

June 3, 1989

Special Analysis: Poland: Election Implications

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Summary:

An analysis of the Polish political climate leading into elections.

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English

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Original Scan

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Special Analysis

POLAND: Election Implications

The election in Poland tomorrow will produce a sweeping victory for Solidarity and a deeply divided government. The opposition will fully control the new senate, which must approve legislation initiated by the lower house; the party and its allies will retain most of the lower house seats and get the powerful new presidency. Even if pragmatists on both sides seek compromise to address Poland's deepening economic problems, bitter political conflict appears inevitable as the opposition tries to chip away at party power.

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The party's negligible appeal and legitimacy ensure an opposition landslide in races for the new 100-member senate. The opposition probably will also win most of the 161 contested seats in the 460-member lower house.

3.3(b)(1)

the opposition has overcome initial voter apathy; despite lingering skepticism voters are likely to participate in a massive referendum against party rule.

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Postelection Dilemmas

The opposition coalition has survived internal dissension, wildcat strikes, and a boycott by radicals who claimed Solidarity leader Walesa sold out to the regime at the roundtable talks.

3.3(b)(1)

top Solidarity adviser Bronislaw Geremek will become the opposition whip, tasked with developing coherent political action in the face of opposition divisions on such fundamental issues as the pace of economic reform, the need for austerity measures, and the relative merits of free market capitalism and West European social democracy.

3.3(b)(1)

6.2(d)

The party's resounding defeat will deepen polarization of hardliners and moderates in the regime. Walesa and his top advisers fear their landslide will destroy party discipline and discredit the pragmatists responsible for the regime's grudging concessions at the roundtable. Regime moderates would then lack the power to fulfill agreements with the opposition. Party traditionalists are sure to accuse reformers of underestimating opponents like Walesa and to resist further concessions.

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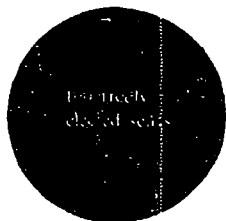


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New Polish Parliament

Number of seats

Upper House

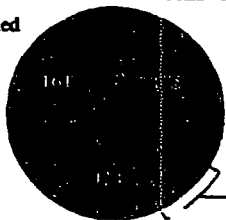


Rules for New Government

- ▶ Each house can initiate legislation that must be approved by both.
- ▶ Lower house can override upper house disapproval by two-thirds majority.
 - Regime would have to gain some support from contested seats in lower house to guarantee two-thirds majority.
- ▶ Both houses will convene within one month of election and elect president for six-year term; Jaruzelski is likely to be only candidate.
- ▶ President has power to veto legislation and to dissolve Parliament if prolonged deadlock occurs or if national emergency declared.
- ▶ Dissolution would require new election.

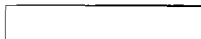
Lower House

Contested 35%



Guaranteed to Communist Party

Guaranteed to pro-Communist alliance parties



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In the postelection period, an uneasy and protracted tug of war between the regime and the opposition is likely. Party officials will be counting on General Jaruzelski to use the presidency to protect Communist privileges and break the opposition's momentum. The regime will try to maneuver the opposition into sharing responsibility for any painful economic policies and to lay the groundwork for blaming economic stagnation on opposition "obstructionism."

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The opposition will try to use the novelty of Poland's new political structure to build working relationships with pragmatists in the lower house, regardless of ideology, on issues that cut across party lines, like housing, environmental cleanup, and agricultural prices. In this way the opposition hopes to make inroads into the party's domination of the new structure and to exploit fissures between party hardliners and reformers. Opposition leaders will also be tempted to rally their forces around popular antiregime planks such as drastic funding cuts for the security services and abolishing the party's right to name economic managers, but pushing such issues too strongly will reduce the chances for political deals with party pragmatists on other significant issues.

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Outlook

The election almost certainly will be another milestone in the slow decline of the party's power, but the opposition must implement constructive political and economic reforms to fully grasp its new opportunity. If it fails, it could end up in a stalemate with party hardliners determined to protect their control of the economy and the corrupt *nomenklatura*. Such an outcome would risk further divisions in the opposition that would leave the Communists in broad control and the populace more disillusioned and angrier than ever.

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