

SUMMARY

Émigré Party: Dilemmas of the Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” 1945–1994

The Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” was established by a group of young politicians descending from conspiracy groups active during the World War II and military and civilian structures linked to the Polish government in exile. It was officially set up in February 1945 in response to the Yalta conference agreements. It was a form of opposition to the new political situation imposed on Poland by the world powers. At the same time its creation was motivated by the feeling that historical (in this case pre-war) parties did not have much to offer to younger generations of politicians. The history of the movement encompasses almost half a century as it officially ended its activities in 1994. The history of the Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” can be used to illustrate the history of the Polish independence-oriented political emigration in the Cold War period. It can also show how the political system in exile functioned and how it interacted with systems in the home country and host countries as well as the international environment.

The core question that guides this book is whether or not the Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” can be considered a political party. The answer was not obvious even to the members of the organisation. In consequence the word ‘movement’ was added to the name – it allowed for openness to more social and political groups than traditional parties did. Thanks to this, the Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” attracted Christian Democrats like Stanisław Grocholski and socialists such as Jerzy Lerski and Andrzej Pomian. This broad political spectrum, united under the idea of liberating Poland, introducing democracy and joining the Central European federation was also conflict-prone. And even though the Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” never experienced a split typical for émigré parties, the fact that important members were leaving significantly undermined the potential of the organization.

The Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” was an unusual attempt to prepare the young generation for party activism. Beginning in summer 1945, this was done out of hope that the outbreak of World War III which would change the political situation in the home country, creating conditions for the transfer of these already formed structures to Poland. This would allow the members of the “Independence and Democracy” movement to participate in elections, which

would test their political attractiveness. In its first stage the movement showed characteristics of a cadre party whose objective was to transform into a modern political movement. Such thinking was ahead of its time. However, since activities had to be clandestine, despite attempts to build a mass party, the very core of the organization remained elite in character. Three main districts were formed (in Great Britain, France and the USA), divided into branches and sections, and organisational rules and a program were established. Chances of returning to Poland were diminishing, however, and with them the possibility of transferring a party system based on historical parties such as those supported by the émigrés. Flirting with political underground did not bring any real opportunities to influence the situation in the home country either.

What was left was participation in the political system in exile and international activity. However even though the organisation had its structures and well-thought-out program, some of its members were very active and it had relative successes (such as appointing Jan Nowak-Jeziorański the head of the Polish Section of Radio Free Europe), the Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" had a serious problem with legitimacy. It did not have a chance to undergo democratic processes which would confirm its ability to govern and represent the interests of Polish society. The movement's participation in the constantly changing émigré system (beginning in 1949 as part of the Political Council) was more and more symbolic in nature. The Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" decided to change the strategy of building its own potential and started working towards expanding its social base. The recruitment from among the émigré groups of workers and craftsmen resulted in the increase in the number of members – in the mid-1950s the numbers multiplied. Strong social support enabled effective competition with historical parties such as the National Party or the Polish Socialist Party. The transformation of political centres in exile led to the establishment in 1954 of the Provisional Council of National Unity – an institution aspiring to the role of a parliament. A constitutional dispute, that flared up again was settled by the members of the Provisional Council of National Unity to their advantage. It was deemed that President Zaleski's term of office ended; therefore, new bodies, including the Council of Three (with the prerogative of the president) and the Executive Committee of the Provisional Council of National Unity (with the prerogative of the government), took over the mandate so far granted to the president in exile. Representatives of the Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" – as members of the Provisional Council of National Unity – decided to use this fact to develop their own legitimization mechanisms. They demanded elections that would enable measuring the attractiveness of particular parties in exile. The Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" was seriously preparing to assume its role as a political party. In the Provisional Council of National Unity it swiftly turned to opposition and announcing elections became their major demand for the next few years. They worked on electoral regulations, trying to achieve a situation in which the majority of the PCNU members would be elected. When after a few years the decision about

the elections was made, the Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" – despite their earlier demands – boycotted them, explaining that elections did not meet democratic criteria. This way the only opportunity to measure the support given to the Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" was missed. Such activity – effectively against their own program – was a result of a erroneous strategy adopted after 1957. The organisation was also affected by external factors such as diminishing interest of émigrés in political activities, the possibility of direct contact with Poland, and finally operations undertaken by the public security forces in the People's Republic of Poland. The creation and activities of the Federation of Democratic Movements in 1962 was controlled by the intelligence services of the Ministry of Internal Affairs; however, the members of the Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" probably did not know the scale of this infiltration. It was the interaction with the home country system after 1956 that proved to be most destructive. Support given to Władysław Gomułka, attempts at political dialogue with partners who turned out to be secret agents, contact with the revisionist circles – all these turned out to be the direct and most important reasons for organisational collapse. From this moment, the organisation started losing its potential and never regained it.

What in the first years of the Movement was considered its strength with time started causing more and more serious problems. Instead of building potential, the diversity of opinions and extent of structures started bringing conflicts. Apart from these, the organisation's leaders had to face serious logistical and financial problems. Communication was hindered by the departure of important members of the Movement for the USA and for Munich. These departures from Great Britain caused additional problems – from competing ambition to formal ones that made it impossible to agree on a common standpoint. New members recruited in the beginning of the 1950s needed special political trainings that required additional attention. In these circumstances, maintaining the unity of the movement was getting more difficult. Conflictual situations that previously could be solved in a small group were now impacting the entire organisation. Mistakes on the part of the leaders, who started losing contact with regular members, were just a matter of time. The year 1957 turned out to be a major caesura: some important members quit, and the recruitment of new members came to a sudden halt. These were due to programmatic differences, but also the fact that the London-based core of the party lost contact with very dynamic centres in the USA, France and Germany. What was meant to be a party shrank in numbers, and those who stayed formed only a social structure. The following six years were a time of the organisation's gradual collapse. A final acceleration of this irreversible tendency came with the departure of the Munich circle in 1963 in a protest against the repudiation of the émigré system and an attempt to form a new centre of power. The year 1963 can be considered the moment in which the project of building the Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" as a political organisation active in the most important centres of Polish emigration in the world failed. This could not be changed by active membership over the next few years within the

Federation of Democratic Movements or by attempts to mobilise members for subsequent anniversaries.

Problems of the political system in exile also contributed to the weakness of the organisation. Only in the first post-war years, in the course of cooperation with the Polish Socialist Party and Tomasz Arciszewski, the "Independence and Democracy" movement gained strength within this system. The organisation did not have strong relationships with the Piłsudskiites (*piłsudczycy*, i.e. Marshall Józef Piłsudski's supporters), which was strange considering that many of the "Independence and Democracy" members came from these circles. The Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" strengthened its position in the Political Council and then in the Provisional Council of National Unity. Joining the opposition and taking the decision to form a separate political centre, the so-called Federation of Democratic Movements, undermined its position, which the organisation never managed to rebuild. In the following years not only did the Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" decline, but in fact the entire political system in exile crumbled.

Additionally, the movement's potential was weakened by a gradual turn towards an authoritarian style of leadership. One of the most important roles, i.e. the President of the Central Executive Committee, was held by Rowmund Piłsudski for 35 years. It was criticised by colleagues as breaking the rules of democratic participation in power. It was perceived as a clear signal that the highest rank in the organisational structure was blocked even though democratic procedures were supposedly observed. These reservations became apparent in 1957, when the party experienced a crisis connected to its attitude towards the home country. Rowmund Piłsudski was accused of inflated ambitions and a loss of clear vision. But on the other hand there were not so many people ready to give their time and energy to lead the movement. From the mid-1950s there was no real alternative to Rowmund Piłsudski. From the mid-1960s the competition within the "Independence and Democracy" movement ceased to exist; activities were limited to symbolic actions and journalism. It was only the commonality of experience, organisation and goals that still induced the members to cooperate. This was characteristic of the entire Polish emigration. The potential of individual people composing the Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" manifested in individual actions that were far from the concept of social movement and political party.

An attempt to revitalise the structures in the 1980s following the accession of émigré members of the Solidarity movement was not very successful. The revival was of a short duration. Changes began that questioned the *raison d'être* of a political party in exile. At the same time, there was hope that it would be possible to realise the original postulates, developed almost half a century earlier, including participation in the political party structures in Poland. An attempt to enter political life in Poland in the time of democratic transformation proved to be a painful experience. New parties were springing up – after the elections in 1991, there were almost 30 parties in the Polish parliament – which disoriented long-term émigrés who – since they

could not refer to the tradition of historical parties like socialists or Christian democrats – searched for the political structure that would be closest to their ideas. To this end, they initiated talks with the Centre Agreement (Porozumienie Centrum). This attempt to join forces ended in disappointment. Politicians in exile only had symbolic value for the politicians in Poland. In this situation, however though not unanimously, the decision was taken to dissolve the movement.

This was the end of the Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” – a structure that was conceived entirely in émigré circles and that never formally existed in Poland, either in the pre-war period or after 1989. It did not develop a following and today nobody refers to its legacy. This was also the fate of historical parties built around the 19th century ideologies.

The Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” never became a social movement even though these were its original ambitions. But it never became a party in the strict sense, either. The structures created, even though they were based on well-known models, did not fit into the existing party systems, except for the émigré system based on the historical parties. The Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” was not a historical party. The movement did not manage to receive a democratic mandate either through elections in exile or via return to the home country. It was not a party with its own electorate or one that would be chosen to form a government elected in democratic elections.

It was, however, treated as a party by its own members and by historical parties, and so it was classified by the People’s Republic of Poland’s intelligence services. Consistency in building structures, waiting for changes in the political situation, responding to changes in the home country, strengthening its position on the political scene in exile and in relations with international structures – in the case of a typical party, all this should be considered as the process of party building. Therefore, the term ‘party’ in relation to the Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” cannot be discarded. One can apply a conditional term, though: a party *in statu nascendi*. The Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” was a dynamic structure that should be described as in the process of forming a modern political party. However, due to the international situation and its own decisions, this project never went past its development stage. The “Independence and Democracy” movement was supposed to become a party, and in its first phase it accumulated enough organisational, social, international and conceptual potential to achieve this goal. Contacts with the home country were supposed to capitalise on this potential in Poland; however, this never happened. Staying abroad limited the possibilities. In the 1960s, this potential diminished, except for the political thought related to international affairs. Had it been possible to transfer the activities of the movement to Poland in 1957, would the Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” have become a significant player on the Polish political scene? If the international circumstances had changed faster, would it have been one of the most modern parties in Poland? These questions will remain unanswered.

Even though the use of the term 'party' in the case of the Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" depends on many conditions we need to recognize it as one of the most interesting phenomena in Polish political life in the 20th century. Tension described above between social goals linked with the postulate of self-organisation of the emigration and political objectives which assumed functioning in specific party systems was often evident. The postulate of modernity was what made this party different from other emigrant parties – at the same time it did not agree to turn its back on the past. Modernity related to the method of building up a political life in extreme political conditions, without own country and basing on political commitments as agreed during the World War II.

Equally important were political changes taking place in the Western Europe and in the wider world. Only changes in the international situation would make Poland independent. Security could only be granted by the process of unification of Europe and the skilful policy of the USA – the main opponent of communism during the Cold War period. From the very beginning, the representatives of the Polish Freedom Movement "Independence and Democracy" tried to find a way to influence these policies and shape them according to their political visions. They tried to use contacts with the American Free Europe Committee and European federalists. The movement sought opportunities to influence policies of particular countries in the West. Formation of supranational political bodies that started playing a more and more important role in international politics was also attentively observed. This included Central European initiatives that helped to organise the activities of emigrants and pan-European initiatives that marked the beginning of the European parties. Contacts with the European federalists, at least in the first half of the 1950s, gave the impression of having some – even if insignificant – influence on European politics.

To present the movement in full – rather than simply outline its structures and potential – one needs to mention a large group of exceptional individuals who played important roles in the Polish and international environment, or contributed to Polish political thought in the 20th century. The book discusses over 1200 members of the organisation who played a role in its over-50-year-long history. The list includes names like: Aleksander Bregman, Marian Kamil Dziewanowski, Stefan Gacki, Józef Garliński, Stanisław Grocholski, Jerzy Jankowski, Zbigniew Jordan, Jerzy Lerski, Bolesław Łaszewski, Zygmunt Michałowski, Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, Andrzej Pomian (Sałaciński), Zbigniew Rapacki, Adam Rudzki, Zygmunt Szempliński, Ludwik Teclaff, Piotr Wandycz, Bolesław Wierzbiański, Tadeusz Żenczykowski (Zawadzki) and of course the leader of the movement – Rowmund Piłsudski.