

INTRODUCTION

Volume two of the TEKA [Portfolio] of the Political Science and International Affairs Commission, Polish Academy of Sciences Lublin Branch, is the result of the conference *Identity and Difference in Politics – On Democracy after Communism* held on 18 April, 2007 in Lublin. When they proposed this subject to the participants for consideration, the organizers of the conference followed three assumptions.

First, they believe, perhaps immodestly, that the academic circles also have the right, or even more: the duty to speak in the democratic discourse dominated today by politicians and journalists. They thereby take seriously the conviction present in social sciences, at least in those with an interpretationist orientation, according to which they are not neutral in relation to the reality they investigate. On the contrary, by creating the language that serves to describe and explain it, these sciences themselves co-create it in some way – they constitute its sense. Second, the organizers maintain that democracy without constant self-reflection, without constantly defining itself in the public sphere, i.e., the content and sense of the social contract, condemns itself to atrophy. There is no society of free and accommodating individuals open to co-operation, which could be decreed by one act of decision taken once and for all by a mythical sovereign. Finally, third, *last, but not least*, the organizers are also aware of the fact that there is something wrong with Polish young democracy. The question is what does not work properly in it and why?

Academics, as we know, need some detachment from the reality under investigation. However, there are always problems with this detachment or distance: although this is a vague concept, even when understood in any way, it appears to propose a postulate extremely difficult to accomplish, especially with such a subject as politics – by nature it is a dynamic, changing, complex matter, and full of axiological issues to the extent that it inevitably overlaps with the „interests” of scholars who study it. It is therefore impossible that they should be entirely free from their own attitudes and preferences towards the reality; free from cognitive and evaluative structures which dominate in their scholarly circles and greatly aspire to apply to the social world. This „concerned” attitude, in light of the aforementioned methodological orientation, applied intentionally, is certainly no sin, which one can find while reading most of the articles included in the present Volume. To complete the picture of the conditions under which they were written, we should add that their authors discussed their theses in the atmosphere of extraordinary pressure exerted by the current political events, by the public sphere feverishly excited

by the issues of vetting and corruption, and by the moral revival, which was to be the distinctive feature of the so-called Fourth Republic of Poland, rocked, to make matters worse, by sex and corruption scandals involving some of its leading politicians. No wonder therefore that these circumstances called for academic reflection, which would soothe emotions and enable the formulation of accurate assessment of the situation taking place outside the beautiful historic chamber of the Czartoryski Palace, the seat of the Polish Academy of Sciences Branch in Lublin. The task of the lecturers assembled in it was to identify the fundamental problems – their origin and character – that have beset Poland's politics and public life since the turning point of 1989/1990.

The title *identity and difference* in politics are categories that respectively refer to the universal and the particularistic in democracy after communism, or, in other words: to that which it shares today with old democracies and to that which is specific to it. In Poland's political practice, the organization of its state and law, and political culture, the two categories cannot be separated from each other. This means that common elements merge in it inseparably, i.e., the formal ones, associated with the division of powers, free elections, and the market economy, and the specific or substantialist ones: local and national. Both of them are equally subject today to globalization processes taking place at the same time, parallel and inseparable on political, cultural, and economic levels. One of the political results of the effect of these processes is without doubt the growing problem of the legitimacy of authority in democracies that successively limit the participation of demos in deciding about itself. However, the matter is not settled yet – we live in an ambiguous world, which defies *all great narratives*/explanatory constructions. For modernization in the age of globalization is also associated with the development of the latest information technologies and with implementing them in the organization and functioning of the institutions of state and society. The new media thus create unprecedented opportunities and challenges to democratization of life on the level of both local, national, and supranational communities.

The *difference* in the case of Polish democracy is, in turn, the internally antagonized blend of components not so much of political/state-related character as cultural (national and religious) - with the latest legacy of communism, which we still have to bear like a burden, both as society and the state. The demise of the so-called real socialism has its historical date, which certainly does not overlap with the actual end of its influence. It still continues its activity beyond the grave: on the one hand, in the sphere of socially acceptable customs and behaviors, thinking patterns and semiotic codes which influence the shape of public life and make themselves felt in the popular mentality of the people, especially manifested in their attitude to civil rights and responsibilities. On the other hand, however, the remains of communism survived in institutions, in some economic and financial sectors, that are controlled by the fruitfully cooperating representatives of the present and former ruling elite and secret services. They melted into the new realities, operating on the edge of the law or even beyond it by means of clientelism and corruption.

The articles collected in this volume discuss the subject of democracy after communism from many different angles. As a whole, they are a new cognitive quality, they give a more complete picture of the situation although they certainly do not exhaust the sub-

ject. To oversimplify, they can be divided into two groups: one consists of the first three articles, which create or only reconstruct the conceptual apparatus enabling us to describe, explain and eventually also evaluate a number of phenomena – institutions and mechanisms – characteristic of present-day democratic societies. They speak of the *politics of small things*, of *multi-actor management or governance* and of globalization. The other group is made up of the remaining four articles, which go deeper into the socio-political realities of Poland, into the discourse going on in the Polish public sphere on the identity of the left and the right, on social justice and squaring accounts with the totalitarian past; on the importance of democracy under political transformations and on the post-Solidarity society, as well as on the latest relations between Germany and Poland. The last issue is traditionally widely discussed in this country and it is in light of these relations that we are perceived and assessed as European, meaning democratic, both at home and abroad. Therefore, they could be treated as a certain measure of political maturity and responsibility of individual government administrations, and finally, as some test of how well Polish democracy is functioning.

The question about democracy means comparing the idea with reality, i.e., with the actual state of decentralization and dispersal of authority, self-limitation of it, its shift from the center to the periphery, into the domain of so-called subpolitics made by local governments, and non-governmental, inter- and transnational institutions and organizations. The first to ask it at our conference was Jeffrey C. Goldfarb, a sociologist of New School University in New York. Since the beginning of his scholarly career he has been closely connected with Poland, with the history of the democratic opposition under communism, the experience of which provided to him a clue to the *politics of small things*, which he consistently developed over the course of time into a full-fledged sociological conception. It is built on that which probably constitutes the very core of mature, polyarchic democracy, namely on the belief that the political is not only the domain of the authority and its representatives but also of free individuals – their everyday interactions and personal choices. It is in the latter that Leszek Kołakowski would find the grounds for hope at the times of hopelessness. Hence the telling title, which presents the main thesis of the report by the American scholar: *The Politics of small things + the media = hope against hopelessness*. Apart from explaining the origin and meaning of the concept of *politics of small things*, the article also contains a discussion of the media, their ability to support or weaken us in establishing interactions, and in taking stands and starting alternative actions in politics.

In her article *Governance – Possible or Desirable in Democracies under Transformation?* Agnieszka Pawłowska passes from the level of micro-politics of “small things” onto the level of meso-politics of small, local communities, whose fate is decided today by many actors. Governance is the result of the process of shrinking of the modern state, transformation of its hierarchical structure into a network one; of dividing decision-making competence and responsibility in public matters between many public, private and social actors. Network decision-making is a special challenge to the post-totalitarian society. What barriers does it encounter in it? What prevents the society from becoming really civic-minded? These are the questions Pawłowska seeks to answer.

Maria Marczevska-Rytko raises the general level of the current discussion one step higher, i.e., onto the level of macro-politics dealing with things of global significance.

Within Imagination or on the Impact of Globalization Processes on Democracy is an original look at the condition of present-day democracy on the basis of verifying its theory by practice. The author presents her standpoint when trying to structure the rich and varied globalization discourse. She shows the network of conceptions/visions of both democracy itself and globalization – its (globalization's) positive and negative senses, destructive impact on democracy, but also its latent opportunities for democratization of the international order and even for the creation of democracy on a global scale.

Adam Chmielewski undertakes the task of analyzing the Polish political scene, trying to answer the title question *Why do Polish Liberals Need the Left?* This is a text about the drama of Polish politics doomed to balance between two fundamentalisms: rightist and neo-liberal. Polish liberals are presented in it as proper conformists, who restrict themselves in carrying out social emancipation tasks in the name of social peace and avoidance of conflicts with the Catholic Church. Liberalism devoid of leftist ideas grows exclusive and turns – according to Chmielewski – into an ideology with the same load of (neo-liberal, free-market) populism as the conservatism of the Polish right. The outcome of the clash of the two extremes is, on the one hand, the radicalization of the right, its appetite for being exclusive in the public space, and on the other hand, the marginalization of liberalism and turning it into a tried-and-tested whipping boy in the political debate. The author defends the modern Polish left and urges it to take away their fundamental ideas from the liberals out of concern for the common good.

Jan Kłos, in turn, proposed another look at Polish democracy, previously absent from the conference in question: from the standpoint of ethics. *The Awareness of Injustice and the Sense of Justice* is a study of the fate of the post-totalitarian society, which has not yet squared accounts with its recent past; on the guilt of some and the not yet redressed injustice suffered by other citizens; of public life distorted for that reason and of the need to form social bonds based on the fundamental sense of justice, and on the pitfalls awaiting the seekers of the authors of injustice.

In his article *Defining Democracy Pragmatically and with Poland in the Background* Jan P. Hudzik combines philosophical and political reflection with the description and profile of and comment on the reality of the state and society which emerged as a result of the so-called political-system transformation. From the formal standpoint, regarding eligibility and voting rights, Poland is democratic. What about social rights, however, which are the measure of the efficacy of the whole system? Did we perhaps not mistake democracy for neoliberalism starting from 1989? What are we therefore today? These are the questions the author tries to answer, following his counterfactually constructed, pragmatic definition of democracy.

The last article *Interrupted Reconciliation and the Struggle for Recognition. Germany and Poland in the European Union* is the only paper in this volume, whose theses were not presented at the conference in Lublin. Adam Chmielewski actually wrote it first of all with foreign readers in mind, trying to explain to them the course of and reasons for the dramatic deterioration of Poland's relations with Germany recently. Therefore he shows the significance of the historic factor, which still bears heavily upon these relations. He also highlights their internal determinants – the realities of the Polish political scene, and the external or international ones. When reconstructing the decision-making process on the issues in question, he complements political-science argumentation with clear-cut psychological profiles of the leading Polish politicians.

Chmielewski's analyses and interpretations, however, go far beyond the current events because he shows their fundamental importance to the quality and state of the policies of independent and democratic Poland.

Finally, one more editorial comment. The DVD appended to the present volume contains video and audio files with conference meetings recorded by journalism students of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University's Faculty of Political Science: these are reports of the speakers and discussions. The discs also contain a picture gallery.

Jan P. Hudzik

Faculty of Political Science
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University
Plac Litewski 3, 20-080 Lublin
Poland