

From Industrial Democracy to Political Democracy in Poland: on The Rise and Fall of Solidarity

Witold Morawski*

*(...) before there will be
a fall from inertia
an ordinary death without glory
suffocation from formlessness*
Zbigniew Herbert (1977: 71)

Abstract

The paper looks at the evolution of the institutions of industrial democracy, which would be changing from the Leninist-model into a substitute of political democracy, and subsequently into a central feature of the post-Communist and post-Solidarity order. The process contradicted the usual chain of events observed in the democratic world: as a rule, the institutions of political democracy define the boundaries for industrial democracy, while in Poland the process went exactly into opposite direction. Following emergence of political democracy institutions, industrial democracy imploded. The paper also explores contexts of the aforementioned evolution: its historical-intellectual background and external factors such as collapse of Communism and subsequent developments. Finally, the paper deals with challenges brought about by the post-Communist transformation and then by the transformations generated mainly by the international context.

Keywords: industrial democracy, political democracy, Poland, Solidarity

* Kozminski University, morawit@kozminski.edu.pl

Introduction

This paper has the following objectives. First, to trace the evolution of the institutions of industrial democracy in Poland. Initially, they were completely subordinated to the authorities (the Leninist model). They then made adjustments to the industrial decision-making system. In the 1980s they would substitute the institutions of political democracy, thus becoming the main internal factor contributing to the decomposition of the party state. After 1989, those anti-system institutions became an important building block of the post-Communist order, and a post-Solidarity one between 2005–2007 and from 2015. The global experience in this respect is different. As a rule, the institutions of political democracy define the boundaries within which industrial democracy can operate. In Poland, the actions at the workplace level brought about structural effects (Sewell 2005: 100–103, 225–228), i.e., they triggered the transformations in the system. It was a gradual process, starting in 1956 when the institutions of industrial democracy acquired two different faces, as if they were the ancient Roman god of Janus. On the one hand, they co-managed the workplace, often merely ritualistically and decoratively. On the other hand, they became ever more efficient in blocking the authority of the party state. Finally, the authorities, with their backs against the wall, in 1989 made an offer for concluding a deal between the elites of the state and the elites of Solidarity. The deal offered to replace the old system with a new one. This deal, called ‘The Round Table’, was and still is for some the masterpiece of a peaceful road from authoritarianism to democracy. Furthermore, it is the prime example of manipulation that provided the people from the ancien regime with a better starting position in the new conditions.

Secondly, this paper briefly presents the context of the aforementioned evolution. On the one hand I am tracing their historical-intellectual background. On the other hand, I am exploring external factors, the multi-dimensional defeat of communism in its struggle against capitalism, that allowed the elites (both from the party and Solidarity) this beneficial outcome that was acclaimed across the world, mainly due to its compromise nature. The perception, perhaps, was that the deal contradicts the fashionable grumbling that in the contemporary epoch the anger of the people transforms itself into resentment which would suggest that its mechanisms annihilate the healthy elements that anger might show (Sloterdijk 2006). In Poland, the anger was creatively used by the Polish industrial workers and their leaders. That is why the Solidarity from 1980–1989 deserves to be called ‘The Grand Solidarity’.

Thirdly, the paper discusses the challenges brought about first by the post-Communist transformation and then by the transformations generated mainly by the international context. The latter acquired a dramatic shape. It is worth noting, by way of example, that the protagonists of the Odyssey that I describe here were not soldiers, as usually was the case for Poland over the past 200 years or so, but industrial workers. However, the evolution of capitalism (from its industrial form to financial and global forms), as well as the logic of liberal democracy and growing economic ties with the outer world are not only factors contributing to the erosion of that great social movement of Solidarity, but also promoting uncertainty, social divisions or even cultural clashes. It is thus not surprising that extremely divergent conclusions are drawn from this situation. The left and the centre are drawing negative conclusions. For them, the story of Solidarity after 1989 is an exemplar of the defeat, treason, oligarchisation etc. (e.g. Ost 2005). The social-liberal narrative points to the mistakes and not to how they were overcome. For the liberals, the old Solidarity is an economic aberration and ideological dream, whereas the socio-economic transformation is, in general, a success story. The most comprehensive formula of this ideological war is wielded probably by social-conservatives.

1. Against the ‘Transmission Belt Model’: the Birth of Industrial Democracy

The transformation of the system is the endpoint of a process that was initiated in the Autumn of 1956 when the workers of the Passenger Automobile Factory in Warsaw’s district of Żerań set up workers’ councils. They were set up in the context of a discussion on the decentralization of management, which often referred to Yugoslav experiences. Some of the decentralised processes could be managed by workers’ councils and, from 1959, by workers’ self-management of which workers’ councils were a component part.

Before, the trade unions were totally dependent on the authorities, in line with the Leninist principle of ‘transmission belt’ which posed that trade unions are merely transmitting the will of the Party to the masses by mobilizing the workers for production purposes and educating them in the spirit of Socialism. This dependency was illustrated, among others, by the fact that by custom the head of the Central Council of Trade Unions was a member of the Political Bureau of the Polish United Workers’ Party. The issues that trade unions dealt with at the company level did not

include those that really mattered, such as collective bargaining on wages and working conditions or dispute settlements and conflict resolution (mediation, arbitration).

The demands for co-management rose as an integral part of workers' rebellion against the distortions of the party state. A few months earlier, in June 1956 in Poznań, an uprising broke out which left 70 killed and about 600 wounded (Topolski 2015: 336). When after several months the workers in Warsaw spontaneously started setting up workers' councils, the tone was set by the changes in the party leadership. The position of the First Secretary of the party was taken by Władysław Gomułka, a national communist who had previously been removed from the leading positions. This galvanised the hopes of a sizeable section of society for a renewal of the system towards one which could be termed 'Socialism with a human face'.

These hopes quickly started to fade and were completely shattered after the events in March 1968 (the student protests) and December 1970 (strikes in the coastal regions during which 44 people died and 1200 were wounded). Power was taken by Edward Gierek and his acolytes who wanted some sort of economic modernization (e.g. in consumption). In the political sphere they shaped the system into one that had authoritarian features. This made them stand out in a positive way from other so-called people's democracies. However, this lasted only until 1976. The authorities used slogans of 'perfecting the system' through quasi-technocratic techniques, while at the same time implementing an apparent modernization.

As far as democracy at the workplace was concerned, they allowed worker self-management and trade unions to get involved in the situations of crisis. When the next wave of social rebellion exploded in August 1980, the Gierek led authorities opted for negotiations that were concluded by the accords that recognised the independence and autonomy of trade unions. This meant a break with the 'transmission belt' model. However, reality proved to be much more complex since the authorities imposed martial law in December 1981.

3. Adjustments and Rites: Workers' Self-Management and Games Inside the Companies

The workers always behave in accordance with their values. That is why in Poland they proposed adjusting (fixing) the system's services, e.g. they thought it necessary to make the economic plans more realistic (read: decrease the number of tasks). Also, if were imposed contrary to their will (which was the usual scheme of things)

the workers would concentrate on looking for resources that would allow for their implementation. The actions of workers' self-management seemed to be, and often in fact were, ritualistic. However, even in adverse conditions, they would sometimes bring benefits. Who were the workers at that time? They would usually be recruited from the generation arising out of the massive, post-war social advancement. The industrial workers were the first or second generation of migrants from rural to urban areas. Lech Wałęsa himself emerged from this social milieu. They wanted to socialise what was/had been taken over by the state.

There were constant clashes between the world built from the top and that which existed within the grassroots imaginations about how social life under socialism should look like. The meeting point between those two worlds was, starting from 1959, the Conference of Worker Self-Management, a body whose composition was based on various organizational principles. It included: workers' councils, company-level councils of trade unions, company-level committee of the party, company-level committee of the Union of the Socialist Youth (ZMS), representatives of the Central Technical Organisation (NOT). Towards the end of 1959, there were more than 11,000 company-level Conferences. The main topics of their resolutions at that time, according to Leszek Gilejko who studied 140 of those Conferences, concerned the following matters: the distribution of the company's social benefits fund, improvements to the organization of work, discipline at work, housing, issuing opinions on indicators for annual plans, labour competition, technological progress, occupational health and safety, control of the activities undertaken by enterprises, discussion on the balance sheet of the enterprise (Hirszowicz, Morawski 1967: 55–59).

When fighting for higher wage funds, more jobs, lower tasks in the plan, new investments, social facilities etc. the staff treated the external environment of the enterprise, especially the overseeing authorities, as enemies. They sometimes managed to score a small success, but not of the level that would indicate a qualitative change in the system. How can this be explained? The allies of workers' councils, worker self-management and trade unions etc. were often the company managers or the party branches. It was a deceitful two-way game: the workplace played the role of a besieged fortress attacked from the outside by the bureaucratic structure of the party-state. Why did this game have any sense for the officials, even those from the party or from the company management? Because the failure of the company might have resulted in their careers as managers, state bureaucrats or party officials being broken. That was the overarching logic behind the entire system.

Such coalitions may seem to be outlandish and indeed they were in many cases. 200 years earlier Adam Smith had demonstrated that a company is a natural place

where diverging interests arise and how these lead to associations of both parties (employees and employers) and emerging disputes and conflicts: 'The workmen desire to get as much, the masters to give as little as possible. The former are disposed to combine in order to raise, the latter in order to lower the wages of labour' (Smith 2007: 56). This natural proclivity to safeguard one's own interests could be seen even in such an artificial creation as a socialist workplace which does not deserve to be called an 'enterprise' since it was based on fictitious property titles, pricing of labour, purchasing, selling prices, etc. This game was bound to be a deception, but this deception was in a way beneficiary for many of its players, although it is doubtful if it was beneficiary for the economy as a whole.

Those struggles for adjustments often involved a relatively small share of the staff. Such actions were generalised in the eighties. It was the time of the decline of state Socialism, characterised not as much by an economic market, but rather by a market of various bureaucracies fighting against each other ever more fiercely. In the seventies the importance of managerial staff as a new social force in the modernizing economy was on the rise. The managers started to perceive their interests as diverging from those of the party apparatus. Whereas in the 1980s tensions between the authorities and the people (with self-management as intermediaries) started to build up. Also, a growing number of brakes was placed on political power, as a result of which the mechanism of the 'vicious circle' (the term coined by Gumar Myrdal) between the sub-systems of economy, state and society was created.

Solidarity perfectly understood that this is not how things should be, but at that time it had limited competences in the economic sphere. Solidarity was more of a dream, a voluntarist movement. Its vision generally was closest to the to the social democratic order due to its quantitative domination in large-scale workplaces where they wanted to co-manage. However, they knew little about how the co-management is practiced in the West. One can also find in that movement more or less crystallised liberal elements, especially among the working intelligentsia. Those ideas were abstract and one cannot claim that the subsequent Balcerowicz Plan was part of the then liberal gene. The movement also contained conservative and Christian elements. It was a movement with many currents. It carried striking banners that many ordinary people found easy to identify with. The slogan of fraternity, called 'solidarity', was inscribed on those banners. The slogan of equality, often, surprisingly, understood in very concrete terms, was also on them. But the most important slogan was that of freedom. The term had many definitions, from national self-determination to the dignity of the working people.

3. Substitution and anti-system actions

The tragic social rebellions in 1956 and 1970, and continuous adjustments by the institutions of industrial democracy did not change the system but were gradually loosening its working principles. This process accelerated from 1980–1981 onwards. The imposition of martial law did not halt this but actually deepened it since for the first time in a socialist country since 1917 a new actor had entered the stage. The fact that Solidarity had 10 million members should always be kept in mind in this context.

Those were the trade unions of a new type. Ostensibly describing themselves as ‘independent’ and ‘autonomous’, they stood in opposition to the Leninist model. From Spring 1981 onwards, the new worker self-management was set up. As previously, they made adjustments, but this time not only on their behalf, but also on behalf of underground Solidarity which was banned by martial law. Those self-management bodies were perceived by the workers and society at large as anti-systemic institutions. The definitions of being in opposition were different, but they always had a similar common denominator. In poetic terms it was expressed by Zbigniew Herbert who said: ‘one always swims to the sources, against the stream, only the trash swims with the stream’ (Herbert 1981, transl. WF).

The authorities would describe Solidarity as an adversary. But in practice they treated it as an enemy who had to be destroyed. This was confirmed by the imposition of martial law which was triggered by the visibility of radical forces within Solidarity. It has to be said that the leadership of the trade union tried to stay on a moderate course. But it was not so easy, since society was constantly realizing that the authorities do not keep their promises. It was not surprising to the people, since lying was the principle of the system. Far worse was the fact that the imposition of martial law was not seized as a chance for the introduction of genuine reforms. Not necessarily reforms of the system, since nobody knew at that time how these should look like (see the fate of Perestroika). The authorities did not try to make reforms that would be defined by the people as genuine. There was no political will for that. As a result, another decade was lost. Poland between 1976 and up to the beginning of nineties was drifting economically, was politically in anarchy and its social divisions were growing.

It was not a crisis within the system itself, but a crisis of the system. The ‘vicious circle’ mechanism was shaped because all the three systems (political, economic and social) were blocking themselves mutually. The way out of this state of systemic

anarchy was to make a deal between the elites at ‘The Round Table’. This deal introduced innovations in the system, even although it is presently criticised often. Those who criticise it apply the logic of ‘voice’ (fixing the system) to the ‘exit’ (exiting the system) situation. Suffice to recall the analyses of Albert Hirschman (Hirschman 1970) to see that this is a misunderstanding. The discussed breakthrough came about at the end of 1980s when virtually nobody believed in reforming the system. In the discussions of ‘The Round Table’ the moderate elites of Solidarity and reform-minded elites of the party state took part. The forces of radicalism from both sides (the party conservatives and the radicals from Solidarity) did not support the idea of a compromise.

The deal itself presupposed a gradual transformation in the political sphere. One of the manifestations of this was that General Wojciech Jaruzelski became the first President of the Third Republic of Poland. There were expectations for a radical reform in the economic sphere. Although the ultimate shape of those reforms could not be further from the demands expressed by the workers in the 1980s. Initially the reform was called the ‘transition’, but when it turned out that it proceeded slower than expected, the more suitable concept of ‘transformation’ was employed. The reforms slowed down due to the opposition of the people. This was revealed first by the return to power of post-Communists in 1993 (followed by the election of a post-Communist President who held this post between 1995 and 2005), and in the next phase by the post-Solidarity forces taking power in 2005–2007 and again in 2015.

To sum up, the changes in Poland between 1956 and 1989 were either initiated or were undertaken with the participation of society. Thus, they cannot be reduced to dilemmas which are described by the scholars as markets (economy) vs the state (politics). In fact, we were always dealing with a triangle and its trilemmas where the driving force was an angry society.

4. The Implosion of Industrial Democracy as a Consequence of Economic Transformation

Poland has been an outlier, in a positive way, from international Communism. Some say that it made huge departures from the line, other believe it diverged only slightly. The list of Polish peculiarities as compared with other states of peoples’ democracy was constantly growing. The first item listed is usually the 80 per cent share of private

property of the farmland (post-1956). However, workplace democracy deserves an equally high rank on this list.

Whereas the changes within the system came about as a result of outbursts of worker anger, the transformation that was started in 1989 was different, since it was mainly of a top-down character and it created a new system that was supposed to be characterised by political democracy, private-market economy and civil society. There was no need for institutions of industrial democracy which up until then substituted the role of political democracy. The mechanisms of representative (parliamentary) democracy are nothing more but a rule of competing elites who represent the most prominent private, public and mixed interests. It was a departure from the ideas and practices of direct democracy which were the centrepiece of the vision of society based on solidarity. The parliament and mass media, among others, became the new arena for making politics. Those are dominated by professional politicians, not by workplace leaders appointed from below.

The concept of 'industrial democracy' is substituted by the idea and practice of 'social dialogue'. This is a euphemism, since 'dialogue' means no more than to enter in understanding with others, to feel mutual empathy, to build platforms facilitating agreements, to reveal hidden structures of domination of those who are stronger, to promise emancipation etc. However, this does not have to broaden the scope of democratic decision-making or even co-determination, since this would presume legal methods of coming to taking a decision and their subsequent enforcement. The road from social dialogue to workers' democracy (as envisaged by workers in the eighties) is as far as the road from Earth to heaven. Social dialogue is a mere engineering and economic technique of neo-liberalism. Of course, this is better than nothing. But it is a standard of capitalist normality and not a source of inspiration (e.g. German or Scandinavian).

The Polish evaluation of such an evolution of the transformation must be negative, since it dealt a blow to the Polish institutions of industrial democracy. The question is whether a section of the Solidarity elites acquiesced to this state of affairs because of the perspective of being incorporated into the political elites. Juliusz Gardawski coined a malicious, but apt, description for this situation: a 'political bite' that is expressed in 'political affiliations of the trade union leaders with the political parties' (Gardawski 2009: 246).

In practice, this is an implosion of worker democracy, since it constitutes the surrender of the decision-making field. The direct participation of workers in this field would be of benefit not only for themselves, but also for the entire economy. Even if we assume that not all that was owned by the state would have become a collective

property since capitalism is principally a private-market economy. Even this humbler hope was not realised, as testified by the fate of the employee company. After a few years, most of these companies have gone bust (Jarosz 1995; Jarosz 1998). They went bust, because if an enterprise wants to be competitive on the market in the long run, it has to hold capital for investments, whereas the workers, out of necessity, first take care of their needs (wages). This eliminates the opportunity for increasing stocks of capital. We know that an employee company can prosper under capitalism, but it needs support. This support was not forthcoming.

5. The Social Market Economy in Poland: a wasted opportunity

Whereas the very beginning of neo-liberal economic reforms, which kicked-off on January 1st 1990, held very bad prospects for industrial democracy; starting from 1993, when elements of neo-corporatist system were introduced (its central institution was the Tripartite Commission), one could have had the impression that the political elites had not altogether forgotten about the dreams of Solidarity. The proof of that was that the Constitution, adopted in 1997, spoke about the 'social market economy'. Unfortunately, the actual reforms were conducted in line with neo-liberalism, with no place for co-management on a wider scale. This model is sometimes called the 'coordinated market economy' (Hall, Soskice 2001). The practices of co-management were to adapt to the doctrine. The 'adjustments' therefore meant that the sources of change were to be found outside the remit of workers, or even outside the enterprise, somewhere in the external mechanisms (those of the global economy, European Union etc.).

That is what happened in Poland which adopted the neo-liberal recommendations of the 'Washington consensus' in a dogmatic way and implemented them with a zeal of a neophyte. It turns out, however, that this is not how things have to be. Nor is it how they are in many places, for example in Germany where they managed to reconcile co-determination in enterprises with the neo-liberal tendencies in the global economy. In Germany company-level councils (Mitbestimmung) that represent the entire workforce are set up. Half of the seats at the supervisory board are a preserve of trade union activists and the other half is appointed by the management. These ideas were tested in the conditions of a market economy, political democracy and mature community of workers. In Poland such an initiative was not taken up by the

trade unionists. They preferred setting up multiple trade union organisations in order to accrue benefits, in some cases including material ones, from holding positions in the unions. Such unions are mainly focused on narrowly-conceived group interests which sometimes leads to organizational oddities. For example, the union activists set up for-profit companies which employ workers from the enterprise where the trade union is based. When the then Minister of Labour, Jacek Kuroń, realised what was happening, it was too late to change the course of events. The only thing he could do was to distribute soups to the workers and admit his defeat. Others from the state elite, from its left and right wings, did not show such remorse.

Such top-down solutions contribute to the fragmentation of trade unions and its activist base. In theory, the construction of a neo-corporatist system in Poland could have stirred people into organizing around sectors, industry, and the economy. This could have been brought about only by coordinated actions from the top below and middle. The negotiations between the three types of elites (capital, labour, and the state) in the Tripartite Commission could have brought fruits in such conditions. Perhaps solutions on a sector level, as in Germany, would have been the best option. The final product of this process is widely criticised and the worst consequence of it is that the whole economy is suffering. An economy which is a 'social market economy' only in name.

Was the decline of industrial democracy in Poland inevitable? If we assume that there is no alternative for the radical, neo-liberal economic reforms with the domination of short-term thinking, then the answer is 'yes'. We have been implementing such reforms with the advice from, among others, American and western experts. The more to the left the author of a narrative is, the greater disappointment (and amusement) with such reforms tends to be (Klein 2007: 205–294). Let us recall that the victory of Law and Justice in 2005 was achieved under the banner of 'Poland of social solidarity' versus 'liberal Poland'. Thus, the criticism of the transformation does not come only from the Left. Were such reforms of absolute necessity? They were not, if we take into account the above-mentioned German experience and, even more, that of Scandinavian countries (Kowalik 2010). However, my aim is to demonstrate that these reforms were not accidental. They happened because of the demise of the ancien régime, geopolitics, fashion for searching new ways for getting out of stagflation etc.

6. The Change in the Intellectual-Political Background

Capitalism and democracy are a good couple, which sometimes passes through periods of crisis. This thesis is widely accepted. It is sometimes postulated that the development of capitalism might come about without democracy, but the reverse is impossible. An American theoretician put it this way: 'Democracy requires capitalism, but capitalism does not require democracy, at least in the short run' (Schlesinger 1997: 7). As can be seen, this is a complex issue. For the purpose of this paper it is enough to stress that in the first three decades after 1945 the West exercised 'democratic capitalism'. State interventionism (demand management in the style of Keynes) was employed, the welfare state was built, full employment was guaranteed and the socio-economic inequalities were being levelled out (the growth of the middle classes). The trade unions were strengthened, whereas the left-wing political parties participated in numerous governing coalitions. In sum, that world was much friendlier to the workers than the present, both in a material and non-material sense (Phelps 2013; Reich 2007).

In Poland the events took a different course. Prior to the rise of capitalism, there had to be a democracy, in its industrial (direct) form. The transformations initiated in 1989, in turn, do not diverge to any large extent from the general tendency in the West. Yet they are astonishing for two reasons. Firstly, because those who fought for democratic capitalism before 1989 abandoned it right at the time when they could have started building it without any major obstacles. Secondly, why did they opt for an extreme variety of capitalism (neo-liberalism) rather than going for one of the varieties that was closer to them? Undoubtedly, the latter was either a Social-Democratic capitalism of Scandinavian countries or a real social market economy. The neo-liberal variety of capitalism was a threat to the worker rank-and-file of Solidarity since it assumed selling (or transformations in the property structures) of large enterprises. This was perceived by society as looting the property of the nation (Karpiński 2014).

This contrasted with the moods prevalent in the 1980s, when there had been a firm hope for improving democratic capitalism. Here are some of the quotes about worker democracy from that period. Let us begin by quoting John Paul II who in his 'Laborem Exercens' encyclical, published to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the 'Rerum Novarum' encyclical, says that labour is more important than capital

and that the work-related values should guarantee 'joint ownership of the means of work' and 'sharing by the workers in the management and/or profits of businesses', 'shareholding by labour' etc. (John Paul II 1981). Here is the relevant quotation: 'This principle directly concerns the process of production: in this process labour is always a primary efficient cause, while capital, the whole collection of means of production, remains a mere instrument or instrumental cause. This principle is an evident truth that emerges from the whole of man's historical experience' (John Paul II 1981).

Meanwhile Robert Dahl, an American theoretician of democracy, claimed that 'if democracy is justified in governing the state, then it must also be justified in governing the economic enterprises: and to say that it is not justified in governing economic enterprises is to imply that it is not justified in governing the state' (Dahl 1984: 54). He rejected the view that an enterprise managed by workers is violating property rights. Just as he rejected the claim that the principles of democracy do not apply to companies. Industrial democracy is a right, not a privilege.

Robert E. Lane, professor at the Yale University, argued: 'If workers self-management is the next step on the slow march toward more egalitarian, more participative society, as I think it is, let us not stumble. Minding our step, we will look at the bearing of the doctrines and practices of democracy and capitalism on worker self-management, focusing on workers', rather than intellectuals', perceptions of these doctrines and practices' (Lane 1985: 623). If we assume that the goal of participation in democratic politics in the workplace is to give dignity to participating individuals and protect their interests, then the application of these values, as argued by Lane, could be: (1) complementary to; (2) substitutes for, or, (3) independent of each other.

In prior considerations I employed the concept of 'adjustments' (fixing) instead of 'complementarity' to show the following sequences of roles played by the institutions of democracy in Poland: dependence, adjustment, substitution, independence. The paper by Robert Lane is entitled 'From Political to Industrial Democracy'. Its author suggested complementing the representative democracy by direct democracy in the workplaces. That way people can take matters into their own hands more effectively (than the political elites) for the sake of their own values and interests. It is not enough for the political elites, whose actions are expressed in the bodies of the state and parliament, to show the utmost care when establishing a legal framework for concluding collective agreements, rules for solving conflicts between labour and capital (mediation, arbitration), establishing trade unions and giving the latter the power to bargain collectively. Contrary to his expectations, Lane, who is an empiricist, notes that: 'In real life, however, American workers seek to control

the power of business in the workplace through governmental policing of safety, collective bargaining, private pension plans, and so forth; they treat political control as a substitute for direct workplace control' (Lane 1985: 626).

7. New Threats to Economic Democracy

Ever since we became part of the family of democratic states with a market economy, there was a general sense that the future holds a leap into prosperity. At the beginning, the third wave of globalisation reinforced these moods. But the economic crisis of 2007–2009 transformed the mood within society. There is a sudden increase of menaces that increase uncertainty, produce unsolvable crises, and prepare the ground for culture clashes. A particular accumulation of such threats can be seen in the EU. This has its consequences in the sphere of worker democracy and is expressed in the decreasing activity of trade unions. The latter focus on basic problems and not on broader challenges for the communities and sectors in which they are embedded. The low level of union density is accompanied by the reluctance of governments to support what has been described as social dialogue or social participation. In Poland this produced a wave of aversion to trade unions from the national and international companies, as described in detail by Juliusz Gardawski (Gardawski 2009; Gardawski ed. 2009: 420–532). This leads us towards making some more general remarks.

The first concerns the comparison between liberal democracy and the period of state socialism. In the latter, the top-down logic of making workers 'dependent' left them with no choice, but to develop the logic of 'independence' through rebellion of various shapes and with different consequences. I have shown the tragedy of the workers' position. They died in clashes with the forces of the regime in 1956, 1970, 1981. But I also showed that this effort was not in vain since it led to partial changes in the system. The periods of loosened grip on workers were usually brief. As a result, the events created all kinds of divisions, starting with those in the elites in power (reformers v conservatives). This brought 'The Round Table' deal with counter-elites from Solidarity in 1989. There was also a growing cleavage within the elites of Solidarity. At present they are split. This has an impact on the worker organizations which are pushed to define themselves in relation to post-Solidarity elites (it is suffice here to refer to the division between OPZZ and Solidarity).

The second remark concerns the free market and the coalitions of coercion that it begets. This can be particularly harmful for working people, since the field of market relations is constantly growing thanks to European integration and globalisation. This means that workers are not always in a position to force concessions on their nation state. We are a semi-periphery, dependent economy. This is one of the reasons for which workers support, out of necessity, the state and its companies. After all, it is easier to strike a deal with these than with multinational corporations. Mining is a good example of such dilemmas. Anyhow, the trade unions adjust their activities to the logic of markets, no matter what variety of these we are dealing with. Complementary mechanisms can sometimes bring benefits. For example, the ideas and practice of flexicurity which guarantee flexibility of the labour market for the employer and security for the employees. The point of such schemes is not to adjust or change the system, but rather to improve the conditions of trade-off between flexibility and security. The overall result is tilted in favour of employers rather than employees. The number of workers has decreased from 17.558 million in 1989 to 14.172 million in 2012. The number of industrial workers stood at 4.773 million and 2.868 million respectively. This was due to de-industrialisation and the closure of 650 enterprises. Also, 2 million people went abroad to seek jobs in other EU countries. The negative phenomena are almost always linked with external factors, especially with international financial institutions which 'made financial support contingent uponim posing on us certain conditions' (Karpiński 2014: 24, Ibid. 21–23, 206–207; Kieżun 2012: 131–158).

This situation can be perceived as a cost of delayed economic modernisation. It can be added that the connections with the West promised support which, it has to be stressed, did come in the shape of such things as debt reduction or foreign direct investments. Thus, the new hegemonic order is also safeguarding its interests in Poland. Although I would not go as far as to claim that the West can be compared with the USSR.

The second remark concerns the social sphere, specifically the sense of social justice. In 2012 the Polish society is disenchanted with both the poor implementation of the principle of formal equality of opportunities and the implementation of the principles of meritocracy (i.e. the remuneration should be proportionate to such contributions as intellectual input and effort put into working). In Poland, both these principles ('entering' the system and staying within it) are implemented half or even a third as much as in the countries of mature market economy. This is shown by continuous research, from 1991, 1997, and 2012 (Morawski 2015). This aspect had not

registered improvement over the course of 22 years of economic transformation. It is also hard to argue that people are inclined towards the self-managed economy, which enjoyed popularity in the 1980s. However, there continues to be a strong neo-corporatist inclination. People acknowledge that there is room for trade unions both at the company level and on higher levels. 66.7 per cent of Poles support the view that ‘all the important decisions for the economy should be taken jointly by the government, the trade unions and the employers’ (as far as wages are concerned, 56.2 per cent support joint decision-making). However, the picture is not clear, since at the same time 69.5 per cent believe that ‘the employers should have the right to set wages by negotiating with individual workers’. Therefore, one may conclude that Poles still feel attached to mixed, hybrid solutions (Morawski 2015: 133–141).

The fourth remark concerns the cultural sphere. I am here referring only to the relationship between the workers and the rest of the society. As I noted earlier, Solidarity was created overwhelmingly by the former. But it was shaped in contacts with circles of the intelligentsia. The workers did not allow the authorities to manipulate them. The protests of the intelligentsia in 1968 and of workers in 1970 were organised separately. The rapprochement between the two groups came about in the 1980’s. The term ‘employer’ replaced the term ‘worker’, as in ‘employee self-management’ instead of ‘worker self-management’. This was a conscious strategy for social inclusion. In 2015 it can be seen clearly that social divisions lead to culture clashes and, according to some people, even to culture wars.

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