

doi.org/10.34765/sp.0221.a01

WHY DEMOCRACY IN POLAND IS CURRENTLY IMPOSSIBLE? CONDITIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM

Abstract

Liberal democracy is the fruit of many centuries of evolution based on conflict between various interest groups. This struggle, or conflict, is the source of stability in state institutions, the law and the courts. It is a strange pitfall in which numerous strong entities are capable of enforcing their rights. The condition for a liberal democracy to be stable is therefore the existence of sustainable social stratification, opposing interests and forces among social entities. The destruction of social strata in post-communist states has become entrenched and created a new type of uniformized or groupthink society. The elimination of private ownership perpetuated over several generations, mass resettlements and the degradation of higher strata have created a new type of society devoid of genuine stratification, interest groups capable of engaging in conflict with efficacy. Many generations of evolution, including battles, disputes, perhaps of a revolutionary nature, are required for a sustainable structure of liberal democracy to be instilled in states belonging to the former Soviet bloc.

Keywords: Post-communist culture, tradition, revolution, *uravnilovka*, uniformization, top-down enforcement of uniformity, class struggle, class conflict, bourgeoisie.

JEL codes: D7

DLACZEGO DEMOKRACJA W POLSCE JEST OBECNIE NIEMOŻLIWA? WARUNKI TRWAŁOŚCI SYSTEMU LIBERALNO-DEMOKRATYCZNEGO

Streszczenie

Demokracja liberalna jest owocem wielowiekowej ewolucji opartej na konflikcie między różnymi grupami interesów. Ta walka lub szerzej – konflikt – są źródłem stabilności instytucji państwowych, prawa i sądów. To dziwna pułapka, w której liczne silne podmioty są w stanie egzekwować swoje prawa. Warunkiem stabilności demokracji liberalnej jest zatem istnienie trwałego rozwarstwienia społecznego, przeciwstawnych interesów i sił wśród podmiotów społecznych. Zniszczenie warstw społecznych w państwach postkomunistycznych ugruntowało się i stworzyło nowy typ społeczeństwa zunifikowanego lub „grupomyślnego”. Likwidacja prywatnej własności utrwalanej przez kilka pokoleń, masowe przesiedlenia i degradacja wyższych warstw stworzyły nowy typ społeczeństwa pozbawionego prawdziwego rozwarstwienia, grup interesów zdolnych do skutecznego angażowania się w konflikt. Wiele pokoleń ewolucji, w tym bitew, sporów, być może o charakterze rewolucyjnym, jest potrzebnych do zaszczerpienia trwałej struktury liberalnej demokracji w państwach byłego bloku sowieckiego.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura postkomunistyczna, tradycja, rewolucja, urawniłowka, uniformizacja, odgórne egzekwowanie jednolitości, walka klas, konflikt klasowy, burżuazja.

Kody JEL: D7

To obtain a better grasp on the state of politicalness in Polish society, it is worthwhile to examine more closely how elections work in countries in western civilization with a stable political system. What is immediately discernible is that for decades membership in a given social stratum has been a material factor informing the choice of one political party or another. Generations of families in France and the United Kingdom have voted as a rule for the right or the left, respectively. Political choice is part of cultural identity. It is a natural component of belonging to a given community.

The French right, one of the pillars of stability in its political system counts the bourgeoisie among its supporters. It is not the case that revolution, republic, freedom, equality and brotherhood have altered all of the underlying foundations of the class divisions in this nation (Chauvel 2010). Higher

or lower-ranking bourgeoisie are easy to recognize. The higher-ranking bourgeoisie reside in specific better districts, and they dress the same, especially their offspring. Even though they are dispersed across France, the bourgeoisie lead a similar lifestyle, they share an odd amount of regular habits as if derived from a rule in a monastery: family meals bringing all their members together according to strictly defined rules during which it is impolite to phone, pay a visit, etc. This stratum shares an entire cannon of behaviours.

It is a hermetically closed community within its own confines. It is not possible to join this community, live in it or be invited to join it on a whim, or it is difficult to do so, if you are not a member of this social stratum. The French Catholic bourgeoisie differ from the Protestant bourgeoisie. The former group dresses more conservatively, while ladies belonging to Protestant families (here I am citing a direct witness's recounting of this story) adorn themselves with gold at weddings as if they were Christmas trees. This was the overheard remark made by the wife of a Catholic bourgeois. This group is sizeable, easily discernible and visible in France's social landscape. We can find its members in Paris, Lyon, Nice and Bordeaux. Even so, they also reside and flourish in small provincial towns and cities where they lead their "bourgeois" lives. They inhabit beautiful tenement houses, family nests that remember the times of their grandfathers, great-grandfathers and great-great-grandfathers. They spend their leisure time in their chateaus if they have one. Of course, their children attend schools designated for them, or situated in good districts, or they attend private schools that are frequently Catholic parochial schools. The Catholic bourgeoisie are as a rule not fanatically Catholic; this is even more true of the Protestant bourgeoisie. Catholicism is a part of their cultural identity just like their lunch menu, wine selection and cultural conversation during meals. Voting for the right is one of the constituent elements of this identity. In the 2017 presidential elections the "Catho" (Catholics), who belong in principle to the higher layers of the bourgeoisie, voted for Francois Fillon, i.e. for "their candidate" even though he publicly compromised himself (he had fictitiously employed his wife in the European Parliament). The very thought of voting for a "stray" animal like Macron caused some of them to experience physical revulsion.

Similarly, other social groups have their own impenetrable worlds: rural farmers, laborers, service providers in numerous professions. The members of these distinct social groups interact with one another, but they do not intermingle. Naturally, it is possible to gain a higher position in terms of profession (possibly leading to a higher social position over time): gifted children, scholarships, the best schools, working in a bank, ministry, university, court or law

firm. The ability to change fluidly does not, however, upend the durability of these distinct worlds.

The socialist and communist movement, today's social democratic movement has developed as a counterweight to the French bourgeois universe. The left in its various manifestations forms the second political force. It also constitutes a distinct social stratum. It has its own style of being, thinking, dressing and preferred occupations. Michael Onfray, a philosopher of leftist provenance who is popular in some circles has described the attributes of his own community when recalling his childhood in his public appearances. Homes with open doors. Everyone was welcome without having to make prior arrangements or appointments. Children were free to come and go as they pleased. They opened the refrigerators of their leftist neighbours, had something to eat and continued on their way. That is how Onfray perceived the cultural nature of the left hailing from families of laborers forming an explicit contrast to bourgeois customs.

Here one can perceive the sustainable and inviolable stratification of the centralistic, and as it would seem, equitable state of France (*égalité, fraternité*). Consequently, we glean a stable social structure, which on account of its long-lasting and invariable cultural, property and local entrenchment is deemed to be an obvious and inviolable structure. This is not something up for discussion. One can laugh at it, be proud or ashamed of it, or one can flaunt it haughtily, make films or write stories about it, but it cannot simply be abolished, or deemed to be something that never happened. Decree its non-existence. This social stratification has been built and strengthened in France over hundreds of years. Similarly, strong stratification is present in other countries in old Europe and the United States.

Where families come from, and the regions they inhabit are also of significance in the construction of the collective identity of relatively closed groups in a single state. Whether a person comes from Var or Île-de-France, or from Alsace, Brittany, Normandy, or from Bavaria, Hamburg or Berlin in Germany, or from Texas, Alabama, New York or California in the US matters: these identities are long-lasting and inviolable (Heidegger 1988).

All these well-established social structures indirectly strengthen democracy. They are a necessary prerequisite, although they are not sufficient in and of themselves. Having regard for the stability they afford, representative democracy along with its inherent arbitrariness and chaos may be added to the game of social interaction. This is the underpinning for the following tenet: one of the conditions for the sustainability of the political system in western democracies

that has gradually taken shape over the course of history is the existence of intractable memberships, class and regional identities. This is a material factor of stabilization in juxtaposition to the volatility, lack of durability, flux, distinctness of value systems and perspectives for perceiving the world, and thus the practical relativism that is characteristic of liberal democracy. Moreover, liberal democracy develops in conditions involving constantly appearing novelties stimulated by the incremental growth of knowledge, technological development, the pace of growth of the consumer society supported by the power of marketing efforts.

* * *

In the meanwhile, fifty years of communism in Soviet bloc countries definitively destroyed modern social stratification (or interrupted seedling development in agricultural nations like Poland). Differentiation of awareness ensuing from belonging to a given stratum or region in the country became implausible. More than anywhere else the residents of post-totalitarian societies become a uniform cultural, customary and mental mass. They became a “herd” as Nietzsche once wrote, deprived of any guise other than of the herd. Group-think, as prophesized before WWII by the outstanding Polish writer Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1973) is precisely what caused the post-totalitarian masses to be unable to comprehend, accept and acknowledge social differentiation, stratification and hierarchy as a natural state. They treat all forms of differentiation, whether cultural, property-related, intellectual or environmental as a threat, as an injustice to be suppressed.

Hierarchy in post-totalitarian countries does not exist as a natural state of supragenerational custom. However, when it proves to be a necessity: for example, in the organization of labour, it is enforced through compulsion, which in Poland is in part aptly likened to treating people as serfs. For treating others like rubbish is not just something that is a “long-lasting” attribute (*longue durée*) of Poland’s feudalistic nature (and hence a cultural imitation of the patterns of treating serfs as slaves in the Republic of serfdom), but also of *homo sovieticus*, who has been nurtured in the soul of a Polish national from the Polish People’s Republic for more than half a century.

Józef Tischner, a popular Catholic clergyman, a philosopher inspired by the thinking of Emmanuel Levinas and Martin Heidegger popularized the formulation of *homo sovieticus*, an important concept in Sovietology studies. This is how he described the existential condition of the Soviet man:

“a client of communism enslaved by the communist system: he lived on the merchandise communism offered him. Three values were of particular importance to him: labour, participation in government, feeling of self-dignity. As he owed them to communism, *homo sovieticus* became dependent on communism, which, however, does not imply that he failed to contribute to its abolishment at a certain moment in time. Had communism ceased to satisfy his hopes and needs, *homo sovieticus* would have taken part in a mutiny. He contributed to a lesser or greater degree to other people taking the place held by communists: namely, the advocates of capitalism. In this manner a paradox emerged. Currently, *homo sovieticus* demands that the new ‘capitalists’ satisfy the needs communists failed to satisfy. He is like a slave, who upon gaining his freedom from one enslavement ardently seeks some other form of enslavement. *Homo sovieticus* is the post-communist form of the ‘escape from freedom’, which Erich Fromm once described” (Tischner 1992).

This astute picture of the condition of the Soviet man encountering the conditions of life in a capitalist system did not lead to social change in the custom recorded in elementary behaviour. Many more years of work are required.

Poles and Polish elites alike are profoundly unaware of the impact exerted on the state of society by living in real socialism. Sociology studies do not register this as they themselves spring from the spirit of uniformization. The cautiousness with which we should approach sociological descriptions is accompanied by the words of Fredrich Nietzsche who unveiled the unconscious pre-assumptions of this field of science: it contains certain obvious elements that are not framed as discussion topics on account of being obvious. This pertained to the 19th century, but it has not lost its currency to this date. In his *Will to Power* Nietzsche writes: „Even the ideals of science can be deeply, yet completely unconsciously influenced by decadence: our entire sociology is proof of that. The objection to it is that from experience it knows only the form of the decay of society, and inevitably it takes its own instincts of decay for the norms of sociological judgment (...). Our entire sociology simply does not know any other instinct than that of the herd, i.e., that of the sum of zeroes — where every zero has “equal rights”, where it is virtuous to be zero. (Nietzsche 1968, p. 33).

In his statements Nietzsche speaks against uniformization, against excising or stripping away higher-ranking values: culturally, intellectually, familiarly, artistically (passion and talent), against understanding equality in a manner that does not tolerate people who are better, that does not acknowledge the existence of people who are better because of the fear of standing

in a competition, and he aptly contemplated its inevitable collapse. This is therefore the hatred and resentment of weak people who are fatigued by life. According to Nietzsche's thinking, sociology is blind because its subject matter is the average social state, thereby implying the herd in question, instead of what deviates from that herd. Sociology, which acts blindly when making its valuations does not comprehend that it is the product of a herd society.

* * *

The models devised during the first Republic of Poland (1450–1795) are used for diagnostics in the now popular reflection on the condition of contemporary Polish society. This is related to feudalistic culture in which a serf is someone to be pushed around, a slave in fact, who is not allowed to vacate his village, who had to work gratuitously, and who for even the slightest of infractions could be lashed and killed with God's assistance.

In this subject matter, people do not notice the differences relating to the continuity of feudalistic culture in the various regions of Poland, such as Silesia and Greater Poland (*Wielkopolska*) as opposed to Congress Poland (*Kongresówka*) and Galicia. Families from Greater Poland do not have any memories of treating people with extreme humiliation. Prussians initiated the abolishment of serfdom in the early 19th century. In the meantime, some farmers working the properties owned by magnates in the Eastern Borderlands still tended to the fields of their lords between the two world wars because they had not heard of the Tsar's decrees abolishing serfdom in 1864. Similarly, Prussia introduced an obligation for children to attend school, which had to have materially changed the status of the lowest social strata. The historical memory of the lowest social strata in Greater Poland had to have been different in connection with the pogroms of Jews during World War II. Their numbers could not have been of that magnitude in the small towns of the former Prussian partition because the Germanized Jewish bourgeoisie had left their homelands following the victory of the Greater Poland Uprising and returned to Germany. At the outset of World War II, the remaining group of citizens of Jewish extraction was relocated eastwards to the General Governorate. That means that Poles do not have a shared memory and identity in all their aspects. In turn, at present, the idea is unwittingly embraced, in the spirit of uniformization, that Poland in its entirety had the social and mental structure of the Eastern Borderlands. If victors write history, then the victors are people who come from Warsaw, Cracow, Białystok, Lublin and Rzeszów.

There is something that causes Poles not to want to perceive social differences; they do not appear in public space or in the media. Localism tends to be perceived as museum folklore, while Silesian's distinctiveness is additionally perceived as a threat to the unity of the state. They form material constituent elements of post-Soviet mentality in which all people are supposed to be equal, or identical, while the idiosyncrasies of various historical, cultural, culinary, social and political experiences are mere whims, or a dangerous form of separationism posing a threat to the unity of the state. The mountaineer dialect is the only regional vernacular that prevailed in people's consciousness for the duration of the Polish People's Republic and continues to be uncontested to the present day, as if this mode of speaking is what properly expresses the essence of the Polish soul. A repulsive perspective.

* * *

Post-totalitarian societies are monolithic in their world view; they do not perceive the sense of things or what is possible, they do not find a justification for differentiation in the perspectives for seeing the world and they are enemies of polycentrism. They are extremely egalitarian. And that means they are antidemocratic. In the meantime, democracy, contrary to the appearances, is a system of rivalry in which belief is placed in the principle: may the stronger one win (politically, economically, intellectually, artistically, and in sports – physically). In turn, the loser, who is weak, helpless, not useful will not perish, but will receive state support because we can afford it. Hierarchism is therefore inscribed in the democratic landscape. Though this is not necessarily what people want to see, or what they want to discuss openly because democracy professes the equality of its citizens. In turn, democracy means equality of rights and entitlements; it does not imply eradication of social stratification.

Democracy is an organized and controlled form of inequality. Genuine equality is plausible solely in a totalitarian system, even though the equality it offers is for the residents of a penitentiary who are deprived of the majority of their rights, barring the right to breathe, eat prison grub and partake of the entertainment selected for them by their guards. That is precisely what the experience of the post-Soviet man entails: the imaginarium of Poles that is so prevalent that it encompasses everything and becomes invisible. The egalitarianism of slaves. Poland is a post-Soviet nation. To call a Pole a *homo sovieticus* is to speak the truth. "Affront to the Polish nation" – such a popular concept at present could have been born only in the head of a Soviet man: a human

being through and through, who is completely humiliated (in the dimension of multi-generational cultural experience) whose prison is the only home he remembers in his collective memory.

In the meanwhile, the world is governed by the principle expressed by the sophist Thrasymachus in Plato's *The Republic* that justice is what is beneficial to the stronger. This principle is immoral but fulminating at it will not alter the course of things: the stronger ones govern, victors write history. Power governs the world: in a broad sense, of course, not just physical power, but also intellectual and organizational power, territorial and population advantage. The only consolation for losers is the hope for a change of fate: following a series of failures, sometimes there comes a period of victories, even if only partial ones. Adaptation or symbiosis with a culturally, technologically or militarily stronger party is also a reasonable strategy.

The modern democratic welfare state does not modify Thrasymachus's principle, but it does apply it flexibly. In the course of its evolution the might of capital collided with the strength of the proletariat which forced it to make concessions. In turn, many of these concessions frequently proved to be favourable to capital, thereby becoming an element of its image-related strategy: "look how well they treat employees there", or "from shoe shiner to millionaire" as praise to the American version of capitalism *en gros*. The softening in the functioning of these rules awakens the proletariat put to sleep by its well-being to resume its struggle. That is how the world goes round.

* * *

In a post-Soviet society, which has been effectively uniformized, or induced into a state of groupthink, in which it is not possible for the distinctiveness of ideas to exist, other ways of living are unknown and hence unimaginable (American movies and mass tourism are of little help because this refers to day-to-day experience, not pictures on a screen or pictures seen from a bus window). This is how a society-wide need is born for there to be a single all-encompassing ideological source giving a comprehensive interpretation of all customary, political and religious phenomena. The need for a single authentic explanation! For, after all, there can only be one truth as political and religious propagandists contend.

In the process of civil evolution nobody has confronted Polish bourgeoisie with the proletariat's requirements because the bourgeoisie was weak prior to the Second World War (an agricultural and unindustrialized country), while

after WWII all forms of capitalistic activity to create a bourgeoisie stratum at varying levels were physically destroyed (a similar fate was visited upon the aristocracy which had been additionally compromised by many centuries of profiteering on its serfs; after the war the aristocracy was impoverished and functions today rather as a museum object on display that is in fact engaged in pursuits characteristic of the bourgeoisie). Therefore, it was not possible for the Polish society to go through the process of conflicting interests referred to as class struggle by Karl Marx. There was no class conflict in a communist state because Stalinism had created a classless society in this country, i.e. a herd society without any collective entities expressing and fighting for their own particular interests. The natural existence of higher strata, better paid people who are more effective and have their own imagined world with their own separate reasons differing from ours is not something that the proletariat, i.e. working class people in the cities and villages in the epoch of the Polish People's Republic or contemporaries have managed to grasp: the bourgeoisie tending above all to their own interests. Why? Because the impossible has become possible: the totalitarian state has physically eradicated social stratification.

The masses in a post-Soviet society, and this includes Poland, do not understand how natural it is for the bourgeoisie to exist because they did not have any firsthand experience of it over the course of their several generations of living in real socialism, they did not feel it in their own skin or by the sweat of their brow and the blood in their veins. The emergence of new capitalists after 1989 is therefore perceived as an aberration, as something unnatural. Post-Soviet mentality does not make one fit to comprehend why someone is supposed to become a millionaire. The dearth of this awareness stems from more than forty years of experiencing the inability to engage in disputes of class interests. This refers to something more than just natural jealousy which is common to all people.

The anticapitalistic revolts in countries belonging to the West, especially the ones in the early 1970s merely bolstered social division as each one of the groups of opponents arrived at a more profound awareness of the distinctiveness of its sense of belonging. Higher classes – at a distance, sometimes held in disdain, though rather in their own midst, frequently without excessively flouting their distinctions as that would be tasteless. In turn, the lower strata grew stronger in their revolutionary vindictive fervour as a way of being in the world. This is where the field of battle, space for concessions, negotiations and compromise opened up. The fundamental structure does of course have its irregularities in keeping with the rules of normal distribution: some on the

left did not want any concessions and this was the reason for leftist terrorism in those years while others who were previously teenage rebels fighting against the system of capitalistic pressure returned after turning forty to the womb of their social class, according to the plans of their opulent parents they joined the management boards of their bigger or smaller companies.

The lack of social confrontation and the mechanical and top-down liquidation of class struggle, or class conflict contributed to the emergence of the conviction in the awareness of post-totalitarian societies that the existence of social classes is not real; in their picture of the world there is no long-lasting and irremovable stratification, while the incoming news announcing its existence, even if just from the movies and books referred to above, is considered to be something abstract, a nice fairy tale. Observing the actual development of oligarchy in post-Soviet societies merely confirms the pathology of any concept of stratification, which is aptly described in the following phrase: a rich person is a thief.

The elimination of the bourgeois stratum during the period of Stalinism brought about a situation in which post-Soviet states do not have any larger quantum of multi-generational businesses with one hundred or one hundred fifty years of existence under their belts, small workshops or large-scale industrial companies. No multi-generational awareness of belonging has been cultivated. The opposite perspective, the strength of the interests of the bourgeoisie did not have an opportunity to do its educational work; namely, that one must reckon with things that exceed our capacities, with a perspective that is not ours, but that is irremovable, that one must rather reach a compromise with it as it will never abandon its own perspective and one must find a way to live in this constant struggle, in this dispute in which sometimes you win and sometimes you lose.

That was and is the driving force of trade unions, as is the case in France, for instance. In the meanwhile, trade unions in Poland frequently are merely a cardboard structure, good sinecures for professional union activists. For insofar as there are no separate or distinct interests, there is no class struggle, there are no insurmountable opposing viewpoints, we must pretend to engage in class conflict and reach an agreement with the management of the company so that they do not excessively bother us, and so that we do not bother them excessively. The trade union movement in a post-Soviet society is characterized not by open struggle, rivalry or dispute but by shady dealing and ubiquitous pretending. The communistic liquidation of social strata made it impossible for the real wrath of the people to exist.

The Stalinist revolution has made painful social education impossible, that one should be strong and fight to survive when faced with the powers, interests and pictures of the world, in confrontation with stronger, more influential and more attractive parties. For post-Soviet societies, and this includes Poland, did not have any powerful players with whom it was necessary to struggle. At the bottom of society, it was necessary to deal to survive, while the only powerful player, the monopoly position held by the totalitarian state was beyond the reach of any common sense perception of one's own capabilities. That is exactly what gives rise to helplessness; it shapes a new man who is aware that there are no shared rules in the game and who adapts. People's natural conformism in a post-Soviet society has its own specific hue in terms of its baggage of unique experience and this should not be mistaken for French, English or American experience.

The eradication of class conflict precipitated a situation in which the party's elite in its efforts to care for its own welfare was rather compelled to be ashamed of that and conceal it while pretending to show solidarity with the working masses in cities and villages. Thus, there was one entity to express the overall society's interests, namely the communist party. Since interests in every society are at odds with one another, the Polish United Workers' Party was chiefly occupied with pretending to represent all people's interests. Several generations of Poles were raised to hold irrationally egalitarian convictions under the illusion of the ability to reach widespread consent whose most beautiful, albeit utopian expression was the myth of Solidarity. Solidarity as an idea – let me commit blasphemy here – is a product of the Soviet system of values in which human masses were inculcated to believe, contrary to the facts, that the interests of large social groups are not at odds with one another, that all people are equal in keeping with the communist proverb: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". Maintaining even the appearances of widespread accord is not possible in any non-authoritarian society. Only totalitarian systems that concentrate authority in a narrow group of despots and turn the state into an organized prison make everyone's social status equivalent in a prison-like manner. Monocentrism always means injustice, abuse and violence.

Monocentrism established in this manner in the society's imaginarium, i.e. the failure to see opposing interests as a natural state of a social body has survived the Polish People's Republic. Post-totalitarian monocentrism has made it so easy to win the hearts and minds of people in our country, i.e. for the Catholic Church to take over the central system of ideological control from

the deceased, the Polish United Workers' Party. The Church seamlessly took up the role of expert on every subject, as the supplier of truth in all areas of life, whether public, political, economic or private, family or marital and in the education of children and youth. It would suffice to glance at the list of topics covered by the Papal encyclical letters.

Looking back, we can observe that the handing over of succession was initiated ideologically and practically in conjunction with the declaration of martial law in 1982. This was a way of discreetly and informally reaching an agreement through the societal relationships cultivated by church officials and the authorities dating back to the time of martial law in the matter of providing ever more non-standard privileges to the clergy. First, the wave of building permits for churches in the declining phase of the Polish People's Republic as an expression of gratitude for the hierarchy's reticence juxtaposed with the authoritarianism shown by the military junta, and after 1989, the property commission that awarded land to church institutions extralegally, religion in school, the church fund through which the state underwrites clergymen's retirement contributions. The direct funding of church investments seen at present that does not even maintain the appearances of acting with integrity, the consents given for construction projects that violate zoning plans, the sell-off of state lands to church institutions at cut-rate prices. All these things were and are being done under grandiose words invoking the good, truth and love, under the guise of moralizing, which as a form of usurpation is always "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu 1977).

* * *

It is not belonging to your own social stratum, or to your own distinct regional, ethnic, national or racial group, but a weak, or excessively weak feeling of belonging to it, and thus the uniformization of perspective, the failure to have your own perspective stemming from your distinct world picture is what causes the populace in a post-totalitarian community to be much more susceptible to political manipulation. We are witnesses of that in many countries of the former communist bloc, as in Russia, Hungary and Poland.

Social homogenization, which is so beloved by those enamoured with mindless egalitarianism insists on central governance which strips people of their status as subjects. Discipline, submission and obedience are the educational ideal in the monoculture of a post-totalitarian society. This is not at all related to a Prussian drill, but a post-Soviet drill. The greatest affliction

of uniformization is the failure to respect distinctiveness (this refers not just to human dignity, but also to the failure to acknowledge distinctiveness rooted in culture and identity). That is the reason for the previously-mentioned authoritarianism as a method of managing employees, which is a type of a *perpetuum mobile*: construction managers working at a construction site affirm that employees are unable to understand the meaning of instructions unless they use course language. Thus even culturally-minded engineers take part in a game on a *nolens volens* basis whose rules they did not establish.

“The Dreamt Revolution” described in Andrzej Leder’s book was the source of social advancement for the great masses at the outset of the Polish People’s Republic, i.e. for several million people to vacate their destitute villages and move into workers’ estates (Leder 2014). That, however, entailed advancement only in appearance in many cultural dimensions. This revolution installed new political elite that had a managerial role inside the communist system; however, they had never previously been, nor would they every become culturally bourgeois elite. The lifestyle of the caciques belonging to the Polish United Workers’ Party, their manner of speech, dress, eating and drinking are evidence that a new bourgeoisie layer was not formed; at best a caricature of that emerged. Polish comedies and cabarets from that time are a good witness to that. Cultural stratification (cultural diversity) in daily life was destroyed in favour of a mental and habitual monoculture embodied by newspeak and newlife. This is not the subject to which Leder draws attention as he prefers to appreciate the positive aspect of emancipating lower layers, while failing to observe its disingenuous civil manifestation. This lacks the creative life of a businessman, the ethos, that culture of the lifework of an entire stratum of people who in following in the footsteps of their great-grandparents, grandparents and parents would devote the bulk of their energy to their family company to meet the challenges of the capitalistic market.

* * *

The element of randomness present in democratic systems gives authoritarian groups, thanks to the use of populist demagoguery, much more freedom of action in post-Soviet states such as Poland. It makes it possible to destroy the foundations of the system and legal institutions that prove to be easier to blow out than a candle. This compels one to inquire about the source of strength of institutions in a liberal democracy that have survived the test of time? Is it not the case that it comes from the sustainable social stratification in which

the difference of interests is culturally rooted, visible, irremovable, and hence the existential need felt by the strongest social strata for there to be protective institutions? The strength of the courts, barristers and solicitors ensues from the strength of the interests they are called upon to represent. The magnitude of the opposing interests the state protects underpins the inability to undermine the state's institutions. That is why Donald Trump cannot dismiss the prosecutor who blocked one of his decrees. Pluralism and the enormity of particular interests inside a developed capitalistic state needs stable institutional protection and that is what is afforded to it.

The straight-forward and easy liquidation of legal institutions, their collapse like a house of cards is unimaginable in France. It would be difficult to imagine that the populists in the National Front could pose a threat to them. Marine Le Pen and her father belong to the group of higher-ranking bourgeoisie. Her father's way of speaking reveals he attended good schools in his youth; Marine is slightly different, she is an angel of higher culture in the face of the *dégringolade*, or downfall embodied by the political unruliness seen among the elite in post-Soviet countries. Her extreme slogan calling for exiting the eurozone found no audience. Curtailing the number of refugees accepted and controlling the borders were her postulates during the 2017 presidential campaign. She did not advocate closing the borders, but imposing limits. Extremism differs by country with each having its own version of populism. Populism in post-Soviet countries does not offer a plane for comparison with the one seen in countries with many centuries of capitalism under their belts, understood here as a multitude of entities with the strength and means to defend their interests, positions and influences in accordance with the law. Where a material part of acting is engaging in disputes that are always an official and public test of strength according to identical rules applicable to all parties involved.

Have institutions in post-Soviet states such as Poland become sufficiently well-established, have they formed new social strata that will be capable of protecting the state against authoritarianism taking the form of what is seen in Russia, Turkey or China? There is no simple response to that question; however, reason instructs one to anticipate a pessimistic scenario. Naturally, one would like to believe in that not having to transpire. Allegedly, faith can move mountains. Faith, however, commands one to wait for a miracle. It cannot be precluded that we are left with having faith in fortuity (which has many of the attributes of the classic understanding of a miracle) thanks to which the authoritative system that is being systematically built in Poland will stumble.

One must count on fortuity, which is hidden in some circles under the ancient name of providence (*providentia*, coming from *provideo* – is a way of viewing the future in which fortuity is not a surprise). However, the citizens of the former Soviet bloc states themselves continue to be helpless without the aid of providence comprehended in this manner. There are many grounds to incline one to reach a pessimistic conclusion concerning the inability of the liberal democratic system to survive in Poland. The simple replication of the legal and organizational structure of liberal states and the embracing of the European Union's cumulative body of laws have proven to be insufficient. There is no strength to survive the test in this high-stakes political struggle.

* * *

The Poles continue to be a post-Soviet society. How can they extract themselves from that position? There are no recipes on how to do that. The sole path is to struggle. Only a mortal threat is capable of emblazing in the memory of generations intractable boundaries, the imperative of protecting rules without which it would not be possible to safeguard one's own interests. Capitalists should protect their own interests in the long-run, and not merely by reaching an arrangement with the current government. A stable legal system and good law firms are undoubtedly in their long-term interest. The proletariat, people employed in services, in industry - the sole rescue for them, and thus their long-term interest is having a stable legal system consistent with civil standards (and perhaps counting on the rivalry between law firms that now and again can do something on a *pro bono* basis for those who do not pay dearly).

We see instances of convergence in the inevitable class conflict: the two strata of employers and employees that are the most in conflict by the very nature of things have an interest in having a stable environment within the rule of law. A single playing field with judges who cannot be bribed are needed for a fair game to take place. A fixed game, a fixed rivalry is a corrupt authoritarian system. Its goal is always the same: building an oligarchical monopoly consisting of the authoritarian leader's selected ones. The Law and Justice party in Poland is covertly moving in this direction while masking all its movements. It has not yet attained its chief objective: seizing major assets. Its end-game is to build an oligarchical monopoly consisting of the people selected by the head of the party and his successors. To accomplish this, it is necessary to eliminate an independent judiciary. Court "reform" is required. Judges are being subordinated to the executive branch under the cloak of reform. The

intentions of political leaders must be transparent as a rule in a parliamentary democracy. In the meanwhile, we can only guess by surmising that the purpose of the current political overthrow in Poland is for a group of new oligarchs to seize ownership of the state's assets with the means to this end taking the form of a dependent judiciary.

Only such a goal is capable of awakening visible zeal, enthusiasm and devotion among the angels of good change who see themselves in the future belonging to the oligarchical elite. Their saliva is drooling at the prospect. Following the example set by Hungary, a country governed by cronies holding a substantial portion of the nation's assets. With the original example set by Putin's Russia. Thus, the purpose is to seize assets by appropriating other people's property. What is inevitable in this plan is for the independent media, publishers of the press, television channels and radio stations to be taken over through nationalization or privatization on the basis of parliamentary or governmental decrees. The creation of the effective appearance of the rule of law (Fraenkel 2017) is supposed to accompany the oligarchizing of the society. The underlying idea is to fix the game in such a manner that nobody will never be able to see the fix again, barring some minor marginalized groups of frustrated people under the constant supervision of the political police who are deprived of their means and access to the media.

Can this plan succeed in Poland? Yes. It has succeeded in Russia and Hungary; it is being fulfilled in a variety of forms in other countries belonging to the former communist bloc. It is a natural system of organization corresponding to the social structure of post-totalitarian states. The Polish dreams of might, that here is the nation that loves freedom the most is only a means to kill the pain felt by the post-Soviet man who is incapable of grasping his despicable state. Unless, as mentioned before, providence or fate plays its hand.

* * *

The essence of politicalness is the struggle for what is yours. Reinstating conditions for a fair rivalry and procuring that in a sustainable manner is the starting point for engaging in this conflict with integrity so that it becomes impossible for the parliamentary majority to disassemble it. Sufficient thought was not given to this subject at the time when the legal grounds were put in place for the states belonging to the Third Republic. Perhaps people had posited good will; perhaps they had thought that this game, rivalry or political conflict was merely a convention, not mortally grave combat? Indeed, their

thoughts were naive that higher-ranking feelings, not the desire to be victorious, govern political life. Inadequate thoughts about human nature, about the nature of how the human “herd” functions, that were at odds with mankind’s political experience, were and are the story of justice standing behind the stronger - perhaps these illusions were seductive and made it impossible to create effective safeguards so that in this inevitable conflict there is always a chance to mount a defence, to ensure that it is not possible to chase away legal judges and buy your own judges on the cheap.

Accord is implausible in a democratic society from the starting point because society by its very nature is stratified and full of opposing interests. Conflict and discord according to the rules of conflict (at some point we had rules for knights to engage in conflict, a code of honour) lend strength to institutions. A conflict that is not for pretend, a struggle for life and death, with accord merely being a temporary consensus obtained through negotiation as is the case in business negotiations, where parties’ concessions ensue from reciprocal force. In the meanwhile, Poland does not have a stratum in the proletariat that would be conscious of its separateness. Post-Soviet uniformization – the absence of belonging – is the fundamental reason for that. It is therefore necessary to politicize the lower social strata, to turn them into subjects as the bulk of the society is uninterested in political life. Thus far, no noteworthy commotion in this respect has been observable. Leftist parties do not represent the lowest social strata. If they do represent them, they do this verbally; the wrath of this “people” can only be theatrical wrath. People on the left in their mass are not familiar with people from the bottom of the social classes; they have never lived with them or gone to school with them. They hail from another fairy tale. They are missionaries living among the “heathens” who come from another world, who have a different level of funding, different abilities to move about, that have different interests from those “heathens”. The comparison with the might of the French trade unions, the people’s authentic wrath with the *Mouvement des Gilets jaunes* that is publicly, ritually and ceremoniously engaged in renewing its identity speaks for itself.

* * *

Each one of us thinks according to what our place on earth permits us to do. Being shapes awareness, where you stand depends on where you sit. That is also the famous Nietzschean perspectivism, or relativism, which has been tarnished by dogmatists, i.e. people in love with holding a monopoly over

ideological authority known as the “truth”. Consciously, or more frequently, unconsciously we represent values we have not created. This susceptibility to influence also means that it is so easy for manipulators of social media to affect others like a temporary affliction.

There is no freedom without conflict, conflict with all those persons who want to strip people of this freedom. Not every human being on earth is a friend; there are few friends, the majority are an indifferent mass while some of them are enemies. First, they want to deprive a person of his or her legal protection so that such a defenceless person will sing along with whatever tune they play for him or her.

The saying that *polemos* is the essence of things, namely dispute, some say: war has been ascribed to Heraclites. Constancy and stability are the outcome of that dispute in which opposing forces always create a delicate equilibrium. Constructive discord. Especially discord as the failure to accept an attack mounted by a narrow interest group against the interests of all other groups and social strata.

Bibliography

- Bourdieu P. (1977), *Sur le pouvoir symbolique*, “Annales”, Vol. 32, No. 3.
- Chauvel L. (2010), *Le destin des générations. Structure sociale et cohortes en France du XXe siècle aux années 2010*, [Édition revue et augmentée, avec une nouvelle préface de Le destin des générations, structure sociale et cohortes en France au XXe siècle, 1998], PUF, Paris.
- Coulangeon P. (2010), *Sociologie des pratiques culturelles*, La Découverte, coll. Repères Paris.
- Fraenkel E. (2017), *The Dual State. A Contribution to the Theory of Dictatorship*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Heidegger M. (1988), *Gelassenheit*, Pfullingen, Germany.
- Leder A. (2014), *Prześlona rewolucja*, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warsaw.
- Nietzsche F. (1968), *Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann, New York.
- Tischner J. (1992), *Etyka solidarności i Homo sovieticus*, Znak, Cracow.
- Witkiewicz S.I. (1973), *The Shoemakers*, (in:) *The madam and the nun and other plays* translated and edited by Gerould D.C., Durer C.S., University of Washington Press, Seattle, London.

Tadeusz Bartoś

Afiliacja: **dr hab. Tadeusz Bartoś, prof. AFiBV**
Akademia Finansów i Biznesu Vistula
ul. Stokłosa 3
02-787 Warszawa
e-mail: t.bartos@vistula.edu.pl