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The Evolution of Constitutional Ideas of the Democratic Alliance

A PhD thesis promoted by prof. Jan Majchrowski of Warsaw University

Summary

The Democratic Alliance (Polish "Stronnictwo Demokratyczne") is one of the oldest political parties in Poland. Its roots go back to the last years of the pre-war Polish Republic (II Rzeczpospolita), when a group of liberal and leftist intellectuals founded first the Democratic Clubs (1937) which were, less than six months before the outbreak of WW II, transformed into a political party.

After the War, in the so called "People's Republic of Poland", the Democratic Alliance (DA) was one of the few (ultimately three) parties functioning as a part of the official system. It was also, together with ZSL (United People's Party), part of a three-party coalition led by the PZPR, which formally ruled Poland between 1945 and 1989.

Towards the end of the People's Republic the DA (as well as ZSL) decided to rally with the democratic opposition of the time, thus paving the road to the formation of a first non-communist government in this part of Europe.

From the very beginning the DA focused on the principles of the political system giving them considerable thought in their program documents. This doctoral thesis, written in a chronological order analyses the evolution of the constitutional thought of the party from 1937 until the present times.

One must admit that the DA promoted its political ideas with assiduity and consequence. The notion of creating a Constitutional Court was submitted before WW II, and was persistently repeated after the War, in a completely different political system, until it was implemented (on constitutional grounds) in 1982. The DA has always been and is still consequently in favour of the State Tribunal, the president as head of state, and of strengthening the legal position of local governments (in the Peoples Republic the local "national councils" played the role of a sort of local government). Beginning with the eighties of the twentieth century the DA also postulated the creation of the guardian of rights, which, in the second half of the decade brought the nomination of the first ombudsman in Polish history. The DA has devoted a lot of attention (both in the times of the II Republic and now) to the problems of suffrage

Never being a first rate political player, the DA has contributed largely to the Polish constitutional thought of the twentieth century. Its analysis as well as that of the evolution of the party's views on Poland's political system against the background of a dynamically changing political scene has never before been the subject of separate research.