

## 6 The Hungarian parliamentary elections, 1990\*

András Körösenyi

### 1. Re-emerging pluralism in Hungarian politics: The character of the political parties

In a smooth transition lasting 30 months, the decay of the Communist Party and the emergence of the opposition parties made it possible for Hungary to have free parliamentary elections in March 1990.

The communist regime looked stable until the mid-1980s, then the decay of the regime began fast. The first signs of the crisis had already appeared in 1985, when 40–45 independent candidates were elected at the last one-party general elections. The years 1985–87 were still the golden age of communist reformism. The reforms, however, failed to preserve the one-party system: the opposition entered the stage very soon. The years 1988–89 can be characterized by a two-sided process: a rapid decay of the Communist Party and a slow, gradual rise of the opposition. There were no two strong, determined and self-confident characters in this political drama, like Solidarity and the Communist Party in Poland, but several hesitant second fiddlers. The Communists resigned under rather weak pressure, because even they themselves had lost their belief in the legitimacy of their rule as well as their self-interest in maintaining it. The succession crisis and the embittered battle between reformers (I. Pozsgay, Gy. Horn) and hard-liners (K. Grósz) also weakened their position. The name of the party was changed to the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP), but that was not enough to gain the confidence of the public. After the simultaneous abolition of the *nomenklatura* system and other privileges of the Communist Party, the regime collapsed by the autumn of 1989, before the opposition could take power. Since no political power stood behind the government and the legislature, a real power vacuum came into being, which lasted until the March/April 1990 parliamentary elections.

The political basis for the 1990 elections had developed by the beginning of 1989. There were no big 'umbrella' organizations, both the ruling

Communist Party and the opposition were divided. On the opposition side, the Hungarian Democratic Forum and the Alliance of Free Democrats were the most influential parties. The *Hungarian Democratic Forum* (HDF) was founded in September 1987 as a national-populist political movement, occupying a 'centrist' position between the ruling Communists and the radical opposition groups. The political character of the Forum had changed significantly by the end of 1989: it had moved away from its populist standpoint, broken with the reformer Communists and built up a Christian-democratic image. This shift was due to Jozsef Antal, the new president of the HDF, who shaped the Forum to be the Hungarian counterpart of the German CDU/CSU and the Austrian Volkspartei.

The other major opposition party, the left-liberal *Alliance of Free Democrats* (AFD) was formed by dissident intellectuals and human rights activists, who made up the radical opposition to the communist regime. Its closest political counterparts in European politics, in programme and political philosophy were perhaps the British centre parties, but in the final six months there was a shift towards a much more Thatcherite economic stance. The Hungarian dissidents did not have a single, charismatic leader, like Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia.

The other radical opposition party, the *Federation of Young Democrats* (FYD) was originally founded in March 1988 as a youth organization. The FYD became well known and popular because of the radical speeches of Viktor Orbán, who was the only charismatic figure in Hungarian politics, and because of radical political actions, such as collecting tens of thousands of signatures to force hard-line communist MPs to resign. They had a political philosophy similar to that of the Free Democrats, but by the pre-election period they had successfully moved away politically from the AFD; this was crucial – it kept their sympathizers as voters and it reshaped the image of the party from militancy to moderation and thoughtfulness.

The *Independent Smallholders' Party* (SHP) was originally founded in the inter-war period, and was then the major opposition party. It was the party of the peasants with landed property. As the single anti-communist party which took part in the 1945 contest, it had taken all the votes of the right (57 per cent) and won the parliamentary elections. At the end of 1988, former Smallholders MPs began to reorganize the party, but it then became entangled in an ongoing leadership crisis. However, the party survived, and by raising the question of landed property, it became popular in rural Hungary by the pre-election period. (It claimed back the collectivized land of the peasantry.)

In the beginning of 1989, old social democrat politicians also tried to reorganize the Social Democratic Party, which had fused with the Communists in 1948. In the inter- and post-war period, the *Hungarian Social Democratic Party* (SDP) was the party of the working class, based on trade-union member factory workers. The new SDP, however, did not turn back to this tradition, but tried to build up a left-liberal middle-class party. The SDP also suffered from an ongoing leadership crisis, which damaged the image of the party.

\* An earlier version first published in *Electoral Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1990, pp. 337–45.

On the other side of politics, the ruling Communist Party was in decay. The internal struggle within the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party finally led to an open split in October 1989. The reform wing, led by I. Pozsgay, pushed K. Grósz and the hard-liners out and reshaped the party under a new name as the *Hungarian Socialist Party* (HSP), under which title they kept their governing position until the 1990 elections. The HSP reformers tried to build up a new, social democratic image, but were not able to stop the decline in their party's popularity.

The hard-line communists tried to revive the old *Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party* (HSWP). Though they had the highest number of party members in the pre-election period, their political influence did not extend beyond their own rank and file.

## 2. The electoral system

The electoral system was a product of a political compromise. It was discussed and decided upon by the main opposition parties and the ruling Communist Party during the 'roundtable negotiations' in August and September 1989.

The historic parties (Smallholders, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats) favoured proportional representation (PR) with county-based party lists, which was used in 1945 and 1947. However, the general mood in the country, especially among the MPs in the parliament, made it impossible to abolish the existing local constituency representation. Since there were no huge popular movements behind the new political parties, their legitimacy was limited. The local notables and the citizens did not want to let the whole nomination process be controlled by party bureaucracies. The long debate and the general mood made it impossible to introduce any election system based on a single principle. Therefore, the electoral system became a combination of different principles and techniques.<sup>1</sup> The 386 seats of the unicameral Hungarian parliament were divided into three categories: 176 were to be elected in single-member constituencies (SMC), 152 from regional party lists, and 58 from national party lists.

The country was divided into 176 SMC (single-member constituencies) and 20 regions, i.e. multi-member constituencies (19 counties and the capital, Budapest). The voters had two votes, one for an SMC candidate, and one for regional party lists.

In the 176 SMCs there was a two-ballot system. In the first ballot there was a majority rule: if one candidate gained an absolute majority, he or she took the seat. Otherwise, the first three candidates could enter the second round, plus any other candidates who got at least 15 per cent of the votes cast in the first round. In the second ballot, there was a 'first-past-the-post' system: the plurality of the votes was enough to gain the seat.

The second votes of the electorate were cast for regional party lists. Each region had a number of seats in the parliament, in proportion to the

number of its residents. The smallest region, Nógrád county, had four seats, the largest, Budapest, had 28. The seats in each county were distributed by PR among the parties.

There were 58 additional seats for a national pool. These were distributed among the national party lists in proportion to their residual votes. (Votes which are not enough to gain a seat either in an SMC or in a regional contest are regarded as residual votes.)

The combination of three different channels made the Hungarian election system more 'balanced', and safer for the major and medium-sized political parties. There were four built-in obstacles in order to hinder the tiny splinter parties: 1. the strict regulations of the nomination process; 2-3. the criteria for putting up regional and national party lists; and 4. the 4 per cent threshold. More detail on these points follows:

1. According to the regulation of the nomination process, anyone (whether a party member or an independent politician) who wanted to be a candidate in an SMC, had to gain support and collect the signatures of at least 750 local residents.
2. A party list could be nominated in a region if the party was able to put up candidates in a minimum of at least a quarter of the SMCs in that region.
3. A national party list could be set up if a party was able to put up at least seven regional lists.
4. A party could not gain any seats from its regional and national lists unless the votes for its regional lists exceeded 4 per cent of the total votes cast for regional lists.

## 3. The election

The transition process might have been too long for the Hungarians, because they became rather bored by the time of the electoral campaign. The campaign did not make the country very excited and the first post-communist election turned out to be a choice without enthusiasm. The turn-out was rather low, compared with the East German or Czechoslovakian: 65 per cent in the first round and 45 per cent in the run-off. The explanation might be found in the peculiarity of the Hungarian transition process. Whereas in Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia the transition was a consequence of huge mass movements, in Hungary it was not preceded by a popular revolt. The collapse of communist rule was much more an outcome of a struggle between small elite groups of the regime and the opposition, than the result of mass pressure from below. The opposition parties altogether did not have more than 100,000 members in the pre-election period. People in the street followed the process of transition with approval, but without participating in it.

### 3.1 The official campaign period and the nomination process

The official election campaign had two parts, each one month long. The first half of the campaign was closely linked with the nomination process. According to a multiparty agreement, each of the registered 54 Hungarian political parties had the right to advertise its political programme on the main TV and radio channels.

Due to the strict regulations of the nomination process, most of the 54 parties were de-selected; 28 political parties were able to put up candidates in SMCs, and 19 of them on at least one regional party list. But only 12 parties were able to put up seven or more regional lists and thus gain the right to put up national lists and take part in the distribution of the 58 seats reserved for the regional votes. All the other parties lost their right to win seats even from their regional party lists, as well as their access to the main media sources in the second half of the campaign, where time was reserved for party political broadcasts. Otherwise, there were no limitations on access to media sources, so the political programme of the parties got good publicity. The political broadcasts of the main TV and radio channels were controlled by a multiparty committee, which successfully maintained 'fair play' in the distribution of the party political broadcasts.

The whole campaign and the election itself took place in rather 'fair' circumstances. All political parties, who had candidates, sent representatives to the electoral committees, they checked the process of vote casting and counting, and no serious incidents were reported. Unlike East Germany, the election campaign was dominated by internal political contest in Hungary: the outside influences were marginal. After the pre-selection process of the nomination, the political scene became much clearer for the second half of the campaign: 12 national parties remained on the stage and competed for the votes. There were no political surprises in this pre-selection process.

### 3.2 The first round

The first round of the elections clarified the political scene and brought three minor surprises. First, the turn-out: 5,093,119 citizens cast their ballot, which meant a relatively low (65 per cent) turn-out<sup>2</sup>. Second, the 4 per cent threshold reduced the number of relevant parliamentary parties to six, as Table 6.1 shows.<sup>3</sup>

The HDF gained a plurality of the votes, but the Free Democrats were close behind them. The Forum was ahead by 3.3 per cent in the national total of votes cast for regional party lists – a wider margin than had been predicted. The Socialist Party and the Young Democrats achieved the result predicted by the opinion polls. The real surprise lay in the poor results of the Smallholders, in the collapse of the Social Democrats and in the advance of the Christian Democrats.

In the regional distribution of these votes, the Forum got the plurality

Table 6.1 The votes cast for regional party lists (in %)

1. Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF)	24.71
2. Alliance of Free Democrats (AFD)	21.38
3. Smallholders' Party (SHP)	11.76
4. Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP)	10.89
5. Federation of Young Democrats (FYD)	8.94
6. Christian Democratic People's Party (CDPP)	6.46
<hr/>	
7. Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP)	3.68
8. Hungarian Social Democratic Party (HSDP)	3.55
9. Agrarian Alliance (AA)	3.15
10. Party of Entrepreneurs (PE)	1.89
11. Patriotic Electoral Coalition (PEC)	1.87
12. Hungarian People's Party (HPP)	0.76
+ others	0.96
<hr/>	
total	100.00

Source: *Magyar Nemzet*, 28 March 1990, p. 1

Note: Table 6.1 shows the distribution of the political preferences of the electorate. The 386 parliamentary seats were distributed through three different channels: 1. 120 among regional party lists by proportional representation; 2. 176 by single-member constituency (SMC) contest; 3. 90 by national list (in proportion to the residual votes from the first and second channel).

of the votes in 15 regions, the Free Democrats in four and the Smallholders in one, out of a total of 20 regions.<sup>4</sup> Since the 152 seats of the regional party lists were allocated by PR, the actual distribution of these seats among the six national parties was: Forum 40, Free Democrats 34, Smallholders 16, Socialist Party 14, Young Democrats 8 and Christian Democrats 8 seats (see Table 6.4). The rules defined by the electoral law and the distribution of the votes made it possible to distribute only 120 out of the 152 regional seats. The remaining 32 increased the seats in the national pool from 58 to 90.

Among the 176 single-member constituencies<sup>5</sup> there were only five where the final result (i.e. clear majority) emerged in the first round. Three of these seats were won by the HDF and two by independent candidates. In general, the Forum took the lead in 80, the Free Democrats in 63 and the Smallholders in 11 constituencies. The lead of the Forum was significant, but not overwhelming. In 171 constituencies the second round was to be decisive. Uncertainty about what the voters of the de-selected parties would do, as well as the confusion of the local and national electoral pacts, made the results unpredictable. The general trend of these pacts, however, suggested the likely pattern of coalition making. The HDF-CDPP and the AFD-FYD alliances were confirmed, but the Smallholders' Party was divided on what it should do.

Table 6.2 The changing positions and the final distribution of the 176 single-member constituency seats

	1st round	2nd round
HDF	80	114
AFD	63	35
SHP	11	11
HSP	3	1
FYD	3	2
CDPP	4	3
AA	2	2
PEA	1	-
J	2	2
I	7	6
total	176	176

I = independent candidates

PEA = Patriotic Electoral Alliance

J = joint candidates of different parties

Source: Calculated by the author

### 3.3 A landslide in the second round<sup>6</sup>

The second round produced a landslide for the Forum. The HDF gained 41.2 per cent of the votes and won altogether 114 out of the 176 seats which were contested. (Three of them had already been won by the Forum by absolute majority in the first round.) In the first round they had taken the lead in 80 constituencies, and now they not only won those 80 seats, but gained a further 34 victories. The Free Democrats turned out to be the big losers in this landslide. They lost 28 places out of the 63 where they had secured a plurality of votes in the first round, and won only 35 of the 176 single-member constituency places. The Smallholders stood their ground in their strongholds and won 11 constituency seats. (See Table 6.2.)

### 4. The role of the election system

The victory of the HDF in the run-off elections was much higher in terms of seats gained than of votes won. The SMC electoral system gave an advantage to the party which got the highest number of votes at the expense of all the other parties. As a consequence of the first round and of the electoral pacts (a couple of candidates stood down in favour of their allies), in the 171 SMCs, where the run-off was held, the HDF was left with 154 candidates, the AFD with 135, the SHP 69, the HSP 58, the CDPP 21 and the FYD 12. Table 6.3 shows the number of votes cast in the second round and the distribution of the 176 SMC seats (five of them

Table 6.3 Votes cast in the second round\* and the distribution of the SMC seats

Parties	Votes		Seats	
	number	(%)	number	(%)
HDF	1,460,838	41.22	114	64.77
AFD	1,052,096	29.69	35	19.89
SHP	376,988	10.64	11	6.25
HSP	219,024	6.18	1	0.57
FYD	76,279	2.15	2	1.13
CDPP	130,903	3.69	3	1.71
independent	103,922	2.93	6	3.41
others	123,791	3.50	4	2.27
total	3,543,841	100.00	176	100.00

\* = the Table contains the figures of five SMCs, where, in fact, absolute majority, and therefore final result were achieved in the first ballot

Sources: *Magyar Hirlap*, 1990 április 10, pp. 4-5, and *Beszélő*, 1990 április 14, p. 22

Table 6.4 The distribution and sources of seats

Party/	SMC	regional	national	total	%
HDF	114	40	10	164	42.49
AFD	35	34	23	92	23.83
SHP	11	16	17	44	11.40
HSP*	1	14	18	33	8.55
FYD	2	8	12	22	5.70
CDPP	3	8	10	21	5.44
AA	2	-	-	2	0.52
I	6	-	-	6	1.55
J	2	-	-	2	0.52
total	176	120	90	386	100.00

SMC = single-member constituency

I = independent candidate

J = joint candidate of different parties

Source: *Magyar Hirlap*, 10 April 1990, p. 1

Note: As there is more specific information about the real party alignment of the joint candidates, the figures are slightly corrected by the author.

had been already won in the first round). Table 6.3 also shows how effectively the different parties transformed their votes into seats in the SMC contest.

The third channel of the electoral system, however, slightly decreased the defeat of the Free Democrats and the other four parties who could

Table 6.5 Distribution of seats by national and regional PR (%)

parties	national PR	regional PR
HDF	29.37	33.33
AFD	25.41	28.33
SHP	13.98	13.33
HSP	12.94	11.67
FYD	10.62	6.67
CDPP	7.68	6.67
total	100.00	100.00

Source: Calculated by the author

Note: The 'regional PR' column shows the actual distribution of the seats by regional proportional representation in the Hungarian general elections.

gain seats in the national pool. The number of the 'lost' residual votes became especially important after the 32 seats were taken from the regional seats and added to the national pool, where the available number of seats therefore increased to 90. These 90 seats were distributed in proportion to the residual votes of the parties. In spite of that, the Forum finally gained 164 out of the 386 parliamentary seats (42.49 per cent), while the Free Democrats won 92 seats (23.83 per cent), the Smallholders 44 (11.4 per cent), the HSP 33 (8.55 per cent), the Young Democrats 22 (5.705 per cent) and the Christian Democrats 21 seats (5.44 per cent). Table 6.4 shows the distribution of seats.

The following conclusions can be drawn about the role of the electoral system:

- The overwhelming victory of the HDF was only partially counter-balanced by the proportional distribution of the regional and national list system.
- The final results of the AFD and the SHP, which were able to take part effectively in the SMC contest, were close to their proportion of the national votes.
- The last three parties, which were unsuccessful in the SMC contest (none of them gained more than three constituency seats), suffered heavily from the SMC part of the electoral system.
- Compared to a nationwide PR, the regional version of PR also 'distorted' the result slightly. In the relatively small multi-member constituencies the distribution of seats diverged slightly from the national proportion of votes. It favoured the two major parties (the HDF and the AFD), while the others lost by it. (See Table 6.5.) The regional PR had two consequences: first, the smaller a party the larger was its loss; and second, the more evenly distributed the votes of a (smaller) party, the more serious was its loss (in the latter case, the FYD fell back to the level of the CDPP, in spite of its better average).

## 5. Patterns of contest

In the 176 SMCs, 1,623 candidates took part in the first ballot contest, i.e. 9-10 candidates in a typical constituency. As a consequence, only five candidates secured a majority of the votes and became MPs on the first ballot. In the other 171 constituencies, second ballots were held with the participation of 496 candidates. In five out of these 171 constituencies the turn-out was under 50 per cent of the first ballot, so here all the candidates had the right to participate in the second round. In the other 161 constituencies between two and four, but usually three, candidates contested the seats on the second ballot. The election was dominated by the competition between the HDF and the AFD; most of these constituencies (105 out of 161) were characterized by four different patterns of contest depending on which party was the third participant in the second ballot in addition to the HDF and AFD candidates. The pattern of party contest in the run-off elections had a strong regional character.

- In rural Hungary the SHP did well and took part in the tripartite contest in 29 SMCs.
- In the purely Catholic regions the CDPP became the member in the triangle contest in 12 SMCs.
- The HSP was usually the third participant in Budapest, where the SHP and the CDPP were weak, and in the heavy industrial region of Borsod. So a HDF-AFD-HSP contest marked 39 SMCs.
- In 25 constituencies, where electoral pacts were made between the two ballots and candidates stood down in favour of another one's, (especially in Budapest and in Pest county) there were many HDF-AFD single combats.

Notwithstanding these different patterns, all but three of these 105 constituencies were won either by the HDF or the AFD.

## 6. The achievement of the parties

What explains this electoral/political landslide in the second round? What kind of constituencies did the parties have? What were the social and regional backgrounds of the parties? A look at the parties themselves may answer these questions.

### *The Hungarian Democratic Forum*

It seems that the Forum was able to become a 'catch-all' party, appealing to voters from all social groups in all regions in Hungary. In the second round the Forum was backed by most of the voters of other, de-selected parties. There were constituencies where the Forum increased its votes by 50 per cent or even doubled them in the second ballot, in spite of the

Table 6.6a Party alignments and residence

	Budapest	Towns	Villages	Total
FYD	22	44	34	100
SHP	12	31	57	100
CDPP	13	36	51	100
HDF	26	40	34	100
HSP	31	40	29	100
AFD	32	43	25	100
average	22	40	38	100

Table 6.6b Party alignments and age-groups

(Age: years)	18-33	34-49	50-65	over 66	Total
FYD	56	30	10	4	100
SHP	15	27	36	22	100
CDPP	7	21	33	39	100
HDF	21	38	27	14	100
HSP	10	37	20	23	100
AFD	28	40	22	10	100
average	23	34	26	17	100

Table 6.6c Party alignments and education

(Classes)	under 8	8	C	D	E	Total
FYD	5	25	20	35	15	100
SHP	31	27	17	20	5	100
CDPP	29	27	18	18	8	100
HDF	10	24	17	31	18	100
HSP	21	22	15	20	22	100
AFD	8	22	20	35	15	100
average	16	24	18	28	14	100

under 8 = unfinished primary school; 8 = primary school; C = technical education (for skilled workers); D = grammar school; E = university degree (BA or MA).

Note: Tables 6a, b and c are calculated by the author, using the results of an MKI opinion survey: *Magyar Hirlap*, 28 March 1990, p. 5

Table 6.6d Political preferences of income groups

	poor	middle	well-to-do
CDPP	4.5	5.5	1.6
FYD	5.3	5.5	5.3
SHP	14.0	6.8	7.0
HSP	5.7	8.7	5.8
HSDP	1.5	4.0	5.3
HDF	12.5	18.0	23.9
AFD	20.8	16.8	28.0
don't vote	6.8	3.3	2.1
others	28.9	31.9	21.0
total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: GALLUP-Budapest, Research Report, 20 March 1990

lower turn-out (45.5 per cent). In general, the HDF and the AFD showed differing capacities to increase their votes in the second round. In those 125 SMCs where both of them took part in the second round, the HDF candidates gained an average 29.1 per cent and the AFD candidates an average 5 per cent increase in their votes. Opinion polls<sup>7</sup> in the pre-election period showed that the main strongholds of the Forum were the country towns, while the Free Democrats were strong in Budapest, and the Smallholders in the villages. The first round proved this prediction correct; however, the Forum finally overtook the Smallholders' Party in most of the villages and was not even defeated by the Free Democrats in Budapest. The supporters of the Forum were slightly over-represented among the middle-aged, and the well-educated people, and under-represented among the under-educated citizens. The HDF drew vast support from the middle-class Hungarians (see Table 6.6).

#### The Free Democrats

In general, the constituency of the AFD was among the well-educated urban population in the young and middle age-groups (see Table 6.6). The November 1989 referendum showed the crucial role of the Budapest votes (the Budapest votes decided the referendum in favour of the Free Democrats), and Budapest was regarded as the main stronghold of the Free Democrats. The results of the first round, partly, justified these expectations: they took the lead in 20 out of the 32 Budapest constituencies, and gained the 27.1 per cent of the votes on the Budapest regional list (5.8 per cent above their average). But even these good results were not enough for victory. The Forum did much better than was expected: it won the competition of the regional lists by 28.4 per cent of the votes and took 11 out of the 20 seats where the Free Democrats had the leading position at the constituency level, winning 23 out of the 32 Budapest

Table 6.7 Voting pattern by regions. The difference from the national average

	HDF	AFD	HS(W)P*	SHP	CDP	FYD
metropolitan Budapest	+3.6	+5.7	+2.5	-5.0	-0.7	+2.6
industrial north-east	-2.2	-4.2	+3.9	-3.1	+5.0	-0.9
rural-protestant 'Tiszántúl'	-2.3	-4.2	+1.9	+5.9	-3.9	-1.6
rural mid-south	+0.9	-2.1	-2.5	+2.7	+0.2	-0.4
urbanized north-west	-2.5	+4.8	-2.9	-0.9	+0.7	0.0

\* = HSP and HSWP votes together

Source: Calculated by the author

single-member constituency seats altogether. But still, in Budapest the Free Democrats did much better than their national average. In general, the Free Democrats did well in the developed, more urbanized north-west Hungary and in the metropolitan area of Budapest, but got below their national average in the rural areas (see Table 6.7). The Free Democrats were also able to increase their votes in the second round, but much less so than the Forum.

#### *The Smallholders*

The Smallholders' Party was disappointed by the result: they ended 4-6 per cent below the final opinion poll forecasts, getting only 11.7 per cent of the votes. In addition, there was not the slightest electoral shift towards the Smallholders' Party in the second round. The party was 'frozen' into its limited, sectional electorate. It was not able to break away from its 'single-issue' character (the SHP claimed the collectivized land should be returned to the peasantry) and to develop any appeal for the electorate beyond its sectional voters.

The constituency of the Smallholders' Party was the poorly educated, old age-groups of the rural areas (see Table 6.6). The party is more popular among men than among women. All six counties where they did much (more than 4 per cent) over their average<sup>8</sup> belong to the rural 'Tiszántúl' and mid-south Hungary (see Table 6.7), where the Smallholders have had strong political traditions since the inter-war period. By winning 44 seats (11.4 per cent), however, the Smallholders were able to keep their 'centre' position between the two main opposition parties; without them neither a 'centre-right' nor a 'centre-left' government could be formed.

#### *The Christian Democratic People's Party*

To pass the 4 per cent threshold and get into the parliament was a great success for the newly reorganized CDPP. They got 6.5 per cent of the total votes cast for the regional lists although they did not have regional lists in five counties. The typical Christian Democrat voters were the elderly, poorly educated, female (mostly church-going) citizens in villages or provincial towns. In Budapest the party won only 5.7 per cent of the vote. The strongholds of the CDPP are the Catholic regions of north-west and north-east Hungary. In most constituencies in the Protestant 'Tiszántúl' (east Hungary) the CDPP could not even put up candidates (see Table 6.7).

#### *The Hungarian Socialist Party*

In general, the result of the HSP (national average: 10.9 per cent) was about what was expected, as far as the regional lists were concerned. But the failure of all but one of its individual candidates was a humiliating defeat. Beside M. Szürös, the interim president of the republic, only M. Németh, the popular Prime Minister, could win in his constituency, but as an independent (non-party) candidate. The poor electoral result of the party was first of all not a judgement on the current HSP government, but rather a referendum on the four decades of the one-party system. Combining the votes for the two heirs of the Communist Party (the HSP and the HSWP), it is plain that they did best in Budapest, in the industrial and in the Protestant rural area ('Tiszántúl').

#### *The Federation of Young Democrats*

The FYD, gaining 8.9 per cent as a national average, was able to keep most of the electorate recorded by the opinion polls since the spring of 1989 (it was permanently between 8 and 11 per cent). The FYD have gained 22 parliamentary seats. As a small party with evenly distributed regional results (see Table 6.7), it got 20 of its seats from party lists. One of its two constituency victories was a victory over Pozsgay, the number one politician of the reforming HSP. The FYD got many more votes from the young voters than from any other age-group; otherwise, a slightly higher support from the urban well-educated electorate. The regional distribution of its electorate was similar to that of the AFD.

### 7. Conclusions

The elections were partly a referendum on the falling one-party regime (which explains the poor result of the HSP), but were as much, especially in the second round, a choice for the future: a decision on who should

form the government, the moderate centre-right HDF or the radical left-liberal AFD?

The election turned out to be a victory for the *right*. The HDF-SHP-CDPP coalition got 42.9 per cent of the (list) votes, and with the landslide HDF victory in the SMC run-off, they gained 229 out of the 386 seats (59.33 per cent), a strong majority in the parliament.

The humiliating failure of the socialist *left* was a consequence of various factors:

- (i) The defeat of the incumbent HSP and the HSWP, which were blamed for the past 40 years.
- (ii) The fragmentation of the left. All three socialist parties (HSP, HSWP, HSDP) refused to form an alliance with any of the others.
- (iii) There was a striking phenomena – the absence of a traditional social democratic party, with strong blue-collar and trade-union backing. The HSDP got 3.6 per cent – insufficient to secure even one parliamentary seat.

The voting patterns showed a remarkable regional character. The geographical distribution of the (list) votes revealed five distinct regions. In the metropolitan area of Budapest (which contained one-fifth of the total electorate), the HSP and the new parties, especially the Free Democrats, won more than their national average, while the Smallholders had a poor result. The industrial (and Catholic) north-east region turned to be a stronghold for the (ex)-communist HSP and HSWP and for the Catholic CDPP. In the rural (and Catholic) mid-south the Smallholders did best, while in the rural and Protestant 'Tiszántúl' the SHP and the (ex)-communist parties had votes above their national average. The most urbanized (and Catholic) north-west became the strongholds of the Free Democrats and the Christian Democrats (see Table 6.7).

In general, the political scene has developed towards a *tripolar* structure: with a governing centre-right HDF-SHP-CDPP coalition; with a fragmented and discredited socialist-left (HSP, HSWP); and with the left-liberal AFD-FYD (which was the radical anti-communist opposition of the former ruling HSWP/HSP).

#### Notes

1. 1989 Electoral Law, *Heti Világgazdaság*, 1990 március, *Választási Különszám*, p. 17–29.
2. The registration of the electorate was made by the local administration automatically and without any registration fees. Discounting minor administrative mistakes, the whole adult population was registered, therefore the turn-out figures express the proportion of the voters in the adult population.
3. The de-selected parties still had a chance to gain seats in SMCs. However, only the Agrarian Alliance could gain two seats.

4. *Magyar Hírlap*, 1990 március 28, p. 1.
5. The source of the SMC results of the first round: *Népszabadság*, 1990 március 31, p. 28–31.
6. The source of the following figures of the second round: *Magyar Hírlap*, 1990 április 10, p. 4–5, and *Beszélő*, 1990 április 14, p. 19–22.
7. The source of the following figures on the social composition of the constituency of the parties: surveys made by the Gallup and the MKI (Magyar Közvéleménykutató Intézet): *GALLUP-Budapest, Research Report*, 20 March 1990; and Lechmann Hedvig: 'Kik szavaztak a pártokra?' *Magyar Hírlap*, 1990 március 28, p. 5.
8. Votes of the parties by regions: *Népszabadság*, 1990 március 31, p. 31.