

Why the Collapse of Socialism and the Restoration of Capitalism?

Reflections from Poland

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The changes taking place in contemporary Poland are numerous, deep and multi-faceted. The primary ones are the replacement of monocentrism by a pluralism of economic and political forces, total nationalisation by a private form of ownership, directive-distributive steering by market regulation and the autocratic decreeing of what should be done by democratically agreed rules and programs of public life and how these are to be effected. These transformations no longer fit into the framework of the reform of the system established after the Second World War and modelled on the socialist East; they have assumed the character of a qualitatively different system shaped by its similarity to the capitalist West. The significance of these changes goes beyond the fate of Poland and its affairs. My observation during their initial phase, that the crisis of so-called real socialism in Poland and the transformations stemming from it were the earliest and clearest manifestation of processes taking place in all states with similar systems, is now undisputed.¹

Two aspects are however extremely controversial: what are the causes which have been building up for decades of the current rejection of the system, and what is the prognosis for the outcome of the

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1 Cf. M. Gulczynski, *Bariera aspiracji*, Warsaw: MON (1982), pp.35-6.

current transformations? I consider that a historical-philosophical approach, which I call 'historiosophical', can be helpful in answering the above questions. This is the science of the regularities of social processes based on deductions drawn from the similarities of social behaviour in past situations comparable to current ones. It is true that 'historiosophy' has fierce opponents² but it also does not lack supporters who are ready to hazard that a knowledge of past processes 'constitutes an indicator to behaviour in cases where similar factors exist'.³ Subscribing myself to the 'historiosophic' approach I will seek help in it to understand the causes, nature and prognosis for current systemic transformations as compared with the events of the revolutionary periods associated with the birth of feudalism and capitalism.

The causes for the formation of the totalitarian version of the system defined as socialist are various. If one sets aside secondary clashes of opinion the debate boils down to what was primary and decisive: was the system caused by the idea of such a form of organisation of social life or rather by social forces interested in such a direction of social change?

The view that socialist reality was 'an attempt to bring into existence the ideological project' conceived by thinkers isolated from the demands of life, and that this was imposed upon society by a small group of revolutionaries, is currently gaining the widest popularity.⁴ This applies particularly strongly to the belief that this was imposed upon Poland by the Soviet Union in the form of an imported revolution.⁵ The reasons for the popularity of such a belief are rather obvious; its acceptance absolves all social groups from the responsibility for the compromised system which in the long run turned out to be inefficient as well as guilty of limiting freedom and using repression. It confirms the proverbial rule that while success has many fathers defeat usually turns out to be an orphan.

The popularity of any thesis does not however prejudice its academic validity. It is therefore appropriate to examine less fashionable hypotheses as well. One should therefore assume that the answer to the question concerning the causes of all social change should be sought, above all, in the interests of social forces, their desire to either maintain or change the existing order as well as their capacity for imposing their will. The creators of the socialist idea did not over-estimate its in-

2 Cf. K. Popper, *Nedza historycyzmu*, Warsaw: Krag (1989).

3 C. Pereyra *Po co nam historia?*, Warsaw: PIW (1985), p.18.

4 J. Staniszkis, *Ontologia socjalizmu*, Warsaw: in Plus (1989), p.10.

5 A. Schaff, *Polskie requiem dla realnego socjalizmu*, unpublished mimeograph, p.11.

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fluence when they declared unambiguously that 'theory always only materialises in a nation insofar as it constitutes the realisation of its needs'.⁶ The 'idea' always discredited itself when it diverged from 'interests'.⁷ I assert that such an approach permits a better understanding of the causes and sense of what occurred and what is taking place in Poland, and in countries with similar social systems, and that it allows one to forecast the further course of events.

The fundamental historical-philosophical rule of all social change is that its early attempts have a *barbarian* character. I use the notion 'barbarian' not as a pejorative epithet but as a term characterising the attempt to create a new social formation not on the foundations of the achievements and experience of the previous civilisation but on its ruins. This was observed for the first time in history in the form of the break-up of the slave-owning Roman Empire by barbarian peoples, hence the name. Kindred phenomena occurred in the early dawn of the anti-feudal revolution. The socialist revolutions have, till now, had a similar character.

The main reason for the barbarism of these revolutions, and of the systems to which they give birth, is the domination of the most pauperised sections of society, of the *sans-culottes* or Dutch 16th century 'beggars' revolt' type in the anti-feudal revolution, and of the urban and rural plebs in what have hitherto been the socialist revolutions. In other words these are the sections of society which are the most deprived, as well as the most rebellious, furious and ruthless in overthrowing the system which condemned them to poverty and despair. But they are also at the same time the least educated and experienced in organising social life and the most inclined to use coarse and boorish methods in politics as well as economics.

The main force behind the socialist revolution in Poland 45 years ago (as in Russia and other countries where similar transformations took place) was by no means the working class and its most skilled sections. It was rather the plebeian masses of landless, unemployed and semi-illiterate paupers who at that time made up the largest part of Polish society. Their interests and aspirations in social change as well as their skill, or rather the lack of it, in achieving it determined the barbaric character of the revolution and the system created by them. We observe, in all fairness, that the blame for what is bad in barbarian socialism should not be laid solely, or even mainly, at the door of the

6 K. Marx, "Przyczynek do krytyki heglowskiej filozofii prawa" *Dziela*, vol. I, Warsaw: KiW (1960), p.467.

7 F. Engels & K. Marx, "Święta rodzina" in *Dziela*, vol. 2, Warsaw: KiW (1979), p.100.

plebeians; it was the fault of the previous ruling class who were responsible for the inhuman living conditions of the vast mass of the Polish nation and consequently for the early attempts to overcome this. We find this admission among the more enlightened representatives of the previous ruling class and in the following statement: 'all the post-war deformations as well as conscious actions do not rehabilitate the former reality; because after all there, amongst other factors, lies the primary cause'.⁸

I remind the reader of the obvious, though often easily forgotten, factor that Poland was, before the Second World War, a country of peripheral and dependent capitalism, with strong feudal elements and a weak, under-developed industry. From this stemmed the dramatic division in the social structure between a privileged minority of barely a few hundred thousand (landowners, bourgeoisie and the higher levels of the state bureaucracy) and the quantitatively dominant mass of many million strong deprived plebeians (workers and rural poor, suffering from chronic unemployment and the poverty associated with it).⁹ Three clearly contradictory and conflicting tendencies emerged from this situation in Poland after the Second World War.

The first was the *conservative*, whose social base was the pre-war, landed and bourgeois owning classes and the state *apparatus* associated with them. Their program for restoring the pre-war situation was unattractive to the majority of society and almost universally rejected.

The second, *reformist*, tendency wanted to achieve social change through democratic reforms in the direction of a modern capitalism. The insufficient numbers and influence of the middle classes, in particular the ethnic Polish middle class and the farmer-peasants, made the weakness of the reformist tendency inevitable, a weakness evident in the half-hearted character of attempts to achieve such changes in the interwar period.

The third, *revolutionary*, option endorsed the deep social changes supported by the plebeian sections of Polish society. The decisive factor in the victory of the third tendency was the entry of the Red Army and the Yalta Agreement. This was the necessary, though not a sufficient, condition; a significant role in the systemic transformation in Poland was played by the involvement of the pauperised masses who saw an opportunity for social advancement and for influencing the form of change in the revolutionary transformation.

8 T. Lubienski, "Wizyta", *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, No.24, (15 June 1990).

9 Cf. I. Ilnatowicz, A. Maczak, B. Zientara & J. Zarnowski, *Spoleczenstwo polskie od X do XX wieku*, Warsaw: KiW (1988), pp.593 ff.

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The barbarian character of the revolution revealed itself above all in the complete negation of the cultural aspects of civilisational achievements. Civilisation, after all, appeared to the plebeian masses as something foreign, hostile and humiliating. Hence their aspiration was not to accept and develop the existing civilisation or system but to demolish it and to create a new one from scratch on its ruins, proclaimed as a perfect 'System of Social Justice' (similar to the declaration of the 'Kingdom of God' on the ruins of pagan Rome, or the 'Kingdom of Reason', the Jacobin slogan during the French Revolution). This strengthened the tendency towards autarchy and separation from external contracts, especially from the influence of societies associated with the traditions of human civilisation and its development.

The victory of this tendency was by no means the materialisation of the idea of socialist revolution conceived by Marx and Engels. They envisaged a transformation directed towards developing the civilised achievements of capitalism by creating new formations on the foundations of what was functionally permanent in human experience. Poland's peripheral and dependent position in the world capitalist system, similar to Russia's earlier situation and the contemporary one of China, Yugoslavia and just about all the countries (apart from Czechoslovakia and the GDR) attempting socialist transformation, determined the barbarian character of that revolution and consequently gave birth to a less attractive and effective systemic model than that of developed capitalism.

The total rejection of the previous system and an unbridled arrogant belief in the excellence of the newly-created one legitimated violence, just as in barbarian times or the Jacobin Great Terror, as a means of dealing with enemies of the socialist revolution as well as proponents of more civilised aims and courses. The primordial cause was by no means the emergence of leaders with blood-thirsty inclinations of the type of Stalin or Bierut. It was the accumulated hatred of the plebeian masses against everyone and everything that humiliated them economically, politically and intellectually and the tendency to advance not only by one's own efforts but by the liquidation of higher strata and all the forms in which they expressed themselves. One should not regard the Great Terror of Stalinist times as the work of a group of criminals but one should discern in it a dramatic social process similar to the kindred phenomena of the French Revolution and other parallel episodes in human history.

The characteristics of plebeian political illiteracy and incompetence facilitated the shaping of a *subject-autocratic* relationship between rul-

ers and ruled. The plebeian masses did not assume power, because they were in no position to do so. They limited themselves to backing the process of replacing the rulers from 'other' social groups by leaders of 'their own', originating from their own circles. Hence, rather than the replacement of bourgeois-landowner rule by People's Government, what emerged was the rule of the Party *aktyw* [élite] originating from the plebeian masses and governing in the name of the people. I would describe this by the term *aktywocracy* [rule by the Party élite]. The term bureaucracy as the source of power and its abuse in the exercise of office by a qualified caste monopolising its role as functionaries is not a sufficient description. The notion of *nomenklatura* is also somewhat too narrow as this, after all, exists in all modern states in order to guarantee the implementation of the policy of a party or a coalition through the occupation of key posts by its representatives.

The *aktywocracy* is specific in that the source of power is not the exercise of an office, on the contrary, the holding of all main offices in the state and economy is reserved to those belonging to the political or Party *aktyw*. This precisely was the essential, and often the purely sufficient, criterion for filling leading posts irrespective of character or the level of qualifications. From this developed the celebrated 'carousel' of leading posts which involved a Party activist in filling a variety of widely differing roles: director of an industrial enterprise and trade union functionary, dealing with culture and, immediately after that, with health or agriculture. The longevity of rule by the *aktywocracy*, the inadequacy of democratic mechanisms for selecting and replacing leading cadres, led to increasingly inefficient direction of social processes and to the isolation of the directing stratum. The *subject-autocratic* relationship which initially had an attractive and convenient *paternalistic-guardianship* character for the plebeian masses transformed itself into a *despotic-demanding* one.

This was connected with the method of satisfying living necessities peculiar to this type of system whose main feature was that of *total-distribution*. It began with the revolutionary act of satisfying the plebeian masses through redistribution which consisted in taking much from the property owners and in handing it out to those without property. Consolidated through practice, distribution under conditions of chronic shortage became the prime feature of economic and political relations under real socialism. The character of this feature was called the

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'shortage economy' by Janos Kornai.¹⁰ I propose to extend this notion to the political sphere in which there was also a chronic shortage, insofar as there was only as much liberty and security as was allocated to particular individuals and groups. In contrast to Kornai, who sees the source of this shortage only in the inefficiency of the socialist method of running the economy, I consider that the basic reason was also that shortage became the main source of power based on distribution. The gaining of social acceptance by the ruling party in exchange for the latter, and the state which it ran, 'giving' citizens everything from birth clinics, kindergartens, schools, works, housing, health care, holidays, entertainment right up to funeral allowances, was only possible because there was a permanent shortage demanding regulation; a plentiful supply of goods or freedoms would have rendered the process redundant. I consider that the limitation of various economic and political activities in the past stemmed from the initial continuation of distribution as a method of gaining social legitimacy. The process itself served specifically to reproduce shortages, creating the conditions for the existence of the paternalistic power of the distributive *aktywocracy*.

The practice of barbarian forms of socialism confirmed once again the general rule that it is impossible to create a completely new form for the organisation of social life overnight. Humanity enriches itself through the whole historical process with optimal forms for survival and development; no formation is totally, or even mainly, novel. Each constitutes the synthesis of arrangements earlier worked out with innovations introduced by the new system. Hence the barbarian attempts to reject the achievements of previous formations provoked the spontaneous return of already outdated and rejected forms and methods. It was precisely this attempt at the total negation and destruction of everything with a capitalist pedigree which caused the re-introduction under the socialist sign-board of long obsolescent and forgotten forms of feudalism, slavery and the Asiatic mode of production. Such features were monocentrism and autocracy, in their paternalist and despotic variants, the emergence of leading strata through nomination and cooption without verification by democratic elections, the decreeing of the leading role of the Party and its ideology on a pattern similar to that of the ruling Church and religion, the modelling of collectivisation on feudal obligations, the treating of forced confessions as evidence of guilt, and the existence of slave labour camps. The system which took shape was in practice *pre-capitalist*, well below the capitalist experi-

10 J. Kornai, *Niedobor w gospodarce*, Warsaw: PWE (1985).

ence of the organisation of social life, not the *post-capitalism* claimed by the system's theorists.

This method of exercising power and the reproduction of the conditions of social life initially had quite wide social support, as it suited the plebeian level of aspirations and competence. Originally the capacity for participation in public life was just about nil. Aspirations were restricted to a low level such as employment or work on a piece of land which would ensure one's existence, any sort of housing whatsoever and the opportunity to educate oneself. The authorities were harsh, but caring, and guaranteed social security as well as the comfort of a feeling of general equality. And at first these aspirations were satisfied. The peasant hunger for land was satisfied by the parcellation of the large landed estates into lots of about five hectares; this was done in a politically effective way directed to gaining support by the beneficiaries for the new authorities rather than to economical efficiency. It did not create the conditions for commodity production for which large family farms of some tens of hectares were necessary. The unemployed masses in towns and in the countryside gained work and the certainty of employment; however, the work was usually technically primitive, of a labour intensive character, with poor labour productivity. Initially positive factors prevailed but negative ones appeared after some years. The most important gains were security and social welfare, the right to work, holidays, rest and health care; true, these benefits were available on a low level but this was an enormous step forward in general living standards compared to the previous state of affairs. Wide possibilities opened up for plebeian access to culture and education and the gaining of higher and university qualifications. The latter led to high posts in public life often going far beyond the intellectual and moral qualifications of those who were advanced too quickly; but all this was to be revealed only in the future.

This was a *shallow advance*, but a universal one, and it produced a feeling of satisfaction alongside the awareness that 'grandfather died of hunger, father became a qualified worker with his lapel full of medals while he himself [the son] begins his studies'.¹¹

Seen objectively, the social advance made by the masses in the first decades of socialism overcame the previously dominant features of poverty and hopelessness. It gained support for the new system, not only from those who moved up socially including the plebeians, but also from fairly wide intellectual circles who were sensitive to social

11 "Zwykłe sprawy: Rozmowa z J. Lewad i O. Szkaratanem", *Polityka*, No.24, (4 June 1988).

wrongs. One can cite Jacek Kuron for an example of this type of motivation for the 'entry into communism'.

The intellectual primitivism of my friends [in the communist circles — MG] and their lack of elementary knowledge was seen by me as part of the wrongs which they had suffered. I visited them at home, in terrible rooms, the like of which I had previously never known. I saw how they dressed and what they ate and I had the feeling that, at last, justice would be done. And that is why when various gentlemen talked in the family home of the rabble, tarts from the manure, farm-hands and the like, I became very angry. Such gentlemen were seen by me as the models of reaction and confirmed the feeling that right was on the side of people from the social lower depths.¹²

The eminent theorist, Witold Kula, compared what happened at that time with the expansion of vulgar, barbarian peoples under the slogans of Christianity against the Roman civilisation which had constrained them. Although he grieved over the destruction of significant civilising values, he excused this by arguing that 'although many stars dear to us will be dimmed for a certain time, it will be a world in which the vast majority of people will live better'.¹³

Not only the plebeians, but also wide social circles including the old intelligentsia, and even a section of those who had been privileged by the old order and who were then discriminated against, allowed themselves to be captivated by the program for rebuilding Poland after the destruction of war and for the economic development of the western territories of Poland (formerly belonging to Germany); they were moved in particular by the program for overcoming Poland's economic backwardness and dependence upon foreign capital through the great leap forward of modern industrialisation. 'I am concerned by the fact that these matters are today simplified in an unheard of manner down to a single cause regardless of all distinctions'. Thus writes Marian Brandys, a typical representative of the intelligentsia of that time, in order to explain his passing fascination and commitment to socialism. 'The young people of the time who found themselves in the frontline of history... believed in the bright future of the socialist utopia'.¹⁴

The reasons for the crisis of the barbarian form of socialism in Poland, and in other countries with a similar system, are connected with the way in which it had been constituted; this was the growing strength of social groups interested in systemic change who were sufficiently large to compel such transformations.

12 J. Kuron, *Wiara i wina, Do i od komunizmu*, Warsaw: NOWA (1989), p.32.

13 W. Kula, *Rozważania o historii*, Warsaw: Czytelnik (1958), p.29.

14 M. Brandys, "Nikt nie wie wszystkiego", *Wokanda*, (25 March 1990).

The groups *harmed* by barbarian socialism did not have sufficient strength to do this by themselves. In this group were included the previously privileged landowners and the bourgeoisie, and the numerous victims of the Great Terror which in the case of Poles began with Soviet repressions on territory occupied by them after 17 September 1939, especially against the local intelligentsia there. After 1944 these repressions were directed not only against opponents of socialism but also against supporters of the more civilised social-democratic forms of the system and those who wanted socialism implemented by more humanitarian methods. It is a bitter truth, confirmed repeatedly by the historical-philosophical approach, that few people are concerned by anti-humanitarian methods, apart from its victims, as long as the majority of a given society find it beneficial.

The revolts of those *disillusioned* with barbarian socialism, in other words, those intellectuals and the intelligentsia who moved away from accepting these forms in the mid-1950s, also proved ineffective — hence the barely partial success of the attempts during the Polish ‘October’ of 1956 and March 1968 to civilise and democratise Polish socialism. The suffocation of these attempts in Poland took place without Soviet intervention; all that was required was the workers’ permission, and even support, for the authorities’ pacification measures. Let us note that the situation in societies which are still under plebeian domination, such as Romania, Bulgaria or China, continues to be close to that in Poland in 1956 and 1968: the masses support changes in the communist élites in favour of those promising a better socialism but refuse to support the intelligentsia struggling for deeper and, strictly speaking, democratic changes in the system.

The main reason for the defeat of barbarian socialism stemmed, paradoxically, from its success in transforming plebeians into a skilled working class. As the masses outgrew the basic plebeian level so did their aspirations for a better life and for standards similar to those of more advanced systems; they demanded moreover an open development towards the civilised gains of humanity, in the production process as well as in consumption. Aspirations towards full political citizenship in which the *autocratic-serf* relationship would be replaced by a *democratic-partner* one also took shape. This new shape and level of aspirations collided with the limited possibilities for their implementation under systemic conditions based on autocratic aktywocracy and

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the distribution of shortage.¹⁵ Hence the earlier satisfaction with the rapid rate of social advance, and the support stemming from it for the authorities and the system, gave way to *disappointment* and opposition. And as the autocratic system did not create democratic mechanisms for producing change, working class discontent repeatedly led to spontaneous mass revolts, beginning with Poznan in June 1956, then in December 1970, in June 1976 right up to August 1980. It turned out that 'the workers only differed from the whole of the rest [of the opposition — MG] in that under real socialism only they were able to stand up to the party-state authorities effectively'.¹⁶

The aims of these working-class revolts were originally very limited; they were directed not at changing the system but at improving it by a measure which was close to vulgarity in its simplicity, the replacement of the group directing the party and state. Not the system was blamed but the deformations caused by the mistakes of leaders. Hence it was considered sufficient to replace the post-Bierut leadership by Gomulka's, and when that also failed to meet expectations, by Gierek's.

A qualitative change in the aims and methods for demanding change took place after June 1976, when a sort of three-sided opposition alliance took shape: the working masses *disappointed* with barbarian socialism (as well as the peasants) united with the intellectuals who were *disillusioned* with it and the victims *harmed* by this type of social change and the repressions of the time of terror. This alliance found its organised forms, at first, in the Committee for the Defence of the Workers (KOR), then Solidarity, a spectacular sign of the strength of the strikes, and Agreements of August 1980. The attempts to save the previous system by the delegalisation of Solidarity and the repression of the opposition organised by it during 1982-1988 turned out to be futile. They proved fruitless primarily because it appeared that the system was incapable of reform. Attempts to introduce economic and political reforms did not bear sufficient functional fruit and did not meet the new aspirational levels of the majority of society. The consciousness of the enlightened patriotic forces, in the ruling camp as much as in the opposition, that this process was leading to the dissolution not only of socialism but also of Poland, became the basis for the civilised resolution of conflict situations. This found expression in the Round Table Agreements, the 1989 elections based on principles of contractual democracy and the change of government which opened up the possibility of systemic transformation.

15 Cf. Polacy 88, *Dynamika konfliktu a szanse reform*, Warsaw (1989), pp.5 ff.

16 Kuron, *op. cit.*, p.202.

The direction of these changes appears obvious if one notes the declarations and actions of the main ruling forces. The aim is to create a capitalist system based on the model of the most advanced democratic societies which includes the universally accepted slogan of 'Return to Europe'. If social desires and the proclamations of the rulers were a sufficient condition for achieving such systemic transformations, the initial definitions would suffice as one could assume that what was desired would take place. However, declaring oneself for capitalism requires not only the desire for institutional and legal changes but also, which is more decisive, the support of sufficiently strong social forces determined to carry them out. The experience of barbarian socialism is a dramatic warning that the under-development of social forces can warp the finest systemic principles. Because of this, even the most passionate advocates of such a direction of systemic change, like Jadwiga Staniszkis, express 'doubts and anxieties as to the possibility and the method of the passing from real socialism to capitalist economy'.¹⁷

A basic weakness in the balance of forces auguring the return of capitalism is a lack of capitalists, people with capital and skills for organising the economic processes according to capitalist principles. The slogan 'Return to Europe' is exaggerated because Poland never belonged to the economically developed and fully democratic modern states of Europe. The pre-war bourgeoisie was extremely small, under one percent of the population and over half of it was ethnically foreign, Jewish or German.¹⁸ In addition it was largely eliminated by the German occupation and the postwar social changes. Tadeusz Syryjczyk, Minister of Industry in the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, declared that 'we have the same problem as Napoleon. The revolution in France slaughtered the aristocrats but, when it turned out that the state could not function without them, Napoleon began to appoint new ones. In Poland we have to appoint capitalists'.¹⁹ Nevertheless appointment as a capitalist does not mean that the individual automatically develops the essential skills and habits, and what is most important, the qualities and the behavioural principles required to prevent the market from becoming a wild, destructive jungle. Another not less important barrier is the lack of capital, essential for the rapid modernisation and development of the Polish economy, so that it becomes a permanent partner of the higher developed European economies. On top of this, we have to take a 40 billion dollar foreign trade debt into account as well as the real

17 J. Staniszkis, "Dylematy okresu przejściowego: przypadek Polski", *Tygodnik Solidarnosc*, No.22, (1 June 1990).

18 Cf. Ilnatowicz *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp.629-30.

19 "Nie dyskutujcie — prywatyzujcie", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, (21 June 1990).

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danger that we will become peripheral and dependent, exploited by superior economies.

The greatest chance of overcoming these insufficiencies is for Poland to be treated by the Western Powers as a bridge-head for beaming the effectiveness of democratic and market transformations at the societies of Eastern Europe, especially at the [former] Soviet Union. It is equally important that this experiment should be financed not with an eye to short-term economic gain but from the point of view of the strategic benefit of such a development for the security and progress of humanity. Only such an investment can stimulate and develop the miniscule — although greater than in most other East European countries — resources for training a class of bourgeois entrepreneurs and, even more important, for creating a modern market and enterprises. There are not many signs so far that the West is inclined to implement such a scenario.

And only a rapid advance by Poland towards civilisation, in terms of modernising production and improving consumption, can augur the gaining of support for such a direction of change not only from the re-born bourgeoisie but also the working class. In the event of the road towards such progress becoming unduly long, and the social costs of re-establishing capitalism in its worse version becoming more real, the workers disappointed by barbarian socialism will likewise reject *barbarian capitalism*. This process has already begun to the extent that the awareness has spread that the Government programs up till now are only attractive for those who have capital to live off; for manual workers the process ensures a drastic fall in living standards, the loss of social security and many years of sacrifice. Nothing is promised to the majority in exchange while only a small number may hope to enter the lower sectors of the middle class after many years of effort. Such realities, and an increasing awareness of them, are the basis for the break-up of the old opposition alliance. The reader is reminded that this was composed of those harmed (old privileged class and the persecuted), disappointed (workers) or disillusioned (intellectuals) by socialism. The break-up is taking place all the more quickly as the key centres of power have been assumed, in Parliament and in the Government, by individuals with higher education and appropriate qualifications who belonged to the harmed and disillusioned categories while the disappointed workers have been left with the role of merely supporting the measures of the new Solidarity Government. This was the basis of the conflict which took shape within the Solidarity camp in Spring 1990. This conflict could be overcome by rapid success in transformation or, in other words, an economic miracle.

The alternatives for moving out of this situation which has, again, become dramatic are of twofold:

The first, and the most threatening, is the appearance of *authoritarianism* (e.g. of the Peronist type) and populism. The latter would be designed to relieve the frustration and resentment stemming from the lack of popular participation in politics through a populist style Presidency.²⁰ This would be a repetition of

the disastrous cycle which is well known to us from history. After the victorious revolution the first moderate governing team is usually accused by the 'second revolutionary outfit' of betraying its interests. The declaration of the *Centrum* Coordination Group [formed in Summer 1990 by Walesa's supporters] states that 'the opportunities created by many years of social struggle are being wasted'. Walesa himself speaks of 'the victory being squandered'. The 'Second Outfit' often overthrows the first team counting on the arousal of social activity. We know however from history that this second revolutionary burst is met by deepening apathy. The second team not only fails to control the situation but it worsens the chaos by applying simple recipes. The 'accelerators', once in government, even if they are aware of the whole complicated character of the economic situation, would be driven by the logic of their decisive corrective steps, radical measures and effective decrees. The accelerators of revolution very often finish by resorting to authoritarian forms of rule or to openly violent measures by the second team, or the one following it.²¹

Signs of such tendencies are becoming ever clearer. The reasons for such a course lie not only in the inclinations of Lech Walesa and his current advisers, but more importantly, they are confirmed by studies showing the pro-authoritarian predilections of the majority of Polish workers and peasants.²² These groups continue to have the greatest capacity for exerting pressure on the shaping of social change.

The second way out is to assume that the aspirations of the masses can be satisfied by the shaping of a democratic system which identifies the market economy with the demands of socialist social justice. This would now seem to be utopian. I consider it, however, to be no less likely than the vision of transforming all the socialist countries, and even more so all the societies of the world, into superbly prospering, highly developed capitalism.

The historical-philosophical approach tells us that humanity has never given up social gains which have once been achieved. Hence after attempts to restore the previous system, which are a natural reaction

20 J. Staniszkis, *op. cit.*

21 P. Pacewicz, "Przyspieszyc czy przeycz", *Gazeta Swiateczna*, (30 June 1990).

22 Cf. J. Koralewicz, "Autorytaryzm robotnikow i inteligencji", *Spoleczenstwo przed kryzysem*, Warsaw: PWN (1987), pp.80 ff.

to the exhaustion of the attraction of the barbarian forms of the new one, progress has been achieved, but in a civilised form capable of bringing together all that was functional in the civilised heritage of the past with the innovations which are socially beneficial. The clearest example of this is the fate of the French Revolution. It moved on from initial barbarism and the Great Terror, through attempts to restore feudalism after 1815, right through to the victorious shaping of a capitalist democracy. Such parallels lead us to forecast the shaping of a *civilised socialism*, built not on the ruins, but on the foundations of capitalist experience and achievements. What also needs to be shaped is the evolutionary method of modernisation principles and methods of social life to replace administrative methods.

Here I disagree with Francis Fukuyama who considers that the crisis of barbarian socialism is proof that capitalism is the best of all possible systems. Furthermore, he proclaims the end of history.²³ I agree however with the argument that what does not end, at least, is the need, or the possibility, to improve the organisational forms of social life. And the historical-philosophical rule is that such a need is generally greatest in societies where the system is least adequate. In Poland such a need may turn out to be all the stronger as the consequences of restoring capitalism become less beneficial to society. Consequently, although what is to be rejected from the old systemic forms is now unquestioned, it still remains debatable what system ought to or should be built.

The aim, declares Adam Michnik, is liberation from Stalinism and the building of a system which meets the requirements of life. One often hears the opinion that this should be a capitalist system. I find this an absurd idea. One cannot build a system on this social base which is the product of an absolutely different social reality...at the moment there is no such wonderful model which can simply be brought to life.²⁴

This corresponds with J.K. Galbraith's opinion who writes in his article 'What sort of capitalism for Eastern Europe?' that what is needed after the crisis of socialism

is an adaptation [of new requirements for development towards civilisation — MG] and not a dramatic plunge into primitive capitalism. This is a road which nobody has so far entered on. This is a road which one will not be able to travel over if one keeps to rigid

23 F. Fukuyama, "Czy koniec historii?", *Polityka*, (17 February 1990); see also F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Hamish Hamilton, (1991/2(?)).

24 A. Michnik, "Zyjemy w nowej epoce", *Zmiany*, (8 October 1989).

principles. What is necessary, unfortunately, is a painful intellectual process. This was opposed in all economic epochs like the present one. There is no alternative.²⁵

The future shape of Poland, and of the other states undergoing similar transformations, is after all a question which still cannot be answered with certainty. One can only predict the chances and the threats to these transformations on the basis of the balance of social forces and historical-philosophical parallels. And thanks to this knowledge one can engage more effectively in the activities which increase the chances and diminish the threats to the course of events, according to one's own and social group interests.

²⁵ *Harper's Magazine*, 4 April 1990.