

From ‘Parallel Society’ to Civil Society: surfacing from authoritarianism

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I want. I know. I can.

A poster in Kosova

‘Parallel society’ – a concept

In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville outlines three spheres of society. The first is the state, *i.e.* a system of elected bodies (national assembly, central government), law enforcement institutions (courts, police), central administrative authorities, army. The second is the so-called political society consisting of elected representation (local assemblies, local governments), juries, political parties. The third sphere is civil society comprising a plethora of associations organized in connection with individual interests and issues.

De Tocqueville, however, could not predict that this tripartite structure would not be found in societies governed by totalitarian or authoritarian communist regimes in the twentieth century. Citizens of “a partocratic and mythocratic state that embraced every walk of life” (Tismaneanu & Turner 1995:4) had yet to find their place.

A political society is a forum for the contest of power – at all levels of the state administrative apparatus and elected bodies; which in some countries are also within several spheres of state control (judges, prosecutors). In contrast to this, the actors of a civil society do not compete for political power; rather they are “checking and limiting the power of the state”. Civil society, it is believed, “stimulates political participation, develops a democratic culture of tolerance and bargaining, creates additional channels for articulating and representing interests, generates cross-cutting cleavages...” (Diamond 1996:xxiii). When there was no possibility of contesting power in the political society that then existed (*e.g.* in communist governed countries), and where civil society did also not exist, there was room for the so-called ‘parallel society’.

The concept of the ‘parallel society’ was outlined by the Czech philosopher Václav Benda in

late 1970s. He maintained that even a gentle form of opposition could, in due time, undermine the communist regime's omnipotent control over society. The goal of the *parallel polis* was “taking over... every space that state power has temporarily abandoned or which it has never occurred to it to occupy in the first place” (Benda 1988:218). As early as in the beginning of the 1990s, Di Palma (1991), following Benda's thought, predicted that the ‘parallel society’ could play an important role in an imminent civil society in post-Soviet Russia.

A Pole, Wiktor Kulerski, concisely described the goals of a parallel society as:

a situation in which authorities will control empty stores, but not the market; the employment of workers, but not their livelihood; the official media, but not the circulation of information; printing plants, but not the publishing movement; the mail and telephones, but not communications; and the school system, but not education.⁽¹⁾

In sociological and political science literature on Central and Eastern Europe it is often stressed that the Poles, Hungarians and to some extent the Czechs and even East Germans succeeded in defying their authoritarian governments. However, it seems that the most successful group in terms of actually implementing the concept of the parallel society were the Kosovars, at least for the few years which preceded the outbreak of war.

In 1989 the Yugoslav (read: Serbian) government, breaching its own constitution of 1974, cancelled the autonomy of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo. The services provided by the state were withdrawn. However, Kosovars refused to become subservient and instead started to organize their daily life activities by themselves. School education, health care, food distribution and other social services were run by those Albanians who had been dismissed from their jobs by the Serbian authorities.

Most of the formalized structures of the ‘parallel society’ were formally established in 1992 after an illegal parliamentary election. A newly established underground parliament, with representatives from the various political parties, sought that education be organized on all levels. Courses were provided for children and youths in private homes by jobless teachers.

By 1998, it was administering essential services to over 90 percent of the population... The entire apparatus was funded by a 3 percent tax that was levied on Albanians in Kosovo and by contributions from the Albanian Diaspora.⁽²⁾

This parallel society has been severely damaged by the forced expulsion of Kosovars and growing levels of emigration.

Because the state could not be effectively challenged, it was to be ignored. It is important to remember that the parallel society in this part of Europe was seen mainly as an alternative not an opposition vis à vis communist regimes (*cf.* Mastnak 1992). Thus, instead of trying to eliminate

state institutions people engaged in creating a parallel society advocated 'positive action': they created and broadened an open public sphere in which independent educational activities, cultural events, printing houses and the like were organized. A well known Polish dissident intellectual, Jacek Kuroń, referring to workers' riots in Poland in December 1970 when the communist party headquarters (the so-called 'party committees') were torched, argued in 1980: "stop burning down committees, let us build our own". Thus, the main body responsible for independent activity was named the Komitet Obrony Robotników (KOR – the Committee for the Defense of Workers).

The institutions of a parallel society were to undertake long-lasting work for the building of democracy, rather than plan for any immediate mobilization against authoritarian regimes. The already existing elements of civil society challenged state institutions at the grass-root's level. It required quite an extensive amount of work and much effort to cope with a multitude of different tasks. A parallel society needed specialists able to compose curricula and syllabi for underground educational courses; people competent in printing technology to publish hundreds of illegal journals and books as well as those who were committed enough to risk their freedom in order to distribute illegal publications; others who provided refuge or help for the persecuted, who acted as hosts to printing houses or offered their apartments for classes, courses and public (sic!) lectures. All this led to the building up of various communities of citizens which although limited in terms of their numbers, were nevertheless very committed, and which took the lead in public opinion formation.

To be or not to be... political

We want democracy – we don't want politics
(a slogan in Romania in 1989)

As the state's agencies were principally unresponsive to citizens, they – in turn – felt no loyalty to them. The omnipotent state apparatus expected three 'virtues' from Soviet citizens: obedience, fear, and habit. Severe penalties were imposed for unsanctioned political or social action. Thus, among the vices that could lead to an individual's condemnation, were included such things as having an independent mind, being frank or using one's own initiative. Political and civil rights were not respected by the state authorities while most citizens were not able, or willing, to demand them. During the Soviet era, grassroots' organizing was forbidden in general.

Thus, to avoid harassment from the authorities, people had to adjust to the 'rules of the game' laid upon them. Mimicry, obedience, hidden anti-political sentiments, became standard ways of behaving in public. Denial of critical and independent thinking was rewarded with increased levels of social security; some of those citizens who complied were rewarded with privileges within an economy where there was a shortage of goods.

In an authoritarian state it is not only the police, armed forces and judicial system, which moulds and controls citizens' minds and actions. In addition, all types of schools, all sorts of art (literature, film, painting, even theatre), and the mass media – all worked to shape the thinking of each individual citizen in the Soviet Union. All of these institutions were contributing to the

creation of the *Homo Sovieticus* with its attitudes, values and beliefs. Compulsory schools served this purpose quite well. Despite the main goal of Soviet education being to create an all-round personality with egalitarian ideas, living for the collective's good, in practice Soviet citizens were taught and trained in being subjugated to and dependent on the omnipotent state. After being exposed to the Soviet school system, and socialised by the labour market, many citizens became unable to act independently.

Educational provisions for adults in Warsaw Pact countries did not differ in their propagandistic objectives from compulsory education. Adult education was constantly and consistently used as a means to build the State's authority and to maintain it. Many adult education programmes were subjected to the direct control of the Agitation and Propaganda Sections of the Central Committees of communist parties for quite some time.

This kind of socialization made consecutive generations of citizens hostile to social and/or political activism – what is more, it also helped to develop a “purposeful and primary contempt for or hostility towards politics” (Jørgensen 1992:40f).

Havel sought ‘anti-political politics’, “not as the technology of power and manipulation... over humans... but as one of the ways of seeking and achieving meaningful lives, of protecting them and serving them”. He considered politics as a form of “practical morality, as service to the truth, as essentially human and humanly measured care for our fellow humans” (Havel 1988a:396f). Among the most popular methods used to achieve this goal were the production of underground publications and through illegal education, although ways of coping with the omnipotent state varied notably.

The ideal state of affairs which communist regimes dreamed of was a kind of unwritten contract, according to which

the citizen was not expected to interfere in public life, the State would guarantee a problem-free life, neither poor nor rich. To this end, the State would tolerate almost everything; a poor work ethic..., petty theft of communal property, irresponsible and inconsiderate behavior toward nature etc... This contract logically led to a moral corruption and disintegration of values (Willemans 2000).

Many communist governments used several coercive techniques as well as propaganda to achieve this ideal. To counteract this a variety of solutions were applied by conscious citizens who rejected being apathetic or permissive.

Breathing under water. In one of his earlier science fiction stories, the Polish writer Stanisław Lem, described a planet where inhabitants were coerced to live in water, or – if those in power could get what they wanted – under water. Another Polish writer and critic, Stanisław Barańczak, has summarised the story as follows:

Bubbling sounds were the only acceptable means of communication, the

official propaganda emphasized the advantages of being wet, and occasional breathing above water was considered almost a political offense... [Inhabitants] dreamed all the time about some dry place to live. But the propaganda still maintained that the fishlike way of life, especially breathing under water, was the highest ideal toward which every citizen should strive” (Barańczak 1983:491).

This almost comic-like situation was the actual experience of many people living under communist regimes.

'Internal emigration'. Often, the sense of frustration and hopelessness felt among the people led to indifference. Generation after generation of citizens retreated from public life. There was even a special term coined to describe this situation, namely 'internal emigration', as opposed to the external variety, when a person actually left his/her own country.

In several communist countries, increasing numbers of citizens eventually returned from 'internal emigration' and undertook public action. Their first experience of it often came in the form of gaining access to underground publications (*tamizdat* and especially *samizdat*) or through participation in illegal educational and cultural activities.

Some other solutions, which required the conscious decisions of individual citizens, are mentioned below.

Benda's 'parallel polis'. Václav Benda, a Czech mathematician and Catholic philosopher, one of the Charter 77 spokesmen, advanced the concept of the 'parallel polis' in 1978. Prior to this, most of the intellectual dissidents in the Warsaw Pact countries were occupied with cultural, censorship and free speech issues. Benda's concept was a broader one; it contained “an uncensored information system, popular music, unofficial education and scholarship, and the so-called second or black-market economy” (Skilling 1988:212).

When analysing the destructive policies of communist regimes Benda observed the fact, that the so-called 'Iron Curtain' did not only exist between Eastern and Western Europe(s), but also successfully alienated people from the Eastern European countries. Thus, one of the tasks for dissenting citizens, would be

to tear down or corrode these miniature iron curtains, to break through the communications and social blockades, to return to truth and justice, to a meaningful order of values, to value once more the inalienability of human dignity and ... responsibility... (Benda 1988:218)

both in their own countries and across the political borders of that part of Europe.

Comparing developments in Czechoslovakia between 1977 and 1988 Benda described the following:

the repressions have certainly not become milder, but their psychological effect has essentially changed. In the mid-1970s, the persecution of a handful of people was enough to frighten and warn off thousands of others. Today, on the contrary, every political trial is a moral challenge for dozens of other citizens who feel responsible for taking the place of those who are temporarily silenced (Benda 1988:219f).

This change of attitude can be partly attributed to Charter 77 protest actions and publications. Both showed the people of Czechoslovakia the value, and importance, of building up a parallel polis.

Milan Šimečka, a Czech political theorist from Bratislava stressed, that the most immediate goal for dissidents was to save “Czech and Slovak culture from degeneration, to save language from mindless phrases and memory from forgetting” Šimečka 1988:225). Eventually, “the awareness of a wider task emerged... [:] the creation of islands of plurality that may become a prefiguration of a pluralistic society” (*ibid.*).

Ivan M. Jirous, a Czech art historian, pointed out that the parallel polis “establishes, or rather renews, relationships that, in return, give its members the dignity of participating in decisions that concern the community” (Jirous 1988:227).

Havel's 'living in truth'. Václav Havel, a Czech playwright and essayist, was one of the earliest spokesman of Charter 77. The notion of ‘living in truth’ was presented in his essay entitled *Power of the Powerless* (1985). Like Benda, and many other Chartists, Havel stressed the moral realm of their activities. Moreover, he believed in it as strongly in 1988, as he did in the mid-1970s:

it is probably not true to say that there is a small enclave of ‘completely independent’ people here in an ocean of ‘completely dependent people’ with no interaction between them. There is an enclave of ‘relatively independent’ ones who persistently, gradually, and inconspicuously enrich their ‘relatively dependent’ surroundings through the spiritually liberating and morally challenging meaning of their own independence, thus strengthening in those surroundings that small sphere of independence that remains or that it has been able to preserve. Ultimately, therefore, even such an enclave of ‘relative independence’, despite the fact that it is only an enclave, and despite the relativity of its independence, is important for the whole of society and contributes to the spread of independence throughout society (Havel 1988b:237).

Michnik's 'new evolutionism'. The term coined by the Polish intellectual Adam Michnik,⁽³⁾ urged citizens to create all possible types of publications, associations, educational and cultural activities – all parallel to state-party institutions but independent of state control. There were no debates about seizing political power; the struggle concerned the soul of the nation, not the state’s administration.

Michnik's 'new evolutionism' was important because from the time of its publication, and the subsequent debates, the intellectual opposition in Poland changed the addressee for its petitions, proclamations and work. From that time, the main target group for those dissidents became society at large and not the so-called 'liberals' within the communist party. The focus was put on learning how to self-organize various activities: educational, cultural, and self-helping.

Konrad's 'anti-politics'. György Konrad, the Hungarian sociologist and writer, developed the concept of 'antipolitics'. According to him, it referred to "the political activity of those who don't want to be politicians and who refuse to share in power" (Konrad 1984:230). It was a generally shared attitude of rejecting politics. It was a quite natural reaction from people living in countries where almost every sphere of life was made political.

No wonder then, that some dissenting or free-thinking citizens decided to "snatch fragments of public life out of the communist party's control" (Smolar 1989, after: Jørgensen 1992:34) whether they be educational, social, cultural or even economic.

Illegal adult education. One of the most successful examples of the "snatching" of a fragment of public life out of the communist's control took place in the late 1970s in Poland. The sphere of life which was reclaimed from the authoritarian state was adult education. Based on a long-lasting tradition of illegal educational work, Poles organized a number of study circles, lectures, seminars; they even opened a clandestine folk high school and carried out various pieces of empirical research.

Much of the illegal education in the 1970s was focused on presenting a history other than the one taught in school curricula, on explaining the need for value-building, laying the ground for a political culture, and discussing co-operation and solidarity across political boundaries. Much attention was devoted to explaining human and civil rights and to preparing people to use them. It was taught, and learned, that people on becoming citizens could and should use rights. A key notion was *empowerment* not power. Eventually, in the 1980s, the demand of reclaiming power from communist governments was put on the agenda.

Thanks to the growing number of *samizdat* publications and illegal educational activities, dissidents could prove that society under a communist government was not as defenceless and powerless as many believed. All these activities challenged the communist regimes' attempts to maintain control over societies and their monopoly of power and truth.

Contemporary outcomes

(Un)democratic citizens

Living under authoritarian regimes for decades has undoubtedly had an impact on the attitudes, values and abilities of individual citizens and the society at large. One of the measures of the degree of political culture and the strength of democratic values is the concept of political tolerance, *i.e.* the question whether citizens will tolerate political activity by their opponents.

Tolerance is generally believed to be a primary component of democratic politics (*cf.* Dahl 1989). Citizens of the so-called ‘new democracies’ have, thus, not had much to rely on. Their political culture stems from their pre-democratic experiences.

Several studies undertaken by the American political scientist James Gibson deserve attention. In one of them, conducted in the early 1990s, he found that the level of tolerance in Russia was strikingly low:

large majorities of the respondents [were] unwilling to extend political rights to their most hated enemies... Virtually no respondents would allow their hated political enemies all these means of competing for political power. It is difficult to imagine a political culture with more widespread political intolerance (Gibson 1995:83).⁽⁴⁾

During the whole post-war period (1945–1989/1992) there existed a kind of ‘social contract’ between the state and the citizen. According to this contract the citizens ‘adapted themselves’ by giving up their civil liberties. In exchange the state guaranteed job security and a gradual rise in living standards (*cf.* Rupnik 1988). However, today, in many post-socialist countries, after experiencing the burdens of creating a market economy, many impoverished people long for that ‘contract’.

Another foreign researcher, the British sociologist Richard Rose (1994) pointed to the results of public opinion surveys conducted across the whole of the Russian Federation using a representative sample. This research showed that almost 70 per cent of the interviewees did not trust the key institutions of civil society. How, then, does one build a well functioning civil society when the citizens themselves have no confidence in its institutions? When these institutions are seen not as a guardian of their rights and safety but as a direct menace to jurisprudence and fair treatment?

Even today, surveys conducted among citizens from Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States and the Balkans, provide no reason for optimism. Civic activism and engagement is perceived by many citizens in these countries as being a private matter. It will take some more time before any commitment to the public good will be seen as a norm in a civilized society.

(Re)-education for democracy

This type of political regime used to have an effect on the premises under which adult education functioned. The education legislation stipulated by democratic governments, and their allocation policies, usually differ from those exerted by authoritarian ones.

During the seven decades of the Soviet regime, citizens were discouraged from undertaking, or even showing, any initiative, especially in their social and political lives. The school system particularly was under the constant surveillance of the state authorities. Teachers, within all spheres and at all levels of the education system, were actively discouraged from taking individual initiatives. Their main role was to be an *učitel'-ispolnitel'* (teacher-fulfiller) (Webber

2000:80). Eventually, the state succeeded in making its citizens reluctant to take responsibility. All too many citizens found it safer to stick to their own business and stay away from other issues.

In 1920, Lenin declared that “the entire purpose of training, educating, and teaching the youth of today should be to imbue them with communist ethics... The School apart from life, apart from politics, is a lie and a hypocrisy” (quoted in Sweeney 1993). The expected result was that a “Soviet citizen... should think and act in accordance with the dictates of the Party” (*ibid.*). This total submission of the school system to ideological demands and the propagandistic curricula that flowed from them has had a long-lasting impact on how people see and regard the educational system today.

[T]he Soviet State used the country's educational system, including non formal adult education, consistently and explicitly, to achieve its ideological goals (Morgan & Kljutcharev 2001:226).

Understanding the societal role of adult education might be facilitated by recognizing that in the Soviet Union and its dependent countries, adult education was an important agent of political socialisation within a political culture that differed significantly from the political cultures found in democratic countries.

In all of these countries, various organisations, institutions and associations could reach the individual with their programmes either at his or her work place, in his or her neighbourhood, or during his or her leisure time. This was all usually done on a gigantic scale. What was characteristic of this mass indoctrination through adult education was the fact that, despite the variety of messengers, the message was almost always the same, and the actual ‘message-sender’ was also always the same, namely the state as ‘owned’ by the communist party. Thus, in practice, all of these various organizations played the role of being transmitters of the CPSU programme to society. For many decades the communist parties succeeded in occupying all of the individual’s spheres of activity in an attempt to preclude alternate sources of socialisation.

In authoritarian states it is not only the media, army, and police which socialize to a governing ideology, but schools also contribute to the maintenance of this ideology. When new rules of government were introduced, schools had to undergo significant changes. From being a tool for suppression and coercion, it is now believed, that the school should be transformed into a *chram dobra* (a temple of good).

During the 1900s, adult education changed its role in many European countries. From serving as a means to achieve a democratic political system it subsequently became an agent to maintain democracy. In the case of Russia the development is quite different. After seven decades of an initial totalitarian and then later, authoritarian political system, adult education is now expected to fulfil both historical tasks at the same time.

Many Russian educationalists, as well as foreign researchers, wonder if adult education can contribute to raising citizens' willingness to actively participate in the social and political life of the society? Can it play any role in changing people's minds? And what is the state of people's minds?

There is an interesting hypothesis, which has been proved to some extent, that the level of education is a good way to foretell the individual's degree of tolerance: those who are better educated tend to be more tolerant. Interestingly, most of the empirical research which proves this assertion was carried out in Western societies, that is, those with relatively democratic, tolerant forms of governance. The hypothesis is based on two assertions: (a) the higher the level of education one obtains, the longer he/she is exposed to democratic norms and values that characterize Western educational systems; (b) "More education increases the likelihood that an individual will consume more information from the media, will be critical of the media, and will seek compensatory information from informal social contacts" (Remington 1988:203). Two American political scientists, with a long history of conducting empirical research in the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation, rightly ask the following questions: "what of systems with norms that are ambiguous or antithetical toward democratic tolerance? What of systems that encourage citizens to be intolerant, especially of the enemies of the polity?" (Gibson & Duch 1993:288).

Naturally, there are several other variables which have an impact on predicting levels of tolerance, *e.g.* whether or not there is a really existing or apprehended threat from outside, the level of expressed or felt support for democratic norms, individual feelings of insecurity, explicit ideological conservatism (*cf.* Gibson & Duch 1993).

Based on two surveys of public opinion conducted by themselves in 1990, Gibson and Duch proved that political intolerance was quite common among Soviet citizens. They also concluded that the level of education played "an especially interesting role, contributing to support for more general democratic values, but not directly to political tolerance" (Gibson & Duch 1993:286).

Many political scientists, sociologists, and not least, educationalists, assert that citizens build their value systems through a process of so-called social learning. This term

refers to a process by which individuals acquire their values, standards, and views about public affairs through their interaction with particular subcultures and social environments which reward or 'reinforce' them for beliefs and conduct approved by society and punish them for beliefs and conduct not approved by society (or significant segments of it) (McClosky & Brill 1983:28).

In the case of authoritarian regimes, the fact that someone has been exposed to their school systems can lead to other results, however. Those who obtained a higher level of education have been longer exposed to the given state's system of norms – which in the case of the Soviet Union and similar regimes – meant exposure to a system which did not advocate tolerance.

The Bolshevik style of politics has been characterized as one of crushing one's enemies, not simply defeating them. Moreover, there is a long-standing Soviet tendency toward rigidly defining groups and political movements as either

friends or enemies, with little distance lying between the two extreme categories”(Gibson & Duch 1993:290, n. 6).

Still, it can be assumed that the more higher education one receives, the broader knowledge and greater number of ideas one has been exposed to. This assumption is especially valid for those who obtained a university degree. Universities, even in the communist countries, used to teach individual's to question rather than to accept given interpretations.

Based on their empirical research findings, Gibson and Duch thus, came to the exciting conclusion that:

Perhaps what we are observing here reflects an interactive effect of education. That is, education increases support for democratic values not directly but by imparting skills that allow one to consume information and understand the world, especially during periods of rapid political change. For this effect to be felt, however, the highly educated must have access to information (Gibson & Duch 1993:312).

Gibson and Duch did not observe the immediate

effect of education on political tolerance, but some indirect effect... and support for general democratic values... These indirect effects show just how broadly education can affect political values. Not only are the better educated more open-minded, but they are also more supportive of general democratic values and less materialistic (Gibson & Duch 1993:312).

Several authors stress that free, intuitive rich citizens are a precondition for a well functioning civil society. In relation to this, there are two ways to secure their existence, and required number. First, a system of civic education designed for all categories and age cohorts of the population; second, by ensuring the appropriate grounds (legal, financial, practical) for associative activities of the citizenry. Oddly enough, while the latter means has spread across the whole region, *i.e.* of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the former is clearly absent. From the perspective of building and maintaining civil society, adult education in the post-communist countries is offering irrelevant courses and contents (*cf.* Bron [forthcoming]).

Conclusions – predicting the future

During the communist period no independent organization or institution was permitted to mediate between the individual citizen and the authority of the state and communist party. It was the ruling party which solely represented the interests of all citizens. It was the same party which

outlined the limits of citizens' activism. There was no room for the citizen's own initiatives. In the case of the Soviet Union three generations, while in other countries of the region – two generations, of citizens were exposed to these communist regimes.

In both the period under the communists, as well as in the last decade, many ordinary citizens have tried to live ordinary lives in extraordinary times; they have attempted to deal with the problems of not only physical but also emotional survival.

The process of surfacing from authoritarianism started with breaking down the state's monopoly in various spheres of public life. In most of the countries of the region, citizens' associations were rather weak. Very few of the NGOs established at that time were strong enough to influence state policies. In some countries they had no chance against the high levels of violence and hatred encountered.

Even if the NGOs had been more developed and powerful, “no civil society has the strength to withstand tribal or ethnic warfare once the state loses its capacity to maintain order” (Ignatieff1995:135). Many inter-ethnic clashes occurred during the 1990s in almost all post-communist countries. The case of the former Yugoslavia is the most telling example:

If ... order depends on the rule-enforcing capacities of the nation-state, then the paradoxical conclusion is that the best way to promote a democratic civil society in failed or fragile states (from the Balkans to the Caucasus) is in fact... state-building (Rupnik 2000:70).⁽⁵⁾

Almost ten years ago I tried to predict how civil society, and adult education, would develop in the countries which had just freed themselves from communist regimes (Bron 1994). The then pessimistic observations seem to be still valid; at least in some countries and to some extent.

In the last decade (adult) education in the East and Central European and Balkan countries has been sharing its fate with the destiny of the societies in which it operates. Citizens active in the 1970s and 1980s in combating, or at least ignoring, the omnipotent presence of the state struggled for social justice and against *π λ ο υ τ ο κ ρ α τ ι α* (plutocracy), *i.e.* rule by the wealthy: those of influence, those rich in money, opulent in access to information, in short, those plentifully furnished with possibilities to make an impact upon large sectors of a population if not the whole society. The ultimate goal of those struggles was *δ η μ ο κ ρ α τ ι α* (democracy), *i.e.* rule by the people, as opposed to rule over the people. However, what can now be observed in many countries of the region is far from it. If we do not have to deal with civil war or the threat of it, we instead face the menace of dissolving state structures, growing inter-ethnic hatred, or hostilities between different regions. The number of Mr Nicolas Chauvin's disciples (*i.e.* chauvinists) has increased dramatically. Contrary to previous diagnoses and warnings, communist regimes did not altogether manage to ‘wash people's brains’ nor ‘captivate people's

minds'. Observing the increasing inter-ethnic and inter-regional tensions one can only conclude that all the pre-war (*i.e.* pre-communist) ugliness and filth remained undisturbed.

In many countries of the region we can observe a similar socio-political (psychological?) phenomenon, namely a visible withering of social and individual participation and engagement. The ultimate risk with this is that it can lead to rather un-democratic practices. The people's lack of interest in showing any form of individual concern often encourages an eagerness for the strengthening of an executive power. For it will guarantee a more efficient mode of governing and will give people the necessary 'time for maturing'. The societies of East and Central Europe and the Balkan countries are, apparently, not yet ready to accept or even perceive the newly established, democratic rules as a 'common good' – commonly shared and, if necessary, commonly protected. One can also observe an interesting phenomenon, namely, that those in power 'grow up' quicker than the people. History does not therefore provide many examples where the populace has been recognized as being mature enough to take over its rightful position.

Freedom, sovereignty, democracy, pluralism do not automatically solve problems, conflicts, disparities etc. What we, from time to time, can observe is how a 'tyranny of the majority' exercises its power. Henri Benjamin Constant de Rebeque (1767-1830) expressed a general concern that, from the point of view of the individual, it makes no difference whether s/he is tyrannized by a single despot or by the totality of individuals composing his/her society. S/he is oppressed just the same. The latter is even worse: assassins might rescue him/her from a despot, while...

One can predict three possible developments in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the Balkans:

(a) the current situation of labile balance will last. There is an even chance of keeping a reasonable equilibrium between the awakened expectations of the people and the politicians' abilities (and possibilities) to meet them;

(b) today's tyranny of the majority will evolve into a full ο χ λ ο κ ρ α τ ι α [ohlocracy], *i.e.* rule by the mob. It will obviously be the most painful scenario for those who are not a part of the 'majority'. As H.B. Constant stressed, if the will of the majority is to be supreme, everyone will be at its mercy;⁽⁶⁾

(c) the third way, the one which is the longest and steepest, is a turn towards democracy, where political struggles and election campaigns would be run in somewhat more cultivated forms; where the rule of law will be in force; where different minorities will have their rights protected by law and respected by fellow citizens.

As far as (adult) education is concerned one can predict that on each of these roads education will certainly be used for good causes as well as being abused. The precondition of a working democracy is a well-educated and well-informed society.

Notes

- (1) Quoted in: Lawrence, W. Reed 1987: "The Polish underground", *The Freeman*, vol. 37:12 [available at: <http://www.libertyhaven.com/countriesandregions/poland/polishunderground.html>]
- (2) The Advocacy Project 2000: *Preserving the spirit of the parallel society* [available at: <http://www.ddh.nl/fy/kosova/opinions/2000/parallel2703.html>]
- (3) This concept was first presented to the Western public in Paris, in October 1976. For an English translation of the essay "The new evolutionism" see Michnik 1985, pp. 135-148.
- (4) Interestingly, the same respondents showed less intolerance when asked about their attitudes towards people other than their political opponents. The only other group which evoked a strong intolerant reaction were the ethnic minorities.
- (5) This is not so very paradoxical. While previously studying adult education in Yugoslavia, I maintained a hypothesis that the only chance for this country was to develop what I coined a 'statehood identity'. Obviously, educational provisions for adults would play an important role in achieving this goal (cf. Bron Jr, Michał 1985: *Adult Education and (Dis)integration Processes in Yugoslavia*. Uppsala Reports on Education 22, Uppsala; see also: Bron Jr, Michał 1985: *Education and Multi-Cultural Societies. The case of Yugoslavia*. Institute of International Education Working Papers Series No 96, Stockholm; Bron Jr, Michał 1992: "Lost identity. The decline of adult education in Yugoslavia". [In:] *Education in East/Central Europe*. Ed. by Arild Tjeldvoll, Oslo 1992, pp. 331-349).
- (6) Several decades after Constant, Lenin, in his *State and Revolution*, described democracy as 'an organized use of coercion'.

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