

H-Diplo | Robert Jervis International Security Studies Forum

Article Review 169

Sławomir Łukasiewicz. "A Shadow Party System: The Political Activities of Cold War Polish Exiles." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 25:1 (Winter 2023): 46-74. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws_a_01121

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9 April 2024 | PDF: <http://issforum.org/to/JAR-169> | Website: rjissf.org | Twitter: [@HDiplo](https://twitter.com/HDiplo)

Editor: Diane Labrosse | Commissioning Editor: Thomas Maddux | Production Editor: Christopher Ball

A politico-legal institution and social condition, exile has roots in the two traditions molding Western civilization, the biblical and the classical. Yet, exile of political parties, i.e., of groups with a reasonably coherent political program and institutionalized internal organization, is a twentieth-century phenomenon. One may even dare to observe that it became undeniably palatable only in the Cold War landscape,¹ and mostly in Europe where the division that became a fact by the late 1940s produced a cohort of Central and Eastern European exiles.² Among them the Poles were the most populous³ and, with their Second World War origins,⁴ also the most “senior” group in the temporal sense.

Sławomir Łukasiewicz argues that historians and political scientists have been neglecting parties-in-exile in their studies of the Cold War social and political behavior. He is right, especially as regards scholarship aspiring to international reception. Unlike the portraits of leaders or exile movements in the broader sense, discussions of party politics do not abound on the national level either, even if they are not completely absent. Thus, for example, Łukasiewicz was able to utilize research coming from other Polish scholars. If

¹ For inter-war examples, see Francesco di Palma, *Liberale Sozialismus in Deutschland und Italien im Vergleich. Das Beispiel Sopade und Giustizia e Libertà* (Berlin: Metropol, 2010); Gaidz Minassian, “The Socialist International and Communist Bloc Socialist Parties in Exile: The case of Dachnaktsoutioun, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.” *Revue d'études comparatives est-ouest* 32:3 (2001): 105-30; Claudia Weiss, “Russian Political Parties in Exile.” *Kritika* 5:1 (2004): 219-32, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2004.0018>.

² It should be noted that, at the close of the Second World War or shortly afterwards, some Nazi collaborationists chose exile. For a rare Polish case, see Małgorzata Bańkowska, “Jan Emil Skiński—krytyk niepokorny. (Z redakcji „Pionu” i „Przełomu” do Biblioteka Nacional w Caracas).” *Acta Universitatis Lodzjensis—Folia librorum* 35 (2022): 86-90, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18778/0860-7435.35.05>

³ For the respective “national” cases, see Anna Mazurkiewicz, ed., *East Central European Migrations during the Cold War: A Handbook* (Berlin, Boston: DeGruyter Oldenbourg, 2019). The Polish case was discussed by Sławomir Łukasiewicz.

⁴ During the Second World War, the governments of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Yugoslavia, and multiple “free movements,” such as the Free French, were headquartered in London; Martin Conway and José Gotovitch, eds., *Europe in Exile: European Exile Communities in Britain, 1940–45* (New York: Berghahn, 2001); Vít Smetana and Kathleen Geaney, eds., *Exile in London: The Experience of Czechoslovakia and the Other Occupied Nations, 1939–1945* (Prague: Carolinum, 2017), esp. essays in Pt 1. While most wartime exiles returned home, most of the Polish exiles did not. Some Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, and Polish returnees found themselves in exile again only a few years later.

there seems to be some recent interest in parties-in-exile, it tends to be channeled towards case studies,⁵ with limited interest in more general, theoretical issues of party politics. There is one notable exception: the work of the Israeli political scientist Yossi Shain.⁶

The niche is thus evident. To address it, Łukasiewicz proposes a framework for the study of the parties-in-exile as an important element of the émigré political systems (cf. 50). Proceeding from the general to the particular, he tests his argument's methodological underpinnings on Polish émigré party politics. In doing so, Łukasiewicz introduces Polish Cold War exiles also to colleagues who may otherwise not feel compelled to zoom in on Central and East European affairs. As Łukasiewicz, who is an established scholar of Polish Cold War exile politics and political thought, openly acknowledges, this article builds on his previous research.⁷ On the whole, it demonstrates erudition and reflexion.

Laying out his framework, which is informed by the work of Maurice Duverger, Valdimir O. Key Jr., and Giovanni Sartori,⁸ Łukasiewicz discusses primarily the ramifications and the scope of party activities in exile. Both depart from the representative claim of “speaking for the nation” that political parties in exile put forth, for, as sociologist Stéphane Dufoix has pointed out, exile movements “prétendant ‘être’ les véritables dépositaires de l’autorité étatique, le ‘vrai’ pays.”⁹ This claim is often legitimized with reference to the support received in the last elections before forced emigration, and rather exceptionally through elections held in exile. While the assumption of ragged elections leads to the assumption about the existence of a prospective home country electorate of exile political parties, Łukasiewicz notes that such electorate is unverifiable and unquantifiable. Even so, parties-in-exile, which are antithetical to the forces in power that have eliminated them from their original political landscape, may play a distinct role in preserving “elements of a previous party system whose legitimization was based on more or less democratic choices” (49).

Łukasiewicz points out that, when ousted from its original territorial context, a party-in-exile establishes structures wherever possible. Its “trans-territoriality” unfolds in relation to the political systems in the home and host countries, as well as to the international system; the party actually operates in the latter two. The political system in the home country, in fact, is its “constitutive other”; the local hegemon’s “lack of official recognition of exile parties and its attempts to eradicate the political appeal of the exiles strongly legitimize the exiles in the eyes of many; after all, the state cannot fight something that does not exist” (50). This existence manifests itself primarily by focus on political thought and on international activities. Under standard conditions, these two domains are of secondary importance for party operations; in exile, while the former tends to evaporate with the passing away of the founding generation, the latter may open for international careers. Such limited scope notwithstanding, parties-in-exile are no strangers to friction, or Shain’s “politics of schism.”¹⁰

⁵ Christian John Makgala, “The Basutoland Congress Party in Exile, 1974–1986.” *African Historical Review* 44:2 (2012): 78–97, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17532523.2012.739750>; Hugh Macmillan, “The African National Congress of South Africa in Zambia: The Culture of Exile and the Changing Relationship with Home, 1964–1990.” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35:2 (2009): 303–29, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070902919876>.

⁶ See his *The Frontier of Loyalty: Political Exiles in the Age of the Nation-State* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).

⁷ That said, a note explaining how the present article relates to the author’s earlier publication with a somewhat similar title might have been included; Sławomir Łukasiewicz, “The Polish Political System in Exile, 1945–1990,” *Polish American Studies* 72:2 (2015): 13–31, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5406/poliamerstud.72.2.0013>.

⁸ Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, trans. Barbara North and Robert North (London: Methuen, 1954); Valdimir O. Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups* (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1964); Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2016).

⁹ Stéphane Dufoix, “Les légitimations politique de l’exil,” *Genèses* 34 (1999): 53.

¹⁰ Shain, *Frontier of Loyalty*, ch. 3.

Łukasiewicz posits that the Polish Cold War party system in exile offers the best sample for the study of the parties-in-exile, of their modes of operations, and of the ramifications. This claim is not elaborated on, for example, by contrasting this party system to its Central and Eastern European counterparts, which the author describes (cf. 55-7, 66). Primacy aside, one could speculate that its origins in a political representation of a sovereign state and the said “seniority” in the temporal sense do, to some extent at least, single out the Polish party system in exile. There is, however, no trace of such guiding line of thought. Instead, the article moves over to the Polish system per se and announces an ambition as “to examine the system’s origins, composition, and functioning within the international environment” (51).

This is surprising, since Polish historiography, while not prioritizing the party system, has produced considerable number of studies on the first two elements; the last one features prominently in Anna Mazurkiewicz’s research.¹¹ What may be considered a more relevant contribution is the presentation of the framework of Polish exile politics for the broader Cold War history community. This is what the article delivers (cf. 58-66). Three observations appear relevant in a broader perspective. First, efforts to the opposite effect notwithstanding, party politics in exile remained an elite affair; parties mobilized only a tiny part of the exile community (even when attempts to hold diaspora-wide general elections were made). Second, when party youth organizations are included, the number of participants increases considerably, even if one should consider to what extent these served as platforms of ethnic socialization, and only then as a site of politics proper. Third, over time the initially popular socialist parties lost popular support in favor of parties with a clear anti-Communist/anti-socialist profile.

Łukasiewicz discusses the international operations of exile parties in some detail. In doing so, he corroborates on their importance for exile-party operations as such. He is right to assert that the simultaneous presence of multiple exile communities coming from the same region was an asset (66), or at a minimum a potential asset, in Cold War confrontations (hence the critical role of an interface, connecting the exiles with the CIA and the State Department, [67]).¹² Łukasiewicz points out that international inter-party cooperation advanced inter-party cooperation on the national level as well, and that “these parties, ..., were treated as the basis for new East-Central European political systems” (67). It is, then, a pity that not much of the analysis ventures beyond the early Cold War period.

Here, again, Łukasiewicz’s narrative moves away from the general to the particular and zooms on the international operations of the Christian Democratic exile parties. Underscoring the polemical argument of historian Ildesbald Goddeeris that these activities had helped the exiles exert insignificant influence only,¹³ the author notes and highlights the attempts of these parties to play an important role in Cold War politics. Still, the article’s singular cases from this province of Cold War exile politics do not appear to inspire much revision in this regard. They do point to the potential of institutionalized international cooperation to increase a party-in-exile’s own status and influence on two levels, vis-à-vis foreign patrons/donors and within a symbolic hierarchy of exile communities. The question remains as to whether we at present have instruments to assess this potential and to ascertain if, and if so, how and how successfully it was converted.

¹¹ Mazurkiewicz, *Uchodźcy polityczni z Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w amerykańskiej polityce zimnowojennej, 1948–1954* (Warszawa, Gdańsk: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej—Uniwersytet Gdański, 2016). Mazurkiewicz’s most recent monograph (*Voice of the Silenced Peoples in the Global Cold War. The Assembly of Captive European Nations 1954–1972* (Berlin, Boston: DeGruyter Oldenbourg, 2021)) appeared probably too late to be utilized in this article. See also Łukasiewicz, “The Polish Political System,” 15-6.

¹² On this dimension of the exile condition, see Brian J. Auten, “Political Diasporas and Exiles as Instruments of Statecraft,” *Comparative Strategy* 25:4 (2006): 329-41, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495930601057472>.

¹³ Idesbald Goddeeris, “Exiles’ Strategies for Lobbying in International Organizations: Eastern European Participation in the Nouvelles Équipes Internationales,” *European Review of History / Revue européenne d’histoire* 11:3 (2004): 391–2, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350748042000313773>.

As a post-script in kind, Łukasiewicz touches upon attempts of the parties-in-exile to return and become a part of the local political landscape in their home countries after the demise of Communism. The few examples he mentions leave an impression of mixed emotions at best, and there is at present no evidence that would prompt one to disagree with the author on that point.

In the concluding section the author restates some of his observations. This is commendable, for the reviewed article is complex, and this reiteration allows readers to grasp its arguments. While one can agree that “Émigré parties offered a specific type of opposition,” the claim that this opposition “strongly delegitimized the Communist dictatorships” (73) is problematic. First, it embraces the exiles’ own perspective on their (unceasing) activities to that effect, and second, it seems to assume some “universal subscription” for their views, without asking (and illustrating) in whose eyes this delegitimization was supposed to work. The article argues more persuasively for the fact that the existence of multiple “centers of power built on party subsystems” (74) hampered the effectiveness of the party system as a whole; indeed, one might even wish to examine on what occasions one can and cannot speak about a coherent Polish party system in Cold War exile.

Obviously, this is an ambitious article, with corresponding challenges. It is also a methodological proposal. Proposals, as a rule, entail a certain dose of ambiguity. The scholarly ambition to measure past impact is usually rather problematic. If one holds that “a party in exile resembles a phantom illusion” (46), the claim that “East-Central European political parties in exile were an important feature of the Cold War landscape” (47) begs for elaboration. These parties were present, at times even vocal in that landscape, yet they can hardly be considered to have been overly effective. One can safely argue that, apart from playing a part in Cold War propaganda, they were important for the exiles themselves—as program and mobilization platforms. Was this perhaps what enabled their survival until the very late 1980s, as “important symbols of independent politics” (71), with their importance more assumed than documented? Still, one can maintain that, in “a situation in which large fragments of Central European party systems, including the Polish system, ended up outside their home countries,” the respective party sceneries were more fragmented than they would otherwise have been. It is not clear whether these party systems “highly fragmented” (57) as a whole, or rather forcibly consolidated in the home countries but fragmented in exile. Further, when one asserts that “from the regimes’ perspective, émigré parties appeared to be an important and dangerous mechanism for delegitimizing the political systems in Communist states” (54), it would be interesting to know whether this was a constant, long-term understanding, or rather one most acutely pronounced shortly after Communist takeovers.

There are some minor issues. One involves the article’s reference to Polish scholarship without contextualization with the international scholarship on Polish affairs, either original or translated,¹⁴ which is more readily accessible to the prospective readership of this article. It is not clear, for instance, why a 1995 monograph on the early post-war transformation of the party system in Poland¹⁵ is “excellent” (52), and why it has not been surpassed by more recent works. In the similar vein, to present Jan Nowak-Jeziorański as “known as the courier from Warsaw” (4) is somewhat speculative and opens for the question “known to whom?” Certainly not to most Cold War historians, who as a rule do not write on the Polish Second World War “Underground State.”¹⁶ The claim that the coalition government that emerged from the 1946 Czechoslovak general elections was not a democratic one (cf. 55) is in need of clarification since the eclipse of

¹⁴ This is perhaps most apparent in the discussion of Poland’s transformation during the later 1940s. See, for example, John Coutouvidis, Jaime Reynolds, *Poland, 1939–1947* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986); Andrea Mason, *British Policy towards Poland, 1944–1956* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Andrzej Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Alina Prazmowska, *Civil War in Poland, 1942–1948* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

¹⁵ Janusz Wrona, *System partyjny w Polsce 1944–1950: Miejsce—funkcje—relacje partii politycznych w warunkach budowy i utrwalania systemu totalitarnego* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1995).

¹⁶ Paczkowski, *Spring Will Be Ours*, 63–73, 83–103. See also Jan Karski, *Story of the Secret State: My Report to the World* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014 [1944]).

democracy in Czechoslovakia conventionally dates February 1948, when a constitutional crisis enabled a Communist takeover of this government—and, with it, a takeover of the country.

It is not clear what part of Ukraine or Belarus was “annexed” (56) by the Soviet Union during the Second World War and, by extension, what local party systems were thus erased. The implied suggestion that Belarus and Ukraine were states on par with inter-war Baltic republics (56) is unwarranted. Apart from ephemeral, quasi-sovereign state formations that emerged after the collapse of the Habsburg and the Romanov empires and that the Bolshevik expansion extinguished by the early 1920s, there was no Belorussian or Ukrainian state between the wars. The Belorussian or Ukrainian political parties that were neither republican branches of the Russian, after 1925 All-Union Communist Party, nor Bolshevik fronts in the “Near Abroad” operated either within the inter-war Polish party system or in exile, and while Nazi occupation authorities allowed a certain degree of indigenous political life, they did not institute anything close to a party system.¹⁷

In conclusion, Łukasiewicz’s mighty attempt to bring political parties in exile to the attention of Cold War historians is welcome. These actors undeniably played a part in the global ideological confrontation between liberal democracy and Marxism–Leninism. Łukasiewicz’s methodological proposal has its merits, inasmuch it acknowledges the principal features of these parties and the limitations to which they had to adapt. Further gestation is necessary to operationalize it more persuasively, in the first place with respect to the effective influence that the political parties-in-exile were able to exert on their partners, most notably donors, as well as on their enemies, the dictatorial regimes back home. At times, the narrative includes well-willing judgments on the exiles, which are difficult to substantiate with research. Some of the issues listed above originate in the article’s very complexity, as so do the unanswered questions, that future work by Cold War historians should address. Sławomir Łukasiewicz’s article should be read as a seminal piece of work on one unjustly understudied phenomenon from the recent past.

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¹⁷ See, for example, Juryj Borys, “Parties, political,” In *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. 3: L–Pf, ed. Danylo Husar Struk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 785–787; Jerzy Holzer, *Mozaika polityczna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1974), 241–260, 531–62. For the post-World War I failed emancipation projects, see Per Anders Rudling, *The Rise and Fall of Belorussian Nationalism, 1906–1931* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 80–113; George O. Liber, *Total Wars and the Making of Modern Ukraine, 1914–1954* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), ch. 3–4. See also Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 47–54; Leonid Rein, *The Kings and the Pawns: Collaboration in Byelorussia in World War II* (New York, London: Berghahn, 2011), esp. ch. 4.