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DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS OF THE POLISH REPUBLIC'S POLITICAL SYSTEM BEFORE AND AFTER POLAND'S ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. APPEARANCE OF HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES ENABLING FUTURE DEMOCRATIZATION

A highly important historical event which had far-reaching consequences, both for Poland and Middle-Eastern Europe happened in June 1989. It was an extremely significant historical moment, not fully realized at first as far as the perspective of socio-economical and civilization changes is concerned. It opened a possibility of irreversible liquidation of ''the real socialism'' system, acknowledged as a peculiar emanation of Soviet totalitarianism (Śliwiński 1993: 63), and the rise of democratic political system. It came into being as a result of gradual process of system transformations also called ''a regulation revolution'' (Dudek 2004: 489). At the same time, a chance for optimal reception of positive standards established in mature western democracies appeared (Garliński, Noga-Bogomilski 2004: 86–90). However, after a short-term enthusiasm, caused not only by the spectacular victory of ''Solidarity'' union movement, political atmosphere in the Polish society gradually began to change. A peculiar phenomenon characterized by regularity formulated as ''a short period of hope'' .

At the same time the characteristics of a socio-political syndrome named *homo sovieticus* (Tischner 2005: 141–245), stimulated by the atmosphere of demagogy and populism, were quite clearly expressed. That syndrome was often supported by those who reluctantly decided to hand over the political power in 1989–1991 to the ''Solidarity elite''. In fact, the former communist party leading group would not fully agree to it. Thus, it counted on the attractiveness for some social groups of the modified variety of ''real socialism'', so as to regain power in a favourable political situation, basing on it.

The tasks which the Polish society political representation chosen in the partly democratic election in June 1989 faced, appeared in its implementation dimension so large and difficult to realize, that it was decided to perform a ''shock therapy'' in the economic sphere. Market mechanisms based on neo-liberal monetarism models were successively introduced, more and more often leading to dissatisfaction. Those changes were accompanied by a naive in its expression, propagation of opinion about supposedly optimal possibilities of learning ''the power of one's own money''. That, however, was regarded by the greater part of the society as an undertaking excessively drastic in existential dimension. It was met with considerable objections reflected in the Polish citizens' collective awareness sphere. Soon, criticism of deepening differentiation of the society concerning the access to goods of all kinds appeared (Karnowska 2005: 151–173). Simultaneously an opinion was expressed that a new approach to the problem of social justice in the economic dimension and in political sphere would be advisable.

Dysfunctional factors impeding the democratic conversion of the political system became active. At the same time antinomy between the state functions referring to higher reasons and ''the civil society'' aims did not lose its importance. Nonetheless, both respecting the state subsidiarity principle and aspirations to revive the respect for this institution turned out to be essential, which found reflection in the social opinion. That might be conducive in a prospective dimension to creating a democratic – and what follows – active political culture (Janowski 2004: 170), creating favourable conditions for the introduction of essential reforms eliminating civilization regress features (Ekiert 1995: 87–111).

2. IMPLEMENTATION MEANDERINGS OF DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM TRANSITION IN POLAND

For 17 years an escalation of critical comments about experiences connected with the system transformation has been successively observed. Reproach that the Polish Republic III is still a weak state because it is characterized by ''the inability to fulfill its basic functions'' is articulated. At the same time one can clearly see the remains of ''the contestation habits of the state'' treated not infrequently as a foreign formation (Nalewajko 2001: 1). For that reason, an opinion which became a stereotype has been formulated, that ''some kind of *they* are using the state resources, and *we* are losing what we would be able to reach because the said *they* are making decisions about everything'', despite the changing composition of the power elite in the course of time. That means that a considerable

''contestation potential'' of infrastructural character has been manifested. Nevertheless, it may, although does not have to, directly lead to disfunctioning of the components of the democratic political system, or even to its destruction (Wnuk-Lipiński 2001: 18).

A specific, and at the same time dangerous phenomenon of contemporary epoch, which is man's getting lost in everyday life reality may be conducive to the deformation of civil and patriotic attitude, which may be manifested in pretensions arising from the attraction of consumerism, and even the approval of cosmopolitan attitudes. On the other hand, a patriotic attitude going beyond any acceptable norms, sometimes of nationalistic character, may be conducive to tendencies manifested in ''xenophobic closing to the world'', becoming consequently a dysfunctional factor for the process of democratic system transition (Fiedler 2000: 118). It needs emphasizing that, with regard to gradually advancing integration of the European continent, the requirement for positive and lasting reception of democratic values, and political standards developing from them, is becoming a non-alternative option (Kaute 2001: 482). The awareness of this imperative significance should gain the chances of promotion among contemporary Poland's citizens.

The political system transformation proceeding gradually for over 17 years means undoubtedly, at the same time, the chances which enable further consolidation of democratic standards. It can be assumed that the transformations in the sphere of social structure and, what is more, in the economic sphere, will continue for a longer period of time. A phenomenon quite suggestively manifested is, despite many objections, an option of a system based on democratic values and models favoured by the majority of Poles. Experiences of former state democracy are not insignificant here. It was declared between 1989–1991 and is still being confirmed – not without reservations – now when Poland is functioning in the European Union structure.

What is fairly characteristic is the fact that one can observe in the Polish society a phenomenon of ''being tired'' of democracy. Therefore, one must take into account the tendency for certain social circles to reveal dissatisfaction with the system transformation results achieved so far, not reflected in a spectacular way in the sphere of economic development and – what follows – in a perceptible growth of living standards. In other words, the deepening pauperization of many groups of the Polish society caused by fairly high, persisting unemployment is an unfavourable phenomenon. The situation of this kind is largely associated with the results of market economy mechanisms functioning based on free competition (Mojsiewicz 1996: 65–76).

It happens that groups of the displeased compensate their hopes in demagogical populism (Markowski 2004: 11–29) which may lead to ochlocracy or some kind of undefined autocracy, or on the other hand, isolationism

and deep Euro- skepticism (Kostrzębski 2005: 285). It needs to be hoped however, that the majority of the Polish society will not desire to introduce system solutions of authoritarian character into political relations sphere. Working class communities express a prevailing opinion that the planned system might be ''close to populist democracy''. It would be socialist and protective towards the weak, and market, that is capitalist, for the strong (Gardawski 1996: 167).

Regardless of the above comments one may suppose that normative requirements of legitimized way of wielding power and pluralism principles may become an unrelinquishable standard of democratic political relations. However, despite considerable progress as far as universalization of democratic political culture values and models is concerned, it turns out that after the fourth rival election to the RP Seym in September 2001, the formation of functional political party structure still can't be attained. One can say more: ''the further evolution direction is still unknown'' (Antoszewski 2002: 154). This may bring, which cannot be excluded, surprising solutions if one takes into account the appearance of a bizarre party coalition in May 2006 (Gołata 1995: 5–20).

For several years a conviction, that the contemporary Polish Republic, as a fully legitimized democratic state of law, should be characterized by an increasing level of political subjectivity of numerous social communities, has gradually been winning a lot of supporters. This might be revealed in conscious civil activity (Wróblewska 2003: 83–89). Positive results in this sphere would be conducive to neutralization of populist-ochlocratic threats which might dysfunctionally affect the constitutional democratic order (Nalewajko 1997: 351–365). Insufficient in the Polish society level of knowledge about democracy and resulting from it low level of abilities how to use its ''benefits'' appear to be an undoubtedly dysfunctional factor.

Regardless of the above statement, it needs to be said that a conviction that the Polish society new structure should be formed as a great community constituting an integral component of democratic ''European society'' (Nalewajko 1997) is at the same time beginning to gain supporters. The rise of such state of matters would make it possible to respect the conviction that full observance of ''cultural roots of each nation and each ethnic group'' is essential. That would mean that Polish cultural heritage would be no longer threatened by the phenomenon of social values relativity and the danger of civilization degradation (Chodubski 2000: 130). Thus, one should not disregard the system transition axiological context as extremely important for each national culture, the Polish one as well.

The appearance of a situation enabling the regard for political pluralism principle is frequently manifested by far-reaching freedom and ingeniousness as far as creating new political groups is concerned. This does not exclude

the influence of various *lobby* and interest groups on the political system, either (Jasieński 2001; Antoszewski 2003). The ''political correctness'' model has become most interesting and attractive, especially when ''emancipation policy'' is mentioned as an intention directed towards freeing individuals and groups from restrictions which might ''be a burden on their life chances''. Thus, an assumption that justice, equality in the legal aspect, and responsible political participation in ethical-social dimension should be the main aim of democratic ''emancipation policy'', is often approved (Giddens 2001). One should hope that the continuing European integration process will favour the Polish Republic's system identity and thus create conditions for the possibility of regarding the democratic state of law principle. The process of considerable unification of the EU state systems, which will include Poland, will certainly continue gradually, promoting democratic standards consolidation (Kuciński 2005). This may be estimated in more ways than one, particularly if one takes into account the semantic context of numerous determinants of the reasons of State. However, the circumstances that more and more Poles begin – although perhaps too slowly – take advantage of economic and civilization advancement, may be a reason for optimism. The escalating reception of democratic standards in Poland reflected in the Polish Republic society's awareness corresponds to this phenomenon.

This tendency is to a large extent complementary to universalization which systematically takes place in Europe (Brodowski 1995). It also includes this continent's states' system principles based on political pluralism and legitimization conforming to liberal political democracy norms (Zieliński 2001). Political system evolution positive direction should lead to reaching such a state, when Poland – as a democratic state of law - would be fully legitimized, first of all as a result of political subjectivity increase manifesting itself in the Republic's citizens' civil activities. One cannot exclude the appearance of real threats dysfunctionally affecting the constitutional democratic order. This would mean a serious danger for the Polish reasons of State (Nalewajko 1997).

The Poles, as the Republic III citizens, in the situation when their country entered the European Union, face the necessity to assume an attitude to the problem of shaping European identity (Dopierała 2004; Gałuszka 2004). It is necessary when fully accepted obligations resulting from Poland's membership in this structure of ''the old continent'' are becoming more and more important, which has been present for over two years.

Accepting an optimistic scenario of social development which has reference to the international relations sphere as well, gives hope that the Polish ''identity and civil dignity'' does not have to be in conflict with the European sense of citizenship (Konopacki 2005). One should hope that far-reaching

discrepancies between Polish patriotism and European identity will not arise. The Poles, losing nothing of their own national consciousness and love for their homeland, may become European patriots as well. In turn, a new expression of patriotic civil attitude does not have to be determined by nationalist and chauvinistic motives (Sztombka 1993).

3. CIVILIZATION-CULTURAL DIMENSION OF POLAND'S INTEGRATION WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

A conviction has repeatedly been expressed that harmonizing the requirement for the respect for the Slavic ethnic-cultural identity (Furdal 2000: 196; Chodubski 2003: 188–190) with the idea of multicultural society, regarded as democracy standard in the European Union, is an essential undertaking. On the other hand, this should not exclude a full possibility of presenting by Poles a patriotic attitude and approval for their cultural heritage. Thus, this would not have to mean ''the decline'' of sovereignty and the decay of a national state idea (Waldenberg 2000: 477–479). It needs mentioning at the same time that the fact that the Polish society ''reveals a strong and lasting bond with Western culture'' is a positive phenomenon (Dyczewski 2000: 479; Kempny 2000). This may become an opportunity which enables gradual shaping of the European democratic cultural identity, among the Polish society as well (Liszka 2001: 494–498).

Regardless of the geopolitical conditions and the economic situation of Republic III, political culture tradition, both recent and earlier, plays a very important part in the political system. It may also have to a large extent a multicultural dimension. Polish political culture, if external and particularly globalization conditions are considered, is becoming more and more pluralistic. This means a possibility of coexistence of many pluralistic political subcultures (Liszka 2001). Thus, not only environmental and national cultural values and models are being preserved, but also the universal ones which are the result of the domination of contents emitted by electronic *mass media* (Michalczyk 2003; Mikułowski-Pomorski 2006).

Undoubtedly a political system, a democratic one especially – and such may Republic III be characterized by – is influenced by a multicultural environment in a diachronic and synchronic dimension. This means a developing political system cultural pluralisation. It is not indifferent, if one takes into account shaping of a holistically understood multicultural society, including both symbolic and political culture as well. As regards this, it needs emphasizing that favourable cultural conditions, also in a pluralistic dimension, have been present in Poland for over 17 years, enabling the

initiation and continuation of conversion and democratic system consolidation process (Solorz 2002: 198–199). It may be assumed that it will become more and more open to political multiculturalism having a universal dimension.

A universal phenomenon defined as ''European community'' of democratic values is often mentioned (Trzeciak, Przeciszewski 2002: 23). In connection with this it is sometimes said that Poland cannot be ''a lonely fortress'' playing a role of ''the nations' conscience'', located outside the European civilization circle in which civil behaviour models and democratic values are respected (Sowiński 2002: 197–200, 207). Therefore, a statement that the Republic III found itself at the beginning of the 21st century in the situation of globalization challenge which favours cultural interiorization including models and democratic values, which is done first of all via *mass media*, should not be regarded as exaggerated (Goban-Klas 2004). A contemporary person, a Polish citizen including, is said to face every day alone numerous globalization influences which may be perceived as restriction on their freedom area (Dębska 2002).

It must be emphasized that a political system which undergoes democratization as a result of system transition should be – which is obvious – related to culture, including political culture regarded in a pluralistic way, whose dominant would be created by such values as democracy and freedom (Paradowska, Paradowski 2002). In connection with this the following question arises: what semantic context can be given to freedom ? Answering it, it is not difficult to accept a statement that freedom should enable the appearance of inclusive democracy, which depends on the citizens', aware of their subjectivity, active joining political life in accordance with unrelinquishable human rights – and what follows – participation in political system democratic transition. Universalization of attitudes of this kind, as far as taking advantage of democracy is concerned, would undoubtedly become ''a condition for Polish transformation success'' (Mach 2001: 77, 81).

The necessity to remove many imperfections from the political system evolving towards mature democracy is becoming an imperative. Therefore, a principle that ''countries where democracy has been rooted for a longer period of time, introduce the changes of the electoral law very rarely'', is considered obvious. This is unquestionably a ''democratic institutions maturity index''. ''The frequency of election game rules changes'' in Poland is without doubt too high. A fear that the Republic III political system might go too far away from modern democracy accepted standards is often revealed (Kot 2002: 112).

An opinion is sometimes accepted that ''transition to democracy'' may indubitably occur in the situation of ''simultaneous extension of the state and civil society powers'' (Ekiert 1993: 109). The Polish Republic's citizens, better and better educated and having access to fuller information, are able

to create an open democratic society. They may express satisfaction with participation in the process of taking decisions about public matters, which would mean the appearance of ''equal opportunities of development, self-realization and self-determination'' (Potulicka 1993: 4).

As regards that, consensual behaviour of the Republic's citizens manifested in the respect for the Polish state as ''common property'' has been considered necessary for many years (Bartoszewski 2000: 61–62). Apart from the fact that it is part of a large geopolitical structure of ''the old continent'', namely the European Union, democracy in Poland is still being consolidated. It is frequently disturbed by no regard for the principle of law abiding. This makes it possible for the authorities to tolerate, not always disinterestedly, the lobbyist interest groups acting to some extent ''on the border of law''. They make use of a pseudo-democratic rhetoric which favours the introduction of some camouflaged form of ''limited democracy'' profitable for the part of political class derived from the structures of ''the old'' order before 1989 and partly from post-solidarity elites.

Irrespective of numerous threats of this kind and the peculiar ''Polish national character'' (Lewandowski 1995), one may hope that the process of the Polish society's democratic political culturing will follow in a positive dimension. In this highly important process the ''experience in democracy'' as a whole is really fundamental (Antoszewski 2000: 63–64). Despite positive tendencies in this sphere, an opinion is expressed that an authentic and lasting reception of civil political culture democratic values will not happen in Poland without regarding the principle of law abiding and the determined negation of aspirations to take over the power for the sake of some decisive groups' egoistic interests.

A procedure which will enable the Polish Republic III to last in the European Union structures was implemented legally and in a normative dimension (Sasińska-Klas 2004). However, Poland's authentic and optimal participation in civilization order of this geopolitical-economic structure of the European continent is not an easy task (Piątkowski 2002). Poland's difficult history and the axiological peculiarity connected with the Republic's cultural heritage, which includes democratic tradition as well, is not insignificant.

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On balance, it must be stated that the general look at Polish political reality may become a basis for the opinion that there are many imperfections or even anomalies in democratic political system functioning in Poland. Thus, the attempt of summing up is not easy (Jarosz 2005: 335–338). A deepened insight into this problem however, gives a basis for forming an opinion that some democratic standards are not consequently respected, and

may be even overused or falsified. These standards of modern democracy have not been clearly rooted not only among the citizens as a whole, but also in many political class circles. Sometimes a reluctant attitude to democratic values and models was revealed, particularly to these which reach Poland from outside. Nevertheless, there is a considerable dynamics of social atmosphere in this matter (Strzeszewski 2005).

The reception of the democratic standards requires time and patience. At the same time competent democratic education of the Polish society is necessary. In time active democratic political culture may be formed. It needs to be hoped that democratic state institutions will begin to function gradually and in a proper way.

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