

Zbigniew Kwieciński

Członek rzeczywisty
Polskiej Akademii Nauk

The Conflict of Socialization and Etatism in Education at the Time of Crisis and Social Change

To help children and young people enter life, to lead them through the early stages of development in a way that would make them able to coexist and cooperate with others productively and peacefully and that would make them accept that the fulfilment of their needs, interests, ambitions and dreams must benefit and not harm other people, their broader environment and the society – these are all unquestionable educational ideals and goals, embraced by all modern educational systems and institutions, and espoused by numerous other organisations and institutions which declare – whether directly or indirectly, overtly or implicitly – their intention to have their part in shaping the personalities and behaviour of their members.

An equally universal and generally acknowledged educational goal is the introduction into citizen roles, that is shaping learners in such a way that they will willingly, voluntarily, or – in the very least – habitually and peaceably take part in the functioning of the state; in other words – that they will eagerly and appropriately perform citizen duties as defined by the law, and exercise their privileges and rights within lawful boundaries. The duties are, for instance, national defence and

acceptance for the leadership of the state authorities which act in the name and in the interest of the entire nation. A Polish sociologist and pedagogue Józef Chałasiński termed this area of educational goals, contents, means, and effects “encitization” (*uobywatelnienie*) and stressed the crucial role of the critical point in individual and collective development where a shift begins away from private, familial and local categories and towards the categories of a broader community: the nation, the state, and the society.

Educating for the society and educating for the state are thus unquestionable component goals of education which prepare individuals to take part in and themselves set tasks that extend beyond the personal domain. Socialisation and “encitization” are crucial components of the process of individual growth and of individuals’ introduction into the roles, norms and values of the broader social milieu.

The universal nature and the harmonious union of the two areas of goals, processes, activities and effects associated with socialisation (nurture) may seem obvious – it is enough to take a cursory glance at educational programmes and ideological manifestos of various organisations and institutions.

Devolution of Power in Socialism

If we take a closer look at modern history, and especially the most recent events in the world and in Poland, it turns out that this seemingly obvious harmony has every now and then been shattered. The ideals and goals of education are defined by social movements, philosophical, political and religious doctrines, political parties, public and official organisations. Therefore, they depend heavily on political events of critical importance and their outcomes.

For example, among the desiderata formulated by the socialist movement, which aims at a gradual abolition of large-scale private property and its socialisation, are: an abolition of state (whether radical or gradual), democratisation and socialisation of the state, exercise of power by the society itself or through the representatives of the entire society (councils, self-governments) with mechanisms of social control built into the procedures of nominating and monitoring them.

At the opposite pole is the tendency – exposed at political “breaking points” and when social criticism is at its peak – for the society’s “mandatories” to deviate from serving the interests of the people and evolve into functionaries of the state who are in actual fact opposed to the interests of their own society. The functionaries exhibit a disturbing propensity, which has been now amply observed and described in the literature and which was on numerous occasions the target of mass-scale social protests. It is the tendency to a cliquish protection of their interests which means subordinating the principal instrument of the state’s effectiveness (the law) as well as the instruments that regulate the nomination to and the monitoring of their positions, to those interests. Instances of this include: rigging results of elections, public-opinion polls, consultative surveys, etc.; winning over public

approval through stifling protests and criticism; restricting the area of free choice and self-regulation on lower levels; manipulating the media which have particular appeal with the public; channelling and isolating the enclaves of actual or potential political opposition groups.

In post-war Poland, the periods when such activities were particularly transparent were even given labels in the official Marxist jargon: "periods of errors and distortions" (the hard-core Stalinism roughly between 1949 and 1956) or "periods of arbitrariness and arrogance of the authorities" (1956-1970). During those periods, the ruling centre developed a powerful, multidimensional superstate network of relations between members of the political apparatus, the state apparatus (legislative, executive and controlling bodies), the apparatus of coercion and various other specialised apparatuses that buttress the state (including mass propaganda, schooling and education); the network extended vertically in a top-down fashion to encompass regional and local substructures.

There are grounds to suggest, then, that we are facing the growth of a powerful, antisocial superstate structure. It functions under the banner of public interest and long-term social goals and in the name of "people's democracy"; the structure has unlimited control over public finance and property, the army, secret police and the entire apparatus of persuasion, reward and repression which exploits and abuses the authority of the law. It is that structure that has been the target of the cyclical outbursts of the working-class anger. These eruptions of discontent have inspired programmes of the resocialisation of the state (S. Magala's terms), with a particular emphasis on the resocialisation of school and education. However, in the context sketched above, such programmes – concerned with education for the state and for citizenship – run the gauntlet of suspicions and criticism; they are suspected of being the tools of intellectual servility, and specifically of conforming children, youth and adults to the ideas and activities of the elite of power and its apparatus, which by no means serve any public, social or class-bound interest.

The socialisation of large-scale public property undertaken by the socialist revolution was carried into effect in the form of nationalisation, that is the requisition of the means of production by the nation. In the legal sense and in actual fact, the property was confiscated by the state, which was the only legal representative of the nation as a whole. The vexed question is how to resocialise the basic means of production, coercion and persuasion (propaganda and education), once they have been nationalised (subjected to the complete control of the state).

Socialism and the Attempts of Its Reforms

There are several conceptions and programmes of the state's "renewal" with socialisation as a goal; the "renewal" is generally seen as transforming the state so that it will effectively serve the society and endow it with more autonomy in constructing and controlling the state. What are those programmes and conceptions? One of

them aims at handing over the initiative and autonomy (subject-status) back to the society and to its individual members and groups, at dispersing power and property among individuals and local communities. In education, for instance, this means handing schools over to local groups (territorial, religious, political) and self-governments as well as establishing educational forums and institutions for voicing needs and demands, for consultations, mediations etc.

Another major conception is that of screening the process of socialisation of the means of production, coercion and persuasion with the purity and integrity of the tenets of the socialist revolution as criteria. That means a complete elimination of private means of production and a thorough nationalisation (confiscation by the state) of the hitherto relatively pluralistic centres of educational influence.

These two concepts call for radical changes of political structures, for a rejection of existing tradition and either the abolition of the existing apparatus of power or the undermining of the social and cultural structures which have deep roots in the society (e.g. the elimination or severe curbing of the influences of the Catholic Church; confiscation of traditional family farms).

In this context, the third programme stands the best chances of public acceptance. Its propositions can be summed up as follows: social solidarity and joint effort in undertaking the task of the social “renewal”; the “healing” of the State through social contract which would prevent the state functionaries from disloyalty to the social interest and which would force them back into the roles of mandatories (or cause them to be replaced with new mandatories with no change to the political structures and their functioning).

The first conception – that is, the reprivatisation of property on the systemic scale, the dispersion of state power and handing over the processes of production, public control and education to local communities and self-governments – is unfeasible on several counts. Firstly, it is opposed by the defenders of the global configuration of power. Secondly, it finds the society unprepared for assuming autonomy and self-direction, which in turn result from the earlier processes of externalising the decision-making, execution and control. The second conception, which overtly aims at reinforcing the superstate structure of the ruling centre – arouses public resistance (or is likely to).

What is left, then, is the third programme. Regrettably, the society has trusted the implementation of that programme to the professional functionaries of the state and superstate structure with its roots in the period of “errors and distortions” with only some weak provisions and safeguards made (including solemn public declarations and promises to serve social interests and goals from the old functionaries; introducing some new mandatories into the political scene, stepping up the processes of legislative reform, the reconstruction of the social base of political power as well as the separation of that power from administration and control).

The fundamental concern of the people staffing old superstate structures undergoing the process of “renewal” must inevitably be establishing institutional, solid guarantees of their own security and stability, and seeing to it that there are no more outpourings of anger and demands from the social class which they lay claims to representing and which legitimates their rule (the working class). An elementary and sufficient condition for such guarantees could be economic success and ample supply of commodities on the market. This, however, is hard to achieve. In fact, the notorious shortage of goods was the consequence of replacing rational economy with a system in which public goods and property were embezzled and squandered by the ruling elite and their supporters. The effects included: Poland’s enormous foreign debt, the degeneration of economic processes; disharmony and dysfunction of economic subsystems; general erosion of motivation to work solidly and creatively; the stifling of innovativeness and individual autonomy; the spread of nepotism, corruption, negligence, unreliability, fraud, and mutual distrust. In a system like that it is not easy to achieve economic success within a short period in order to shore up the newly “renewed” social structures.

For want of economic success, other arguments need to be employed; one is persuasion (whereby it is suggested that we must patiently endure the “temporary difficulties”, tighten our belts and wait for the promised fruits of the glorious visions of our leaders), another is coercion (against those who openly articulate their impatience, distrust or hostility to the authors and defenders of the “only right path of changes”¹).

Economic and Educational Crisis

An uncontrolled outpouring of anger and demands makes attempts at persuasion completely ineffective, particularly when fuelled by the sudden opening of the channels of social communication and the burgeoning of new institutions which challenge the authorities and force changes (strikes, demonstrations etc.) The state apparatus of direct coercion, enjoying lawful status, is then employed against the society’s majority. In terms of socialisation and educational effects, that leads abruptly to a legitimization crisis of the state authorities and pushes personal identities to breaking point (as the result of anomy and alienation). There is an unprecedented growth of the potential role of general processes of education and nurture, which the rulers must hastily substitute for the means of direct coercion in order to gain acceptance for their strategy of development and for the political *status quo*, but also to make a predominant section of the society accept the promulgated vision of development as their own – whether motivated by a “lesser-evil” position, by the need to protect personal interests, or to identify with new interpretations of meaning. The latter task is increasingly difficult to achieve given the context of the

¹ Well-known old slogans of the former Polish communist party (translator’s note).

numerous earlier paroxysms of the system and the shattered hopes which erode the credibility of educational ideas and programmes as well as the structures of controlling, managing, regulating and directing schooling and education. Another obstacle is the degeneration of material and psychological infrastructure of educational processes in the aftermath of the economic and motivational crisis.

To conclude, I am suggesting that before the system of schooling and education regains its proper re-educating power and the proper functioning of its organic institutions, non-educational means designed to mask coercion – that is, to suppress it in the social consciousness – will be employed.

The whole issue in fact boils down to the problem of regaining social acceptance for the existing structure of power, that is “reetatising” citizens (subjecting them once more to state control or etatism) in the context of an increased ability of the society to articulate demands for the resocialisation of those structures (and, by the same token, the resocialisation of the state). The problem can only be solved through the manipulation of all available channels, including education, schooling, upbringing, and educational research.

The Growing Role of Manipulation

I see “manipulation” as a set of techniques of influencing and controlling people in a way that leaves them unaware of what they are taking part in. Importantly, however, the “switched-off” awareness of the people who are subjects or instruments of manipulation has a number of levels, ranging from unconscious compliance in the face of external manipulation, through a number of varieties of “game-playing” between the manipulators and the manipulated (who pretend not to understand the true aim and the means of manipulation to avoid punishment or gain personal advantage) to the fully conscious participation of the manipulated, who nonetheless make a pretence of being on the side of “the people”. In the second instance, there is a whole continuum of conformist and escapist attitudes, with numerous varieties of anomic and adaptive behaviour (Cf. Szafraniec 1986). The third case is an instance of “ketman”², as brilliantly described by Czesław Miłosz – crudely, a kind of “a game of two cheats” who are both aware of the real objectives of the game and the true meaning of the symbols and events involved in the game, but nevertheless continue playing and, in their own interest, keep their masks on till the very end. An extreme – though by no means rare – case of the ketman game consists in enacting the rituals of the opposition while at the same time enjoying the rewards granted for the loyalty to the manipulators.

² Ketman is an old Persian term, recorded by Arthur de Gobineau, and elaborated by Czesław Miłosz, an expatriate Polish poet and writer, in his book about Stalinist Poland *Zniewolony umysł* [„The Captive Mind”] (1955). Ketman is the practice of an elaborate concealment of one’s deepest convictions and the pretence to adopt a rival system of beliefs (translator’s note).

In any instance, the breaking-point period – when the coherence and legitimacy of the hitherto dominant value system collapse, the ideological justification for the chosen path of development is discredited and the social support for political structures is lost – is characterised by a large-scale conflict of natural socialisation processes and institutionalised educational activities. On the one hand, we must face a dual reinforcement of the primal dimensions of crisis (P. Sztompka's approach, 1982) – that is the redoubled intensity and a self-reinforcing combination of anomy (dissociation of value systems; axionormative vacuum; dissolution of human bonds; the breaking-point crisis of personal identities), alienation (a sense of subjection and instrumentality in political and economic processes) and deprivation (a threat to elementary needs). On the other hand, the goals, models and means of educating proposed so far are treated with aversion. It is because "the system of education" that has been put forward and consequently enforced on the national scale was based on a behavioural model. The possibility of moral choices has been substituted (in educational theory, methodology and practice) by a mechanistic "breaking-in" – forcing individuals into rigidly prescribed, fixed roles dictated by the political centre and justified by those who "know better" and have a clear, unmarred vision of "the only right path". This kind of drilling, and the centralised control over the choices that education offered (if any), were elevated to the status of the official (that is, compulsory) methodology of teaching. The "system" was perfected in the pathological Stalinist State, and it lives on.

Is what we are currently witnessing an attempt to resurrect and enforce similar "systems", this time under the guise of a new phraseology, embellished with words like humanism, socialism, dialogue, pluralism, partnership etc.? The earlier practical experience has amply proved that such systems in fact constitute the binary opposite of humanism in any sense. Such systems are in reality the reverse of socialism and socialist tenets, which are: the widening of the scope of possibilities of development, of axiological choices, and of individual freedom; the shaping of every individual's self-awareness and motivation; the broadening of the terrain of social brotherhood and community (to replace rivalry and fight over goods and positions in a hierarchy).

The failure of similar "systems" precludes the possibility of reintroducing them and dooms them to failure when confronted with the socialisation practice within the family, peer groups and socio-cultural structures which have emerged from the crisis relatively unscathed or even stronger.

Against the background which I have briefly sketched above, education (which has no realistic prospects of regaining the former effectiveness in building the motivation to accept the ideological justification of the socio-political system as legitimate and our own) is substituted with manipulation which affects both the entire State, social and cultural structures and individual people – their awareness, personality and behaviour. Manipulation is employed as a strategy for stabilising the

State and the society and for social, psychological and anthropological engineering with regard to specific individuals. Further, manipulation refers to engineering objective factors and the image of the world as reflected in the collective and individual consciousness.

The techniques (strategies) of maintaining the equilibrium of the State characterised by dysfunction, anarchy and turbulence can be the following (as J. Staniszkis pointed out in her seminar paper at IRWiR PAN³ in 1982):

- 1) imagination barrier (viewing the situation as having no alternatives);
- 2) regulation through crisis (because crises are recurrent, they can be anticipated and managed by dispersing the centres of protest, introducing cosmetic changes into the system, and adopting the rhetoric of “renewal”);
- 3) corporatist structure of interest articulation; segmentation of the society into superior and inferior categories;
- 4) the mechanism of a double dependence of the apparatus of power (the greater discontent, the more generously the apparatus is rewarded);
- 5) an artificial recreation of the “public opinion” (completely subdued to official control and exploited as means of stabilising the system and the existing elites of power);
- 6) the mechanism of “repressive tolerance” (maintaining a limited number of rigidly controlled “safety valves” of criticism and opposition);
- 7) a surrealist rhetoric; the use of words and semantic operations running counter to experience and common sense, e.g. articulating the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat to be set against the proletariat itself; the need to use violence and coercion against the working class because it is supposedly acting against its interests; a hunt for “class enemies” among those who offer the only chance of overcoming the crisis and survival (that is, peasants and intelligentsia) and those who constitute a stabilising factor (the Catholic Church and peasants again);
- 8) pushing the essence of conflicts to social margins.

A critical factor in manipulation on a macroscale is the battle waged in order to imprint in the mass consciousness the linguistic facade which obscures reality. A. Piotrowski (in his seminar paper in IRWiR PAN, 1983) suggests that the entropy of the socio-political order, the growing apathy, the abandonment of the right of choice between value systems, the preoccupation with marginal conflicts (e.g. the alleged conflict between the Church and the state which in reality cooperate to maintain the status quo) are all accompanied by: the ritualisation of the language of mass communication (particularly the language of the revolution which was used

³ IRWiR PAN – Institute for the Development of Rural Areas and Agriculture at the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (translator’s note).

to perpetuate the status quo and which is blatantly incompatible with the activities of its senders), and the use of the forms and principles of a "closed dialogue" (specifically, secretiveness, institutional restrictions on access to Information, the exclusion of certain categories of people; the hierarchic nature of communicative competence; restrictions on the forms of communication (negotiations preclude partnership); truth as a tool for efficient action rather than the ethical goal and the communicative function of text).

The centre, which controls the distribution of goods, information, mass media and the apparatus of coercion is in a position to produce in an individual a view of the surrounding world which discourages emancipatory action, articulation of social demands, and communication with others. W. Łukaszewski's view is that it is sufficient to have a combination of four types of direct influence (direct influence on the situation and its perception through: manipulating inequality; shortage of goods, closure of exits and hypercontrol) as well as two types of indirect influence (influence on awareness – through education and propaganda). In a similar fashion, J. Rudniański has analysed the effectiveness of four types of "anthropotechnics": the method of "non-military struggle in close surroundings", the methods of creating and managing a depriving situation; the method of redoubling non-elementary needs; the channelling of ideals, and the escalation of anxiety. Łukaszewski has analysed the dominant tactics of handing over autonomy to people in the course of socialisation and enculturation (natural education within a cultural and social system). He suggests that the dominant techniques are: punishment over reward; competition over co-operation; sadness over joy; control over trust; passivity over activity; antagonism and inequality over equality and partnership. The orientation we get in effect is: egocentric (rather than altruistic), conservative (rather than progressive), defensive (rather than innovative) passive (rather than active), and externally-rather than internally-guided. The Polish social system in the late 1970s seemed to meet all the external conditions that produce this kind of human development. The principal features of the system were (according to Łukaszewski): self-imitation and routine; a sense of threat and lack of hope; introducing irrational complication to the world; systems of indoctrination which breed fanaticism, intolerance, opportunism, resistance and rebellion, confusion and chaos of the system of goals and of the evaluation criteria; hierarchic patterns; authoritarianism (master and servant relations); bureaucracy (a soulless, formalist, dehumanised attitude to people); dogmatism and sacralism (assigning ordinary objects, people, events and words the status of sacred inviolability and imposing the attitude of non-internalised ritualism); intolerance to other value systems and behaviour norms; selectivity of information or complete information blocks; limited imagination (implanted convictions about what is impossible and inviolable).

The Effects of Manipulation

The cumulative effect is the pattern dominating the Polish culture to this day (that is, the pattern of accepted and revered values and behaviour norms): possession, spontaneity, individualism, intolerance and sentimentality. The resultant pattern runs counter to the democratic and humanistic ideal of education (education towards multidimensional, creative humanity, nurturing co-operation and productivity, planning, rationalism, tolerance, and collaboration for change).

In the macrosocial dimension, the strategies and techniques of manipulation have produced the emergent dominant patterns of political culture: the parochial culture and the subjection culture. The former pattern is characterised by a distancing from the political system combined with expectations of security guarantees from that system. The latter is typified by discontent about the political system combined with the belief that no changes into the system are possible. In comparison with these, the cultural pattern of committed citizenship is marginal or virtually extinct. It consists in the belief that there is an urgent necessity to introduce changes to the political system in order to attain greater pluralism, political representation, and greater scope of activity for democratic institutions and structures. (The distribution of the cultural patterns is illustratively presented in the following empirical surveys: Polacy '81, '84, '88; IFiS, 1982/1984, 1985, 1989).

The above picture of the collective Polish personality and the dominant cultural (and cultural-political) patterns, comes from the late 1970s and early 1980s. The explosion of demands we saw in spite of those patterns resulted from the discrepancy between the level of consumption that had been promised and the real capacity of the system to accommodate the hedonistic aspirations (orientation at comfort and affluence) that had been aroused.

The “unbridled democracy” (T. Konwicki’s⁴ term) could only be curbed with the use of an entire arsenal of manipulation techniques. A relapse to the earlier authoritarian configuration followed. There was, however, one critical difference. The dreamy image of Poland promulgated till late 1970s by the official propaganda (portraying Poland as an affluent and highly civilised country, being among the most advanced nations in the world and constructing a new, perfected socio-political order) was in ruins and had to be eradicated from the collective consciousness of Poles.

The society was now impoverished (morally, psychologically and otherwise), lived with “no vision and hope” (B. Suchodolski’s words), was stripped of the dreams about fulfilling the grand national values, forced to live on sustenance level and in constant anxiety. A society like that was bound to experience the degeneration of its dreams, beliefs and expectations. “Survival at any cost!” is the only precept

⁴ Tadeusz Konwicki – Polish contemporary novelist (1926-2015) (translator’s note).

that has been left of the once proudly proclaimed “decatalogue of renewal”. This represents an abrupt shift away from the society’s collective attempts to rise to the postconventional level, and a relapse to the preconventional level – the avoidance-of-suffering stage (Cf. Habermas, Kaniowski, Witkowski). Such society may yield to the control and rule of anyone who offers a plausible system of values (or a return to ritualistic forms of accommodating spiritual needs).

It is very likely that the people undergoing the identity crisis (that is, the society immersed in an axionormative vacuum) will absorb a new interpretation of meaning, a new utopia, a new religion. It is because the lack of hope attracts FAITH. General hopelessness has not suppressed “the hunger for meaningfulness” or “the hunger for a catechism” of inviolable, ultimate values which would give human life some meaningfulness other than a purely biological one. In the objective, social and cultural context in which we are functioning, this translates into the possibility of the revival of etatism as the ideological essence and programme of Poland’s long-term development.

Etatism and Its Threats

I have defined etatism as the cult of the State as the ultimate value, subjugation of the people to the will and the decisions of their “representatives” (state functionaries), and the acceptance of the blockages in personal development which confine it to the level of pre-existing and arbitrarily prescribed roles.

We might ask, however, why we should be concerned with “a revival” of etatism? First of all, it is because etatism occurred earlier on in the history of independent Poland, namely in the aftermath of the crisis in the late 1920s and 1930s⁵. Further, it is because the imminent danger of shattering the harmony between socialisation and etatisation as educational goals was observed and warned against very early on in the post-war period.

Chałasiński, in his book *Spółeczeństwo i wychowanie* [“Society and education”] (1969) has brilliantly exposed the way in which European societies – at a time of crisis and the collapse of earlier value Systems – absorbed and took over totalitarian ideologies of the State which have resulted in the most gruesome, horrifying atrocities that have ever been perpetrated against humanity, and the most vicious and inhuman war in history. Likewise, T. Parsons views anomy as preliminary to the ascendancy of the fascist ideology, which is the ultimate form of the cult of the state and the cult of the leader.

⁵ In the 1920s, Polish parliamentary democracy was gradually brought to a stalemate. In May 1926, Marshall Józef Piłsudski – a hero of the independence movement during the 1st World War and a cult figure with many Poles – seized power in a relatively bloodless coup and a period of authoritarian rule followed (1926-1939) (translator’s note).

Back in the 1930s, F. Młynarski identified the following main characteristics of the ideology of etatism, which was then in the ascendant:

1. There is no limit, and there can be no limit, to the power of the state. There is no escape from the intervention of the state, and there must be no escape. (2) The only sovereign of the absolute omnipotence of the state is the leader who is head of a monoparty. (3) Since the state is omnipotent, and the only sovereign of that omnipotence is the leader (the dictator), the state and the rule must be synonymous. Hence, there is no logical possibility of any criticism of the authority and passive compliance is everybody's duty. (in: W. Giełżyński, „Odchodzenie” 1982)

The spread of etatism in 1930s greatly disturbed educationalists. M. Falski (writing under the pseudonym of Rafał Praski), in his book *Walczymy o szkołę* [“The Battle for School”], wrote as follows about the conditions of teachers' work:

In no other profession, even the most responsible one (e.g. medicine or engineering) are the practitioners treated with greater suspicion than in the teaching profession. No other profession suffers so much abominable harassment from censorship... Significantly, while vast public funds are squandered to censor and monitor teachers, no effort is made to help create centres of serious educational research and thought and of advanced intellectual debate; the embryonic centres of educational progress are unsupported and therefore weak. And it is precisely such centres that could breathe new, revitalising ideas into Polish schools.

Further in the book, M. Falski writes about “the ideological profile of school curricula”:

Current school curricula, which are supposed to suit the new political order, are an incoherent amalgam of guidelines; some of them are better, some are worse, but they do not form any sort of a consistent ideological framework. They contain a myriad of petty, irrelevant instructional hints, and they do not point out clearly the true goals of school... Creative work and – by the same token – progress in the area of resource materials and textbooks, are stifled by routine censorship and narrow-minded monopolism.

Counter to appearances, the essential change introduced by the recent school curriculum reform is not a new scope of instructional curricula nor a new methodology, but an attempt to produce obedience to and acceptance of the alien socio-economic order and the present autocratic form of wielding power which oppresses the masses of workers. As a result, efforts are being made to base education of the youth on dogmas... and to substitute pro-social education with the mere drilling into the youth of the doctrine of ‘the education for the State’. The effect is the triviality and the lack of any guiding idea in selecting daily school material. These conditions will not produce a man of action nor a man of creative thought. For teachers and students, they spell a boring, dry and largely pointless work, far removed from their interests and experiences with the fast-changing world around them.

K. Sośnicki (1933), who formulated an entire system of general pedagogy, saw “a collision of [social and pro-state] ethos” as the essence of organised and goal-oriented education which defined its tasks. In the early 1930s, in his book *O wychowaniu państwowym* [“Education for the State”], he outlined his programme of education as a dialogue, as mediation between the conflicting values and aspirations of the state and the society. In his view, education was to maintain a harmonious balance between socialisation on the one hand, and etatisation (fitting learners into Citizen roles) on the other. Sośnicki’s approach, though innovative and up-to-date even to this day, could not be a popular one in the period of state monopoly, the cult of the leader and the rule of the monopoly. On the contrary, in the 1950s Sośnicki was pronounced an exponent of a pre-war reactionary doctrine of education and hence not fit to be an educationalist in a socialist State (he was forced to retire, and the university department which he headed was closed).

Socialisation vs Etatisation

The dispute over the future shape of socio-political and economic system went on during the war, particularly towards its end, and shortly after the war. Some of the advocates of socialist transformation warned against the consequences of the unlimited centralism and the monopoly of means of production which could prove destructive to social, communal or co-operative initiative.

The dispute was especially heated within the peasants’ popular movement before it was forcefully transformed into a procommunist United Peasants’ Party (ZSL); the issue inflamed arguments between socialists and communists before they were united into the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR) with an unequivocally Stalinist programme.

Very early on after the war, the developments in Poland gave rise to serious concern that the educational ideals, programmes and curricula may once again substitute “etatisation” for socialisation. M. Ossowska (1946) was particularly outspoken about that. She pointed out that a democratic system, which was allegedly being instituted in Poland “is a system in which there are no oppressors and oppressed, no privileged and no underprivileged people; in which as many citizens as possible are engaged in shaping their collective life; in which everybody’s potential can flourish. Speaking of privileges and handicaps I mean all their kinds, not just purely economic ones. In this view, democracy precludes any divisions into first-class and second-class citizens...”

What ideal personality features or “marks” should a socialised Citizen have in such democratic society? Ossowska identifies the following characteristics: 1) perfectionist aspirations with regard to collective as well as personal life; (2) an open mind, that is “the ability to acquire new facts, concepts etc., and to constantly revise their views, particularly in the light of new facts”; (3) aside from an open mind – self-discipline, ability to make sustained, long-lasting effort informed by a coherent

and lasting system of values – “a firm backbone”; (4) tolerance, viewed as “the ability to respect the needs and opinions which one does not share” (5) activeness, seen as “undertaking actions aimed at improving, in some respect, the conditions one lives in; a certain effort at advancement, whether concerning personal material needs or freeing the world from oppression. Passivity means accepting the existing reality with no attempt to improve it”; (6) moral courage, attributed to those who “openly declare their beliefs and defend them, even if this jeopardises their vital interests, subjects them to hostility and abuse, and limits their career opportunities”; (7) intellectual frankness – the ability to live without self-delusion, lying, prevarication; (8) a critical mind – being “invulnerable to ideological intoxication”, always stipulating that justification be spelled out; (9) responsibility for one’s words. Within this model of a socialised Citizen Ossowska identified a set of features which she collectively termed (10) socialisation – interests and competencies that reach beyond the personal domain; overcoming egocentrism; empathy; altruism and service for others; a sense of responsibility for collective life; the ability to work and act collectively; understanding others’ aspirations for personal development based on individual models; respect for others’ privacy; respect for equal rights of all humans. Ossowska’s model additionally includes (11) chivalry to opponents in a dispute or fight – individuals should not “brag of victory, nor demonstrate anger when defeated”. Further, they should be (12) aesthetically sensitive, and have (13) a sense of humour.

Ossowska’s final reservation about the relationship between humanity, socialisation, and “encitization” seems particularly meaningful and foreboding, both from the perspective of Polish pre-war and wartime experience, and from the perspective of the numerous meanders of the post-war history:

The properties I have listed as characteristics of a personality model do not mention the relation between the Citizen and the State. This is not the result of an oversight. There is simply no need to elaborate on this relation, for I have viewed this issue in a broad context of human behaviour in any human group, including the one that is referred to as the State. A socialised man in the sense I have adopted is socialised in any group, whether local (e.g. a village council or self-government) or wide-ranging. The pro-state phraseology we were fed on before the war, on the model of totalitarian States, is necessary only in a State which attempt to inculcate in its citizens that they are merely little cogs in the State machine; this kind of phraseology is redundant in a system whereby the State is only a uniting, organising and co-ordinating agent, and not an object of religious cult.

Etatism as the End of Socialism

Ossowska was exceptionally perceptive in pointing to the danger of etatism inherent in the post-war vision of a truly democratic state of socialised citizens. The perceptiveness is especially evident in retrospect, in the context of the rampant etatism, centralism and personality cult of the 1940s and 1950s.

“The Marxist doctrine, which originally had an enormous revolutionary dynamism, was adopted – as an official State doctrine – in order to stabilise the new system and protect the new privileged elite” (Ossowski, 1957). The Marxist dialectical theory and methodology was applied with similar aims in mind.

Ossowski writes (ibid.) that “The dialectics of development could provide a justification for the processes whereby the gap between the reality and the desired State of affairs was for ever widening; according to this interpretation of dialectical processes, one could proceed towards a State which meets the equality requirement through combating egalitarian tendencies. In other words, one could move closer to the desired State of freedom by increasingly curbing freedom”. K. Sośnicki hoped that the momentous events of 1956 would root out “the old, dismal myth which served to soothe the conscience of those who resigned themselves to the existing state of affairs – the myth of historical imperative which was supposedly handed down to the rulers in an act of almost divine revelation.”

Such hopes proved vain. S. Lem, in his *Dialogi* [“Dialogues”], little-known sociological sketches published in 1957, points out that [in 1956] the following methods of regulating the system (which was only precariously balanced or oscillating) were available: (1) a flood of hollow promises, run-away inflation and haphazard investment; (2) introduction of self-regulatory market mechanisms and handing power over to the masses; (3) excessive “tightening” of the system of power (fascisation). Lem wrote that the option that was selected (a totalitarian etatism) was bound to produce a relapse to the earlier condition and another outburst is bound to follow (which was indeed the case, with cyclical explosions of civil resistance in 1968, 1970, 1976, 1980-1981).

From the perspective of forty years of “people’s republic” in Poland, B. Sucho-dolski (1984) wrote: “the emerging Polish State was not to be a continuation of the Second Republic (the pre-war Poland from 1918 to 1939) – it was to receive a new social structure and to develop in accordance with socialist principles... The great task of that time was to win the favour of the growing section of the society for socialism. The means of successfully completing that task were to be powerful political rule and the ideological moulding of people’s awareness and attitudes – but these have in fact discredited socialism in the public eyes; ideological education has evolved into compulsory indoctrination, shored up by numerous threats and prohibitions. For cultural life, that was a blind alley”.

Still, in those hard times when “darkness enveloped the earth”⁶ the vision of [true] socialism – the hope of constructing a system of social justice and community – lived on. “Those visions mobilised our minds and hearts” (ibid.)

⁶ A paraphrased title of Jerzy Andrzejewski’s symbolic novel *Ciemności kryją ziemię* (1956) permeated by disillusionment and fatalism (translator’s note).

Further in the paper, Suchodolski writes that militant Marxism, fighting first for intellectual recognition and then for academic hegemony “was to be generally accepted by the society, just as the programme of socialism was”. “Regrettably, in some cases the disputes led to attempts to eliminate all other positions and oust their exponents”.

It seems vitally important at this point to remind of the early post-war conflict between the programme of, and hopes for, the socialisation of the means of reproduction, of the relations between people and of the people themselves on the one hand, and the forever growing, pervasive impact of the state (specifically, the political centre in the first decade of “People’s Poland”) on the other. Only bearing in mind this conflict can we understand the essence of the continual collision between socialisation and etatism throughout the history of People’s Poland and up to this day. It is because at the time of that conflict the political doctrine, the educational doctrine and the educational practice developed and firmly established a set of essential features of etatisation, seen as organised and monopoly-oriented influence of the State on individuals, aimed at subjugating them to external control and achieving a maximum uniformity of attitudes. Another reason why the conflict is important is that it is crucial in understanding what kind of intellectual, ideological, political and moral formation the youth of that time was moulded into. It must be remembered that the generation in question (people born around 1930) was a special one: as children, its members subconsciously absorbed home-made etatism and fanaticism; then they had to face the humiliation and frustration of the lost defensive war of 1939; they were eye witnesses to the barbarian cruelty and death during the war; they were the one who fought a fratricidal battle for the future of post-war Poland; finally, they were the generation that was particularly susceptible to the impact of Stalinism.

Etatism and Education

What kind of doctrine was presented to the youth of that time and what educational conceptions were propagated and enforced. After we answer these questions it should become clear why they were so recurrent, particularly in the programmes of school reform and the conceptions of educational systems in the 1970s which were formulated by the members of that very generation.

This is how the answers have been reconstructed by A.M. Kaniowski and, earlier, by A. Radziwiłł. The desiderata formulated at that time were both eufunctional and dysfunctional. So, the principle of the social ownership of the means of production was expected to bring about social justice and equality of effects (rather than merely an equal legal status and equal opportunity). This aroused hopes for the social promotion of “basic” social classes and caused an actual promotion of large numbers of young people, but – on the other hand, fuelled social demands and

created a general perception that the State was responsible for satisfying those demands. The right to employment was shortly substituted with the compulsion to work, which eroded the original enthusiasm and motivation. The effects were: inefficient work, hidden unemployment, an instrumental attitude to work (alienation), a sense of injustice, low morale of workers, and notorious theft of state-owned property (a popular justification offered was: "this is nobody's stuff - it's State property"). The working class and the peasant class (officially) became lawful subjects (= autonomous agents) of power. However, it was suggested, they could not exercise power directly - for technical reasons and because they were immature; therefore power was wielded on their behalf by the Party - an avant-garde of the two ruling classes, entitled to dictatorial rule in the name of the victorious revolution. This arrangement, however, had a dysfunctional aspect - some day, the working class could have laid claims to direct power.

The principle of "the leading role of the Party" (as inscribed in the Polish constitution of the time) and that of "democratic centralism" had two sides too. Their stabilising function consisted in dispersing the autonomy of decision-making, masking the contradictions and collisions of interests, justifying the fact that no member of the ruling elite was ever admitted responsible for wrong, illegal decisions. But the dysfunctional nature of the principles consisted precisely in this very fact that the divergence of interests was concealed and that there was no dependable body of knowledge about the real expectations of the society. This led to the isolation of the rulers, who "got offended with the society", and an increasing delegitimation of their rule. As for the general view of the world, the following set of arguments was used. History reached and passed a maturity threshold at the moment of the proletarian revolution, that is at the moment of passage to 'the kingdom of freedom', when the Party was brought to the scene. We were witnesses to that moment, and because we are historically determined, we can, and must, accept that inevitable passage, the knowledge about which is bestowed with the Party. The society is viewed as dichotomous (new vs. old, ours vs. theirs = alien; socialist vs. bourgeois = hostile). There is only one scientific interpretation of the world as laid down by the doctrine of scientific communism. Theory and practice are one, as are the description and evaluation of the world. The proletariat - the class which is the subject (autonomous agent) and the creator of history, is represented by the Party, which exercises power. The resultant view of the world was completely insensitive to blatant distortions of the declared ideals; other effects included censorship of history, neglect of direct observation, and the rejection of the majority principle. In terms of personality, the result was a severe intellectual rigidity, authoritarianism, politicisation, collectivism, servility, and dogmatism of beliefs and attitudes.

As for the ideological doctrine, power (authority) occupied a special position. It had an autonomous value. The seizure and maintenance of power by the Party were preliminary to fulfilling the role of the absolute agent. Authority is good by

nature, for it is the trustee of the people's well-being (the well-being of "basic" social classes), and has insight into the essence of development. Democracy means assuming roles on the political scene, according to a scenario that has been pre-planned by the centre (the Leadership).

Political education means fitting people into the roles arranged according to that scenario and developing maximum servility in citizens. The model of education in Poland from 1948 to 1956 comprises a special view of the process of education and politicisation of education (in the life of a society there are no non-political spheres, it was claimed). Education and nurture were equated with ideological and political propaganda. It was instilled in people that the creation of a "new human", shaped in accordance with the new ideology, is preliminary to the growth and strengthening of the new system. The discrepancy between reality the ideal of a society and an individual was resolved by introducing the principle of spontaneity which in turn rendered 'the base of spontaneous submissiveness'. The educational model had the following characteristics: a dichotomous and contrastive nature; the assumption that the world is fully explicable and man is fully educable; the primacy of the interests and activities of the collective; no line drawn between the public and the private (which resulted in the stifling of individualism; escapism; time-serving; opportunism; a split, schizoid identity; the collective as the means and goal of maximising control; the direct impact of "the activist core" (*aktyw*) on the peer group as the dominant sociotechnics; the principle of the leading role of the teacher (which was an elaboration and a vertical transmission of the principle of the leading role of the Party).

In M. A. Kaniowski's view, this model – when practically implemented – effectively eliminates the ability to distinguish technical problems from practical and moral ones. The principle of scientism and intellectualism were given a peculiar interpretation – it was viewed as a free, individual route inevitably leading to the belief that the goals set by the authorities are justified and valid. Establishing the link between life and education was interpreted as inculcating in people current official goals, as laid down in official slogans and speeches of the leaders.

Hence, the model assumed that only the kind of education which is oriented towards complete and uncritical acceptance of the authority (etatisation), and not at shaping individual system of values and beliefs, could guarantee success, that is complete loyalty to existing social order and its defenders (state functionaries).

In Kaniowski's view this model (which he reconstructed) is still in use today. The basic modification consists in the shortening of the revolutionary perspective, up to the point where outward appearances of law and order, social stabilisation and faked discourse are the only components of the vision of development.

In this context, K. Sośnicki's judgement seems to be particularly valid and insightful. This is what he wrote in the 1970s in his book *Istota i cele wychowania* ["The essence and goals of education"] (1974) after he analysed the educational

trends and schools of thought in the 19th and early 20th century, after he constructed an original conception of education as a means of resolving the conflict between the ethos of the society and the State, and after his revealing observations of pre-1956 Polish education:

There emerged an idea of education for the State, whereby the goals of education were an extension of the political aspirations of the State. Occasionally, the current of socio-political movements encompassing an entire society was offered as justification for those aspirations. Efforts were made to portray the movements as a spontaneous and voluntary rise of new social forces. In reality, the 'mass movements' were conceptions espoused by a small cadre who managed to win broad recognition of the values they propagated through vulgar propaganda and often through terror... (p. 197)

Educational Reforms in the Age of Etatism

There was another victory of etatism over socialisation, but this time the victory was more complete and overwhelming, and the consequences were more far-reaching, more devastating and longer-lasting. The great reform of schooling and education from 1968 to 1980 was realised by people who were products of that time and those educational models – people whose personalities were an authoritarian reflection of the “dual echo of war” (the impact of the war itself and the replica of fascism – the Stalinist dictatorship).

The consequences of those reforms and the causes of their failure were thoroughly analysed in numerous diagnostic and critical works. In my view, K. Dobrzyński's evaluation of the reform programme is particularly important and useful, for it is made from the historical perspective of the Polish educational Left. Dobrzyński writes that “the central assumptions underlying the reform programme as well as the detailed instructions for implementing reforms were beyond any criticism (p. 235)” and that “critical voices (which were never allowed to be published, anyway) in university circles were stifled and people who expressed critical opinions were harassed and persecuted. All this went on against the background of ecstatic praises and shows of admiration for the success of Polish education from hoards of conformists and flunkies. The resultant climate was that of pervasive pretence, mendacity and hypocrisy, and a growing chasm between ideas, words, and actions”. (p. 236)

Dobrzyński described the school envisaged in the reform programme as “tententiously antidemocratic”. The programme “precluded a large section of young Poles from acquiring the level and kind of education which was indispensable at the close of the 20th century, in the heart of Europe, and in a [supposedly] socialist country; this concerned particularly young people from rural regions and small towns, and from working-class ('uneducated') background”. Further, Dobrzyński

point out that “for those young [15-year-old] people whose level of intelligence was judged unsatisfactory, a separate programme was prepared and a separate network of schools⁷ established”.

As the result of the public opprobrium, the programme was halted in 1980. Dobrzyński regrets, however, that it was the case of throwing the baby out with the bath water, because the legitimate goal of extending the scope of and access to secondary education was abandoned accordingly. A similar opinion has been repeatedly voiced by M. Kozakiewicz.

What did the etatism of the reform consist in? On the one hand, beneath the veneer of new language, intellectual elegance and theoretical coherence was resurrected the old conception of an educational system – a system of moulding the youth into the roles which were arbitrarily assigned by the political centre and then translated into minute details of instruction, organisation, and teachers’ conduct by specialised “school methodologists”. In this way, school education (during classes and after school, in various “voluntary” youth organisations) became, or was supposed to become, the most crucial and most efficient means of political stabilisation and winning ideological acceptance. On the other hand, etatism meant the shaping of the school network, the school structure, the configuration of monitoring, controlling, managing and regulatory functions, and the choice of content material, in such a way as to turn education into the chief instrument of stabilising and reproducing the existing social structure.

Both strategic instruments of the etatistic system of role assignment and the self-reproductive system of schooling have effectively blocked the ability of the young generation to undertake autonomous social change.

The working-class explosion of protest in 1980 exposed the true goals as well as the actual and potential social consequences of this kind of manipulation. A question arose how to construct education and schooling which would be free from the faults of etatism, which would help to optimise the society’s development, and maximise individual development in the situation of general economic crisis, the crisis of values, degeneration of the “psychological infrastructure” of Polish schooling, and the appalling material condition of schools which had just been disclosed. A related question was how to achieve harmony between the processes of personalisation (the shaping of individual identity), socialisation and “encitization”?

Illustrative of the complexity of this situation and of the dangers involved is the following comment, by H. Muszyński (1983) who was one of the main authors of the system of education seen as role-assignment:

We cannot preclude the possibility that a society of systematically unified individuals could have been pronounced an ideal one. Suffice it to say that this planned,

⁷ The so-called „job-training schools”, teaching the simplest manual crafts (translator’s note).

systematic unification would have had to include making people experience happiness about living in that kind of world.

As I see it, the idea of a perfectly happy society composed of identical individuals could only be conceived in a warped mind. Only a diseased mind could assume that people would be willing to renounce all the things which humanity essentially is about: the right to personal dignity, the freedom to choose their own, individual path in life, the right to free, unhampered thought; the right to seek an individual, unique meaning in life, based on personal, spontaneous spiritual needs.

In this way, a man whose name became a byword for a system of etatistic education – the one which was most intellectually advanced and most widely and relentlessly implemented on the national scale – has not only repudiated the way the system was introduced to schools, but judged it harmful and feeble-minded. And it was precisely that “school of thought” that was once granted absolute priority, verging on monopoly.

This, however, still does not solve the problem of how to educate people towards their maximum potential, and so as to would make them useful for the society and the State at the same time. To my mind, some preliminary conditions must first be met, namely: the restoration of “the vision and hope” and a new legitimacy of the political and cultural structures which support, represent and fulfil them; but above all – economic normality⁸.

Translated by Piotr Kwieciński

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⁸ The paper was published in: *Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici, Socjologia Wychowania VIII – Nauki Humanistyczno-Społeczne*, No 216 (1990), and in *The sociopathology of education* (Wydawnictwo Naukowe DSW, Wrocław 2017); originally delivered at Jabłonna Conference in 1985.

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