

**Dilemmas of the Great Transition:
A Tentative Catalogue**

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Abstract

The author examines current literature on the post-Communist transition and attempts to put dispersed observations, insights, and hypotheses into a coherent, systematic framework rooted in the “theory of social becoming” (see his *Society in Action: The Theory of Social Becoming*, Polity Press and Chicago University Press, 1991). In terms of that theory, the crucial goal is to identify the barriers preventing the mobilization of human potential for transition to a market, democracy and pluralistic civil society. Three types of barriers are distinguished: some deriving from the intermediate nature of the current situation (“the dilemmas of transformation”), some rooted in the historical tradition of specific societies, but particularly the common experience of “real socialism” (“the burden of history”), and some produced by fresh memories of revolutionary excitement and hopes of 1989 (the “postrevolutionary syndrome”). In each group, the set of eight dilemmas is identified and carefully defined—altogether twenty-two dilemmas of transition. It is argued that the fundamental paradox of the present situation, the twenty-third meta-dilemma, is the necessity to apply state power (from above) in the active policy of eliminating all those highly resistant barriers to the free operation of human agency (from below). There is no other way but to reach democracy by slightly undemocratic means, to “coerce people into freedom,” to attain liberalism by illiberal measures. This will not degenerate into new forms of autocracy if state intervention is limited only to “deconstructive” goals (destroying barriers) and not to the “constructive” task of building another social utopia.

The countries of Eastern and Central Europe are undergoing huge historical transformation. It will doubtlessly enter the textbooks of history alongside other Great Revolutions. For the sociologist living in the midst of changes somewhere at their midpoint, it provides the unique opportunity of seeing a society in the making. Such occasions have always provided the strongest spur to sociological theorizing. After all, most of classical sociology was born of similar experience in Great Transition, the passing of traditional society. Perhaps the end of the twentieth century will witness a true revival of social theory on a scale comparable to the achievements of 19th century masters.

To prepare the ground for that, it is necessary from time to time to detach from the chaotic historical scene, to take stock of rushing events, to freeze the ongoing processes and make a try at some measure of generalization and systematization. This is what I purport to do in the present article. Needless to add, all claims are highly tentative, based on a variety of sources including my own observations, insights of professional colleagues and some hard data, mostly of survey type, provided by empirical researchers. My immediate documentation and illustrations refer to Poland, but their import may be more general, touching other countries undergoing post-communist transformation.

Replaying history, or not?

The obvious first question has to do with the essence of the process; what is in fact happening? One is reminded of the famous joke: "What is real socialism"? "The longest and most twisted road from capitalism to ... capitalism!" Indeed, it seems that in post-communist societies we are building capitalist system from scratch, repeating the experience that Western countries were going through centuries ago. But one should not be misled by superficial similarities. The second birth of capitalism is fundamentally distinct from the

first. The uniqueness of historical situation comes down to at least eight circumstances.

First, the period of "real socialism" has left a significant legacy. Part of it—most often noticed—is a burden of liabilities; in social consciousness, economic infrastructure, ecology, administrative system, demographic composition and many other areas. As E. Mokrzycki observes: "Recent empirical data indicate that decades of 'real socialism' have changed these societies much more than the reformers assumed. On the micro level there is the syndrome of *homo sovieticus*. On the macro level there are symptoms of deep structural changes related to shifts in group interests" (Mokrzycki 1991: 1). But "real socialism" has also left some assets; it raised the springboard from which we jump toward capitalism. After all, the society is already industrialized and urbanized, with class structure of an industrial type, a relatively skilled labor force, developed (or even overgrown) bureaucratic organization, relatively advanced technologies (including efficient instruments of power, control, oppression and warfare). Anyway it is certainly not the traditional, rural or "feudal" society in which Western capitalism found its birth.

Second, a considerable part of the push for change is due to the rejection of the old system, rather than active seeking of a new one (Mokrzycki 1990: 2). The peoples of Eastern and Central Europe are "escaping from" rather than "running after." A large measure of popular enthusiasm and mobilization results from this "flight from Asia." Most people simply want to get away and only a small minority has a clear vision of what the positive—capitalist, liberal—alternative really means. For large masses it is rather a vague catchword, heavily loaded with evaluations; a synonym for the good life—prosperity, affluence, consumption, sometimes also freedom. "To view their rejection of communist

tyranny as a unmitigated taste for raw capitalism is to misunderstand their social orientation" (Etzioni 1991: 18).

Third, as a consequence, the goals of transition, the standards of dreaming and striving, are conceived by common people in quite concrete, tangible ways. One observes a marked de-ideologization and pragmatic bias in social consciousness. There is no revolutionary theory outlining the means and path of transition, and there are no utopian visions of the perfect society to be achieved. The "distinctly a-theoretical character of the upheaval" (Offe 1991a: 3) is noted by several observers. Instead of a revolutionary theory, we find purely instrumental, pragmatic justifications of such "well-tested" solutions as the free market, parliamentary democracy, and political pluralism, etc. They are not seen as realizing some fundamental human values—freedom, justice, equality—but rather as practical arrangements providing comfort, an easy life, abundant consumption, etc.

Fourth, post-communist societies are starting toward capitalism at the moment when in other parts of the world capitalism is already highly developed. The patterns to imitate are not abstract but localized; in London, Munich, Paris, New York, Milan. In orienting our changes toward present-day capitalism in its most successful incarnations it is easy to fall into the trap of anachronism and fetishization; most people seem to forget about the long historical path of Western capitalism, of all costs incurred on the road, of the heavy price paid for present prosperity, and also of the "other face" of contemporary capitalism, with enclaves of poverty, unemployment, cultural decay, spiritual emptiness. We hope to jump into prosperity immediately and entirely—at no cost.

Fifth, we are living in the environment of a highly globalized society. The scale of a single nation-state is increasingly losing importance. World-wide

interdependence—economic, political, cultural—is growing. Our transition is merely a fragment of the wider processes, and as such it heavily influences, and is strongly influenced by, developments in other parts of the world. On the one hand, our success so far is strongly indebted to the developments in the East: the policies of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika,' as well as the dismantling of the Soviet external empire under the leadership of M. Gorbachev (Staniszki 1990: 30). As S. Tarrow points out: "The rebellions in the East were set off by a radically new international opportunity structure" (Tarrow 1990: 17). Now, as the initial victory has been won, further success depends to a large extent on the attitude of the developed West. Much hinges on the proportion of support or reluctance. It is an illusion that our entrance into the capitalist system will automatically follow our bid to join, that we shall be embraced by the West willingly, unconditionally and immediately. On the contrary, there is a likelihood of *selective acceptance* with the distinct danger of becoming a dependent periphery. But there is also the possibility of gradual association and full incorporation (along the lines of East Germany). On the other hand, our indigenous processes have had repercussions in other countries of the Soviet bloc, as well as significant impact on the world capitalist system—most often beneficial—opening huge markets for Western surplus, releasing military tensions and resulting in the decline of the left (Lipset 1991), including the world-wide demise of communist parties and movements.

Sixth, our transition signifies a sudden, radical break with the past. Real socialism was not providing conditions for the slow gestation of capitalist institutions, ways of life, values, habits. On the contrary, it efficiently destroyed the market, personal property, entrepreneurial ethos. Instead of a long evolutionary process, moving through a set of consecutive stages and slowly preparing background conditions for the take-off to capitalism—as was typical in

the West—Eastern European societies have to reach it in one jump and build it from scratch.

Seventh, the comprehensiveness, the multi-dimensionality of the effort, is historically unprecedented. The transition embraces the economic, political, ethnic, and social spheres simultaneously. The issues of economic efficiency, political freedom, national sovereignty, civil society have to be faced at the same time. It was usually not the case with earlier revolutions, when various tasks were reached in a sequence; nation building, capitalist accumulation, political democratization were *consecutive* rather than *concomitant*. Even the more recent transitions to democracy (e.g., in Spain, Portugal, Argentina, the Philippines) were limited mostly to the political dimension, as economic market or national independence had been attained long before.

Eight, the transition was initiated by the revolution from below (clearly the case which sociologists classify as "volcanic"). The wave of mobilization, activism, and participation, the outbreak of popular enthusiasm, aspirations and hopes, even though only temporary, leave their own lasting imprint on attitudes, mentalities, aspirations of all those who have lived through the extraordinary times. We are now in a peculiar post-revolutionary climate, with both positive and negative implications for the future transition.

Smooth walk or steeplechase?

Two years after the eventful autumn of 1989, in many post-communist societies one observes the mood of disenchantment and frustration. Perhaps it is most pronounced in those countries—like Poland or Czechoslovakia—where hopes, aspirations and popular enthusiasm reached the highest levels. The transition seems not to work as smoothly as expected; it proves to be much more difficult and problematic. "Thus far, neither capitalism, enlightenment, or

democracy has proved as pristine or as accessible as everyone wished" (Alexander 1990: 4). Time and again resistance is encountered; various barriers, blockades, "frictions" (Etzioni 1991) appear on the course of change. The reasons to complain are myriad.

First, old ways are still preserved. The transition is not as radical as expected, it does not produce a complete break with the past. On the contrary, we constantly encounter institutions, norms, values, mental habits of "real socialism." Inefficiency at work, bureaucratic red tape, networks of nepotism and favoritism, preservation of privileges by the old "nomenklatura" are only some illustrations. Sometimes, paradoxically, even the new institutions still look like a mirror image of the old. In the media there is talk of a "new nomenklatura"; specialized departments resembling the old sections of the Central Committee appear in President Walesa's office; "decommunization" sometimes calls to mind the harassment of earlier anti-communist opposition.

Second, the pace of change is slow. The transition is not as rapid as expected, the emergence of a new society is lingering. For most people, the standard of life does not improve, democratic participation is hesitant, entrepreneurship does not flourish (at least in more developed, productive forms, as opposed to short-term speculative ventures).

Third, there are unexpected setbacks. What seemed already achieved is suddenly lost again. The communists who were believed to be definitely out of power gained considerable electoral victory in Poland in 1991; the exemplary level of popular mobilization (in the golden days of "Solidarity") drops as sixty percent of the population does not even bother to cast their ballots; inflation, which seemed effectively curbed, accelerates again.

Fourth, there is a considerable number of unintended side-effects of transition. Sometimes they seem to outweigh the benefits and may even produce

cravings for the past (the calls "Comrades, come back!" may already occasionally be found on the walls). Examples are abundant: the emergence of unemployment, lowered pensions, limitation of free health services, rising crime rates including huge organized crime, commercialization and degradation of culture, skyrocketing prices. In a nationwide poll, 80% of the population reported a lowered standard of living ("Gazeta Wyborcza," Nov. 22, 1991).

Fifth, there are also boomerang effects, ironic twists of history producing effects contrary to those intended. The effort to speed up political pluralization and democratization, breaks down the nation-wide unity and consensus symbolized by "Solidarity," producing polarization, factional struggles and futile efforts at forming a lasting government. Coupled with growing popular discontent and the emergence of populist appeals phrased by some political elites, it raises the specter of non-democratic, dictatorial developments. The effort to utilize the undisputed charisma of a revolutionary leader in the everyday routines of government leads to the breakdown of charisma and loss of support, as the emperor is repeatedly shown to be naked.

All these experiences indicate that the process of transition encounters resistance—in A. Etzioni's term—"friction." "The extent of friction, the ease and the speed with which socio-economic changes can be introduced are pivotal to the evaluation of the policies pursued and urged on various post-communist countries since 1989" (Etzioni 1991: 4). Understanding the nature of "friction" becomes a central task for social scientists.

Multiple and varied barriers

One finally has to pose the question: why? What are the reasons for all those disappointments and drawbacks? Could they be blamed exclusively on personal factors—incompetence, ignorance, arrogance, self-aggrandizement, private

ambitions of the new ruling elites; coupled by negligence, passivity, apathy of the common people? Or, apart from inevitable personal frailties, some deeper, structural blockages are at stake, residing in the objective situation in which we have inevitably found ourselves after the anti-communist upheaval?

There are three kinds of structural barriers to transition, differing in their origins and location. Some are inherent in the logic of transitory situation; the intermediate point between one complex social system slowly fading away, and another, basically different social system not yet established. These are **THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSFORMATION**. Some other barriers derive from particular historical circumstances, and in our case especially from the prolonged exposure to the system of real socialism, imposed from the outside. These are **THE BURDEN OF HISTORY** (Jedlicki 1990: 39). Finally, there are some that remain vestiges of the revolutionary experience of the eighties. These may be referred to as **THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY MALAISE**.

In each category, the barriers may take various form. Some are most dangerous, because in principle they cannot be resolved in any fully satisfactory manner. They are **ANTINOMIES**, i.e., mutually contradictory aspects of the situation; when one barrier is successfully eliminated or limited, another one is strengthened or produced. Other barriers take the form of **ASYNCHRONIES**. This means the impossibility of carrying out certain processes or reaching certain goals at the same time. They must be sequentially arranged, and some have to be suspended in order for others to succeed. The third type stems from **INERTIA**, the general tendency to maintain old accustomed ways and patterns and to avoid novelty. Finally, the last type involves **SHORTAGES**, the lack of certain resources necessary for successful transformation. I will apply the foregoing typology in the discussion of multiple barriers encountered on the path to market, democracy and civil society.

The challenges of transformation

(1). THE DILEMMA OF IMPROVISATION. The transition is a process without historical precedents. Therefore it must proceed by trial and error, requiring some degree of flexibility. But at the same time its experimental, tentative and flexible character produces attitudes and behavior detrimental to the ultimate goal. The more people listen to the defensive rhetorics of politicians invoking the novelty of the task, the lack of requisite knowledge, the experimental nature of reform, the more they are apt to apply defensive strategies: "grab and run," "wait and see," "consume and not save," "plan till tomorrow." "The very notion of 'experimenting with reform' borders on incoherence, since the agents' knowledge that they are taking part in an experiment induces them to adopt a short time horizon that makes it less likely that the experiment will succeed" (Elster 1989: 176). There is widespread reluctance to commit oneself to long-range projects, uncertainty of the terms of trade, hesitation to invest, search for quick profits, political opportunism. All this is clearly not conducive to the appearance of either a market economy or democratic polity, both of which demand certainty, long-range perspectives, and stability of rules. "The efficacy and benefits of a reform depend strongly on people's belief that it will last long enough to make long-term investment worth while" (Elster 1989: 193). TENTATIVENESS of the situation is at odds with the demand for PERMANENCE.

(2). THE DILEMMA OF DEVISING THE RULES WHILE PLAYING. The transition entails building the foundations of economic and political order, which should last for decades, if not centuries. But the order is constructed from above by political elites that are not yet clearly constituted nor socially legitimized themselves, yet are already committed to political game (Staniszkis

1991: 34). Therefore the political and economic arrangements have no strong guarantee of endurance, as they are dependent on changing political coalitions. Also, at this stage, there is a strong temptation to shape a constitution in the way that would favor particular group interests and help the crystallization and legitimation of some momentarily stronger political parties. "This unavoidable circularity is particularly patent, when, as in Poland, Bulgaria, Roumania, and Czechoslovakia, the newly elected parliaments also function as constituent assemblies. This indeed means nothing other than that the players determine the rules according to which the future game will be played, and with which it will be decided who will be a fellow player. Actors are judges in their own case." (Offe 1991a: 25). OPPORTUNISM contradicts the requirement of PERSISTENCE.

(3) THE DILEMMA OF SELF-LIMITATION. The shaping of the market and a democracy in the virtual vacuum inherited from "real socialism" requires strong interventions from above; and the role of the state is enhanced. Some authors speak of 'political capitalism' (Staniszkis 1991b), others of 'capitalism by design' (Offe 1991a). But once achieved, both the market and democracy require only a minimum of state regulation. Victory preempts the resort to earlier methods of rule, but will the powerful be strong enough to abandon their power, to render themselves powerless, to abandon direct coercion? "The problem is whether the bureaucracy is able and willing to make itself unable to interfere, since the temptation to do so will always be there" (Elster 1989: 197). There appears a contradiction between temptations toward AUTHORITARIANISM evoked by the situation of transition and necessary LIBERALIZATION of economic and political life, once the transition is completed.

(4) THE DILEMMA OF MEANS CONTRADICTING ENDS. The full benefits of the market and democracy may be enjoyed only when both are firmly established. Yet the processes of establishing them—marketization

(privatization), democratization—are usually difficult and painful; they may produce economic imbalance, deterioration of life standards, political destabilization, a general feeling of chaos or anomie. As R. Dahrendorf puts it, such processes lead through a "valley of tears" (Dahrendorf 1990: 36). As a result, the whole image of the market and democracy may be tainted, and their attractiveness for the masses—may vanish. To put it short, the price of ATTAINING may overshadow the value of the ATTAINMENT.

(5) THE DILEMMA OF THREE CLOCKS. Successful transformations at various levels of post-revolutionary society require various spans of time. The deeper we move, the longer the requisite time. At the top, there are the reforms of laws and political institutions, culminating in the enactment of the new constitution. The "hour of the lawyer"—as Dahrendorf calls it—may be over in six months. Then, at a little deeper level, there are the reforms of the economic system. They take much longer. Dahrendorf estimates that "the hour of the economist" may last at least 6 years. And finally, at the deepest and most important level, there is the rebuilding of cultural codes, discourses underlying social life. This is the reconstitution of the civil society. Such a task takes longest and meets strongest, even if unwitting, resistance. "The hour of the citizen" may take sixty years. (Dahrendorf 1990). The main challenge is not so much that we shall have to wait so long, but rather that often we shall encounter mutually unsynchronized changes, with politics running ahead at quickest speed, the economy following much slower, and civil society lagging decades and generations behind. Only at the distant but hopefully attainable moment when all three levels coincide, will the revolution be completed. A similar idea, but differently conceptualized, is put forward by C. Offe: there is the natural historical sequence of change which begins with establishing the national identity of a population, moves through installing the constitution, up to routine, everyday

politics of allocation ("who gets what, when and how"). This evolutionary sequence, which took ages and generations for most societies, cannot be replicated in the case of present post-communist transitions. The reconstitution of national identities, introducing constitutional reforms and carrying allocative business—"the triple transition" (Offe 1991a)—must proceed simultaneously. The crux of the dilemma therefore comes down to different rhythms, or speeds of change in POLITICAL, ECONOMIC and SOCIAL domains.

(6) THE DILEMMA OF SUSPENDED CONSENT. In the specific conditions of post-communist societies the processes of democratization and marketization are not necessarily mutually supportive. Rather, a sort of vicious circle develops in which increased political democratization may block economic reforms, and the emphasis on marketization may require suspension of democratic freedoms. The restructuring of economy brings hardships and deprivations for considerable segments of the population. For some time, the fruits of reform are reaped by a minority only (new entrepreneurial elites, rising "political class"). If democratization proceeds quickly, the deprived or at least not immediately benefiting majority obtains the opportunity to hinder or even block ongoing reforms before they are able to prove their viability. As C. Offe observes: "Democratic politics may block or distort the road to privatization and hence marketization" (Offe 1991a: 30). For the benefit of economic transformation, it may be necessary to curb democracy. "Accumulated disappointments and frustrations (...) may give rise to demands for a type of 'democracy' that is based on institutional structure other than civil liberties and representative government, e.g., populist presidential dictatorship" (Offe 1991a: 31). Thus, there is a contradiction between the VETO POWER of the majority and temporarily LIMITED BENEFITS only for the minority.

(7) **THE DILEMMA OF LIMITED PERSONAL RESOURCES.** Economic activities, as well as political activities are—to use L. Coser's term—"greedy" or voracious (Coser 1974). They demand a considerable amount of personal resources: energy, undivided commitment, time. The more people are involved in exploring newly opened economic opportunities or defending their accustomed life standards against the deprivations caused by economic reforms, the less concerned they are with political participation. "For many people economic participation will reduce rather than enhance their participation in political affairs. (...) There are only so many evenings to go around" (Elster 1989: 187). Thus if marketization and privatization proceed at a rapid pace, political demobilization, indifference, and apathy will inevitably follow—both on the part of those benefited and those deprived. This may partly explain the secret of strikingly low electoral turnover (42%) at recent parliamentary elections in Poland. On the other hand if people are overly concerned with politics, highly mobilized and active—their entrepreneurial, managerial and other economic tasks must be sacrificed, to the detriment of economic progress. Thus **MUNDANE CONCERNS** may get in the way of lofty **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**; just another example of the tension between economic and political liberalization.

(8) **THE FREE-RIDER DILEMMA.** Under this label I am putting the regularity of mass behavior, widely studied particularly by the researchers on social movements (Olson 1965, Jasay 1989), which seems to fit our case quite well. The goals of transition are clearly "public," and not "private." If successful, the transition will bring benefits to everybody; the market will open economic opportunities, democracy will enhance freedom and participation for all. Hence there are good reasons to "wait and see" how others will fight for these goals, to abstain from personal commitment, and to reach rewards without risk and costs.

Individually rational, when aggregated, this attitude is disastrous. Neither marketization nor democratization will succeed without the immediate involvement of the masses; economic entrepreneurship, innovativeness, initiative, as well as political participation, grass-roots mobilization, and widespread concern with public issues. Thus, there is a contradiction between PUBLIC GOALS and PRIVATE SACRIFICES.

The burden of history

We are moving now to the set of dilemmas that are not inevitable in the situation of transition but rather derive from particular historical experience, unique to the countries of East and Central Europe. This experience comes down to several decades of exposure to the imposed system of "real socialism."

(9) THE DILEMMA OF THE PUDDING NOT PROVEN IN THE EATING.

Without fully established capitalist and democratic traditions, the market and democracy are treated as instrumental devices for reaching prosperity, acceptable only conditionally as long as they provide such benefits. In other words, they are not considered as *autotelic* values, acceptable unconditionally. When benefits do not come, or at least do not come immediately—no intrinsic rationale for the market and democracy can be invoked. To borrow terminology from C. Offe, "output democracy," as opposed to "process democracy" (Offe 1991b: 2-4). must be immediately justified by tangible outcomes. Pragmatic bias and de-ideologization of the issues have their dangers; they imply that the market and democracy become fair-weather, rather than all-weather, institutions, and their fate is precarious. Exclusively PRAGMATIC LEGITIMACY is dysfunctional in the case of inevitably DELAYED EFFECTS.

(10) THE DILEMMA OF THE SOCIAL VACUUM. As the research of S. Nowak has shown (Nowak 1987: 31) real socialism destroys the fabric of

spontaneous, immediate, interpersonal ties—associations, groups, corporate bodies—extending between the micro-level of the family and macro-level of the state, producing a "social vacuum." To use different terminology, one may speak of the destruction of "civil society." "It is exactly the absence of strong collective actors (...) that is one of the most conspicuous characteristics of the post-communist societies" (Offe 1991b: 10). The anti-communist revolutions were aimed—among other things—at the restoration of civil society. They were "creating the 'people' in the very process of making the revolution in their name" (Alexander 1990: 2). The processes of privatization and democratization continue the task. They bring about slow restoration of this area. The "sociological vacuum" is slowly filled out, the "civil society" reappears. But, at the same time, for the market and democracy to operate, some developed, differentiated network of groups, associations, diversified interests, pluralistic loyalties—is a prerequisite. As long as it does not appear, democratic and market mechanisms are not fully operative. "Competitive democracy lacks, due to this atomized social structure of repressed difference, sufficiently formed protagonists, collective actors, and issues considered worth processing through the machinery of democratic politics. Or, alternatively, the lack of developed complexity in civil society leads to the dominance of themes which, albeit suited to conflict, are not also suited to compromise" (Offe 1991a: 16). WEAK CIVIL SOCIETY stands in the way of the MECHANISMS OF DEMOCRACY, but civil society cannot be strengthened without the prior practice of democracy. This is another item from the "Pandora's box full of paradoxes" (Offe 1991a: 13).

(11) THE DILEMMA OF THE FUTURE PERFECT TENSE. The history of "real socialism" is full of repeated, persistent and failed attempts at reform. This experience may breed the "culture of defeat," a mental and even cultural syndrome including scepticism, pessimism, caution, avoidance of risk and

commitment, etc. A similar story repeats itself also in the post-revolutionary period: governments come and fall, programmes of reforms are hailed and scrapped. People start to wonder if the transition is truly irreversible. All this evokes "a deeply seated tendency in people to live in the future perfect tense, constantly asking themselves how their current actions would be interpreted and penalized if 'the other side' got back into power" (Elster 1989: 199). Such an attitude is dysfunctional for the development of the market and democracy, which require a minimum of trust, dedication, enthusiasm and optimism. Doubt, if widespread and aggregated, may well become a self-fulfilling prophecy, preventing the success of reforms, and seemingly proving the skeptics right. Thus THE MEMORY OF FAILURES curtails the readiness for RISK-TAKING AND INNOVATIONS.

(12) THE DILEMMA OF DIGGING ONE'S OWN GRAVE. For the capitalist system to emerge, there must be a social force vitally interested in its development. This is normally the middle class. But entrepreneurial groups are extremely weak in post-communist society. To turn "capitalism by design" or "political capitalism," initially imposed from above, into an authentic, spontaneously operating capitalist economy, a middle class must be formed. It can be nourished only if appropriate conditions are present. The legal, economic, and political framework for its appearance must be created by the "political class." This will inevitably lose significance or even fall under the dominance of the powerful middle class, once it emerges. J. Alexander puts it in a picturesque way: "A massive cohort of Babbitts will soon appear. They will be money-grubbing Philistines who view the intellectuals who created them with alarm and distaste" (Alexander 1990: 5). Thus the "political class" must act against its own long-range self-interest. Once recognized, this may block the processes of

marketization and privatization. Thus the necessary emergence of the MIDDLE CLASS may be endangered by the SELF-INTEREST OF THE RULING CLASSES.

(13) THE DILEMMA OF "WE" AND "THEY." Real socialism meant the opposition of two spheres of life: private (personal) and public (official). As S. Nowak puts it: "The life of the average Pole is lived in the two, overlapping worlds: the domain of private contacts and the institutional-official sphere" (Nowak 1987:30). This opposition appears in a number of guises: "society versus authorities," "nation versus the state," "citizens versus political elites," "we versus them." The opposition has an unambiguous evaluative, moral flavor. The private (particularistic) sphere is the domain of the good—of virtue, dignity, pride; the public (universalistic) sphere is the domain of the bad; of vice, shame, disdain. Activities carried out in the private sphere bring satisfaction, while any contact with the public sphere is disgraceful. By some vicious irony of history, the core opposition of public and private sphere, together with most of its psychological and behavioral expressions, has outlived the communist system and stands in the way of post-communist reforms. Let me illustrate it with some spectacular symptoms of this surprising persistence. In spite of constant reminders that "we are at last in our own home" people seem not to care, and they are reluctant to get involved in public actions. The continued political passivity and general apathy is remarkable: in the first democratic elections after half a century, almost sixty percent of the population chose not to vote. Almost every second Pole does not think it worthwhile to cast ballot for the first democratic president, and with a pluralistic spectrum of the associations and political parties mushrooming during the last year, more than 90% of the population decided not to belong to any of them (Gazeta Wyborcza, April 25, 1991). The government is still perceived as alien to society, as "them" against "us." In the free presidential elections, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a man of impeccable

credentials and undisputable achievements, turned out to be "polluted" by being in the government (as a first prime minister of post-communist Poland) and got a smaller popular vote than a little-known demagogue and charlatan arriving from Canada and precisely for that reason free from any associations with established authorities. Authorities are still treated with suspicion, and the perfectly normal situation of a political leader surrounding himself with former colleagues and supporters is blamed as "new nomenklatura." People continue their game of "beating the system," as if nothing has changed, as if the system were still alien, imposed, to be rejected. "Parasitic innovativeness" and all sorts of "institutionalized evasions" of laws, flourish in new forms made possible by privatization, the emerging capitalist market, and uncertainties of transitory legislation. This persistent SEPARATION of the common people from the state is basically opposite to IDENTIFICATION AND LOYALTY, demanded by democratic polity and market economy.

(14) THE DILEMMA OF THE CAPTIVE MIND. This indicates the lasting deformations of social consciousness, either as a result of direct indoctrination or as the indirect adaptive response to an oppressive system. The terms "socialist mentality," "socialist spirit" or "homo sovieticus" refer to just such a specific personality syndrome which is highly resistant to change, even under the new post-communist conditions. This remains "the wall in our heads," even when the true Wall has fallen down (Nagorski 1991: 4). The components of this syndrome include: passivity, avoidance of responsibility, conformism and opportunism, learned helplessness, prolonged infantilism, parasitic innovativeness, disinterested envy, primitive egalitarianism, etc. (Marody 1987a: 89, Marody 1987b: 4, Marody 1990: 157, Nowak 1987: 7) It is obvious that the market and democracy require direct opposites of these: activism and constructive innovativeness, self-reliance and responsibility, appreciation for

achievement, acceptance of income differences. **SOCIALIST MENTALITY** is basically at odds with the **SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM**.

In the conditions of Poland, a preeminently Catholic country, there may be an additional factor preventing the emergence of capitalist ethos. Assuming that "Weber's Thesis" is correct, at the time of the first birth of capitalism, the external influx of values conducive for capitalist development was provided by the individualistic Calvinist creed. This source is not available at the moment of the second birth of capitalism in Poland. Instead we possess a deeply rooted tradition of collectivist, authoritarian, community oriented Catholic ethos, made even stronger by the highly significant role of the Catholic Church in overcoming the "real socialist" system and starting post-communist transition. But reasoning along Weberian lines, one can expect that Catholicism will not encourage the "capitalist spirit," individualistic entrepreneurship, "this-worldly" concerns of the middle class—necessary for the emergence of the market and democracy. Thus catholicism may to some extent delay the post-communist transition, even though it was highly instrumental for starting that very process.

(15) **THE DILEMMA OF CAPITALISM WITHOUT CAPITAL, AND DEMOCRACY WITHOUT DEMOCRATS**. As a result of decades of "real socialism," the society is left without some basic resources necessary for a market economy and democratic society. The most tangible shortage refers to disposable capital, a prerequisite to becoming an economic actor in the emerging market. But there are equally grave shortages in the realm of intangibles: education, political culture, entrepreneurial skills, civic virtues necessary for becoming a full-fledged citizen of a democratic state. There is also a deficiency of skilled managers, professional politicians, as well as committed professional bureaucrats (civil servants). Such shortages cannot be overcome in a brief span of time. But the transition cannot wait. Hence, the poor **ENDOWMENT OF THE ACTORS**

may impede the REQUISITE ACTIONS, innovation, investment, planning, participation, taking decisions etc.

Post-revolutionary malaise

The eruption of mass mobilization, enthusiasm, optimism and hope; the feeling of might and omnipotence; the joy of activism and regained meaning of life; skyrocketing aspirations and utopian visions of the immediate future—all of these, so necessary for the revolution to win, have significant repercussions once the victory is won. There are numerous "boomerang effects" of revolutionary experience that may endanger the fate of revolutionary achievements. I will list those that seem most significant.

(16) THE DILEMMA OF THE MORNING AFTER. Revolutions are unusual times, and especially when bloodless (as almost all revolutions of the 1989 fortunately were) they are also happy times. They are like festivals or carnivals (Tiryakian 1985: 3). Making revolution is certainly more attractive than getting up at six o'clock to commute to a day of work. Inevitably, when the revolution is over and people have to get back to usually grey, routinized, boring, mundane realities—disenchantment, or post-revolutionary hangover is apt to set in. EXHILARATION makes a painful contrast with the ROUTINE.

(17) THE DILEMMA OF THE BRIEF HONEYMOON. The hopes and dreams so typical for revolutionary euphoria cannot be satisfied easily or rapidly. Soon after the revolution, the raised expectations and aspirations of the revolutionary period cannot but clash with hard realities—economic scarcities, the burden of foreign debt, demoralization, uncertainty of legal standards, social disorganization, class dislocations, unemployment, injustice. Neither the masses, nor even intellectuals in their utopian optimism, were ready to admit that the "valley of tears" (Dahrendorf 1990:77) lay ahead, and that before real

improvements could occur, severe costs would have to be paid. This results in a reinforced experience of relative deprivation (Gurr 1970: 59), even more painful because no easy excuses can be found any more; in particular, the system—traditional villain of all grievances—cannot be blamed any longer. After all, we really are "in our own home" now. Surveys report that 60% of the Hungarians believes its situation is worse than before and only 8% notices improvement. For Czechoslovakia the numbers are similar: 48% define post-revolutionary conditions as worse, and 22% claim some improvements. In Poland, 59% of the population does not perceive any change, 16% believes things have got worse, and 26% defines the conditions as markedly better (the survey sponsored by the Freedom House, as reported in "Gazeta Wyborcza," April 25, 1991).

ASPIRATIONS are rarely matched with REALITIES.

(18) THE DILEMMA OF DIFFICULT ABDICATION. All observers agree: the revolutions of 1989 were following the volcanic model (Aya 1979: 39); they erupted from the bottom, under the pressure of accumulated grievances, discontents, frustrations and were carried out by the masses. The revolutions were won on the streets and squares of Gdansk, Prague, Warsaw, Nowa Huta, Bucharest. "We, the people" was the true force behind revolutions. But as Timothy Garton Ash says in the book of that title: "'We the people' can rise against an abhorrent regime of exploitation and oppression, but 'we the people' cannot govern" (Ash 1990). The job of government requires quite different virtues, skills and responsibilities than those possessed by the revolutionary crowds. Thus, soon after the revolution, "the people" have to abdicate, relinquish their immediate power, and put it in the hands of representatives. Demobilization of the masses and political apathy are the predictable reactions. And the data clearly bear that conclusion: a recent survey shows that 91% of the Poles, 81% of Hungarians and 59% of the Czechs and Slovaks, have not attended

any political meeting or public demonstration since the revolution (as reported in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 25, 1991). **DIRECT POWER** is much more appealing than **REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT**.

(19) **THE DILEMMA OF INNOCENCE LOST**. This refers to revolutionary leadership. The move from the status of inspired, charismatic leaders to the status of public officials, demands a price. What Max Weber described as "the routinization of a charisma" means the loss of the mythology surrounding the leaders, as well as the emergence of an official, formalized distance between them and their followers. It also means internal splits in the leadership, which was originally united by the exigencies of common struggle but soon afterwards starts vicious fights among themselves for the share in victory. The myth of unity breaks down, and with it much of the popular faith and trust in the leaders. The revolutionary legitimacy of the post-revolutionary powers is lost amid infighting, and a new basis for legitimacy is not easy to be established. **CHARISMA** rarely survives the drabness of **OFFICE**.

A related aspect of this has to do with wider social groups and not only strict leadership. The social groups that were most active in the revolution, made up its "arms and brain" (the workers, the intellectuals), inevitably lose their social standing when the revolution is over. The capitalist transition pushes forward and upward the groups of entrepreneurs, business operators, owners of capital—the emerging middle classes. Those who fought fiercest do not reap the fruits of victory, surreptitiously grabbed by others. The feelings of relative degradation, injustice, disappointment may lead some of those groups to turn against revolution, which was "stolen from them." Thus **WINNERS** may have vested interests contrary to **BENEFICIARIES**, with the resultant blocks or at least delays of transition.

(20) **THE DILEMMA OF VOLUNTARY DISARMAMENT.** The revolution was carried in the name of civil liberties, freedoms of speech, opposition, disobedience, protest and strike. But transition requires discipline, patience, trust—even in the face of grave deprivations, deterioration in the standards of living, decline in social security. There is a need to suspend the rights of contestation, to abstain from struggle, to abandon conflicts. People are expected to do this voluntarily, and sometimes they are not willing to oblige. Thus, newly won **FREEDOMS** may clash with the imperative of **SELF-DISCIPLINE** in exercising them.

(21) **THE DILEMMA OF THE FIGHTER'S REFLEX.** The main target of massive, volcanic social movements, which brought about the revolution, was the state. Those movements were inspired by an anti-authoritarian, anti-statist spirit. They were using techniques of opposition, contestation, and conflict almost exclusively targeted on the state. All this was justified as long as the state was seen as alien, imposed, and oppressive. But that enemy disappeared once the revolution won. And yet, for some groups it is difficult to change their orientation. When the imperative of the day is the strengthening of the state, citizens' allegiance, pro-statist attitudes, and renunciation of some means of struggle—the old reflexes may stand in the way. Thus the revolutionary **LOGIC OF STRUGGLE** may outlive its time and distort the peaceful **LOGIC OF COOPERATION**.

(22) **THE DILEMMA OF THE DELAYED CLOCK.** Revolutionary experience is a break in social continuity, marked by the unusual speed of social change. Dramatic transformations occur almost overnight; governments fall, regimes break down, social hierarchies are overturned, old ways of life and common routines get suspended. It is easy to extrapolate the expectations borne by that experience to post-revolutionary times and become impatient with the slow,

gradual, piecemeal fashion in which changes normally proceed. When the social clock returns to its usual rhythm it is apt to be perceived as delayed. Notice the obsessive calls for the acceleration of change, radicalization of reforms, and policy short-cuts—calls raised by powerful groups of politicians in Poland, and meeting with favorable response among some segments of the public. All this reflects the intrinsic contradiction between the RAPID INITIATION and LINGERING CONTINUATION of the process of transition.

What can be done?

The diagnosis of the situation does not look too promising. The barriers to transition seem overwhelming, and our long list is still certainly incomplete. Does it mean that the task is hopeless and the anti-communist revolution must fail, like most other revolutions in the past? At the close of this sketchy overview of the battle-field let us discuss briefly the matter of available strategy. Can society pull itself up by the bootstraps?

To be effective, the strategy must fit the target—in our case, the *character of society* undergoing transformations, and the *goal of transformations*. The fundamental traits of society are grasped by various theoretical models put forward in sociological tradition. The goals of transformations are depicted by means of overall images of ideal society—social utopias, or the piecemeal specification of selected variables—making up the state of society to be achieved. Thus every strategy must be treated as relative to the model of society and to the image of the goal. There are no universal strategies, good for all conceivable models, and all possible goals.

In the theoretical tradition of sociology, two opposite theoretical models of society can easily be spotted. One is the systemic-functional model, which treats society as an organic whole characterized by specific properties and regularities,

different from those referring to human individuals, its ultimate components. The crucial regularity of a social organism (or system) is the tendency to keep or reach equilibrium. And its components, human individuals, are fully determined by their location within the whole; the status they have gained, the roles they play. They are passive, reactive, adaptive (Sztompka 1974). Another image may be referred to as the process model, focusing on human agency. Society is seen as the incessant stream of social changes which are the aggregated effects of individual actions. Social wholes do not exist in any stable, firm shape, but they are always in the process of becoming, incessantly constructed and reconstructed by members of society. The character of society is fully dependent on what people are thinking and doing, and people are conceived as creative agents (Sztompka 1991).

With similar simplification one may distinguish two ways in which the goals of social transformation have been conceived in social theory. One is positive; it is specified how the ideal society should look like, what institutions it should have, what structural arrangements should obtain, what forms human conduct should take. This was typical of most social utopias. But there is another approach, which may be called negative. It does not specify how society should be built, except that its building should be entirely free, left to the sovereign will of its members. It is the image of society liberated from any constraints on spontaneous, human creativity; society as the unlimited scope of options, rich field of possibilities, society such as its members spontaneously make it (Sztompka 1990). This is what is meant by open society (Popper 1966 [1945]), or more precisely—a market economy, democratic polity, or pluralistic community (civil society).

If society is conceived in terms of a systemic-functional model, and the goal of transformation is pre-conceived as a specifically defined utopia, this implies

the strategy of manipulation. Passive and adaptive people must be coerced or encouraged by some external agency to realize a pre-defined ideal society, supposedly in their best interest, even if they are entirely unaware of what their best interest is. However, if society is conceived in terms of a processive-agential model and the goal of transformation is an open society, this implies the fundamentally opposite strategy. It may be called the strategy of emancipation. Active and creative people must be given maximum opportunities for free expression of their intentions, aspirations, wishes. The potential capacity of society for self-transformation—the potential of its human agency—must be freely released, by eliminating all constraints and barriers to human creativity. This will allow the emergence of society not thought out on behalf of the people by doctrinaires or ideologues, but intended by the people themselves.

For a long time, both models of society (and both related strategies) were treated as mutually exclusive alternatives. It is only with the recent more synthetic or "eclectic" mood of sociological theory (Alexander 1988: 77), that they both came to be treated as applicable, but to different historical circumstances. There are periods in history when systemic-functional models seem to fit well, and when the strategy of manipulation seems to work—the periods of relative stability, continuation, human passivity. And there are periods of rapid change, breakdown of continuity, raised activism, mobilization, innovativeness and creativeness—when processive-agential models and emancipatory strategies are adequate. The idea of *historical relativization* of all models and strategies, even if guilty of eclecticism, is the only one born by the facts.

What model is historically adequate to the conditions of Eastern and Central Europe *anno* 1992? Since the eighties we have been witnessing the awakening of societies, with the peak of spontaneous mobilization, activism, revolutionary struggle somewhere around the "Autumn of Nations 1989." These societies are

certainly no stable social systems, but fluid processes of "social becoming." And they are anxious to part with pre-conceived utopias, seeing their goals in terms of the open society—the market, democracy, pluralistic community. Hence, the strategy of emancipation appears imperative. New society must be allowed freely to emerge by releasing society's potential to act.

But will this process be successful if left entirely to itself, to the working out of spontaneous human forces? Our particular predicament consists precisely of all those barriers and blockages listed above as the dilemmas of transformation. They possess considerable potential of resistance and inertia. They must be destroyed, overcome or at least evaded. To paraphrase an old revolutionary precept of Saint-Just: "No freedom for the barriers to freedom." And this may require a manipulative, and not only emancipatory, strategy, the concentrated effort from above, the active intervention of societal agencies including the state.

This is perhaps the major strategic dilemma of the period of transition, a sort of *meta-dilemma* which may be given the magic number "23." How to find the proper admixture of the opposites: the policy of emancipation—dictated by awakened human agency and the nature of social goals, and the policy of manipulation—made necessary by the persistence of barriers and blockages, some of which were raised by the very policy of manipulation and utopian construction used for decades by the socialist state. *How to push toward democracy by non-democratic means, how to attain liberalism by illiberal measures?* How to make sure that it will not degenerate into another form of autocracy or tyranny?

The only safeguard seems to lie in a consistent anti-utopian bent. The manipulation must be always limited to the destruction and tearing down of obstacles to freedom. It must focus on the borders, parameters of the social field, and not on its contents. It must remain eliminative, destructive manipulation,

and never reverse to the old utopian, constructive manipulation. And it must clearly conceive itself as temporary, transitory, until society takes off by itself.

Some day, we hope, it will happen, and manipulation will be needed no more. If successfully liberated from barriers, blockages, and constraints, the self-sustaining mechanisms of the market and democracy will start operating and become deeply and permanently rooted in civil society. But this is a long way to go; it must be recognized that this is a prospect for generations, not months nor even years. But the scale of the endeavor is historical, hence it must be allowed historical time to come to fruition.

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