BUREAUCRATS AND PROFESSIONALS: THE ‘PARTY MACHINE’ IN POST-COMMUNIST POLAND

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Abstract

This paper examines the development of the bureaucracy and technical and organisational infrastructure attached to the new political parties in post-communist Poland. Most parties conformed more to the recent catch-all/electoral professional and cartel models than the traditional mass party model. All of them were characterised by a weak central office bureaucracy employing a small number of paid staff while a large proportion of party employees were attached to the ‘party in public office.’ Although, it was not necessarily accurate to view the latter as substituting directly for party central office staff, there was, in practice, a functional blurring between party and parliamentary bureaucracies given the overlap between the two leaderships. This meant that many of the staff working for key parliamentary faction leaders were also working de facto for party central office leaders. This same pattern was even more evident at local level where there was substantial evidence of ‘parliamentary’ staff and technical facilities substituting for ‘party’ resources. Only the PSL displayed significantly more mass party characteristics in relation to its party central office and, although the hypothesised pattern of ‘successor’ party superiority was much more evident at local level, this was related less to their organisational legacies than to the fact that they were the two largest parliamentary formations (and, thus, with the greatest access to local parliamentary office facilities) at the time this research was undertaken. However, while there was also some evidence of the increasing utilisation of external experts, advisers and consultants, much of this was activity was motivated by political (if not personal) sympathies and it was questionable to what extent most of this activity could really be described as ‘professionalisation’. Moreover, given the new parties’ extremely weak financial bases, together a lingering suspicion of and a residual hostility towards (particularly Western) professional communication advisers, there was no realistic prospect that such ‘professionals’ would somehow develop as a substitute for replace the weak party central office bureaucracies as envisaged in the electoral-professional and cartel models.
This paper is concerned with the development of party technical and organisational infrastructure and, specifically, the size and functions of the bureaucracies attached to the new parties in post-communist Poland. What might be termed the ‘party machine’ is one of the most neglected themes in party studies research even in the more developed Western literature. Until Katz and Mair’s recent studies there has been no comparative research on this subject with even the number of paid officials attached to most parties remaining a mystery.¹ In the earlier stages of developing their idea of parties being composed of different elements, or ‘faces’, Katz and Mair aggregated the ‘party as bureaucracy’ into a separate component.² However, subsequently they placed greater emphasis on the fact that parties often had several separate bureaucracies and disaggregated this element into the parts associated with what they termed: the ‘party in central office’ (the national leadership of the party organisation), the ‘party in public office’ (the party in parliament and/or government) and the ‘party on the ground’ (party members and activists).³

Moreover, Katz and Mair identified the central role played by the bureaucracy attached to the ‘party in central office’ as one of the defining characteristics of the mass party, as did Panebianco, even more explicitly, in his analogous ‘mass-bureaucratic’ party model.⁴ While the earlier cadre parties paid little attention to campaigning, mass parties built up highly labour-intensive organisations financed by membership contributions. This ensured that the bureaucracy attached to the party central office played a crucial role as the controller and co-ordinator of the party membership, while the ‘party in public office’ was relatively weak. Consequently, the shift towards a more capital intensive, professional and centralised type of campaigning in the more recent catch-all/electoral-professional and cartel models, therefore, had two important implications for the number, character and disposition of the party bureaucracies attached to the party central office and ‘party in public office’.⁵

Firstly, in Katz and Mair’s cartel party model, the party ‘machine’ attached to the party central office assumed much less importance, as an increasing number of party employees were linked to the ‘party in public office’. At the same time as parties began to shift towards a more capital-intensive approach to campaigning, they also came to rely increasingly on subventions and other benefits and privileges afforded to them by the state, and the ‘party in public office’ began to acquire its own staff and financial resources. Consequently, there was a dramatic reduction in the number of party central office staff and a concomitant growth in employees attached to the ‘party

² Party Organisations, pp5-6.
in public office’ paid for largely (if not exclusively) from state funds. Admittedly, Katz and Mair also discovered a continuing bias towards party central office staff in absolute terms and the overall numbers employed in the parties parliamentary offices exceeded those employed in the central offices in only a minority of West European counties. However, even this phenomenon was partially explained by the greater availability of state resources to parties and, therefore, underestimated the real bias in favour of the ‘party in public office’. Indeed, Katz and Mair found that in countries where parliamentary subventions remained the only source of state funding and the party central office lacked the resources to employ its own independent staff, many of the staff who were funded through state subventions actually ended up working there. Moreover, not all of the staff resources attached to the ‘party in public office’ were visible and quantifiable through an examination of party structures alone particularly when the party in question was in government and could, in effect, place party appointees in (often senior) positions in the state bureaucracy.

Secondly, both the electoral-professional and cartel party models highlighted a more general shift away from the employment of paid party officials and bureaucrats towards the increasing utilisation of professionals and other consultants with a much looser relationship with the party. Indeed, while Kirchheimer’s catch-all model (the first to identify a shift in the party’s gravitational centre from party members to the electorate) only treated this issue implicitly, Panebianco considered the ‘professionalisation’ of party organisation to be the distinguishing feature of his electoral-professional model and, more generally, of the process of party change. This process implied both a decrease in the importance of traditional party ‘bureaucrats’ (in the Weberian sense of full-time administrators dedicated the maintenance of the organisation) and a concomitant increase in the role of professionals, experts and consultants. According to Panebianco it was precisely this distinction between bureaucrats and professionals, that was the key difference between his electoral-professional and the earlier mass-bureaucratic model.  

Katz and Mair identified a similar shift of emphasis towards professionals and consultants in their cartel party model which, they argued, was rooted in the changing style of party campaigning. The services provided by bureaucrats attached to the party central office may have been indispensable when most party activities were directed towards the organisation of a mass membership and greater emphasis was placed on the party’s own independent channels of communication. However, as parties increasingly directed their efforts towards the mobilisation of support among the electorate at large and competed for access to non-partisan communication networks, many of the services required from the party central office ‘machine’ could be secured through alternative sources, such as professional publicists and communications specialists. In other words, while the party central office ‘machine’ may have remained useful as a means of organising and co-ordinating the activities of the ‘party on the ground,’ it was no longer indispensable for campaigning purposes. But while in the electoral-professional model this shift from ‘bureaucrats’ to ‘professionals’ took place within the party central office staffs, Katz and Mair were more explicit that the relationship between parties and professionals had become much looser and more

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6 Political Parties, p231.
contractual. For example, communication services could be bought on the open market “perhaps at a higher price but without the added costs of subservience to a party organisation whose goal priorities may be quite different.”

In order to examine what kind of party ‘machine’ is developing in post-communist Poland, this paper examines the six main parties and groupings that emerged as the most significant in the run up to the most recent parliamentary elections in September 1997 (when most of the research for this paper was conducted).

The two largest political groupings, Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarnoœci: AWS) and the Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej: SLD) were both political conglomerates comprising around thirty parties and other groupings. The SLD was dominated by Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (Sojaldemokracja Rzecpospolitej Polskiej: SdRP) which was formed in January 1990 as the direct organisational successor to the communist Polish United Workers’ Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza: PZPR). SLD was the senior government coalition partner during the 1993-97 parliament and its leader, Aleksander Kwaceniewski, was elected President of the Polish Republic in November 1995. The right-wing AWS conglomerate was formed in June 1996 and emerged as the largest parliamentary grouping and main government coalition partner after the September 1997 elections. However, the hegemonic role within AWS was not, unlike the SLD, played by a political party sensu stricto but by the Solidarity trade union.

The third largest grouping, the Freedom Union (Unia Wolnoœci: UW) was formed in April 1994 following a merger of two pragmatic, liberal-centrist parties the Democratic Union (Unia Demokratyczna: UD) and the Liberal Democratic Congress (Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczne: KLD) which emerged from the Solidarity movement. The party was originally led by Poland’s first post-communist premier Tadeusz Mazowiecki until he was replaced by his former Finance Minister and architect of Poland’s post-communist economic reform programme Leszek Balcerowicz in April 1995. The UW was the main opposition party during the 1993-97 parliament and went on to become AWS’s junior coalition partner after the September 1997 parliamentary elections. The Polish Peasant Party (Polskie Stromnictwo Ludowe: PSL) was formed in May 1990 as the successor to the communist’s former satellite, the United Peasant Party (Zjednoczone Stromnictwo Ludowe: ZSL), although it also attempted to draw on the traditions of the pre-war peasant movement which provided the main political opposition to the communists during the immediate post-war years. The PSL was the SLD’s junior coalition partner in the 1993-97 parliament although both its share of the vote and parliamentary representation were slashed following the September 1997 election and it was reduced to the status of only fourth largest grouping.

The Labour Union (Unia Pracy: UP) was another left-wing party formed in 1992 by a number of smaller social democratic groupings emerging from Solidarity movement and reformed ex-communists who chose not to join SdRP. The UP was the fourth

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7 Although Panebianco acknowledged that some of the latter were recruited on short-term contracts.
largest formation in the 1993-97 parliament but narrowly failed to cross the 5% threshold for parliamentary representation in September 1997. Finally, the Movement for Poland’s Reconstruction (*Ruch Odbudowy Polski: ROP*) was a right-wing party formed in November 1995 by the supporters of former Solidarity premier Jan Olszewski in an attempt to capitalise on his relatively good presidential election result. Although ROP won just enough support in September 1997 to secure parliamentary representation this only translated into a tiny number of parliamentary seats.

This paper focuses mainly on the five political parties *sensu stricto*: the UW, PSL, UP and ROP together with SdRP as the main component of the SLD conglomerate; although occasional reference is made to both the AWS conglomerate and to the SLD in its role as a parliamentary fraction when it is relevant to the general line of argument.

So what kind of party ‘machine’ might we expect to see attached to the developing political parties of post-communist Poland? Firstly, given that a number of commentators have hypothesised that the new parties emerging in post-communist East-Central Europe are more likely to conform more to the catch-all/electoral-professional and cartel party models, we would might expect the new Polish parties to develop a weak party central office bureaucracy with a large proportion of the party staff linked directly to the ‘party in public office.’ Secondly, given that they may retain some kind of the structural, material and financial legacy from the communist period we might expect the two ‘successor’ formations, the SdRP/SLD and PSL, to display more of the characteristics of the mass party model and, consequently, to have both a stronger party ‘machine’ and a comparatively larger proportion of their staff attached to the party central office than the completely ‘new’ parties formed since 1989. Thirdly, given the extremely modest financial resources which are likely to be available to all parties in post-communist Poland, we can predict that, in relation to the ‘professionalisation’ of the party machine and greater utilisation of external experts, advisers and consultants, they will only conform to the more recent catch-all/electoral-professional and cartel party models to only a very limited extent.

In order to test these hypotheses this paper considers three important aspects relating to the development of the party ‘machine’ in the post-communist Poland. Firstly, the size of and relationship between the bureaucracies attached to the party central office and the ‘party in public office.’ Secondly, the local party ‘machine’ is examined in order to determine to what extent the ‘party on the ground’ is dependent on the financial, material and staffing resources which are made available to it by local parliamentarians. Although this dimension is not really considered in the Western party models, which tend to focus on the national level, it is (as we shall see) a crucial one in terms of determining the balance of resources between Polish parties’ extra-parliamentary and ‘public office’ faces. Thirdly, the extent to which the new Polish parties have utilised external professional policy experts, public opinion specialists and communications advisers is also considered.

**The party bureaucracies**

As Table 1 shows, one of the most striking features of the Polish ‘party machine’ was the tiny number of paid staff attached to the various central offices. Of the five parties examined only the PSL had anything which might with any degree of accuracy be termed a ‘party bureaucracy’ with the full-time equivalent of twenty paid employees. Significantly, the PSL was the only party with paid central office staff specifically responsible for policy and programmatic development. However, it is worth noting that about one third of these employees were purely administrative or clerical rather than so-called ‘meritocratic’, staff. As the party’s programmatic director Jan Wypych put it, “our office is not some kind of decision-making organ but an executive organ which runs the technical-service side for the party’s governing bodies...It is not a large outpost or cell, it is modest...It is (run) at the basic level so that the party’s main organisational tasks...can be fulfilled.” The PSL also retained many of the former ZSL’s assets including its large headquarters building, although most of this was rented out to the Bank of Foodstuff Trading and, as one Polish commentator put it, the conditions in which the PSL’s staff operated were “far from luxurious.”

With the full-time equivalent of ten paid staff, the UW had the second largest party central office ‘bureaucracy’ and largest of any of the ‘new’ parties examined, although still extremely modest for what was then the main parliamentary opposition party with nearly 70 Sejm deputies and Senators. The main reason why the UW developed such a relatively large party central office staff (and was, for example, was the only party other than the PSL with paid full-time press officers) was that party leader Balcerowicz was not (unlike his predecessor) a parliamentarian at the time of his election. Consequently, he both re-organised and increased the party central office staff compliment from three to ten in order to provide him with a separate extra-parliamentary support service.

Perhaps most surprising was the small number of paid employees attached to SdRP’s central office, given its hypothesised organisational legacy and the fact that more than half of the 200-strong SLD parliamentary fraction were party members. In fact, SdRP was able to hang on to much fewer of its predecessor’s assets than the PSL and, although much controversy surrounded their fate, the party was legally required to divest themselves of most of them. Although its party central office was located in a large building, at least three quarters of the space was rented out to various companies and organisations. As one Polish commentator put it, “entering the (SdRP) party headquarters you get the impression that it is abandoned. Politics take place...”

12 Unless otherwise stated all quotes are taken from interviews conducted by the author between February-November 1997.
somewhere else.” In fact, SdRP only employed the full-time equivalent of four full-time paid. However, it is also worth noting that an (unspecified) number of staff worked in the party central office ‘voluntarily’ but on a full-time basis, including the thirteen members of party’s policy-making Presidium (most of whom were parliamentarians) and the seven members of the Supreme Executive Committee which co-ordinated the party organisation. The latter, for example, included both the party’s National Press Spokesman and the head of party organisation. Nonetheless, perhaps more than any other grouping is, the SdRP ‘party machine’ seemed to resemble a ‘sleeping army’: a modest party central office bureaucracy which could transform itself into the organisational backbone for extremely professional (and expensive) parliamentary and presidential election campaigns.

The UP and ROP had tiny party central office staffs which barely warranted the title ‘bureaucracies.’ Although (at the time the research was undertaken) it was the fourth largest parliamentary party with over 30 Sejm deputies, the UP’s central office consisted of only a couple of rooms and employed the full-time equivalent of one-and-a-half administrative staff. The ROP central office was located in equally modest accommodation, and employed the full-time equivalent of three staff, although a loose and fluid group of around twenty part-time volunteers assisted them with various organisational tasks.

In other words, in most cases the party central office ‘bureaucracy’ or ‘machine’ was a virtually meaningless concept, accurately summed up by two Polish commentators’ prescient observation that:

“What generally strikes one is a kind of aesthetic disproportion between the significance of these people and these parties, which are determining...our future...and the surroundings in which they officially function. You frequently come across the liquidators’ labels (Case No Km 413/92) on the furniture in the SdRP headquarters. The PSL’s headquarters on Grzybowska Street has the appearance of time having stood still since around 1970...The UW’s office is completely clean but it is difficult to believe, on the basis of its appearance, that this party numbers three former premiers among its ranks.”

On the other hand, as Table 1 shows, although also relatively modest the number of staff attached to the ‘party in public office’ in all the four ‘parliamentary’ parties surveyed (SdRP as part of the SLD Parliamentary Club, the PSL, UW and UP) clearly outnumbered those working in the party central office bureaucracies. The only exception here was the PSL were the two figures were broadly comparable. The explanation for these disparities lay in the much greater resources which were available to the ‘party in public office’ in Poland. In addition to election refunds paid directly to the party central office, the Polish state treasury provided parties and

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18 Information supplied by UP party headquarters, June 1997.
19 Information supplied by ROP party headquarters, June 1997.
20 „Pywanie w méœnej wodzie”.
21 Since 1993 one-off election refunds were paid to those election committees (comprising parties or coalitions of parties) which were able to secure parliamentary representation in proportion to the
groupings which secured parliamentary representation with two additional kinds of financial support. Firstly, expense allowances paid directly to each Sejm deputy or Senator in order to assist them with setting up and running their local parliamentary offices. Secondly, subventions paid to a party or grouping’s parliamentary fraction (depending on its size) in order to run central support facilities in parliament itself. For example, in 1996 parliamentary fractions with more than 100 Sejm deputies (the SLD and PSL) received 480 złoties per head, those with 50-100 deputies (the UW) 530 złoties and those with fewer than 50 deputies (the UP) 580 złoties; together with 600 złoties per Senator regardless of the fraction’s size. Consequently, there were two kinds of employees funded by the subventions paid to the ‘party in public office’: those employed by the parliamentary fraction itself and providing support for their party or grouping within the actual legislature and those employed directly by parliamentarians and working in their local offices (the latter are considered in greater detail below).

Thus, SdRP was, to some extent, able to compensate for its meagre party central office ‘machine’ by the fact that the SLD parliamentary fraction office employed around twenty five members of staff. As one Polish commentator put it, the relative importance of the party central office and parliamentary fraction offices was symbolised by the fact that the then SdRP General Secretary and SLD fraction leader Jerzy Szmajdziński’s parliamentary office was three times the size of his party headquarters office! Although not quite as large as its party central office ‘machine’, the PSL parliamentary fraction’s office also employed the full-time equivalent of seventeen members of staff. On the other hand, the UW parliamentary fraction office employed the full-time equivalent of fifteen staff, nearly 50% more than the number attached to its party central office. The greatest disparity was in the case of the UP whose parliamentary fraction employed the full-time equivalent of ten staff.

However, although a large proportion of party staff (a majority in three cases) were linked to the ‘party in public office’ it was not necessarily accurate to view these staff as directly substituting for the party central office bureaucracy in the functional sense. Indeed, parliamentary fraction employees appeared to be orientated primarily towards activities taking place within parliament itself: providing support and back up facilities for parliamentarians in their role as legislators rather than party politicians. At most they saw their role as complementary or supplementary to the party central office bureaucracies.

For example, according to SLD parliamentary fraction office director Jerzy Paprota his staffs’ responsibilities were “in practice, inevitably focused on the Sejm because this is where everything happens.” Moreover, the fact that SdRP parliamentarians

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number of seats obtained. In 1997 this was provision was extended to include both parties (not coalitions) which failed to secure representation but won more than 3% of the votes and include provision for ongoing party subventions not just a one-off re-imbursement to cover election costs.  

22 In order to be formally recognised as such, Parliamentary Clubs had to have fifteen and Circles three members respectively.  

23 See: F. Frydrykiewicz, ‘Senator dro¿szy od pos’a’, Rzeczpospolita, 21 December 1995. In addition, each Club received an allocation of funds specifically in order to commission experts’ reports either from parliamentary analytical bureau or from external experts and specialists. 

24 Author interview with Mariusz Janicki, Polityka magazine, June 18 1997.
comprised only one (albeit by far the largest and most important) element within this parliamentary fraction, inevitably meant that there could be no direct formal relationship between the SdRP party central office and the SLD parliamentary fraction office. As Jerzy Paprota put it, “(although) there are obviously occasions when the leaderships of these elements (which comprise the SLD) are also invited for consultations on a given matter... it is above all here (in parliament) that the office’s tasks are focused.” While at one point (immediately after the 1993 parliamentary election) the PSL attempted to “shift the party’s and Parliamentary Club’s political-organisational support into one political-organisational section encompassed within the PSL Parliamentary Club Office,” it was subsequently decided to “return a certain distinctiveness to the PSL Supreme Executive Committee Executive Office from the PSL Parliamentary Club Office in this sphere.” This was exemplified by the party’s decision to keep its programmatic department located within the party central office. As the parliamentary fraction office deputy director Jan Odorczuk put it, “the party’s basic programmatic work is carried out in the PSL head office. Here (in parliament) you simply work on specific things that are happening in the Sejm...Everything relating to the programme is prepared in Grzybowska Street.” Similarly, according to its director Witold Krajewski, the UW parliamentary fraction office functioned quite separately from the party central office and co-operation took “place within a relatively small field...Given that the Secretariat mainly services Sejm deputies...we operate in different spheres.”

Nonetheless, because of the significant overlap between the leadership of the party central office and the ‘party in public office’ in every party with significant parliamentary representation it was impossible to draw a clear and simple functional dividing line between the two party bureaucracies. For example, although the positions of party and parliamentary fraction leader were formally separated, in practice they were often occupied by the same person. The PSL’s Waldemar Pawlak and the UP’s Ryszard Bugaj combined the leadership of their respective parties and parliamentary fractions throughout the 1993-97 parliament. Similarly, SdRP leader Aleksander Kwaœniewski was also the SLD parliamentary fraction leader until he resigned both positions following his election as President. In other words, many of the staff working for key parliamentary fraction leaders were also de facto working for party central office leaders.

One of the best examples of this functional blurring between party and parliamentary fraction functions was the way in which many parliamentarians were also key members of their party’s policy-making or programmatic commissions. For example, SdRP National Press Spokesman Dariusz Klimaszewski argued that “there are extremely close links between the SLD Parliamentary Club and the SdRP but these are not formalised” and emerge from the fact that “many key members of the SLD Parliamentary Club in various commissions are also on key party commissions...Co-operation and joint work, therefore, flows naturally from the fact that SdRP’s programmatic documents, or sections of them, are often written by SLD parliamentarians who are SdRP members.” According to PSL programmatic director Jan Wypych, the party’s seventeen programmatic commissions “co-operate and often

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overlap with the PSL members of the (relevant) Sejm commissions” and, in spite of the fact that the PSL made a conscious decision to keep its programmatic department in the party in central office, “in recent years you can see that a large section of this meritocratic consideration (of the programme) is really implemented in the Sejm deputies’ sphere of activity.”

Similarly, according to UW central office director Jaros³aw Robak co-operation between the parliamentary fraction and party central office on programmatic matters “tends to arise from the fact that nearly all of the party’s National Secretaries (its national spokesmen and policy co-ordinators on a given issue) are Sejm deputies” and, therefore, “flows naturally from the fact that there is an overlap in terms of membership...rather than any formal mechanisms.” UP parliamentary fraction Secretary Artur Siedlarek, who was personally involved in drafting the party programme, also felt that, “the intellectual life of the party is, in all certainty...concentrated here (in parliament)” and that, “de facto this took place here in the Sejm because the basis of the group that worked on it (the programme) were Sejm deputies...(and) it was chaired by a Sejm deputy.” The parliamentarians involved in these policy-making and programmatic groups naturally drew on the funds and facilities available to them in their role of parliamentarians in order to obtain experts’ reports either from analysts working in parliament sources or from sympathetic external advisers and specialists.

Moreover, there was also some evidence of a trend towards greater co-ordination between (if not exactly substitution of) the party and parliamentary bureaucracies and even some tentative moves toward the creation of joint party-parliamentary office structures. The clearest example of this was in the sphere of media relations and the increasingly close co-operation between the party central office and parliamentary fraction press offices. For example, according to SdRP National Press Spokesman Dariusz Klimaszewski there was “fairly close co-ordination” involving almost daily phone contact “between the various elements communicating our messages - the government Press Spokesman’s group, the SLD Parliamentary Club and the SdRP - in which we co-ordinate our activities...Certain elements overlap, are common...(particularly) between the SLD Club and the SdRP.” The PSL press office director Piotr Przybysz ran the party and parliamentary fraction offices “in tandem,” while there was also close co-ordination between the UW parliamentary and party press offices, by dint of the fact that deputy Andrzej Potocki acted as a single party and parliamentary fraction Press Spokesman.

The grouping where this process of co-ordination and co-operation between party and parliamentary bureaucracies was furthest advance (and even bordered on straightforward substitution in some cases) was the UP. According to UP parliamentary fraction secretary Artur Siedlarek any attempt to “separate out parliamentary and party (organisational) structures...is, quite simply, a fiction” and that, in reality, “everything is sorted out here in the parliamentary buildings” even “if, as a result of this, it creates certain problems in the actual party itself.” Only rich parties could allow themselves the luxury of functional specialisation while the UP, “with our modest possibilities...don’t have any choice...these cells have to mutually assist each other.” For example, the entire UP press office function was run from parliament with the party’s National Press Spokesman Tomasz Na³êcz (a Sejm
deputy) and his press assistant both on the parliamentary payroll. Similarly, the three-man parliamentary fraction office cell responsible for “contacts between the Club and party organisation” were “de facto working more for the party than the Club.”

The party machine at local level

As Table 2 shows, a survey of the party ‘machine’ at local level in four Polish provinces revealed that the same pattern of a skeletal party bureaucracy and modest technical and support facilities. Most local party ‘offices’ were simply small meeting rooms and often without a telephone and hardly ever having a fax, computer or photocopying facilities, particularly those located outside the main provincial town. Very few of the offices were staffed by paid employees and practically all party activity at this level was based on volunteers. These findings confirm separate local research undertaken by Pankowski on nine political groupings (including the five parties surveyed here) in five provincial towns and Siellawa-Kolbowska on four parties (including SdRP, the UW and UP) in four small Polish towns and . For example, Siellawa-Kolbowska, found that while twelve out of the fourteen local party organisations surveyed had their own headquarters, half of them did not have a telephone, while only four were in possession of a fax and only two employed a paid secretary.

Whereas at the national level it was only the PSL that had anything approaching a properly functioning party central office bureaucracy, the hypothesised pattern of ‘successor’ party superiority was much more evident in the case of both SdRP and the PSL at the local level. However, as Pankowski points, this was less related to the parties’ organisational legacy (although this was a secondary factor, particularly in the case of the PSL) but rather to the fact that these were the two largest parliamentary formations at the time the research was undertaken and this factor “currently has a decisive influence on the financial conditions, together with the material base, in the functioning of local party structures.” This high level of local party dependence on the staff and technical facilities made available to them by local parliamentarians arose from their weak financial bases, together with the minimal level of financial and material support they received from their national party organisations.

Polish political parties were generally very secretive about their funding sources at both national and local level. However, local party organisations appeared to have three main sources of income. Firstly, membership subscriptions which, in most cases, provided local parties with their primary (or exclusive) source of regular income.

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26 These findings, and the quotations from local party officials in this section, are based on interviews conducted by the author in Gdańsk, Jelenia Góra, Płock and Rzeszów provinces, April-June 1997. Until local government reforms introduced in January 1999 reduced the number to 16, Poland was divided into 49 provincial administration units, known as województwa, which also provided the basis for Polish parties’ territorial structures. Some of the material in this section is included in: A. Szczerbiak, ‘Testing Party Models in East-Central Europe: Local Party Organization in Post-Communist Poland’, Party Politics. Vol. 5 No. 4. 1999. forthcoming.


28 Polityka i partie polityczne w oczach działaczy partyjnych szczebla lokalnego. p7.
Secondly, larger donations from wealthy local members or sponsors (such as sympathetic local businessmen) particularly ‘donations-in-kind’, such as second-hand fax machines or photocopiers. These tended be one-offs - either to finance a specific local event (such as a visit from a national party leader) or in the form of election campaign donations (known as ‘bricks’) - rather than providing a regular, ongoing source of income. Thirdly, particularly in the case of the ‘new’ parties, where subscription income was so modest that it was often felt to have a purely ‘symbolic’ meaning, local party activities were often financed by party officials themselves making additional donations to, for example, cover the costs associated with running a local office or foregoing travel and accommodation expenses to national party conferences and meetings. Indeed, Pankowski even found that in a few “sporadic cases”, particularly in smaller towns, “(party) leadership positions were held by a person completely unprepared for this kind of activity, whose competence to fulfil this post was determined...above all, by their financial generosity in the cause of party funds.”

The only exception to this general pattern was the PSL which, in most provinces, had other substantial sources of income either from trading activities or from renting out parts of its party headquarters. Indeed, more than half of the PSL’s provincial party organisations (and also a few sub-provincial branches) owned the buildings in which their local party headquarters was located, including those in all four provinces surveyed by this author.

Moreover, other than the occasional training session for party activists, local parties generally received little direct help and virtually no financial or material support from their national party central offices. While local UP officials in two of the provinces surveyed (Płock and Rzeszów) spoke of some financial assistance made available to them in the early stages of party formation, and one local SdRP official (Rzeszów) mentioned a ‘subvention’, the general principle appeared to be that local parties were expected to be self-financing. Once again, the only real exception to this was the PSL whose national party leadership established a ‘Party Fund’ in January 1993 to help local parties “regulate the ownership relations of local offices and buildings, essential to the PSL’s political and organisational activities.” Moreover, in January 1994, the PSL leadership also agreed to direct most of the party’s 1993 parliamentary election refund to assist local organisations with the purchase of their party headquarters buildings which would allow them, as PSL Treasurer Alfred Domagalski put it, to “run political activities independently of external conditions.” For example, in all four provinces surveyed the PSL central office had made interest-free loans available to local parties in order to help them purchase the real estate for their provincial headquarters building and, in one case (Gdańsk), a second building in another large provincial town. Interestingly, together with SdRP, the PSL also allowed their local party organisations to retain all their membership subscription income, while all of the ‘new’ parties provincial organisations were required to pass on a proportion to the

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31 Sprawozdanie z dzialalnoœci Naczelnego Komitetutu Wykonawczego Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowego w okresie od III Kongresu PSL (XI 1992 r.) do XI 1996r. p44
32 Quoted in F. Frydrykiewicz, ‘Co w partyjnych kasach’, Rzeczpospolita. 21 November 1996.
party central office: 25% in the case of the UW and UP and one-third in the case of the ROP.33

Consequently, given their weak financial bases and minimal or non-existent financial and material support from their national party organisations, the evidence of ‘parliamentary’ staff and technical facilities substituting for ‘party’ resources was particularly striking at the local level. Indeed, most local parties’ organisational infrastructure was directly linked to parliamentary offices. In addition to a general personal expense allowance (dieta) and a stipend (ryczałt) paid to so-called ‘professional’ parliamentarians, every parliamentarian received two kinds of subvention from the Sejm and Senate Chancelleries to cover the costs of their local offices. Firstly, one-off assistance with renovation, furniture and equipment costs. For example, after the 1993 parliamentary elections each newly elected Sejm deputy received the equivalent of 4000 new złoties, an incumbent Sejm deputy 3000 złoties and a Senator up to 2500 to renovate and furnish their local offices; together with a supply of office equipment such as a photocopier, typewriter, fax machine and a computer with a printer.34 Secondly, a monthly allowance to cover staff and local parliamentary office running costs (sometimes, confusingly, also referred to as the ryczałt). For example, in 1997 each Sejm deputy and Senator received a monthly allowance of 4250 new złoties.35 This could be spent on: rent; telephone, gas, electricity and water bills; office workers’ salaries; paper and office materials; repairing office equipment; translation and typing services; insuring the parliamentarian against civil liability; newspapers and publications; and ordering experts’ reports.36

These offices were invariably located in or alongside the local party headquarters building. An analysis of the addresses and telephone numbers of the 49 provincial party headquarters revealed that virtually all of them were located in the same building as a local parliamentary office in the case of the PSL (46 with another two sharing the same phone and fax numbers), UW (45 again with a further two sharing phone and fax lines) and UP (47).37 Unfortunately, SdRP central office did not supply the addresses of its provincial party headquarters, although one commentator estimated that around half of all SLD Sejm deputies had their parliamentary offices located in the same building as a party office which, given that approximately 40% of them were not SdRP members, probably included virtually all of those who were.38 Moreover, the overlap between ‘party’ and ‘parliamentary’ leaderships at national level was also reflected at local level where parliamentarians often simultaneously held prominent positions in provincial and sub-provincial party organisations. For example, in 1997 63% (31 out of 49) of PSL provincial party presidents were parliamentarians as were

33 Information supplied by national party headquarters, February-March 1997.
34 See: ‘Parlamentarne pieniądze’, Rzeczpospolita. 4 November 1993 and ‘Pywanie w mętnej wodzie’. Each Senator also received a television, radio and, if a Parliamentary Club had more than 15 Senators, an additional computer with printer and funds for furniture.
38 ‘Pieniądz do biura do partii’. 
51% (25) of SdRP, 21% (7 out of 34) of UP, and 16% (8) of UW provincial chairmen.  

These parliamentary office facilities and expense allowances invariably provided local parties with both additional funds (by subsidising their bills and running costs) and access to the parliamentary equipment and technical facilities. Moreover, each parliamentarian employed at least one full-time employee from their office allowance who was generally a party member, often servicing the local party office simultaneously and was, therefore, de facto, on the party payroll. This ‘union of addresses’ between party headquarters and parliamentary offices also meant that local parties, who often rented their accommodation from local authorities at preferential rates, could sub-let part of their offices to local parliamentarians for a substantially higher rent and, thereby, receive additional income for party funds (or make a clear profit in the case of the PSL which, as noted above, actually owned many of its local headquarters outright).

These parliamentary office allowances were, of course, meant to assist Sejm deputies and Senators in fulfilling their duties as parliamentarians and not party politicians and their utilisation for local party activities was, at best, a grey area. For example, the Sejm Presidium’s December 23rd 1994 resolution stated unequivocally that parliamentary office allowances “may not be utilised for financing the activities of political parties, social organisations, charitable foundations and actions or the activities of Parliamentary Clubs.” However, although parliamentarians had to account for their office allowances to the appropriate Chancellery, there were, for example, no rules that explicitly prohibited them from locating their offices in (or alongside) local party headquarters. In practice, therefore, it was extremely difficult to distinguish between expenditure that related solely to parliamentary duties and that which corresponded to stricte party political activities.

Moreover, national party officials made little attempt to conceal the fact that parliamentary allowances were often used specifically for party purposes and recognised that, in many cases, parliamentary offices played a crucial role in underpinning their party’s local organisational infrastructure. For example, SdRP’s head of party organisation Maciej Poręba acknowledged that his party tried to “take advantage of this by ensuring that the local SdRP headquarters is also the location of the Sejm deputies’ office.” The PSL was even more explicit and instructed all its parliamentarians to “employ a person connected with the PSL in the post of office secretary...submit information on how they spent the sums assigned to them by the Sejm Chancellery to maintain their offices to the PSL provincial Board Presidium” and consult with provincial board President on “all expenditure.” Indeed, PSL programmatic director Jan Wypych justified this on the grounds that “there is a part of their activity as a parliamentarian which you can see falls within the sphere of party

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40 See ‘Pywame w mětej wodzie’.
41 Ibid.
activity given that they were elected as a Sejm deputy or Senator on a PSL party ticket.” UP Vice-Chairman for Organisational Affairs Wojciech Borowik also recognised this linkage and the fact that his party’s “possibilities are greater in those places where we have strong Sejm deputies’ offices with assistants and funding for running an office. The possibilities are very modest in those places where we don’t have these kind of resources. We’re talking about private houses, private telephones.”

The fact that every parliamentarian received the same office expense allowance regardless of how many offices they ran meant that local parliamentarians from the same party often pooled their income and expenditure in joint offices or opened several local offices. In the latter case, one of these was designated a ‘basic’ (podstawowe) office through which all their income and expenditure had to be accounted for and where the full-time paid staff and comprehensive range of back-up facilities were usually located. The remainder, known to as ‘branch offices’ (filie), were generally unstaffed and often consisted of little more than a single room. As Tables 3 and 4 show, in 1995 these offices provided the four largest political groupings with parliamentary representation with a formidable local network of 402 ‘basic’ offices, 789 ‘branch’ offices and 1065 staff. Unfortunately, party central offices did not collect (or were unwilling to reveal) data on exactly how many staff were employed directly by local parties themselves as opposed to those who worked for parliamentarians. However, on basis of this author’s local research and interviews with national party officials, it would appear that there were virtually none in the case of the UW and UP, no more than one per province in the case of the SdRP (that is, less than 50) and at least one but no more than five per province in the case of the PSL (between 50-250).

Moreover, the fact that parliamentarians could run several offices, which did not necessarily have to be located in their own electoral district, encouraged parties to deploy these resources to maximum strategic effect. For example, parliamentarians were encouraged to open local ‘branch offices’ either in provinces where they had no parliamentary representation or in smaller towns and villages in those where they did. For example, the UW parliamentary fraction’s Presidium was (in consultation with the party national executive) responsible for “establishing Sejm deputies and Senators’ offices in those provinces where the party had no parliamentary representation.” Similarly, according to the party’s parliamentary fraction Secretary Artur Siedlarek the UP also “tried to assign every Sejm deputy with a second electoral district, a second province where he ought to set up something much more modest, a ‘branch office’ but still an office, so that we could somehow cover the whole country with this network...(and) open branch offices in those provinces where there wasn’t anything in the main town.”

The key role which these parliamentary offices (and the staff and technical facilities attached to them) played in the functioning of the local party ‘machine’ was confirmed

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43 Not all these staff were full-time (or even paid) employees, although many of them were. For example, in 1997 in figures supplied to the author the UP headquarters estimated that the party only employed the full-time equivalent of around 60 staff in its local parliamentary offices rather than the 127 listed in the Sejm Chancellery records.

both by this author’s and other local research. Given that party membership (which, as previously noted, represented the local parties main source of income) was generally low and most local parties (except for the PSL) received virtually no financial assistance from their national party headquarters, it was not surprising that all four ‘parliamentary’ parties in the provinces surveyed by the author were, to a greater or less extent, dependent on the facilities provided by local Sejm parliamentarians. Those local party offices that had access to any kind of proper technical facilities (fax, computer, photocopier) or were staffed by a paid employee were invariably linked in some way to local parliamentarians’ ‘basic’ offices. For example, all four SdRP local party headquarters were located in the same building as parliamentary offices and they all, to some extent, took advantage of these facilities. There was a similar arrangement at sub-provincial level where local party offices often doubled up as (or operated alongside) local parliamentarians’ ‘branch’ offices. There was a similar overlap between the PSL parliamentary and party facilities, with one local PSL official acknowledging that “there is no way of separating our the local Sejm deputy’s support facilities and the functioning of the party.” In the case of the UW and UP, the two ‘new’ parties with access to parliamentary facilities, the degree of overlap (and straightforward dependence in some cases) was even greater. For example, in one province (Jelenia Góra) all three local UP offices and their facilities were funded by the local UP parliamentarian and his (paid) local assistant was, simultaneously, the UP’s local party secretary. In two other provinces, where the party did not have any local parliamentary representatives (Rzeszów and Płock), it was only able to run offices because UP parliamentarians from different electoral districts opened up ‘branch offices’ there.

The importance of access to parliamentary offices (or rather lack of it) could also be seen when examining the staff and technical facilities available to those parties without parliamentary representation. The ROP, for example, was a case of what Duverger termed an ‘externally-created’ party, formed outside parliament and, therefore, without access to such facilities. As Table 2 shows, this party lacked all but the most basic organisational infrastructure in three out of the four provinces examined. In the one exceptional case (Rzeszów) the party enjoyed an unusually large number of wealthy local benefactors which, as noted above, created its own set of difficulties and sources of instability. These included the provincial party chairman whose company owned the building in which the local party headquarters was located and supplied it with a fax, telephone and computer facilities.

On the other hand, as Table 2 also shows, AWS (the other ‘externally-created’ grouping) boasted a relatively well developed local party ‘machine,’ comparable (and, in some cases, superior) to that of the ‘successor’ parties. However, unlike the ROP that had to build up its party organisation virtually from scratch, AWS managed to fill its ‘organisational deficit’ by utilizing the technical and organisational facilities of its main affiliate, the Solidarity trade union. The union provided AWS with its core facilities in all four provinces. The AWS headquarters was located in the Solidarity provincial headquarters and all the AWS local groups were based in union offices with the possibility (in many cases) of access to telephone, fax, computer and photocopying facilities. The AWS regional organizer (pełnomocnik) was always a Solidarity union official, as were most of its local organizers. For example, in one province (Gdańsk) there were six full-time staff working for AWS on secondment
from the Solidarity trade union. The contrasting fortunes of the ROP and AWS clearly illustrated the extent to which it was virtually impossible for an ‘externally-created’ party in Poland with no access to parliamentary facilities to overcome its resource limitations and develop an effective party ‘machine’ without recourse to an existing external sponsor or agency with a well-developed organisational infrastructure.

Moreover, it is worth noting that some of the benefits from the parliamentary allowances accrued directly to both the party central office and the ‘party in public office.’ For example, some parties required (or asked) parliamentarians to pay contributions from either their stipend, personal expense allowances or office expense allowances into a central fund which was used to provide additional staff and facilities for the parliamentary fraction or occasionally even for the direct benefit of the party central office. For example, in 1997 UW parliamentarians were required to pay 5% of their parliamentary stipends directly to the party central office and a further 5% into the party’s election fund. Similarly, the 120 SdRP parliamentarians voluntarily paid 200 złoties per month into party central office funds. The UW and UP parliamentary fractions also required their members to pay 10% and 5% respectively of their local office expense allowances into a central fund to provide additional parliamentary support facilities which, in the case of the UP, allowed them to employ two additional members of staff. The most systematic and extreme case of a party utilising parliamentary funds for national party purposes was the AWS-affiliated Confederation for an Independent Parliament (Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej: KPN) whose Sejm deputies were, at one stage, required to hand over their entire office expenses allowance to their parliamentary fraction leadership, which then distributed these funds as it deemed appropriate.

Indeed, most ‘parliamentary’ parties also located ‘local’ parliamentary offices in the same building as (or adjacent to) their party central office in Warsaw. For example, there were three ‘basic’ parliamentary offices and eight ‘branch offices’ located in the SdRP party headquarters building on Rozbrat Street (with five of the latter clustered together with one ‘basic’ office) with nine telephone lines, three fax lines and fourteen staff between them. Similarly, there were three ‘basic’ parliamentary offices with six telephone lines, three fax lines and six staff in the PSL party headquarters on Grzybowska Street. There were also four ‘basic’ parliamentary offices with six telephone lines, three fax lines and six staff occupying essentially the same building (although at a different postal address) as the UP party headquarters on Nowogrodzka Street. Only the UW did not have any parliamentary offices located in its national headquarters on Aleje Jerozolimskie Street, although there were seven ‘basic’ Sejm deputies’ offices and one ‘basic’ Senator’s office with three telephone lines, two fax lines and ten staff located in the party’s Warsaw provincial headquarters.

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45 Information supplied by Mirosław Czech, UW General Secretary, author interview, 19 February 1997.
47 ‘Regulamin Klubu Parlamentarnego Unii Wolności’ and information supplied by Artur Siedlarek, UP Parliamentary Club Secretary, author interview, 11 June 1997.
48 See ‘Pieniœdze przez biuro do partii’. A system which, according to some commentators, led to the defection of several KPN deputies and, eventually, to the disintegration of both party and Club. See: ‘60 groszy na demokracji’.
49 Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, II Kadencja: Biura Poselskie and Lista Senatorów III Kadencji z Adresami Biur Senatorskich. With no parliamentary representation at the time that this research was
Although all these party central offices could clearly have derived some rental income from these ‘local’ offices, it is more difficult to judge how much they also benefited from the staff (not all whom were either paid or worked full-time) and technical facilities attached to them. Given that the parliamentary offices located in the SdRP and UP headquarters included those of a number of senior party leaders and officials (such as the SdRP Chairman Józef Oleksy and Secretary-General Jerzy Szmajdziński and the UP Chairman Ryszard Bugaj, Vice-Chairman for Organisational Affairs Wojciech Borowik and National Press Spokesman Tomasz Nałęcz) it would appear that the degree of overlap between ‘local’ parliamentary and party central office facilities was greater in these two parties than in the PSL central office. Indeed, if these (ostensibly parliamentary) staff are factored in, then the SdRP central office bureaucracy was not quite as modest as an analysis of the number of *stricto* party employees based there suggested. Nevertheless, given that these additional staff were formally linked to the parliamentary party rather than party central office, SdRP still appeared to conform more to the catch-all/electoral-professional and cartel party models than the mass party in terms of the distribution of the parliamentary and party central office bureaucracies.

The ‘professionalisation’ of parties

All the new Polish parties were, therefore, certainly characterised by the weak party central office ‘machine’, large proportion of party employees attached to the parliamentary party and high level of dependence on the staff and facilities attached to local parliamentary offices posited in the electoral-professional and cartel party models. However, evidence of the other feature of these two party models - replacement of salaried party bureaucrats by external advisers and consultants with a looser contractual relationship with parties - was much more limited.

There were certainly some indications that Polish politics was becoming more ‘professional’ in a number of fields. Firstly, party leaders increasingly drew on the services of external policy and programmatic experts. For example, the then SdRP party leader Józef Oleksy was assisted by a group of party members and sympathisers from the academic community and regularly organised meetings with supporters working in the Polish Academy of Sciences to discuss key issues relating to programmatic development.50 According to PSL programmatic director Jan Wypych his party had “a wide range of contacts and specialists in various areas and intellectual milieu...organised in seventeen...Supreme Executive Committee commissions which are comprised...of specific specialists in the appropriate subject.” The PSL also had a separate thirty-strong experts’ group chaired by party member and economic expert Professor Władysław Szymański and, if the party did not have an appropriate policy specialist in a given field, then it ordered a specially prepared expert analysis from a non-party member.51 With its origins in two parties that enjoyed strong support in the

untaken the ROP was obviously not included in this analysis. However, it is noteworthy that after the 1997 election when the party narrowly crossed the 5% threshold, a number of parliamentary offices, including the party Chairman Jan Olszewski’s, were subsequently located in its headquarters on Chmielna Street.

51. Ibid.
in the academic and intellectual communities, the UW could also draw upon a large number of policy specialists among both party members and sympathisers. These were organised in twenty ‘National Secretariats’ responsible for developing the party’s detailed policies in the main policy fields such as: the economy, foreign affairs, health, social policy, the environment, rural affairs, national security and education. Moreover, two academic research institutes were also closely aligned with the party: the Gdańsk-based Institute for the Research of the Market Economy established by two former liberals (Jan Szomburg and UW economics spokesman Janusz Lewandowski) and the prestigious Institute for Public Affairs whose governing bodies included the then UW parliamentary fraction leader and foreign affairs spokesman Bronisław Geremek. The UP and ROP also recognised the importance of utilising ‘professional’ external policy specialists, although they encountered much greater difficulties in developing such networks.

Secondly, Polish parties paid great attention to both analysing generally-available, published opinion poll findings and ordering their own, specially-commissioned sociological research. A defining moment here (and in Polish political campaigning more generally) was Aleksander Kwaśniewski’s November 1995 presidential election campaign. Kwaśniewski’s campaign staff, which included the sociologist and director of the Polish branch of the Gallup Institute polling company Sławomir Wiatr, “analysed public opinion research scrupulously and ordered it systematically.” More generally, according to SdRP Central Executive Committee member Krzysztof Janik, the party carried out its own polling research or sometimes paid for market research companies to attach “one or two questions” to their general surveys, although, according to some commentators, the Gallup Institute’s polling for the party was actually much more systematic than this in the run up to the 1997 election.

Similarly, the UW also utilised the services of sympathetic polling organisations such as the Social Research Workshop (associated with the Gdańsk liberal milieu) and academic sociologists. Indeed, during the 1997 parliamentary election campaign the party prided itself on having undertaken detailed opinion research before determining how much exposure to give its leader Leszek Balcerowicz. Even the cash-strapped UP found the resources to fund polling research on its electoral profile and target electorates in the run up to the 1997 election. Meanwhile the PSL, which felt that the mainstream polling organisations took insufficient account of the specifics of its predominantly rurally-based electorate, established its own Peasant Institute for Public Opinion Research (which comprised sympathetic sociologists and polling specialists) specifically for election campaigns. The ROP, which shared the PSL’s mistrust of polling companies but for more ideological reasons, also set up an unofficial polling

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52 Ibid
55 See: ‘Kampania reklamowa’ and ‘Wojna na miny’.
57 Information supplied by Piotr Marciniak, author interview, 19 November 1998.
workshop in the run up to the 1997 parliamentary elections: the Centre for Public Opinion Research.  

Thirdly, although still very much at an experimental stage, there was also some evidence that Polish parties were increasingly interested in using specialist media and communications consultants. The process was furthest advanced in the SLD/SdRP and UW, with the Kwaæeniewski’s 1995 presidential campaign once again being the watershed. According to most Polish advertising specialists, Kwaæeniewski’s was “the first really, modern election campaign in Poland” where the candidate subordinated himself to his advisers, which included the French Socialist Party and Francois Mitterand’s campaign consultant Jacques Seguella. Media specialists and consultants (including, according to some accounts, the French socialists) were also involved in the SLD’s 1997 parliamentary campaign, although to a much lesser extent. As Maciej Porêba (SdRP’s head of party organisation and SLD Election Staffs organiser in both the 1995 and 1997 campaigns) put it, “the time of voluntary activity is ending...There are now several dozen various types of marketing firms in Poland who do this as professionals taking advantage of the very great expertise that is available in the West...If we can find people among these who want to work with us, then we will.” Similarly, according to the party’s National Press Spokesman Andrzej Potocki, the UW “always uses paid professional media experts and communications consultants.” Both of its progenitor parties used media advisers in their election campaigns, as did the UW itself in the 1995 presidential elections when it employed a Polish-Belgian firm Corporate Profiles, together with a number of TV specialists who offered their services voluntarily. During the 1997 parliamentary campaign the party also employed a Polish-American media relations company to act as strategic campaign advisers.

Professional media and communications specialists were also used by the PSL, UP and ROP, although to a much lesser extent. For example, during the 1993 parliamentary elections the PSL hired a Polish advertising agency (Józef Wêgrzyn) to produce their TV election broadcasts and in 1997 also employed specialists to produce their TV and radio programmes, together with a well-known graphic artist (Waldemar Æwei¿y) to design their posters. Similarly, the UP hired the Polish-Swedish advertising agency Marketpoint to design their posters and leaflets during the 1997 campaign. The ROP also employed media specialists to prepare “specific segments” of their election campaign such as their TV and radio slots, together with a group of

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59 See: ‘Kampania reklamowa’.
62 See: ‘Wojna na miny.’
64 Information supplied by Ewa Czaczkowska, Rzeczpospolita newspaper, author interview, 26 June 1997 and 21 November 1997.
65 Information supplied by Piotr Marciniak, Chairman UP National Election Campaign Staffs, author interview, 19 November 1997.
sympathetic media specialists who voluntarily undertook analyses of the party’s campaign.\(^{66}\)

Nevertheless, there was other evidence that pointed in the opposite direction and suggested that there were clear limits to the extent to which such outside ‘professionals’ were being used. Firstly, it was questionable to what extent most of this activity could really be described as ‘professionalisation’ given that much of it was motivated by political (if not personal) sympathies and supplied to parties on a voluntary rather than a contractual basis. For example, according to SdRP’s head of organisation Maciej Poręba, “if we ask for (professional polling or media) help from outside then they are aware that they are working voluntarily...We operate on the basis of sympathisers who take responsibility for these matters...but not on the basis of payment.” Similarly, PSL Executive Office Director Marian Zalewski pointed out that, although there were some media specialists “with whom we work on the usual (commercial) basis,” generally such advice was provided by “journalists who are party members and help us in view of the fact that they are party members.” UP National Press Spokesman Tomasz Nałęcz drew attention to the fact that even the paid work undertaken by the party’s professional communications specialists in the 1997 campaign was be “to some extent, voluntary” with “the payments of a kind that will involve a certain degree of sympathy from people...It will not be...an occasion for these people to make the large amounts of money that they would if they worked for industry or in some other non-political role.” Similarly, ROP National Press Spokesman Jacek Kurski felt that “unpaid people will offer themselves” to help out the party with specialist media and communications advice during the 1997 parliamentary campaign.

An interesting example of how Polish parties drew upon unpaid external advisers and specialists was the support provided to them by their Western ‘sister’ party organisations or foundations, as well as from the American Democratic and Republican parties. In addition to the aforementioned assistance which the SdRP/SLD and Kwaśniewski received from the French Socialist Party, UP National Press Spokesman Tomasz Nałęcz also acknowledged that his party benefited from training schools organised by “the British Labour Party and the foundations connected with the European social democratic parties.” Indeed, according to the party’s 1997 election organiser Piotr Marciniak, Swedish social democratic party campaign specialists helped the UP to analyse polling data and “to a large extent, we formulated the concept of our election campaign in contact with them.” The Polish office of the International Republican Institute, provided unpaid advice to AWS and training schools for ROP and UW activists, while the National Democratic Institute’s Polish branch adopted an even more catholic approach and organised training for representatives of the UW, UP, ROP and SdRP youth sections and a number of AWS affiliates, on subjects such as organising local party structures and targeting women voters in election campaigns.\(^{67}\)

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\(^{66}\) Information supplied by Wojciech Włodarczyk, Chairman ROP National Election Campaign Staffs, author interview, 27 November 1997.

\(^{67}\) ‘Kampania doradców’. 
Secondly, the use of paid external consultants and advisers was generally (and, in the case of opinion polling and communications specialists, almost exclusively) confined to the periods running up to national elections. For example, speaking six months prior to the 1997 parliamentary election UW General Secretary Mirosław Czech pointed that while the “kind of consultants who relate to everyday matters - experts, professionals, sociologists - we are using them all all the time...Only now will we be hiring paid consultants who will be working with us on the question of determining an election strategy.” Similarly, UP Vice-Chairman for Organisational Affairs Wojciech Borowik drew attention to the fact that “we are trying to get together the resources so that in the last six months in the run-up to the election campaign we can have professional groups supporting us.” In one sense, of course, this conformed with the notion of parties as primarily election-orientated organisations posited in the catch-all/electoral-professional and cartel models. On the other hand, it also made it difficult to see these parties as somehow ‘contracting out’ large portions of their central office organisational and campaigning functions, with ‘professional’ consultants directly replacing and substituting for weak party bureaucracies.

By far the greatest impediment towards the more systematic use of professional advisers was the sheer cost of hiring them, particularly given that the best marketing, advertising and communications consultants were generally American or West European firms and, therefore, very expensive. For example, according to PSL programmatic director Jan Wypych, while the party had been approached by a number of companies involved in media and communications strategy during the 1997 election campaign “the costs involved were of a different level to that which we could put into the campaign...This was the main reason, they were too expensive.” ROP’s head of information Andrzej Kieryło also argued that “if someone agrees to work with us for nothing then we will happily utilise their advice” but the party “simply cannot afford...to hire foreign specialists.” Moreover, as UP National Press Spokesman Tomasz Nałęcz also pointed out “there is no sense in hiring experts in order to get their ideas on the specific means for implementing a campaign and not take advantage of these ideas on the grounds of poverty... So in order to hire consultants you have to have certain material capabilities to implement their plans, at least in some meaningful way if not in full.” Ironically, the parties which could draw on the largest pool of sympathisers with professional campaigning skills to assist them voluntarily were generally those with the strongest financial bases, while those with the smallest networks of sympathetic specialists were (like the UP) also those who could least afford to hire paid advisers.

A secondary factor constraining the ‘professionalisation’ of Polish parties was a residual suspicion of the real value of external experts and advisers, particularly advertising agencies and marketing firms. An extremely important element here was the disastrous experience of the UW’s progenitor, the KLD, in the 1993 parliamentary elections. The KLD ran the first truly ‘Western’ Polish election campaign under the supervision of the British advertising agency Saatchi and Saatchi and, in spite of the large sums of money invested, achieved a derisory result well below the 5% threshold. Although this mistrust was, to some extent, evident across the political spectrum, it was particularly striking in the PSL and right-wing parties such as the ROP. For

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68 Ibid.
example, according to PSL programmatic director Jan Wypych the “supporters of more traditional methods of mobilising the rural electorate...are not just reactionaries and have a point that there is a large element of the PSL electorate that would be put off by too slick a campaign...Indeed, the evidence of the KLD’s 1993 campaign suggests that such a campaign can easily backfire and not just among the rural electorate.”

Moreover, the greatest hostility tended to be directed at ‘Western’ media and communications advisers on the grounds that did not properly understand Polish political culture and, more generally, at the exportability of some Western campaigning techniques to Polish conditions. Predictably, the greatest unease on this score was expressed by the PSL and ROP. For example, although generally a supporter of his party adopting more modern campaigning techniques, PSL National Press Spokesman Aleksander Bentkowski also expressed anxieties about the KLD experience which he saw as “an example of taking advantage of a means of campaigning which is transferred to our conditions from the West without due regard” for Polish conditions, where “for obvious reasons...people see a style of campaigning with big business behind it and subconsciously reject this.” Similarly, ROP National Press Spokesman Jacek Kurski said that his party was “not convinced about...these experts...from Western firms who are paid large sums of money and have already led one Polish political party to the grave...because here in Poland you have to have your own original scenario.”

Such anxieties could also be found in parties which were generally more enthusiastic about professional media and communications advisers. For example, SdRP National Press Spokesman Dariusz Klimaszewski argued that while “there are certain...experiences...that you can take advantage of” he was “fairly sceptical about hiring an American PR firm...because you have to know the Polish reality, the methods of getting to people and I know that a couple of political parties lost out as a result of doing this...organised their activities in an American style and simply transplanted them here.” UP National Press Spokesman Tomasz Nałecz also expressed a preference for using Polish specialists on the grounds that “there aren’t always good results from consulting experts used to operating in countries with a different experience from that in Poland” and cited the 1993 KLD campaign which “ended in catastrophe precisely through trying to transfer certain Western models” as an example of the dangers of non-Polish campaign specialists and the fact “every idea transferred from a different country, different culture or different cultures should be modified in a natural way.” Even Andrzej Potocki, National Press Spokesman for the UW, a party explicitly committed to using professional Western campaign specialists, admitted that there were “advantages and disadvantages” to “dealing with people who are new to the Polish scene.” For example, the party hired a Polish-American firm to help them prepare for the 1997 parliamentary election and while, on the one hand, their lack of direct involvement in Polish politics allowed to provide more objective political assessments, “the danger, of course, is that it is possible that they won’t know a lot of things about Poland that are worth knowing.”

The greatest anxieties were related to fears of losing ‘political control’ to ‘strategic’ campaign advisers rather than hiring individual specialists or specific organisations with particular skills such as TV and radio production, artistic design and copy
writing. For example, SdRP National Press Spokesman Dariusz Klimaszewski pointed out that the SLD’s use of media specialists in the 1997 election campaign “did not have an institutional rank, it was more a case of co-operation with specific people.” Similarly, according to PSL programmatic director Jan Wypych his party “didn’t go in the direction of hiring a firm” but rather turned to “experts, directors, artists...hired on an individual basis...whether it was for photos, film, radio, posters or graphics.” ROP National Secretary and election campaign organiser Wojciech W³odarczyk also argued that “there wasn’t a firm which determined the whole of our campaign...We didn’t turn to advertising firms...apart from those who prepared specific segments...according to the principles that we laid down for them.” Even the UW, the only party that actually hired a firm of strategic campaign advisers in 1997, expressed anxieties about the possible consequences of losing political control. According to the party’s election organiser Pawe³ Piskorski (who was also involved in the 1993 KLD campaign) “it wasn’t a case of handing over our campaign to one firm and it ‘ran’ the campaign for us...We didn’t depend on any one firm or expert...We had experience of such models from earlier years...and it did not turn out as we had expected.” Rather, according to Piskorski, “this time...we decided the whole strategy, the method of implementation must be in the hands of politicians...it was the Election Staffs that decided on all important matters and we used consultants for help and experts for specific elements - TV, graphics etc - they were the ‘under-executives’ of tasks determined by the Staffs.”

There was also some evidence of a slow but steady decline in hostility towards the idea of using professional (and even Western) media and communication advisers even in those parties that were most uneasy about modern political marketing techniques. For example, even the PSL at one stage toyed with the idea of hiring Jose Maria Aznar’s Spanish Popular Party’s campaign advisers (although nothing, ultimately, came of this).69 Right-wing parties also appeared to be increasingly aware of the need to run more sophisticated and professional campaigns, exemplified by the September 1997 AWS campaign which stood out in marked contrast to previous efforts by the Polish right. For example, AWS’s TV election broadcasts were produced by a group of young, and highly professional right-wing current affairs journalists and production staff who had been closely associated with AWS candidate and media adviser Wies³aw Walendziak during his spell as head of Polish TV. Even the ROP’s head of information Andrzej Kiery³o acknowledged that his party took “seriously the indicators provided to us by the (American) International Republican Institute.”70

A third factor holding back the ‘professionalisation’ of Polish parties was the fact that most media and communications consultants were, themselves, reluctant to become too closely involved or identified with either a particular party or politics in general.71 Firstly, it generally involved working for a ‘client’ with both an unrealistically high set of expectations and such a small potential campaign budget that success could not be guaranteed (which, thereby, also rebounded on the firm’s reputation). Secondly, most Polish advertising and marketing companies were afraid of the potential damage to

69 Ibid.
70 See: ‘Kampania doradców’.
71 See: ‘Wojna na miny’ and ‘Kampania reklamowa’.
their longer term commercial interests which could follow from becoming too closely identified with a particular party. Thirdly, parties were a particularly difficult ‘product’ for a (still nascent) advertising and marketing industry to promote given the fact that Polish politicians retained lingering suspicions of the advertising medium and did not, therefore, always willingly accept advice from political marketing consultants on how they should present themselves. A classic example of this was Lech Wałęsa, who refused to accept his consultants’ advice on how he should present himself during the 1995 presidential campaign.72

Conclusion

As hypothesized, all the parties surveyed conformed more to the recent catch-all/electoral-professional and cartel party models in terms of the organisation of their party ‘machine.’ All of them had a weak party central office bureaucracy employing only a small number of paid staff and a modest local organisational infrastructure together with a large proportion of party employees attached to the party organisation in parliament. This pattern was particularly evident at the local level where there was substantial overlap in terms of ‘parliamentary’ and ‘party’ offices, staff and technical facilities and the vast majority of paid staff were employed by parliamentarians. As one Polish commentator accurately pointed out “the main organisational unit of Polish politics is the Sejm deputy...political parties are officially poor as church mice...In the meantime party life continues...in the local offices, cars, hotels which the state provides for the political parties.”73

Of the two ‘successor’ parties, only the PSL displayed significantly more mass party characteristics in the sense of having a stronger party ‘machine’ attached to the party central office. The hypothesised superiority of the both the PSL and SdRP was much more evident in terms of local organisational infrastructure and technical facilities. However, although their organisational legacy was a secondary factor here (particularly in the case of the PSL which was able to retain more of its predecessor’s assets) this relative superiority was much more related to the fact that these were the two parties with the largest parliamentary representation and concomitant access to local parliamentary office facilities at the time that the research was undertaken.

Moreover, while there was also some evidence of the increasing utilisation of external experts, advisers and consultants, Polish parties conformed much less to the electoral-professional and cartel models in relation to the changing relationship between party ‘bureaucrats’ and external ‘professionals’. This was partly due to a lingering suspicion of and a residual hostility towards (particularly Western) professional communication advisers, largely based on one party’s extremely bad experience; together with a reluctance on the part of advertising and marketing firms themselves to become too closely associated with political parties. However, the main obstacle to the greater ‘professionalisation’ of Polish parties was, as hypothesised, lack of resources and the parties’ extremely weak financial bases. Generally, therefore, there was no realistic prospect that such external ‘professionals’ as parties did utilise would somehow

72 See: ‘Kampania reklamowa’.
develop as a substitute for the weak party central office bureaucracies as envisaged in the electoral-professional and cartel models, for the foreseeable future at least.
Table 1: Number of staff employed in party central offices and Parliamentary Club offices (full-time equivalent), June 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Party central office</th>
<th>Parliamentary Club office</th>
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<tr>
<td>SdRP/SLD</td>
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<td>PSL</td>
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<tr>
<td>UW</td>
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<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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Source: Information supplied by party headquarters and parliamentary fraction offices, June 1997.
Table 2: Local party organisational infrastructure in Gdańsk, Jelenia Góra, Płock and Rzeszów, April 1997

Gdańsk:

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<th>UP</th>
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<th>AWS</th>
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Jelenia Góra:

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Rzeszów:

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Source: Information supplied by local party officials, April-June 1997

74 These included party facilities of 1 local office, 2 telephones, 1 fax, 2 paid employees, 1 computer and 1 photocopier plus an estimate of local parliamentary facilities based on information in: Kancelaria Sejmu. Sejm Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, II Kadencja: Biura Poselskie. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe. 1995
### Table 3: Total number of Sejm deputies offices, 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>‘Basic’ offices</th>
<th>‘Branch’ offices</th>
<th>Staff</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLD (SdRP)³⁵</td>
<td>164 (76)</td>
<td>477 (251)</td>
<td>478 (235)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSL</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>287</td>
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<tr>
<td>UW</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>127</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>402</strong></td>
<td><strong>789</strong></td>
<td><strong>1065</strong></td>
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</table>


³⁵These figures are based on 1993 data on the number of SLD Sejm deputies who acknowledged SdRP party membership. Given that this figure increased from 70 to over 100 during the course of the 1993-97 parliament it certainly underestimates the numbers of offices and staff attached to SdRP parliamentarians.
Table 4: Total number of Senators’ offices, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>‘Basic’ offices</th>
<th>‘Branch’ offices</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLD(^{76})</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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\(^{76}\)Separate figures for SdRP Senators are not available.