sign of a relatively weaker popular legitimation of these regimes and of their ruling parties (Grilli di Cortona 1989).

The results of the first free elections lend some support to this hypothesis. While in no case in Western Europe parties of the old regime obtain a meaningful following¹⁸, in all the countries of the East European group they are able to survive as significant parties. There are however significant differences of strength even in this group. There is a first subgroup of countries — «Eastern Germany», Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland — where communist parties or their successor parties have become minority parties (within the 10 to 15% range of votes); in a second subgroup — Rumania, Bulgaria, Serbia — they have managed, at least initially, to maintain a much larger electoral following and even a dominant political role. It is easy to see that the divide between the two subgroups follows rather neatly the differences mentioned before in the degree of legitimation and internal strength of the communist regimes.

The non democratic period is relevant also in another way. During that period an illegal opposition often develops. The «dissenters», particularly when the non democratic regime has had a long life, may have little direct experience of the old democracy. But through their challenges to the non democratic regime they gain some kind of political training and popular prestige. If they have not been wiped away completely by repression they can become the nucleus of the new democratic elite. When the regime crisis becomes more acute because of internal or external problems the conflict between regime and dissent may produce a significant amount of popular mobilization (and an even larger area of unexpressed political sup-

¹⁸. In Italy the Neo-fascist party obtains only 2% of the vote in the 1948 elections (and 5.8 % in 1953); in Germany extreme right lists do not even reach 2% of the vote in 1949. In Spain the explicitly franquist lists were a conspicuous failure (they obtained only 0.5% in 1977 and 2.1% in 1979). Things would be different if one included in the count AP because of its leadership largely derived from franquist elite; that party however defined its political identity in different terms. In Greece the military dictatorship had not created a party; to some extent the National Front could be seen however as linked to the old regime; in 1977 it had a comparatively good result (6.8%), but subsequently disappeared.

port for the new opposition). To some extent at least we have at work the factors that in a rokkianian perspective should provide the basis for new political alignments and parties. We can expect therefore that during the transition to democracy opposition movements become important building blocks for the making of the new party system. We can therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

H. 8 The more significant and with a large popular basis the opposition movements under the non democratic regime (or during the process of its displacement) the greater the chances that such movements and their leaders will play a leading role in shaping the democratic party system.

But in order to understand the role that the «opposition born under the dictatorship» may play in the new party system we should not forget the other side of the picture. The special characters this opposition tends to have, may produce significant problems once democracy is at work. The dominant goal to overthrow the regime requires from opposers to put aside political differences and gives a special value to unity of action. The pressure for unity is further reinforced by the moral component which generally plays a crucial role in this opposition. Opposition to the non democratic regime tends therefore to take the form of unified fronts¹⁹. Problems arise once the old regime is overthrown and competitive political life begins. Unity of action must now give way to pluralistic competition. If the front as such had not played a very strong part in the transition to democracy and/or it was a loosely unified confederation of political groups it will be more easy to put it aside. The building of a party system along pluralistic lines will not find obstacles from this. The parties of the opposition front regain their freedom of action and new parties are created outside that group. But if the opposition front played a dominant role in the fight against the old regime and was highly unified the development of a pluralistic party system may be a more troublesome process. The Front at first may try to define itself as something different from a party. More-

¹⁹. There are obviously cases when this does not happen and the opposition is internally divided; in such cases however the opposition will be confined to inefficacy. This is what happened for instance in the first years of the Pinochet regime in Chile; only later the reaching of a large unity among opposition parties gave to the opposition the opportunity to play a crucial role in the downfall of the military regime.

over there is little space left outside the Front; so in the end if pluralism must develop it must arise from an internal split of the Front. Another chance of course is that the Front remains united and dominates the new politics but that would not be compatible with democracy. We can therefore add this hypothesis:

H. 9 The stronger and more unified the opposition Front to the non democratic regime the greater the difficulties for a pluralistic party system to be established quickly.

Empirical cases provide some support to the last two hypotheses. With regard to the first one the examples of France and Italy show that parties taking active part in the Resistance against fascist regimes and Nazi occupation were rewarded with electoral successes and acquired a central role in the new party systems. There is also some counter evidence: in Spain the Communist party which had undoubtedly had a significant role in mobilizing an opposition in the last years of the Francoist regime did not reap from it great electoral benefits²⁰. In Central and Eastern Europe opposition movements against the communist regime play an important role in the first steps at least of the creation of the democratic political system. Where the opposition was stronger and contributed in a crucial way to the fall of the old regime the new party system derives more closely from those movements. Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary offer some interesting evidence. The three countries can be easily rank ordered by the strength of opposition movements. Poland is obviously first on this dimension. Solidarnosc, for its ability to mobilize in the eighties a very large mass following and to bring almost to its knees the communist regime, had been by far the strongest of opposition movements in Eastern Europe. It was not a surprise therefore when at the beginning of democratic life it gained almost a monopoly of electoral preferences. As a result the new party system seemed at first to develop like a *de facto* one party system. At some distance the Czech and Slovak twin opposition movements — Civic Forum and Public Against Violence — acquired a central role but far less

²⁰. The same could be said in fact for one of the anti-fascist parties in Italy. The left liberals of the Action Party although very active during the resistance were practically wiped away by the ballot.

than a monopoly in the first steps of the Czechoslovak party system²¹. In Hungary, where the opposition had played a much more limited role in overturning the regime the first democratic elections were not fought by a unified opposition front but rather by different political movements that acted as parties²². The three countries show also that where a strong and unified opposition movement existed the establishment of a pluralistic party system has to follow a more difficult course than in other cases. At first only weak parties can develop outside the opposition movement; later pluralism will develop out of rancorous splits from the old opposition front. Such a process may not be easily conducive to strong parties as the troubled breakdown of Solidarnosc in Poland seems to show. The process has been easier where, as in Western Europe, opposition fronts were cartels of parties that had (and kept) an autonomous identity and could therefore resume their freedom of action once the non democratic regime had disappeared.

Political movements that rely for their identity mainly on the past role of opposition to the non democratic regime face necessarily a problem of adaptation once the «enemy» has disappeared (or has been reduced to a small and marginalized successor party). The themes that dominate the political debate and agenda change drastically in a matter of months. Choices in the fields of democratic institutions, of economic reconstruction, of international alliances take the place of the struggle for political freedom. The need to find new bases of support becomes therefore urgent. An important question is whether in the first years of the new democracy old or new conflicts can acquire, because of their breadth and depth, the potential of creating stable cleavages and a large scale political mobilization. The general hypothesis from which to start is the following:

H.10 The new parties will develop on the basis of conflicts that have the potential for sustaining a broad and durable political mobilization.

^{21.} In the elections of 1989 Solidarnosc gained all seats of the Senate where elections were completely open, and 160 of the 161 available seats in the other. In the Czechoslovak elections of 1990 Civic Forum and Public against Violence had together a little less than the absolute majority (46.6% of the vote).

^{22.} The fact that one was named Forum like in Czechoslovakia was but a formal aspect, a residuum of the past. The National Forum acted in fact as a party, competing with other opposition movements (like the Free Democrats or the FIDESZ).

The question therefore is what conflicts can play this role in the new democracy. Our attention should go first of all to the great «structural» conflicts that have produced the party systems of continuous countries. Among them the socioeconomic cleavage has a special place. Its influence has been the strongest and most homogeneous on European party systems producing large working class parties in almost all the countries (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). We should expect its impact to be significant also in the making of the new party systems after the restoration of democracy. Either because the persisting importance of this cleavage favors continuity with the past democratic experience and with the working class parties already existing at that time; or because it offers the basis for the establishment of new ones when they had not been significant before the dictatorship. In fact in all Western European cases after the transition to democracy strong working class parties have taken an important place in the reborn party systems. In some cases, as in Austria and Germany, they could revive strong traditions of the first democracy. In other countries such traditions had been weaker. But even in Portugal where the Socialist party had played practically no role before Salazar, this party became one of the important actors after the fall of the dictatorship.

The importance of this cleavage obviously derives from the capitalistic structure of societies. In Eastern Europe, because of the radical transformation of the socioeconomic structure under the communist regime, we should expect a rather different situation. The abolition of market economy and of private ownership of production means resulting in the destruction of capitalistic bourgeoisie takes the wind from the sails of the socioeconomic cleavage (workers vs. owners) in post-communist democracies. We may therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

H. 11. Working class parties will have an important role in the new party systems except where the non democratic regime produced a large scale etatization of the economy.

Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland seem to lend support to the hypothesis. Socialist parties have fared very poorly in the first elections and have not become significant political players²³. It is true however that in other Eastern European countries Socialist parties have had a greater success. But it is not difficult to find the special reasons for that. In Eastern Germany the large electoral following of the SPD had to do more with the

«imitation» of the Western German party system and with the organizational support coming from the brother party of the West than with the intensity of the socioeconomic cleavage in that country. As for Bulgaria and Rumania the electoral victories of the Socialist party and of the Salvation Front, parties which to some extent could be defined as working class parties can be credited more to the ability of the old communist ruling parties to survive in a new form thanks to the peculiarities of the transition than to the weight of the class cleavage.

If these are the initial results we should not discount however the possibility that in the future socioeconomic conflicts will play a greater role in the political life of Eastern Europe. We can reasonably expect however that they will follow a somewhat different course than in Western Europe. For some time at least the main conflicts should originate from the dismantling of state ownership and centralistic controls and from the reconstruction of a more decentralized market economy. That process will pit a growing private sector against a retreating public sector, risk oriented against security dependent groups of the population rather than working class against bourgeoisie. Whether such conflicts will produce well structured cleavage lines and provide a stable basis for competing parties is a difficult question. There are some chances however that rather than fostering the growth of socialdemocratic parties along western lines they might ensure the survival of the refurbished communist parties campaigning on the advantages of the old state economy with the security it guaranteed (to those willing to comply), or the birth of populist parties.

What can be the role of other rokkianian cleavages such as the center/periphery or the Church/State ones ? and what are consequently the chances of ethnic and regionalist or of Christian Democratic parties ? Perspectives for the first type of cleavages and parties appear rather favorable after the fall of non democratic regimes. Very often these regimes because of their centralistic inclinations have adopted repressive policies vis a vis ethnic groups and suppressed associations and parties connected with them; but, leaving aside exceptional cases of total elimination, the probabilities that in spite of everything these ethnic identities will have survived are significant. Repression may have even strengthened their autonomist orien-

^{23.} In Czechoslovakia a Socialist and a Social Democratic party did not even win representation in the parliament (together 5.2% of the vote). The Communist Party obtained 13.6% of the vote. In Hungary the Social Democratic party scored 3.6%, and two other socialist parties derived from the Communist party obtained together 14 %.

tations. In the new democracy such groups will have both the motivations for establishing political parties — as the instruments for obtaining back their autonomy — and the social bases for doing it. The empirical evidence shows in fact that in the countries where ethnic diversities were significant, parties based on these identities have quickly and successfully reemerged in the transition to democracy. Spain is the most important case for Western Europe : regionalistic parties have soon acquired a relevant and stable role in the new party system ²⁴. As for Eastern Europe it has become apparent that wherever national minorities exist, autonomist or even secessionist parties rapidly bloom. To what extent parties based on such principles can be accommodated within democratic life or will produce the breakdown of multiethnic countries is the major question at stake here (Di Palma 1990).

Less easy to evaluate is on the contrary the role of the religious cleavage. Various factors complicate the picture. On one side relations between churches and the non democratic regimes have been far from homogeneous across countries and over time. They have indeed gone from the strong support of sections of the German Lutheran church to the Nazi regime and of the Catholic church to the Francoist regime (of the first decades), to the increasing detachment of the same Catholic church from the Spanish dictatorship in the seventies, to the brutal suppression of all the churches under the communist regimes. But beside this one should also add the important changes in the degree of secularization occurring in the time span during which the individual transition processes are scattered. Where the two factors add together, i.e. where the support of the churches to the non democratic regime was more explicit and the process of secularization has reached a more advanced stage at the time of the transition to democracy, there should be less space for confessional parties in the new party systems. Cases like Spain and (albeit not so clearly) Portugal where in spite of the past importance of the religious/secular cleavage Christian Democratic parties have gained little weight in the new democratic party systems seem in line with those expectations. On one side the support given by the church to the two authoritarian regimes had been substantial; on the other side the transition processes have taken place at a

²⁴. Italy also could be mentioned although on a much more limited scale due to the smaller size of its minorities. The small French speaking minority in the Aosta Valley and the German speaking group in South Tirol have sustained after the fall of fascism their nationally weak but locally dominant parties.

period of time when processes of secularization had severely weakened the Catholic church all over the world. In other cases the two factors are at odds. In the Austrian, German and Italian cases in spite of some greater or lesser support given by the churches to the non democratic regimes (particularly in the founding years) Christian Democratic parties could manage a very successful comeback in the new democracy. The less advanced secularization of the forties and perhaps also the fact that other political forces (like conservatives and liberals) had been even more heavily involved in the old regime could explain perhaps those results. A bit more astonishing seems what is happening in Eastern Europe. Because of the significant role of the churches in the opposition to the Communist regimes many forecasts had expected a success of Christian Democratic parties. This on the contrary did not materialize. Even in a country like Poland where the role of the Church in the opposition to the communist regime had been particularly strong (also through the unambiguous support given to the Solidarnosc movement) no large party with a religious basis has developed after the dissolution of Solidarnosc²⁵. The explanation for these unexpected results might perhaps be found in a combination of factors. The advanced secularization of society, the fact that the extreme anticlerical policies of the communist regimes have seriously weakened the legitimation of secularistic positions (which had been politically relevant in the interwar period) and the large popularity acquired by the churches may have paradoxically created a situation where the relevance of issues related with the religious/secular cleavage is limited and the need for sections of the population to rally behind a religiously defined party is weak.

Summing up of the three important cleavages that have contributed most to the structuring of party systems in Europe only one, for the time being at least, seems bound to play a role in the making of the new party systems of Eastern Europe. Structural factors appear therefore much less «confining» than in most Western European cases.

At the end of the analysis of the different factors that could be relevant for the rebuilding of pluralistic party system after the fall of non democratic regimes we may formulate some first (albeit tentative) conclusions. The constellations of conditions at work when the new party systems of di-

²⁵ Only a number of small «christian democratic» parties unable to unite in a common political formation have emerged with the elections of 1991. Also in Czechoslovakia and Hungary Christian Democratic parties exist, but they are small and have a marginal role in the new party system.

scontinuous countries start developing can be extremely varied. The weight of old democratic traditions, of factors connected with the non democratic period, and finally of the sociopolitical conditions existing at the moment of the transition to democracy change significantly from country to country. To simplify this picture we can imagine a continuum stretching between two extreme poles. At one pole there are situations which we might call of «tight conditions». Because factors of continuity with the first democratic past are strong and/or structural conditions existing at the time of transition define clear cleavages the making of the new party system takes place within a strictly «confined» track. At the other extreme there are situations of «open conditions». The past has left only weak legacies and present conditions do not provide clear structural bases for strong alignments. When such a situation applies the making of the new party system is much more difficult to predict. Idiosyncratic and situational factors — like institutional choices (concerning electoral systems or parliament-executive relations) adopted during the transition; leaders personalities; specific issues appearing on the political agenda; success or failure in solving economic problems; or even external influences — can play a much stronger role.

The implications of the second type of situation are relevant not only for the substantive configuration of the party system (i.e. what specific parties will compose the party system) and for its predictability. But also for another important dimension, i.e. the «degree of partyness» dimension. The greater volatility of factors affecting the rebuilding of parties will probably produce weaker parties and more unstable party systems.

On the continuum stretching between «open» and «tight conditions» Central and Eastern European cases seem generally bound to be placed, compared to most Western European cases, nearer to the «open» than to the «tight» pole. The combinations of factors that work in this direction have been discussed in these pages. To these should perhaps be added also some of the transnational factors suggested by the discussion about the decline of parties. The timing of the transitions makes them more relevant in Eastern Europe than in other countries.

We have already some empirical evidence about the effects of such an «open» situation : the most striking is the dramatic «atomization» of the Polish party system during 1991. We can reasonably expect that in many of these countries further significant transformations of the party systems

will take place in the next years. Any conclusion about these party systems has necessarily to be tentative.

Combining multiple dimensions of analysis of new party systems. A first exploration of empirical cases.

Until now our attention has been predominantly devoted to the discussion of the factors that may affect the configuration of the new party system. We have tried to conjecture to what extent past democratic experiences, legacies of the non democratic period and the specific situation at the moment of the transition to democracy may determine what will be the main components of the new party system and their political identities. This analysis has suggested also that such factors (both past and present) may be in some situations rather strong (making for a very «confined» process in the building of the new party system), but much weaker in other situations leaving therefore space to a more «open» process. This has brought me to hypothesize that another dimension of the party phenomenon might be affected by such different conditions. The strength and institutionalization of the parties and globally of the party system resulting from that process might be weaker when those factors are less confining.

It is time to devote some attention to the other dimensions of analysis that we have mentioned at the beginning of this paper. The role of the party system within a democratic regime depends not only from the political identities of its components but also from the «weight» and institutionalization of the parties (which means their ability to channel and control the crucial political processes at the elite and mass level) and from the competitive structure of the party system. Having weak versus strong parties; a two party system or a moderate multiparty system versus a polarized multiparty system is generally judged relevant for the performances of democracy (Sartori 1976).

For these dimensions as well we could ask to what extent post-authoritarian party systems replicate earlier democratic experiences or innovate; and what factors can explain different results. And then it would be interesting to establish how these dimensions are related to the one discussed until now.

Working in this direction we could combine the analysis of the configuration of the party system and of its competitive structure. A simple dichotomous treatment of the two dimensions would produce a typological map

as the one of Fig. 1 (the map would obviously become more complicated if we treated one or both dimensions in a more articulated way).

Fig.1 *Party system configuration and competitive structure. Continuity and change.*

| | | Party system configuration | |
|-----------------------|------------|----------------------------|--------|
| | | Continuity | Change |
| Competitive structure | Continuity | a | c |
| | Change | b | d |

The four cells of the table identify rather different patterns of change and continuity. Type «a» is the most clear case of continuity: the same parties (party alternatives) persist over time and the structure of the party system is also fundamentally unaffected. Type «b» is a situation where even if the parties composing the party system remain the same the competitive structure of the system is significantly altered (for instance from a polarized to a depolarized state or vice versa). Type «c» is the opposite: in spite of changes in the identities of significant parties (disappearance of a party or appearance of a new one) the structure of competition remains sufficiently constant. Finally type «d» suggests a situation where both aspects have undergone a transformation: there are new parties and/or old parties have disappeared, and at the same time the structure of the party system has changed.

In order to gain a better understanding of the relationships existing between the two dimensions it is worthwhile to explore to what extent the different theoretical possibilities suggested by the table are also empirical possibilities. In particular is this true also for the two mixed situations («b» and «c») ?

We could repeat the same exercise with other combinations of the three dimensions of analysis (configuration and level of partyiness; competitive structure and level of partyiness). And the picture would become even more complex by combining the three dimensions at once (see Fig. 2).

A systematic analysis of all these combinations would prove however extremely cumbersome and abstract. For the time being I will follow a more inductive path: through a brief analysis of a number of empirical cases I will try to see which specific combinations of variations along the three dimensions occur in real life.

In order to evaluate the empirical cases I will start from the dimension we have discussed more thoroughly, i.e. the configuration of the party system. Along this dimension we may identify two extreme and an intermediate situation. At one extreme we find the model of continuity. Here in spite of the non democratic interruption the party system of the first democracy proves able to survive without major changes into the second democracy. None of the most crucial components of the original party system are disrupted and vice versa no significant additions emerge with the comeback to democracy. At the other pole we find the model of discontinuity. Here the old party system has been more or less completely washed away by the non democratic interruption and the new one has to be produced almost entirely from scratch. In the middle we have situations where parts of the old party system survive but others not, and significant innovations develop with the new party system.

For the next dimension which refers to the competitive structure of the party system we can follow the line traced by Sartori with his analysis of party system types. A move from one type of party system to another (for instance from polarized pluralism to moderate pluralism, from moderate pluralism to bipartism etc..) will be defined as change. Vice versa there will be continuity whenever the boundaries between different types are not crossed.

For the third dimension (level of partyness) we may simply distinguish between high and low partyness on the basis of the organizational density of parties. Continuity and change will be evaluated accordingly.

In the short explorations of empirical cases I will follow a chronological order beginning with the countries where democracy was reestablished in the forties after the second World War.

The first case I propose to consider is that of Austria. On the first dimension (party system configuration) the location of this case near the pole of maximum continuity is rather clear. In spite of changes in the names (from Social Democrats to Socialists and from Christian Social Party to People's Party) the two main parties of the interwar period are able to

retain their dominant role after the non democratic interlude. Their individual and combined electoral weights change only slightly between the two periods (the limited change goes in the direction of a strengthening of their dominance within the party system. At this level of analysis at least the democratic interruption has left almost no trace.

Significant changes emerge only when we move to the competitive structure of the party system. The analysis of interparty relations shows indeed an important transformation: from the increasingly unrestrained competition of the late twenties which finally precipitated into violent confrontation, the two major parties move after the second world war to a cooperative attitude within the frame of the grand coalition. Later on will even develop, at least temporarily, the possibility of a peaceful succession of one party governments and the alternance in power of the two main parties. According to the scheme of Fig. 1 we could say that Austria fits in the «b» cell.

As for the third dimension — the degree of partyiness of political life — the Austrian case shows in both periods a particularly high level of organizational density. Continuity prevails again.

To sum up Austria can be described as a case where the strength of the original party mold (defined by the specific identities of the components of the party system and by their organizational weight) is sufficiently high to offset almost entirely the impact of the non democratic interruption. Within this strong framework of continuity opportunities for innovation are mainly confined to relations between the two main parties. «Learning from the past» and the adoption of a countervailing strategy (the grand coalition) tame the polarization that had shattered the first party system. Behavioral change, in particular at the elite level, goes together with a great amount of structural stability.

We have then two cases — Italy and Germany — similar enough in being more or less at a midpoint between continuity and discontinuity on the first dimension. They show however some important differences when the other dimensions are taken into account.

When we analyze the configuration of the party system emerging in Italy after the second world war it is immediately apparent that significant elements of continuity with the past coexist with important aspects of discontinuity. The roots of the three largest parties of the postfascist period (Christian Democrat, Communist and Socialist) can be traced easily to two major political forces of the prefascist political system — the Partito Po-

polare (catholic) and the Socialist party. Only minor parties of the post-fascist period are entirely new. But at the same time we cannot discard the significant changes in the balance between the parties and in their political identities. The Communist party which, by deriving from a split of the Socialist party in 1921, fits to some extent into the image of continuity, becomes a significant element of change in the new party system when we take into account its growth after the fall of Fascism from being a minor party to being a major party (larger than the Socialists). At the same time it must be noticed that some of the older parties even if able to survive into the new democracy are seriously weakened at the electoral and parliamentary level. In fact the two largest forces of the prefascist period, i.e. the liberal «area» (the word party is not easily applicable to this very diversified and divided political family), and the Socialist party, face a dramatic electoral decline (from approximately 36% of the votes in 1919 the Liberals fall to 7% of 1946 ; and the Socialists from 32% in 1919 to 20% in 1946). Finally the Catholics, which had been the youngest (their birth took place in 1919) and weakest of the big parties enjoy a strong growth (from 20% in 1919 to 35% in 1946 and 48% in 1948) which establishes them as the largest party. Of the three largest political forces of the post-fascist period one (the PCI) was hardly relevant in the prefascist period (being born in 1921 and obtaining only 4.6 % in that year's elections). Vice versa one of the three largest forces of the prefascist period (the Liberals) was reduced to being only a minor group in the postfascist era.

If we compared the elections of 1921 and 1946 using the measure of volatility commonly applied to «continuous» countries (Pedersen 1979) the result for the entire party system would be a very high level of 40.3%²⁶. The losses affect essentially the two oldest and largest among the traditional parties (Liberals and Socialists); the gains are fairly equally divided between one of the main historical parties (PPI-DC) and a new entry in the club (the PCI). Summing up the main parties of the two periods overlap only partially . To say that changes have taken place mainly within the two opposed camps of the class cleavage — the PCI gains at the expenses of the PSI; the Catholic party at the expenses of the Liberals — is to a certain extent true, but is not enough. Other important cleavages are affected. First and foremost there is a crucial change concerning the confessional-

²⁶. The highest level of volatility between two contiguous elections that Bartolini and Mair register is 32.1 % (Germany 1924) (Bartolini and Mair 1991 p. 68).

secular cleavage: the near disappearance of the Liberal area to the advantage mainly of the confessional party means that after Fascism this cleavage tends to overlap with the socioeconomic one. Secondly, dissensions on international alignments and attitudes toward the democratic regime become extremely important in the left (opposing Communist party to the Socialist party and other minor parties). This means also that party identities have necessarily undergone some important modifications (this is particularly relevant for the Christian Democratic party).

When we move from the analysis of the components of the party system to its structure it is easy to detect that changes in the balance of parties have affected coalition patterns. While the Liberal elite was the dominant actor in pre-fascist coalitions, the Catholic party conquers this role in the new democracy. But if we look at the aspects that according to Sartori define the «mechanics» of the party system (Sartori 1976) important elements of continuity between the two periods persist in spite of changes. It is sufficient to mention the existence of significant anti-system parties (or in any case of parties the loyalty of which to the democratic regime is at least dubious and which delegitimize it) on both sides of the political spectrum, the high ideological distance, the unavailability of a democratically safe alternative coalition, the necessity to build governmental alliances based on the center parties. Most of the features of polarized pluralism are at play in both periods. At the same time there is a crucial difference which has probably a central role in explaining the greater stability of post fascist democracy. The degree of partyness of the two periods, the overall organizational density of the two party systems differ markedly. The attention should go in particular to the much higher level of organizational strength of the leading governmental party in the post fascist period. The overall growth of partyness of political life is significant both at the elite level and at the mass level. A clear indicator for the latter are turnout rates: these go up from 58.4% in 1921 to 89.1% in 1946 and 92.2% in 1948. Party membership figures are another one: card carrying members were probably no more than 200.000 before fascism; they totalled nearly 3 millions in 1947.

To put it in a simplified formula one could define the Italian case as the stabilization of a polarized multipartism (via a substantial reequilibration of the main parties and a stronger institutionalization of the party system). A case falling between «a» and «c» in Figure 1.

As we have said also in the German case a significant degree of continuity mixes with important changes in the configuration of the party system. On one side all the main parties of Bonn have their roots in some of the major parties of the Weimar period. In fact if we looked only at quantitative data one would find that the global weight of the main Weimar parties in the early twenties is more or less the same of their successor parties in the first Bonn election of 1949 (Urwin 1974). But behind this global outlook there are qualitative and quantitative transformations that added together make for a somewhat modified configuration of the party system. We may consider briefly what has happened to the main components of the Weimar party system — *Sozialdemokratische Partei* (SPD), *Zentrum*, *Demokratische Partei* (DDP), *Deutsche Volkspartei* (DVP) and *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (DNVP). The SPD is probably the one that has changed less and has a very clear successor party in the Federal Republic; the most important novelty here is the practical disappearance of the competitor from the left (the Communist party). The catholic party of the Zentrum has its follower in the CDU/CSU, but with the crucial innovation (which brings also a significant quantitative growth) that the old and strong confessional division between catholics and reformed is overcome²⁷. In the bourgeois area the traditional split of German liberalism that the Weimar republic had inherited from the Empire (DDP and DVP) gives way in Bonn to a unified party (FDP) where the two souls coexist; this however does not prevent a drastic electoral decline. Finally the conservative party (DNVP) has no true successor party. Further changes could be added if we moved from the center to the fringes of the party system (regional, single issue, extremist parties).

The quantitative changes in the balance between the main parties (disappearance of the conservative party, strong decline of liberal parties, growth of socialist and Christian democratic parties) suggest that a significant restructuring of political cleavages has taken place. Divisions that had played a crucial role in the past have been wiped away as a result of the totalitarian interlude.

A further difference between Weimar and Bonn concerns the dynamics of the two party systems: completely opposed trends are at work in the two

²⁷. A further point to be mentioned is that, thanks to the cooperative agreement between CDU and CSU, the traditional split of Bavarian Catholicism is kept under control in Bonn.

periods. A dramatic trend in the direction of fragmentation in the Weimar years: the group of the original parties declines by more than a third between the twenties and the thirties. In Bonn on the contrary the trend is toward concentration. In less than two decades the three main parties gain the control of almost the entire electorate. The «virtuous circle» of Bonn's formative years is entirely opposed to the «vicious circle» of Weimar years.

If we look at the structure of the party system from a sartorian perspective there is a very clear move from a case of extreme and polarized pluralism (Weimar) to one of moderate pluralism (Bonn). All major aspects of the two models are involved (Sartori 1976, 131 ff.). In the Weimar period antisystem parties are strong and important; ideological distance is extremely wide; center coalitions prevail (until the final years) and there is little alternance in government; irresponsible and bilateral oppositions produce centrifugal drives and pursue a politics of outbidding, etc.. The opposite characters dominate in Bonn: antisystem parties are weak and irrelevant, ideological distance is smaller, alternative coalitions prevail, the opposition adopts responsible attitudes, etc. The opposite trends of change shown before for the two periods are also congruent with the sartorian perspective. They show in one case (Weimar) a trend of polarization and the weakening of the center of the political spectrum and of the party system, in the other case (Bonn) a trend of depolarization and the strengthening of the center.

The partyness dimension seems less relevant in the German case compared to the Italian one.

Summing up the German case shows an interesting combination of partial change in the configuration of the party system associated with a clear change in the competitive structure. A case that would be placed in our scheme between the «b» and «d» cells.

The three cases of redemocratization after the second world war show therefore some important differences in the combinations of the main dimensions of party system change.

We may now examine the countries where redemocratization took place in the seventies. Portugal, Greece and Spain are constantly associated for the chronological contemporaneity of their redemocratization processes; this association however raises some problems for what concerns the rebuilding of the party systems. In particular one should not forget that the authoritarian interruption lasted in Greece only seven years compared to the much longer periods of Spain (40 years) and Portugal (48 years).

The case of Greece is understandably the one that shows the greatest elements of continuity between old and new party system. The major political forces of the years before the dictatorship — the conservatives of the National Radical Union, the liberals of the Union of the Center, the communists and leftists of the United Democratic Left — all have a successor party after the fall of the military regime. Indeed the results of the first post authoritarian election (1974) are a very close replica of those of the sixties. The only new party is the Socialist Pasok which obtains in 1974 a relatively small electoral following. The rapid growth of this party to the point of becoming the first party in the third elections, and the disappearance of the Union of the Center are to be seen as a significant breakaway from the traditional party system that had initially survived the dictatorship ? Some doubts have to be raised. Some analyses have pointed to the similarities and links (among which the close family ties between the top leaders) existing between PASOK and the old Union of the Center. If this is acknowledged differences between the two party systems become even smaller.

Has the competitive structure of the party system changed ? Especially during the first years of the new democracy the model of a limited but polarized multipartism which had dominated the pre-dictatorship period seemed bound to be reproduced in the new party system (Mavrogordatos 1984, Seferiades 1986). The degree of polarization of the competition between the main contenders remained high also in the new democracy. At the same time the exclusionary policies adopted against the left that had heavily characterized the democratic regime in the years preceding the dictatorship have been abandoned in the new democracy and the authoritarian leanings of the right have been tamed. Alternance in government, although not devoid of tensions and drama, has become an acceptable outcome of the political game. All that has had obviously to do also with changes taking place outside the sphere of parties, in particular with the disappearance from the political arena of two major components of the authoritarian front (the monarchy and the military).

The last point suggests to turn the attention to another dimension, i.e. to the role and weight of parties in the political system. The decline of other political actors, as a consequence of the fall of the dictatorship, contributed, albeit in a negative way, to a relative increase in the degree of partyness of Greek politics. Interestingly enough this development was

coupled also on the positive side by a significant degree of organizational growth of the two largest parties (Featherstone 1990).

Summing up we may say that, if we interpret New Democracy as a new version of the party of the Right and we accept the view that PASOK is to some extent the real successor of the old Center Union, the Greek party system shows a basic continuity in its main components. But at the same time there are elements of change that affect in a crucial way the functional performances of the party system. Even if polarization has not disappeared entirely the Greek party system has become more similar under certain aspects (in particular the government building function) to the working patterns of a moderate pluralism. We have thus a case which could be placed more or less between the «a» and «b» cells of Figure 1.

With Portugal and Spain — and particularly with Portugal — we come much nearer to the pole of discontinuity in the configuration of the party systems. In the Portuguese case the post-authoritarian party system bears no relationship with the party system of the beginning of the century. None of the main parties of today can trace its roots to the political groups which dominated the political game before Salazar. The discontinuity is less complete in Spain: a. one of the two largest parties of the post-Franco period — the PSOE -- was already one of the important actors in the party system of the thirties; b. the sub-national party systems of the two traditionally autonomist regions (the Basque region and Catalunya) maintain a significant degree of continuity with the past. All this being said the national configuration of the Spanish party system of the seventies is deeply changed. There is no significant successor party to the catholic CEDA and the same is true for the anticlerical bourgeois parties (Partido Radical Republicano and Izquierda Republicana) of the thirties. The UCD first and AP (now PP) later are related more to the legacy of francoism (and in particular to the problem of «democratizing» areas of support for that regime) than to the political movements of the thirties.

For what concerns the other dimensions change has also been extremely significant. In the Portuguese case change has involved first of all the dimension of partyiness: political life has jumped from the stage of purely parliamentary cliques in the pre-Salazar years (which were characterized by limited suffrage) to a fairly structured party system. In the Spanish case, where a somewhat more structured party system had existed already before Franco, change has mainly touched the competitive structure of the par-

ty system. The highly polarized party system of the thirties has given way to a fairly moderate multipartism (verging on a predominant party system).

The two countries fall into the «d» cell of our scheme. Change involves two at least of the dimensions of the party system. This means that compared to the previous cases the pre-authoritarian past is much less relevant to explain the present. Or perhaps it is relevant mainly in a negative way, i.e. because of its disappearance. The explanatory factors for the new party systems have to be found in a more recent past and in the present (which to put it very shortly means on one side the management of the legacies of the fall of the non democratic regime and on the other side dealing with the problems of the democratic instauration).

This brief survey of empirical cases has shown indeed a significant variety of combinations of continuity and change on the three dimensions outlined here for the analysis of party systems. Where the Central and Eastern European cases will be located in this multidimensional space is a question that cannot receive yet a very clear answer. From our earlier discussion the configuration of their party systems should fall more near the pole of change than near the pole of continuity with the past. But will the new configurations of their party systems overcome the generally weak degree of partyness that prevailed (perhaps with the only exception of Czechoslovakia) in their first democratic or proto-democratic regimes ? And will the polarization of the past give way to a more restrained competition ? Given the limited weight played in these countries by past democratic traditions the keys to these answers lie much more in the present than it was the case in most Western European countries. How the institutional problems of the new democracy are dealt, how the political and economic legacies of the communist regimes are handled become the crucial tests.

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