


Solidarity Governments in Poland (1989–1993)

Rządy solidarnościowe w Polsce (1989–1993)

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Abstract: After the parliamentary elections in 1989, a process of replacing the political elite in Poland was initiated. The old government elite (nomenclature) was replaced by a new government elite – members of the opposition in 1980–1981 and after 1981 (Podoski 1992: 155). In 1989–1992, six prime ministers received the mission of forming a government: Czesław Kiszczak, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jan K. Bielecki, Jan Olszewski, Waldemar Pawlak, and Hanna Suchocka. Prime Ministers Cz. Kiszczak and W. Pawlak (outside of “Solidarity”) failed to form a Council of Ministers. The nomination of a candidate for prime minister opens the way for agreeing the government’s programme of action and its composition (Skrzydło 1996: 122–123). The process of creating the Council of Ministers is undoubtedly a forecast of the effectiveness of governance. President Lech Wałęsa, Prime Ministers T. Mazowiecki and J. Olszewski, leaders of political parties, had an unquestionable impact on the composition and construction of solidarity governments. A wide range of determinants was decisive for entry into the first four governments after the political breakthrough of 1989. Solidarity governments consisted almost exclusively of men (97%). This state of affairs is also due to social factors, including, above all, existing stereotypes about both women and politics. The subject literature indicates, i.a., the stereotype, deeply rooted in the society, that the role of a leader is to be played by a man (Żukiewicz 2011: 168). More than half of the members of solidarity cabinets (52%) had academic degrees and titles. The reason for including a large number of academics in the trend of political action was primarily the deficit of expert-practitioners.

Keywords: “Solidarity,” Council of Ministers, Solidarity governments in Poland, coalition governments, forming processes of Solidarity governments, professionalism of the government elite, age and gender of the government elite

Streszczenie: Po wyborach parlamentarnych w 1989 r. rozpoczął się proces wymiany elit politycznych w Polsce. Doszło do zastąpienia starej elity rządowej (nomenklatury) nową elitą rządową – członkami opozycji w latach 1980–1981 i po 1981 r. (Podoski 1992: 155). W latach 1989–1992 misję tworzenia rządu otrzymało sześciu premierów: Czesław Kiszczak, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jan K. Bielecki, Jan Olszewski, Waldemar Pawlak i Hanna Suchocka. Premierzy Cz. Kiszczak i W. Pawlak (spoza „Solidarności”) nie zdołali utworzyć Rady Ministrów. Wskazanie kandydata na premiera otwiera drogę do uzgodnienia programu działania rządu i jego składu personalnego (Skrzydło 1996: 122–123). Przebieg



procesu tworzenia Rady Ministrów niewątpliwie stanowi prognozę dotyczącą skuteczności rządu (stabilności i efektywności egzekutywy). Niekwestionowany wpływ na skład personalny i konstrukcję rządów solidarnościowych miał prezydent Lech Wałęsa, premierzy T. Mazowiecki i J. Olszewski, liderzy partii politycznych. O wejściu do czterech pierwszych rządów po przełomie ustrojowym 1989 r. decydowała gama różnorodnych determinant. Rządy solidarnościowe tworzyli prawie wyłącznie mężczyźni (97%). Taki stan rzeczy wynika także z czynników społecznych, w tym przede wszystkim z istniejących stereotypów zarówno na temat kobiet, jak i polityki. W literaturze przedmiotu wskazuje się m.in. na zakorzeniony w społeczeństwie stereotyp, że rolę lidera pełni mężczyzna (Żukiewicz 2011: 168). Ponad połowa członków gabinetów solidarnościowych (52%) posiadała stopnie i tytuły naukowe. Powodem włączenia dużej liczby akademików w nurt politycznego działania był przede wszystkim deficyt ekspertów-praktyków.

Słowa kluczowe: „Solidarność”, Rada Ministrów, rządy solidarnościowe w Polsce, rządy koalicyjne, proces formowania rządów solidarnościowych, profesjonalizm elity rządowej, wiek i płeć elity rządowej

After the parliamentary elections in 1989, which were agreed at the “round table,” the dismantling of the communist system in Poland took place. The results of the first round of elections to the Sejm and Senate have created a new political reality, but with many question marks. How will parties and governments in other socialist countries react to events in Poland? How will the system of state bodies, including, above all, the parliament, with the participation of representatives of the former political opposition, function? (Materska-Sosnowska, Słomka 2009: 9). Initially, the opinion was expressed that the nomenclature party would not allow itself to take power. According to Jacek Kuroń: “They may have less public support, but they have the state, and therefore the army, the militia, the courts, the administration – not least Television” (Żakowski 15.06.1989: 3). The result of the discussion on the political structure of the Council of Ministers was the adoption by the Solidarity opposition of the slogan “Your president, our Prime Minister,” formulated by Adam Michnik in July 1989 (Michnik 3.07.1989: 1), which was initially treated solely as the author’s “own” opinion. According to this concept, the dismantling of the nomenclature was to take place with the help of a Solidarity government, which is a denial of the basic principle of its functioning. “However, it was such a revolutionary idea – Bronisław Geremek estimated – that both sides needed time to digest it” (Geremek, Żakowski 1990: 228). An important signal was the statement of Mikhail Gorbachev’s adviser Vadim Zagladin, who declared that the formation of a Solidarity government would be “an internal matter of our friends” (Friszke 2024: 169). The breakthrough came

only after the strategists of the “Solidarity” Movement: B. Geremek, J. Kuroń, and A. Michnik accepted the plan to transform the socialist economy into a market economy, developed by George Soros and Jeffrey Sachs, which was implemented by Leszek Balcerowicz. “All right – A. Michnik said to J. Sachs – you have provided me with the last piece of my puzzle. I know what needs to be done politically. Now you’re telling me there’s also an economic strategy. In that case, we are joining the government” (Sachs 2006: 127). Wojciech Jaruzelski and his political environment did not initially intend to take into account the social moods and expectations reflected by the result of the parliamentary elections of June 1989 (Chmaj 1996: 74). The president submitted a request to the Sejm on the appointment of gen. Czesław Kiszczak for the post of President of the Council of Ministers (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 4. posiedzenia Sejmu 2.08.1989: 204), which accelerated the fall of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR) government and had disastrous propaganda implications (Dudek 2023: 43). Wojciech Jaruzelski expressed the mistaken belief that the merits of Cz. Kiszczak in bringing to the “Round Table” will ensure the support of “Solidarity” (Janowski 2004: 322). The failure of this mission was primarily due to the fact that the Solidarity opposition formulated the slogan “all or nothing” and did not want to enter the cabinet created by the representative of the PZPR (Kondrat 5–6.08.1989: 1–2). Lech Wałęsa firmly stated that he stands “[...] against the formation of a new government by General Czesław Kiszczak. The only political solution in the current situation is the creation of a Council of Ministers based on the coalition of ‘Solidarity,’ ZSL and SD, which I will seek” (Wałęsa 2008: 297). Only real power – according to the leader of “Solidarity” – could perpetuate a peaceful revolution (Wałęsa 2007: 24). On August 7, 1989, a government coalition was formed between “Solidarity,” the United People’s Party (ZSL) and the Democratic Party (SD), with the aim of creating a “government of national responsibility” composed of all pro-reform political forces represented in the Sejm (Dudek 2023: 46–47). Wojciech Jaruzelski did not object to the decisions taken (Malinowski 1992: 30–31), but set the condition that the PZPR would participate in the government coalition (Brzezicki 18.04.2007: 3).

The aim of the article is to: (1) draw attention to the mechanisms of formation of the first four governments in Poland after the 1989 parliamentary elections: Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jan K. Bielecki, Jan Olszewski and Hanna Suchocka, whose functioning falls on the period of fundamental transformations of the political, political and economic system of the state, and (2) characteristics of the government elite due to: professionalism, age and gender.

The celebrations of the 45th anniversary of the signing of the August Agreements (August 31, 1980) and the registration of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union (NSZZ) "Solidarity" (November 10, 1980) emphasise that the fall of communism began in Poland. When the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, Poland already had a government led by T. Mazowiecki – the first non-communist prime minister after World War II and a "Solidarity" activist. In turn, the fact that 45% of "Solidarity" members were women justifies an attempt to address the issue in question from the perspective of gender equality, among other things.

1. The Formation of Solidarity Governments¹

1.1. The Government of the First Non-Communist Prime Minister

The candidates for the post of prime minister were: B. Geremek, J. Kuroń, and T. Mazowiecki. The mission of creating the cabinet, in accordance with the concept of the leader of "Solidarity," was given to T. Mazowiecki

¹ Solidarity governments were governments with the participation of representatives of "Solidarity," functioning in the period from September 12, 1989 (appointment of T. Mazowiecki's government – the first non-communist prime minister in Poland after World War II) to October 26, 1993 (appointment of the government of W. Pawlak – prime minister of the SLD and PSL coalition government formed following the parliamentary elections of September 19, 1993). During the above-mentioned period, Poland underwent groundbreaking changes (on December 29, 1989, the historical name "Rzeczpospolita Polska" (Republic of Poland), which had been abolished in 1952, was restored), which were characterised by fundamental transformations of the political, constitutional and economic systems of the state, concerning: (1) the formation of constitutional principles of a democratic political system; (2) the construction of a pluralistic political system; (3) the formation of parliamentary democracy; (4) the decentralisation of state administration and the construction of local government administration (at the municipal level); (5) a thorough change in the economic system (the process of privatisation and economic reforms based on the so-called Balcerowicz Plan). The Government of T. Mazowiecki included representatives of "Solidarity," ZSL, SD, and PZPR. In July 1990, three (Cz. Kiszcak, Florian Siwicki, Franciszek Wielądek) of the four ministers with a PZPR past were dismissed, while Marcin Świącicki, who ran in the second round of the 1989 parliamentary elections with the support of the "Solidarity" Citizens' Committee, i.e. in opposition to the PZPR leadership, retained his position in the government (Mojak 1998: 80, 85–86; Dudek 2023: 37).

(Wałęsa 2008: 299–300). The candidacy of the former MP, a trusted man of the church and editor-in-chief of “Tygodnik Solidarność,” was announced due to parliamentary experience and willingness to compromise (Sandecki 4.07.2008: 20). The submission of a proposal in the Sejm for the appointment by President W. Jaruzelski – a member of the PZPR and general – Prime Minister T. Mazowiecki from “Solidarity” was a landmark event. According to T. Mazowiecki, “the most important assurance was General Jaruzelski, who as president always behaved loyally towards me” (Żakowski 7.06.2008: 20). The Sejm accepted Cz. Kiszczak’s resignation and appointed T. Mazowiecki as Prime Minister (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 6. posiedzenia Sejmu 24.08.1989: 81–82). The concept of the role of the prime minister in the process of forming and then functioning the Cabinet was defined by T. Mazowiecki as follows: “I will not be a painted prime minister, [...] Mr. Lech, I will be a real prime minister” (Subotić 11–12.09.1999: 16–17). The prime minister held intensive consultations with politicians, in which L. Wałęsa did not participate. According to the leader of Solidarność, “the Prime Minister Mazowiecki did not consider it appropriate to consult me on his personal decisions” (Wałęsa 2008: 302). Due to problems with the staffing of some positions, the period of formation of the government lasted a little longer than originally assumed. For example, L. Balcerowicz only after several talks agreed to take the post of Vice-President of the Council of Ministers (for economic affairs) and Minister of Finance. Earlier, the prime minister was refused by professors: Witold Trzeciakowski and Cezary Józefiak (Sadecki 2009: 24). The members of T. Mazowiecki’s cabinet were representatives of groups represented in Parliament (“Solidarność,” SD, PZPR, and ZSL), but personal decisions belonged to the prime minister. The prime minister was the implementer of the concept that “Communists” could not be marginalized, while “Solidarity” should not be reduced to the role of decoration of the Cabinet (K.G. 24.09.1989: 2). “Critics of my government – said T. Mazowiecki years later – forget that after its formation, the then President of Romania, Nicolae Ceausescu, sent a letter to all communist parties demanding intervention in Poland, and that PZPR responded negatively” (Chorabik, Formela 2012). In the process of constructing the Council of Ministers, it turned out that for the prime minister the most important are the competence of candidates and mutual trust. The concept of selecting future colleagues used by T. Mazowiecki gave the head of government hope that he would be able to create a team for so-called difficult times (Geremek, Żakowski 1990: 228). As a result of the implementation of the concept “your

president, our prime minister," an agreement was concluded between the communist power elite and the Solidarity elite. This unprecedented arrangement made it possible to co-opt opposition groups into the government (Misztal 2005: 38).

The cabinet appointed on September 12, 1989 consisted of 12 representatives "Solidarity" (50%). Three members of the government were from the SD (12.5%). The PZPR and the ZSL each had four representatives in the cabinet (16.7% and 16.7%). Only one minister was not associated with any political formation (4.2 %).

The creation of the government of T. Mazowiecki was not connected with the end of the process of destruction of the communist dictatorship in Poland, but closed its key stage (Dudek 2023: 52). This is because the two so-called security ministries (which controlled, among others, the citizen militia/police, the Security Service/State Protection Office, and the army), namely the Ministry of Internal Affairs headed by General Cz. Kiszczak and the Ministry of National Defence, headed by General F. Siwicki, remained with the PZPR. Following the resolution of January 29, 1990, adopted by the participants of the 11th Congress of the PZPR on the dissolution of the party, the heads of both security ministries – *de facto* co-authors of martial law in Poland – were dismissed on July 6, 1990 (Kozłowski 2019: 98–99, 281–283).

1.2. The Government of the President or Prime Minister Jan K. Bielecki?

The resignation of the government immediately after the first round of presidential elections meant that T. Mazowiecki rejected the proposal of L. Wałęsa to continue to hold the post of prime minister in a situation where the leader of "Solidarity" would take the post of head of state. The resignation, which was accompanied by the conviction that L. Wałęsa was not competent to hold the Office of President, could also result from the fear of losing the independence of the prime minister (Sandecki 4.07.2008: 22).

During the presidential election campaign, the formation of a new government was also considered. The candidates for the position of prime minister indicated by L. Wałęsa were J.K. Bielecki, Jarosław Kaczyński, Jacek Merkel, Zdzisław Najder, and J. Olszewski. Due to the fact that J. Kaczyński did not accept the proposal to assume the post of President of the Council of Ministers, preliminary discussions on the program and composition of the Council of Ministers were conducted by J. Olszewski (Dudek 2002: 164).

However, the idea of a cabinet of professionals (different from the government of T. Mazowiecki) did not gain the approval of the leader of "Solidarity." "I had – said L. Wałęsa – a different concept, because I felt that Mr. mecenas (lawyer, attorney) – whom I respected and still respect for his work as a lawyer during the communist era – was not the best candidate for this position" (Wałęsa 2008: 353).

The President submitted a motion to the Sejm to appoint J.K. Bielecki as prime minister. The head of state appealed to the first house of Parliament for the "support" of the new prime minister (*Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 48. posiedzenia Sejmu 4.01.1991: 10–11*). The president considered that the appointment of a person previously unknown to the wider public as head of government was "[...] a breath of fresh air from Pomerania, a boost of energy. Jan Krzysztof was a promising, young, dynamic activist and manager. We needed someone like that. [...] Only such people could launch a market economy for good [...]" (Wałęsa 2008: 354). In L. Wałęsa's opinion, MP J.K. Bielecki was courageous and intelligent, and above all, not involved in "Warsaw's" high society. The appointment thus heralded the smooth formation of a new government, which would include several ministers from T. Mazowiecki's cabinet (Wałęsa 2008: 354–355).

In 2008, L. Wałęsa revealed that the selection of J.K. Bielecki as prime minister was decided by chance: "[...] one Bielecki was in Warsaw, the other in Gdańsk, a lot of information was coming in from everywhere, and somehow the two people merged into one in my mind. [...] it was so and it turned out well" (Paradowska 27.09.2008: 21). It follows from the above that, as a result of a "coincidence," the president opened the way to the European establishment for a previously unknown economist from Gdańsk (Basta 2008: 19). The rapid process of establishing J.K. Bielecki as an exceptionally efficient and competent head of government raised a flood of questions about his independence and ability to perform the duties of prime minister. Publicists of "Gazeta Wyborcza" stressed that the candidate for prime minister does not have a strong political personality. Due to the fact that L. Wałęsa had established – as announced by his spokesperson – a list of ministers prior to the appointment of the new prime minister (Leski, Ławiński 2.01.1991: 1), which was also consulted with L. Balcerowicz (Paradowska, Baczyński 1993: 29), J.K. Bielecki's declarations of complete independence in the process of forming the government were treated with a great deal of scepticism. "[...] The president, in turn, gives me a lot of freedom, contrary to what journalists said at the beginning, thinking that everything

was arranged by the Belweder Palace or personally by Lech Wałęsa. Meanwhile, I am sovereign in my decisions – the president did not even know who would be in the Polish government” (Michnik 20.10.1991: 11). “When selecting candidates – assured J.K. Bielecki – I was guided primarily by the criterion of professionalism. It was not the political arrangements, but the shape of the tasks that this government will have to perform, that guided my choice. It is supposed to be a government of competent professionals, especially in economic matters. It should also be a team of people who understand each other well [...]” (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 48. posiedzenia Sejmu 5.01.1991: 169).

On January 12, 1991, the Sejm appointed J.K. Bielecki’s cabinet, which was treated by most MPs as the government of the head of state (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 49. posiedzenia Sejmu 12.01.1991: 153–164).

The condition for joining the ranks of the new elite was to demonstrate “lack of ties and cooperation with the communist power” (Łabędź 1992: 148). More than half of the ministers, as many as 11, did not belong to any party (55% of the composition). Four members of the government were from the Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD; 20%). In J.K. Bielecki’s cabinet, the Centre Agreement (PC) had two representatives (10% of the composition). Representatives of three groups: SD, Ruch Obywatelski-Akcja Demokratyczna (ROAD), Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe (ZChN) took one ministerial position (5% each).

1.3. Jan Olszewski’s Cabinet

The results of the first free parliamentary elections on October 27, 1991 proved that none of the groups participating in the distribution of parliamentary seats was capable of playing a decisive role in the process of forming a government (Obwieszczenie 1991/41/288). Initially, the initiative to form a cabinet was attempted by the president. Three of the four government-building options developed by the head of state assumed the function of head of government (ard 30.10.1991: 1). When it turned out that the idea of combining the positions of the president and the prime minister undermined the principle of the parliamentary system of the state, L. Wałęsa began to promote the concept that J.K. Bielecki was to remain prime minister. The leaders of five groups: the PC, the ZChN, the KLD, the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN), and the Solidarity-affiliated People’s Alliance (PL) have announced the candidacy of J. Olszewski for the post of

prime minister. However, the president did not approve the proposed candidate and the idea of the cabinet of “breakthrough.” The head of state stated that the “only strong point” of the proposed prime minister is “a hard and frequent sleep” (Wałęsa 2007: 60). In turn, the alliance of centre-right parties refused to recognise Prime Minister J.K. Bielecki and the “continuation government.” Although the coalition “five” assured the president that they had a majority in parliament, as evidenced by the votes for the positions of Marshal and Deputy Marshals of the Sejm (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 1. posiedzenia Sejmu 25.11.1991: 40–41, 79), L. Wałęsa opposed the idea of forming a cabinet presented by the coalition (Patyra 2006: 98–99). Only after the Sejm accepted the resignation of J.K. Bielecki’s cabinet was the president forced to take the initiative to appoint J. Olszewski as prime minister. In a motion submitted to the Sejm, L. Wałęsa assured that he recognised the choice made and would honour the principles of democracy (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 1. posiedzenia Sejmu 5.12.1991: 129–130). However, there are many indications that the president accepted the prime minister’s candidacy in the belief that the mission of forming a new cabinet would not succeed (Dudek 2002: 232–233). On December 6, 1991, the Sejm appointed J. Olszewski as head of government (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 1. posiedzenia Sejmu 6.12.1991: 191, 193). The new prime minister has said his cabinet will be cross-party. “It should be a government of authorities, substantive authorities, professional authorities, but also moral authorities. [...] It must be a government of clear intentions and clean hands” (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 1. posiedzenia Sejmu 6.12.1991: 189). The declaration of the prime minister triggered a serious political crisis, which led to the collapse of the coalition “five” (Patyra 2006: 99). In the Sejm, a stormy debate was held over the adoption of the resignation of the prime minister, but the deprivation of J. Olszewski as prime minister did not occur, because more than half of the deputies gathered in the chamber voted against the resolution on the dismissal of the prime minister (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 2. posiedzenia Sejmu 17–18.12.1991: 37–50). Lech Wałęsa offered the head of government comprehensive assistance in the process of constructing the Council of Ministers.

Jan Olszewski stated that the cabinet created by him “[...] is both a coalition government and a cross-party one. It consists of people of one big camp – the libertarian camp, the camp of parliamentary democracy” (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z posiedzenia Sejmu 21.12.1991: 10). The prime minister stressed that his government “was formed in a short

time and very difficult circumstances. [...] Candidates for one of the leading ministries, after familiarising themselves with even the preliminary state of affairs in that ministry [...] – resigned” (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 4. posiedzenia Sejmu 23.12.1991: 28). Due to the fact that in the environment of J. Olszewski there was no economist willing to take the post of Minister of Finance, the prime minister was forced to hold talks with people outside his political orientation. As a result of the actions taken, the role of “chief accountant of the state budget” was entrusted to Karol Lutkowski – a person unknown to the prime minister at all (Kaja 2007: 153). In the opinion of L. Wałęsa, J. Olszewski failed, despite earlier announcements, to create a cross-party cabinet (Wałęsa 2008: 372).

The government appointed on December 23, 1991 included eight non-party ministers (47.1%). Four members of the cabinet were from the PC (23.5%). Three ministers belonged to the ZChN (17.6%), and two to the Solidarity-affiliated PL (11.8%).

1.4. The Failure to Form a Presidential Government and the Coalition Government of a Female Prime Minister

Immediately after the fall of J. Olszewski’s government on June 5, 1992, the president submitted a motion to the Sejm to appoint Waldemar Pawlak as prime minister. On the same day, the PSL representative became prime minister (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 17. posiedzenia Sejmu 5.06.1992: 82–83), *de facto* the youngest prime minister since World War II (Styczyński 2000: 1–594). It is likely that the candidacy of 33-year-old MP W. Pawlak was recommended to the head of state by Prof. Janusz Ziółkowski, head of the President’s Office. The senator of the first term and the MP of the tenth term were neighbours in the MPs’ hotel (Basta 2008: 19). There are many indications that L. Wałęsa’s decision to entrust the position of prime minister to an inexperienced politician was dictated, as in the case of J.K. Bielecki, by the need to ensure his complete obedience and availability to the president.

The Prime Minister was a supporter of the creation of a sustainable government based on two coalitions (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 17. posiedzenia Sejmu 5.06.1992: 88). In view of the fact that after 10 days of intensive consultations, W. Pawlak failed to form a government, L. Wałęsa presented the idea of a presidential cabinet. According to the proposal of the head of State at the heads of departments: foreign affairs, agriculture, industry, finance and economic affairs, were to become heads of departments

in the rank of secretary or undersecretary of State. However, W. Pawlak did not support the president's idea. He justified his decision by the possibility of forming a government by a parliamentary majority (Łuczak 1992: 75). In connection with the fact that the actions of W. Pawlak did not bring the intended results, the Sejm dismissed him from the post of President of the Council of Ministers (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 20. posiedzenia Sejmu 10.07.1992: 4).

The idea of taking the post of prime minister by H. Suchocka was a surprise to many politicians. Activists of the Democratic Union (UD), who put forward her candidacy, believed that "there will be no misfortune, Hania will be joined by Jaś and Tadzio, that is, Rokita with a Syrian, who will lead everything" (Paradowska 15.08.2009: 11). On July 3–4, 1992, intensive consultations were held on the formation of the Council of Ministers. Effective mediators in the process of forming the government turned out to be MPs: Jan Rulewski and Bogdan Borusewicz from the NSZZ "Solidarność" Parliamentary Club (Dudek 2023: 170–171).

The composition of the Council of Ministers was determined essentially without the participation of H. Suchocka, which was reflected in the opinion expressed, among others, by MP Wojciech Arkuszewski from the NSZZ "Solidarność" Parliamentary Club – in this Sejm, the prime minister cannot choose his own government (Kuczyński 2010: 235). The exclusion of the future prime minister from influencing the "personal structure of the cabinet" should not be justified by her stay (until the evening hours of July 4, 1992) in London (Leszczyńska-Wichmanowska 2022: 265). The situation arose because H. Suchocka became prime minister as a result of political negotiations, i.e., a kind of logical calculation, rather than a victory in the style of Margaret Thatcher² (Thatcher 2012: 886–892). The positions in the government were decided by political groups and L. Wałęsa. The president managed to influence the personnel of the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Łuczak 1992: 56–58) and block the nomination of a representative of the ZChN to the post of Minister of Culture (Dudek 2002: 278).

² Due to the fact that the Conservative Party, led by M. Thatcher, won three consecutive general elections (May 3, 1979, June 9, 1983, June 11, 1987), the "Iron Lady" served as prime minister of the United Kingdom for over 11 years (1979–1990), setting a record in the history of 20th-century politics in a democratic country.

Appointed on July 11, 1992, the cabinet was a minority government (Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 20. posiedzenia Sejmu 11.07.1992: 60; Dudek 2023: 171). The government coalition of seven political parties has been described as difficult and exotic. The president stated that he tried to give the new government a big credit of confidence this time, but public dissatisfaction “made me look at Hanna Suchocka’s cabinet with caution” (Wałęsa 2008: 419).

UD and ZChN each had five representatives (40%). The KLD and PL had four ministerial posts each (32%). Representatives of the party of Christian Democrats (PChD), the Polish Economic Programme (PPG), and the People’s Christian Party (SLCh) each had one position in the Government (16%). Four ministers did not belong to any party (16%).

2. Characteristics of the Solidarity Government Elite

2.1. Age and Gender

The average age of the 96 members of the Solidarity governments was 51 years. The data shows that only in J.K. Bielecki’s cabinet did the average age of ministers not reach this level. The oldest member of the government who joined J.K. Bielecki’s cabinet was Marek Rostworowski, who was 70 years old at the time. The youngest minister in H. Suchocka’s government, Jan Maria Rokita, was 33 at the time. The Solidarity cabinet members were aged: 30–39 years – 9 people, 40–49 years – 34 people, 50–59 years – 29 people, 60–69 years – 23 people, over 70 years – one person. The age difference between the ministers in the governments of J.K. Bielecki and H. Suchocka was 33 years. However, in the offices of T. Mazowiecki and J. Olszewski, this difference was formed at the level of 28 years. Between 1989 and 1993, Solidarity governments were overwhelmingly made up of 40-and 50-year-olds, although the 60-year-old generation made up almost a quarter of them (23%).

Table 1. Age

Government	Average age of government members	The oldest member of the government	The youngest member of the government	The age range among members of
T. Mazowiecki's	51.5	64	36	28
J.K. Bielecki's	48.9	70	37	33
J. Olszewski's	53.4	67	39	28
H. Suchocka's	50.6	66	33	33

Source: own study.

Between 1989 and 1993, there were only three women (3%) in government. J. Olszewski's cabinet was made up exclusively of men. The same situation occurred in the first (almost eight) months of the existence of the J.K. Bielecki government.

Hanna Suchocka headed the cabinet, which was formed without her participation and was created on the basis of "coalition necessity," and not the competence of individual people or the preferences of the head of government. Izabella Cywińska headed a ministry that was not very popular (among ministerial candidates), classified as part of the so-called public sector. The Government of T. Mazowiecki did not marginalize cultural problems, but in the difficult economic situation of the state, expenditures on the resort headed by I. Cywińska were limited (*Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 7. posiedzenia Sejmu 12.09.1989*: 13). The effect of changing some of the existing rules of functioning of cultural institutions and creators of culture was the smoking of puppets of the head of the ministry (*Jaros 12.2015*: 77). However, Henryka Bochniarz's appointment to the seemingly prestigious position of Minister of Industry and Trade took place as part of the so-called second personnel change, only four months before the end of the government's term.

The small number of women in Solidarity governments was the result of a "tradition" of male appropriation of public life. The governments of the Polish People's Republic (between December 31, 1944 and September 11, 1989) were dominated by men. During this period, only seven women (including one on three occasions) held ministerial positions (*Styczyński 2000*: 1–594). However, the presence of women in Solidarity governments initiated the process of breaking gender stereotypes in Polish politics.

Table 2. Gender

Government	Number of women	Number of women in office:				
		President of the Council of Ministers	Vice-president of the Council of Ministers	Resort Minister	Minister without folder	Chairman of the Committee specified in the law
T. Mazowiecki's	1	-	-	1	-	-
J.K. Bielecki's	1	-	-	1	-	-
Jan Olszewski's	-	-	-	-	-	-
H. Suchocka's	1	1	-	-	-	-
Total	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	0	2 (2%)	0	0

Source: own study.

2.2. Education and Professionalism

In governments from 1989 to 1993, the largest group was engineers and economists. 25 people (26%) had a professional degree in technical sciences. 23 members of the Council of Ministers had economic education (24%). Almost one in five members of Solidarity cabinets had completed legal studies (19%). 14 members of the government (15%) had an education in the humanities. Six ministers had a doctor's degree (6%). Four members of the government graduated from military universities (4%). The Solidarity cabinets included five representatives of the exact and natural sciences (physicists, geologists, mathematicians), one journalist, and one farmer.

Table 3. Fields of Education

Government	Journalist	Economist	Physicist	Geologist	Humanist	Engineer	Physician	Mathematician	Lawyer	Farmer	Military
T. Mazowiecki's	0	6	0	0	6	9	1	1	3	0	3
J.K. Bielecki's	0	8	1	0	2	6	1	0	2	0	1
J. Olszewski's	1	5	0	1	4	4	1	0	4	0	0
H. Suchocka's	0	4	0	1	2	6	3	1	9	1	0
Total	1	23	1	2	14	25	6	2	18	1	4

Source: own study.

The Polish government elite was characterised by a very high level of education. 94 members of the Council of Ministers completed higher studies (98%).

Two positions in the offices of T. Mazowiecki and H. Suchocka were entrusted to high school graduates. Among the members of the government who did not have higher education were the prime minister (KID, RAF, PAP 13.06.2003: 7) and the minister – member of the Council of Ministers for Parliamentary Affairs and contacts with political groups (Moldova 1991: 157). 50 members of Solidarity cabinets (52%) had degrees and academic titles. More than half of the Polish government elite in the years 1989–1993 were scientists-academics. The involvement of a significant number of intellectuals in political activity resulted from a specific shortage of expert practitioners, which characterised the period of “impaired balance.” The forges of the government elite were universities, mainly in Gdańsk, Kraków, and Warsaw. However, titles and degrees proved to be an insufficient asset for ministers in the process of transition from a socialist to a market economy. According to Krzysztof Wolicki, “the new Solidarity power, which does not even have a shadow of a program, even the seed of its own vision of the world, throws itself head and neck into ‘normality.’ The intellectuals who accompany it do everything to avoid the question of what should be done and what to strive for. Most often they pretend that this question cannot be asked at all [...]” (Wolicki 2000: 568).

Table 4. Professional titles, degrees, and academic titles

Government	Professional titles, degrees, and academic titles			
	None	Master's degree, Engineer/Master of Engineering	Doctor of Philosophy	Post-doctoral degree (Habilitated doctor)/ Professor
T. Mazowiecki's	1	16	7	6
J.K. Bielecki's	0	10	7	4
J. Olszewski's	0	6	7	5
H. Suchocka's	1	13	9	4
Total	2 (2%)	45 (47%)	31 (32%)	19 (20%)

Source: own study.

Political professionalism is based on knowledge, knowledge of the rules of the decision-making process, the ability to work in a team, and the art of compromise. In political activity, experience gained at the so-called levels of public career, mainly in government administration, is extremely important. This thesis is confirmed by an observer and participant of the Polish political scene – Grzegorz Rydlewski. “I put in the first place the above-mentioned criterion of practice, which I consider particularly important in these

matters" (Rydlewski 2004: 15). The biographies of 36 people (38%) who were members of Solidarity cabinets included nominations for Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister, Secretary of State, and Under-Secretary of State. However, the period of gaining experience in the above positions was short. As a rule, it was a few or several months. The record holder in the performance of ministerial functions was Krzysztof Skubiszewski, who headed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in all Solidarity governments.

The experience gained in previous Councils of Ministers has not always proved to be an asset. The Minister of National Defence in the governments of the Polish People's Republic – F. Siwicki, who was a candidate for the same position in T. Mazowiecki's cabinet, was obliged to make a public declaration that the armed forces would not be used to resolve internal social disputes.

An analysis of the data contained in Tables 4 and 5 leads to the conclusion that there was a certain dissonance between academic degrees and titles and experience in specific government positions (to the detriment of experience).

Table 5. Experience gained in previous governments

Government	Number of people with experience in the position:				
	President of the Council of Ministers	Vice-President of the Council of Ministers	Minister	Secretary of State At the Ministry	Under Secretary of State at the Ministry
T. Mazowiecki's	0	0	2	0	7
J.K. Bielecki's	0	1	5	0	3
J. Olszewski's	0	0	5	1	1
H. Suchocka's	1	0	7	2	1
Total	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	19 (20%)	3 (3%)	12 (13%)

Source: own study.

Conclusions

Solidarity governments T. Mazowiecki, J.K. Bielecki, J. Olszewski, and H. Suchocka functioned from September 12, 1989 (appointment of T. Mazowiecki's government – the first non-communist prime minister in Poland after World War II) to October 26, 1993 (appointment of W. Pawlak's cabinet – prime minister of the coalition government of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and the Polish People's Party (PSL), formed following the parliamentary elections on September 19, 1993). An attempt to create a Council of Ministers

by W. Pawlak, who was the president of the PSL, a party not derived from the Solidarity tradition, within 33 days (June/July 1992), failed.

The period of just four years (September 1989 – October 1993) was a time of fundamental transformation of the country's political, constitutional, and economic system. The appointment of T. Mazowiecki's cabinet initiated a process of replacing the political elite in Poland, the turning point and symbol of which was July 6, 1990 – the day on which Gen. Cz. Kiszczak, head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Gen. F. Siwicki, head of the Ministry of National Defence (co-authors of martial law). Solidarity governments were almost exclusively made up of men (97%). More than half of the Solidarity Cabinet members (52%) had degrees and titles. The reason for the inclusion of a large number of academics in the political mainstream was primarily the deficit of experts-practitioners.

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