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# Polish Shades of Green

## Green Ideas and Political Powers in Poland

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# Introduction

In Western Europe, Green parties are a regular element of the political scene, in their countries as well as in the European Union. Originating as parties of protest and extra-parliamentary opposition, they have joined mainstream structures, often assuming responsibility for co-government. Their beginnings are connected with the events of 1968 and the wave of new social movements born in the wake of the revolt. In the countries of the then Socialist block 1968 did not possess this dimension. Green parties began to form much later, and in a different political reality – in the climate of democratic transformation initiated in 1989.

The "new" EU member countries are attributed with certain shared experiences, described as the "post-Communist syndrome", which is often used to explain the weakness of Green political powers in the states of the "New Union". At the same time, it is increasingly difficult to find a common denominator, as far as the results of the Greens' activity in the "new" EU countries are concerned: in a few post-Communist countries the Greens managed to enter national parliaments, and even structures of government (the Czech Republic, Estonia), while in others – such as Poland – they have not yet found their place.

After 20 years of democratic transformation, the situation of Green political powers in Poland remains ambiguous. Over the recent years, there has been an apparent trend of absorbing environmental, freedom and equality views into collective consciousness and of a growing presence of certain green demands in the media and the political discourse. It seems that the demand for Green politics has been on the increase, which, nevertheless, does not translate into increasing popularity of Green movements and initiatives, or increasing support for the existing Green political powers. The only Green party currently active in Poland, Zieloni 2004, is practically absent from public debate, from public awareness and electoral preferences. Analysis of the Polish political scene after 1989 does not provide generally available data about the development of Green movements and initiatives, neither at present, nor in the last 20 years.

Our publication, devoted to the history and the present of the Green movements and initiatives created in Poland after 1989, fills this gap and attempts to find answers for the question about the future of Green politics. The publication stems from the research ordered in 2008 by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and coordinated by Przemysław Sadura. The research concerned the prevailing reception of Green ideas and perception of Green political powers by the Polish society. On its bases, the Author analysed the Greens' chances of finding a permanent place on the Polish political scene.

The research results presented in the publication are embedded in a broader historical and geographical context. The publication is therefore a look – from a Green perspective - at the past 20 years of democratic transformation, and at the same time it "captures the moment", constitutes a "shorthand report" of the ongoing public discussion about Green initiatives and political powers in the Polish and the European context. The invited authors include sociologists, political scientists and journalists associated with Zieloni 2004, as well as observers of the Polish political scene unconnected with the Greens. Consequently, the publication manages to present several "shades" of Green, various perceptions of Green ideas and demands as well as different interpretations of their significance for modernising Polish and European politics.

Next to Ewa Charkiewicz's reflections about the development of Green political powers and social movements close to them, the publication presents a text by Adam Ostolski analysing sources of differences and similarities between Green parties in the East and the West of Europe, as well as articles presenting Green policies regarding current issues and events in the Polish political and economic reality, such as Maciej Gdula's text focusing on the local and the global dimension of the Greens, or reflections about Green modernisation by Edwin Bendyk. The self-image of Zieloni 2004, its current situation and perspectives of development are outlined by their co-chairpersons, Agnieszka Grzybek and Dariusz Szwed; Agnieszka Graff and Jacek Żakowski, in interviews conducted especially for the publication, concentrate on reasons for the currently limited popularity of the Polish Greens, and on their chances for emerging on the Polish political scene in the future.

The question whether there is a demand for Green politics, and whether Green political powers do stand a chance of entering mainstream politics, is an element shared by all the authors. The responses, though cautiously optimistic, discuss the barriers facing Green policies, originating from the development of the social and political situation in Poland, and from the development of the Polish Greens themselves. At the same time, they indicate possibilities of overcoming those barriers. In this context, the texts presented in the publication contribute to continuation and deepening of the discussion about the significance of Green politics for future modernisation of Poland – the discussion we hope to initiate with this publication.

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Brussels / Warsaw, December 2008.

# 1. Green politics in a post-political society

Przemysław Sadura,
Agnieszka Kwiatkowska

Over the last 25 years, in the countries of old and - after 1989 - new Europe, Green parties have won a strong position. They have seats in parliaments, participate in government, have a strong representation in the European Parliament as well as in the authorities of the continent's largest cities. So far, Poland has been a blank spot on the Green map of Europe. The objective of the research conducted by the Heinrich Böll Foundation in cooperation with the ARC Rynek i Opinia research agency was to reveal the social reception of "Green demands and ideas" and explain the reasons for the weak condition of the Green movements in Poland. The aim, therefore, was to define the scope of political attitudes consistent with the Green programme, and then to describe the major actors implementing this programme. The findings showed that none of the Green non-governmental organisations and social movements were credited by the respondents with being political actors. There are political parties perceived as "ecological", though they have little in common with Green politics (Polish People's Party – Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL), as well as those seeming to implement some of the Green demands (Women's Party – Partia Kobiet), but one can hardly describe them as "ecological". Zieloni 2004 can be characterised as having the largest share in the ecological political market, as well as loyalty towards Green ideals. Unfortunately, this might be its only claim to glory. Zieloni 2004 – the only Polish political party affiliated to the European Green Party (EGP) – has not as yet won any significant support, and operates on the margins of political life. Hence, a new question arose during the research: what are the chances for Zieloni 2004 and other Green organisations to join mainstream politics?

### Political cartelisation and a thought embargo

When asked directly, Poles do not conceal their disappointment in the existing offer of the political scene, and they await the emergence of "new players". Their dream would be a party of "idealist people", who "do not look for their own gain", are well educated, have "ready ideas", bring in "a breath of fresh air" - a "party full of new faces". [1]

At first glance Zieloni 2004 seems to live up to those characteristics. Its members describe themselves as a group of people with different backgrounds who consider the following as their basic values: respect for human rights, abiding by the principles of balanced social, environmental and economic growth (Zieloni 2004, *The Green Manifesto*). Therefore, in the Polish conditions, they can be considered a party with a new profile, abiding by the principles of the Green Politics – the ideology of the Greens worldwide. Their delegates to party congresses are far younger than activists of other parties (the average age of 32, compared to 37-43 in other parties), there are more women amongst them (40%, compared to 10%), and they are better educated: in 2008, as many as 80% had an academic education.[2] Among party members there are academics, publicists, artists. Almost a half of them had earlier experiences with social or political activity, mainly in non-governmental organisations. Thus Zieloni 2004 combines all the characteristics desired by voters. Why is it so difficult for Zieloni 2004 to bring the party's message across to a broader public?

Until quite recently, fatalistic predictions that the Polish political scene would be defined in the long term by a "principal division without a principal difference", could have seemed exaggerated. Today, the opinion about cartelisation of the political system has become universally recognised. In the last parliamentary election, the entire political range was reduced to two options: PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość - Law and Justice Party) and anti-PiS. Voters were forced to choose "the lesser evil". The only parties left, apart from the battling giants, are the SLD and the PSL, melting away, both merely managing to pass the election threshold. None of the leading parties introduce fresh ideas, innovative concepts, new faces into Polish political life. The parties currently outside the parliament could do that, but the threshold for entering the political system has been estab-

1 Qualitative research by focus group interview in July and August 2008 was conducted by the ARC Rynek i Opinia research agency, ordered by the Heinrich Böll Foundation. The respondents included students and persons from the generation of thirty- and forty-year-olds, declaring willingness to vote for a party devoted to protection of the environment. The research was conducted in Katowice and Warsaw. In the text, the quotes without reference are derived from the respondents' opinions.

2 Questionnaire research conducted by Agnieszka Kwiatkowska at the three Zieloni 2004 congresses during the years 2004-2008; comparative data: Mirosława Grabowska, Tadeusz Szawiel, *Anatomia elit politycznych*, Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw, Warsaw 1993.

lished at too high a level. This does not concern the required 5% support, but rather hundreds of thousands of signatures required before submitting lists of candidates; a very limited access to public and commercial media; not being quoted in the polls; lack of financing from the budget; and limitations concerning fundraising by public collection. Thus even the most dynamic and interesting initiatives have little chance of putting their message across. Partia Kobiet learned that painful lesson during the last election. The Polish political scene has become petrified: it is not the economy, but politics, which proved to be the least innovative sector in our country.

Not everything can be explained by the level of openness of the party system. Another problem is the voters' reluctance to embrace new ideas. Their awareness is shaped by the ideas present in public discourse, which has, since 1989, been constructed under the dictate of the powers of economic liberalism and cultural conservatism. Anything beyond the thus created "normality" has been subject to *Denkverbot* – the thought embargo, i.e. the inability to go beyond the paradigm defined by the liberal-conservative hegemony. Stigmatisation of subsequent renegades has been underway: feminists have been demonised, gays – turned into "Jews", trade union members have been branded *homo sovieticus*, and environmentalists persecuted as eco-terrorists or enemies of progress. Little surprise, that in such conditions – and with no established new social movements, which in the West had been developing since 1968 – the combination of liberal outlook, environmentalism and social sensitivity presented by Zieloni 2004 proved too marginalising a juxtaposition to win broad recognition.

The conducted research indicates that a large segment of Polish voters demands policies taking into account the interests of the underprivileged, another group supports gender parity in political bodies, another still reckons that growth cannot take place at the expense of nature. However, it proved problematic to isolate acceptance for all three main elements of "Green identity": a pro-environmental attitude, liberalism as far as world-views are concerned and socialism in the area of the economy. Poles are unable to combine those dimensions into one, and they view the Green party as purely ecological.[3]

Complaining about legal barriers, unfriendly media and an ignorant public is a constant repertoire of explanations offered by small parties in the face of an election defeat. A political party must, more than anything, find a way to operate in the prevailing conditions, and not deliberate about the conditions which would suit it best. From this point of view, Zieloni 2004, as other organisations focusing on ecology, is not without a chance. Environmental issues are becoming increasingly popular in Poland. At the moment, 15% of respondents consider those issues among the most important ones, and 25% of Poles declare a will to vote for a party with environmental protection as one of its key programme elements. Zieloni 2004 is the political brand most associated with ecology, but the party utilises only a small proportion of its "Green potential". Is it possible to reach for more?

## Politics without politics

Critics of liberal democracy indicate that its legitimising theory is flawed with the utopian vision of politics without conflict. Eulogists of consensus assume that unanimity is natural and that competition breeds unnecessary and destabilising conflicts. Is it only them, though? Such a supposition would have to be based on the assumption that a post-political system operates without post-political voters. Are citizens really weary of constantly choosing "the lesser evil"; do they eagerly await an opportunity to free themselves from the perception that modern politics offers no emotions? The results of several recent elections and opinion polls indicate otherwise.

Twenty years of post-political democracy – with a brief episode of populist backlash – have created a post-political electorate. The voters, and certainly the pro-environmental, middle class voters, are more appreciative of consensus and accord than of antagonism. Furthermore, they declare to be happy, optimistic, open and flexible. According to research by CBOS, the number of such optimists is increasing consistently, regardless of whether it concerns satisfaction with life (from about 53% in 1994 to 67% in 2007), general living conditions (from 24% to 47% in the same period), or income and financial situation (from 9% to 24%). The Polish middle class is a post-political Prozac generation. This does not mean

3 Based on a telephone poll ordered by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, conducted in May 2008 by the ARC Rynek i Opinia research agency, on a representative sample of 1,600 inhabitants of Poland. The quotes without reference are derived from this research.

that its members worry about nothing, but that they look for solutions improving individual satisfaction. It is usually assumed that the potential Green electorate are students from the largest academic centres, but a poll shows that they are usually a bit older: thirty- and forty-year-olds with academic education, living in large cities, whose interest in ecology stems from concern for quality of life for themselves and their children. Consequently, we decided to include both segments in our focus group interviews.

Younger voters reckon that "at present, their interests are not represented". This is not the first research reflecting young people's sense of alienation. The problem is, however, that students do not indicate any group interests they want represented by political parties. They do not see many problems to be solved politically. An important issue is environmental degradation, but counteracting it requires "a change of attitudes among citizens" (segregating waste etc.), and it "ought to be dealt with by non-governmental organisations". There is little tolerance in Poland, and many groups experience discrimination: sexual and ethnic minorities, women, the disabled. The solution is, once again, a "change of mentality", which ought to be taken care of by the school.

What party would they like to vote for? One "the Church does not interfere with", "combining experience with a young ideal". They reckon "there is no one to vote for", "basically the same gobs all the time", and "there is a need for a party ensuring a political renewal". Are they, indeed, fed up with the status quo? Which party did they vote for? The Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO). Strange choice for someone looking for a party distancing itself from the Church and promoting new ideas and people. They voted for the PO, because they were fed up with PiS ("I do not identify with the party, I just chose the lesser evil"), or by way of a "mechanical civil impulse", according to the principle that it is better to vote for an imperfect party than not to vote at all. They are not happy with the PO's actions, they criticise its passivity, nondescriptiveness, and indistinctness. However, when asked about characteristics discouraging them from voting for particular parties, next to too much leadership and barratry, they quote... "too much distinctness" and "radicalism".

Not only do the young shun from defining themselves as "left wing" or "right wing"; they do not want to define themselves at all. They want "new faces, but with experience". They demand new subjects in public debate, but "without exaggeration". In their eyes, too strong ideals are suspicious. One of the respondents mentioned ethical problems with eating meat, because, for example, "those same substances can be obtained from other sources". Even in this case, he had to add: "obviously, I would not opt for giving up meat entirely". Nothing can be done entirely, decisively, definitely. The young want products deprived of their substance – a "revolution without a revolution", coffee without caffeine, crisps without fat and politics without ideals.

## Do whatever you please

The group of pro-environmental thirty- and forty-year-olds is different from students. Its members can identify themselves as a generation (e.g. as the "do whatever you please generation"), they have more defined views and are interested in politics. Not only can they articulate their needs, but they are capable of indicating the political institutions they consider responsible for satisfying those needs. This, however, does not mean that they are an electorate of a profoundly idealistic party. Slavoj Žižek would probably describe them as "liberal Communists": "buy green, recycle... as if taking ecology into account justifies capitalist exploitation".[4] They believe excessive radicalism to be inadmissible, but they set limits in a different place: "introducing gender parity in the parliament is no radical idea". It is worse with the demands of gays and lesbians, towards which they feel instinctive aversion. A modicum of tolerance for all minority groups, equal rights for women, separation of the state and the Church, even taxing the latter, are obvious to them, to a certain extent. They support liberalisation of the anti-abortion law, they would welcome punishment for doctors illegally refusing to perform abortion or prenatal tests, they demand introduction of sexual education into schools.

Protection of the environment is very important and it requires changes in political institutions, as well as in attitudes. Political institutions, "the entire chain: local authorities - the parliament – the government", ought to get involved in protecting the environment, improving the situation of

4 Slavoj Žižek, *W obronie przegranych spraw [In Defence of Lost Causes]*, Wydawnictwo "Krytyki Politycznej", Warsaw 2008, p. 396.

women and improving the quality of public services. The lack of a pro-environmental policy is a symptom of the country's backwardness, since "all those technologies, e.g. plastic bottles, arrived in Poland at the very time everybody else was switching to glass (...), we remain... two steps behind". Therefore, development of a green economy and energy production is a key issue, though it must serve growth and modernisation. The state ought to simultaneously support development of renewable energy sources and atomic energy, since "everybody around is doing it, and we are the only ones fearful of it for some reason", with a "trauma after Chernobyl". "Environmentalism" of this group is shallow and conformist (they want glass bottles and atomic energy plants, because people have them in the West), but it may translate into electoral preferences.

Although pro-ecological attitudes and the liberal outlook of the present thirty– and forty-year-olds bring them very close to Zieloni 2004, there seems to be less convergence as far as views about the economy are concerned. At best, the respondents show moderate sympathy for social-liberal solutions, such as development of public services. High quality of medical services seems to bear the most significance for them. They support higher contributions towards the state health service, but in case there is no perceivable improvement, the system "should be privatised, so that we do not pay twice". Similarly, pro-family policy ought to be based on developing the childcare infrastructure, rather than on one-off benefits. Shortage of childcare, preschools and playgrounds "discriminates women and parents". The solutions for social and economic issues should satisfy the middle class and the hard working people, meanwhile "social services are not preoccupied with people with low income, but with the dregs of society!" It is better to ensure fair earnings (e.g. by raising the minimum wage) than to pay out unemployment benefits. All this should be taken care of by political parties and the government. The respondents believe that citizens should have an opportunity to vote for politicians who would see to that, but they have no intention of personal involvement. What they want most, is "peace and quiet".

## Abeyance or mimicry

There is no sign of an ideological earthquake coming to Poland in the nearest future. Even if the liberal-conservative Civic Platform and the conservative-liberal Law and Justice Party do not permanently monopolise political life, we may have to wait a very long time for the dream of "May '68" to become reality. Some political circles, aware of the political realities, have geared themselves towards long organic work and struggle for the language. They are recovering the public sphere dominated by neo-liberal discourse, they are introducing left-wing language and endeavouring difficult play with the mainstream media. They do not mind that some people consider them to be intellectuals stupefied by Marxism, while others think them traitors of the revolution.

A political party's situation is more difficult. It cannot "for a time" finance itself from publishing books, to later take power with the hands of their readers. In order to exist in the media, a party must have support allowing it to enter the parliament and local authorities. Consequently, organisations like Zieloni 2004 are facing the alternative between abeyance and mimicry.

What becomes of a movement, which at a given moment wins no recognition for its ideology? Does it die? It may do so, but equally often it enters a state of abeyance, as described by theoreticians of social movements. Failed ideologies "go underground, where, invisible to the authority, they can survive and be reborn in new forms".[5] As one researcher of the American feminist movement wrote, "abeyance is a stand-by mode in which movements operating in an unfavourable political environment remain, thus ensuring continuity between subsequent stages of mobilisation".[6] An organisation in abeyance becomes restrictive and exclusive. It strives to preserve "purity" and "faith" to ideology. In Poland, this situation concerns many left-wing, anarchist and feminist organisations. Under the dictate of a single truth, other views may survive only inside an elite avant-garde of the chosen ones. Without the people who create them, there would be practically no hope of survival for alternative scenarios. At the same time, those groups deprive themselves of an opportunity to influence their environment.

5 George Rudé, *Ideology and Popular Protest*, Pantheon, New York 1980, p. 37.
6 Verta Taylor, *Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance*, "American Sociological Review", 54/1989, p. 761.

They can but wait in hope that in the future, political circumstances will make the public more perceptive of their demands. Zieloni 2004 might follow this path, trying to preserve the Green ideology for future generations.

Another possibility is a reversal of the cynical strategy employed since 1989 by the post-Communists. Just as the SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej - Democratic Left Alliance) pretended to fight for ideals while fighting for power, one can pretend to fight for power while actually fighting for ideals. In its election campaigns, the SLD deceived gays and lesbians with promises of protecting their civil rights, proclaimed a struggle for reinstating the women's right to decide about motherhood, promised to stand for the economically deprived. Having won the election, however, the SLD returned to its consistent defence of the "abortion compromise", to reciting papal encyclicals and repeating the mantra about "the market always being right". The pretence of idealism masked the party's post-political nature.

What would happen if Zieloni 2004 pretended to be post-political, thus masking some of their idealism? Could the less popular demands be disguised for the time of electoral campaigns? Could they promise improving quality of public services to the level satisfying the middle class, instead of implementing social justice; delay fighting for the rights of sexual minorities, and instead move gender equality to the forefront; substitute unequivocal protest against construction of atomic power plants with promoting energy efficiency and development of renewable energy? Instead of creating an election programme ahead of the changing attitudes of the Poles, observe those changes and decide, how far to move forward in a given moment. The mimicry can, and should be accompanied by the work of organisations and institutions preserving "Green ideology" in its pure form, and of groups transforming the public domain and discourse in accordance with the interests of the present and the future generations. In such case, the party itself would not be forced to give up on its "Green core", but to cut the Green election programme to the shape acceptable for post-political voters.

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7 „Krytyka Polityczna" ("Political Critique") is a quarterly left-wing journal founded in 2002. „Krytyka Polityczna" also organizes open discussions and other projects related to politics, society and culture. More: http://www.krytykapolityczna.pl/About-us/menu-id-101.html (Editor).

## 2. Between East and West

Adam Ostolski

When Green parties were created in many countries of Western Europe at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, their founders had already had the experience of over two decades of protest movements. Pacifist, ecological, feminist, anti-nuclear, human rights, animal rights movements, which were being created since the late 1950s, were described as the "New Left" or the "new social movements". Right from the beginning they were characterised by a loose structure, or at least by suspicion towards hierarchic forms of organisation (such as a political party). Those movements were created around concrete focal points of public discontent (the war in Vietnam, male domination, the arms race, restrictions on sexual freedom, nuclear power plants, experiments on animals, etc.), and, at the same time, they built ambitious visions of a better world. Although their actions were international and went against geopolitical divisions - East vs. West, or global North vs. South - initially they resulted in the formation of Green parties only in the West.

### From protest movements to Green parties

By founding political parties, the Greens gave new meaning to demands made by those movements. The aim was not only to act more effectively for social change, but to create a new, lasting formula, combining the multitude of social demands in a single keyword of "Green politics". The idea of Green politics made it possible to put several focal points of protest into one, and to combine different (though not necessarily contradictory) dreams of a better world.

Green parties referred to social movements not only at the ideological level, but they used the organisational experiences of those movements as well. In some countries social movements took part in elections, most commonly local ones – in Holland, as early as the 1960s (the Amsterdam Provos had their representatives in the city council );[8] in Great Britain since the early 1970s (the PEOPLE party, a predecessor of what is now the Green Party of England and Wales, was created in 1973). Each country had its specific character. In England, the symbolic beginning of the new social movements was the first Easter March (1958) against nuclear armament; in Holland, freedom movements came to the forefront; in Germany, a special role was played by settling the issues with the generation of fathers and their involvement in Nazism; in France the restrictions on sexual freedom of young people and students became most symbolic. Opposition against the war in Vietnam, intensifying with every report of American war crimes, was global. All over the world, there was discontent with authoritarianism of the "Old Left" (mainly Communists), and its capitulation to the status quo and gradual abandonment of ambitious projects of social change (mainly Socialists).

Green parties did not appear in a vacuum, but within a historical context rendering their emergence natural. Furthermore, they were an answer to the depletion of utopian energy of the 1960s and 1970s. Some social movements lost their universal character, turning towards narrow "identity politics". Part of the activists withdrew from political involvement, assuming individualist strategies – a healthy lifestyle, private business, development of personal potential and so on. Others, trying to urge the arrival of the revolution, turned to terrorism. The Greens believed that each of those routes was a dead-end. To those fascinated with terrorism and violence, they answered that social change cannot be forced; as Rudi Dutschke put it,[9] it is necessary to undertake a "long march through the institutions". To those who chose individual careers, they responded that the answer to social problems – the environmental crisis, the arms race, oppression of women – is not individual "therapy", but joint political action aimed at changing the coordinates of the human world. Finally, to the oppressed groups (women, sexual minorities, people subjected to racial discrimination) they proposed - contrary

8 Provos – a counter-culture movement operating in Holland in the mid 60s. Their actions involved mainly the creation of White Plans – reform projects aimed at bringing the institutions of power closer to everyday needs of people – as well as organisation of peaceful happenings provoking the police to use violence. The continuation of the Provos movement was the Kabouters' Party. See: Aldona Jawłowska, *Drogi Kontrkultury (The Ways of Counterculture)*, Warsaw 1975. On other counter-culture movements around the world see: *Rok 1968 – 40 lat później. Marzenie o wykonalności zmian [1968 Revisited – 40 Years of Protest Movements],* Warsaw 2008 and *Rewolucje 1968* (*The* 1968 *Revolutions)*, Warsaw 2008.

9 Rudi Dutschke (1940-1979) – legendary leader of German new social movements, one of the leaders of SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund) and Non-Parliamentary Opposition. He formulated the concept of "march through the institutions", and shortly before his death was involved in creation of the German Green Party. On new social movements in Germany, see: Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Rüdiger Damman (ed.) *Maj '68. Rewolta [1968. Die Revolte]*, Warsaw 2008.

to "identity politics" – a manner of articulating their claims, which would not trap them within narrow "group interests" and lobbying, but which would place them within the universal horizon and turn them into a link in a broader project of social change.

Is there a place for Green politics in the countries of Central Europe today? The answer requires asking a few more questions. What was the experience of the 1960s new social movements for the inhabitants of Central Europe? Why were there no Green parties to the east of the iron curtain? Can the Greens today relate to the rebellion and the hopes of the 60s, as they do in the West? If so – how? If not – what traditions can they relate to?

**From revisionism to democratic opposition**

The dominating narrative in Central Europe today emphasises the profound distinction between protest movements on both sides of the iron curtain. When young people in the West were unhealthily fascinated with Marx, Mao and Marcuse, the Poles - it is said – related to Miłosz and Mickiewicz.[10] When western students dreamt about democratic socialism, inhabitants of the Eastern Bloc longed for liberal democracy. There is a grain of truth in this tale - there have been differences between the East and the West, right from the beginning - nevertheless its key thesis is false, mainly because it interprets the entire past of the protest movements in the East and the West via the differences crystallised in the 1970s.

The 60s were an era of universal rebellion, fortuitously described by Immanuel Wallerstein as a "revolution in the world-system".[11] At the time, protest movements from all over the world had a lot in common. Their participants presented a similar social profile. In the 1960s, across the globe, the youth became an independent political actor, and universities, lecture halls and campuses – a political battlefield. The mobilisation was not limited to students, it concerned older pupils and young workers as well. In Poland too (as shown by the latest archive research by Marcin Zaremba[12]), contrary to popular clichés about 1968 as a generation experience of the intelligentsia, the rebellion of young workers was at least as widespread as the protests at universities. In the West, as well as in the East, political articulation of consumers' interests and needs took place, though only in the market economy of the West the consumers appeared clearly as the subject of rights and a political actor.

More than anything, the sources of discontent – particularly disillusionment with conformism of the Old Left – were similar all over the world. On the ideological level, the new social movements were based mainly on certain schools of liberatory Marxism. In the West, it was the works of the Frankfurt school, in the South – anti-colonial literature, and in the East – revisionism. The most important works of the latter school include *The New Class* (1957) by Milovan Đilas, and *Open Letter to the Party*[13] (1964) by Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski. Letter to the Party was soon translated into several languages; it inspired the activists of the Prague Spring and was a bestseller in the Quartier Latin before the Paris May. There is no better proof of the rightful participation of the Polish opposition in the global circulation of ideas.

Obviously, in the 60s, certain differences in the political profile of protest movements on both sides of the iron curtain were already perceivable (I shall come to them later), but the breakthrough took place in 1968. In the West, it was the culmination of the protest; in the East – a definitive closure of a certain era. At that very moment, the paths of social movements diverged. Throughout the 70s, western social movements built their institutions, without changing their objectives or their identity. In the East, the March events and the anti-Semitic campaign in Poland, as well as the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia, put an end to dreams about internal reform of socialism. Gathering strength after the calamity, opposition movements had to define their identity anew and, in a way, start from scratch. Although contacts across the iron curtain prevailed, even deepened, the paths of social movements

10 Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004) - a Polish poet, prose writer and translator; in 1980 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) - one of the greatest Polish Romantic poets (Editor).
11 Immanuel Wallerstein, Sharon Zukin, *1968 – rewolucja w systemie światowym [1968, Revolution in the World-System]*, „Krytyka Polityczna", 6/2004.
12 Oral information from M. Zaremba (Editor).
13 In the *Open Letter to the Party* (1964) Kuroń and Modzelewski (the democratic leaders of the opposition in the People's Republic of Poland) criticized the new ruling and bureaucratic class in Poland. They suggested replacing the existing system with a "workers' democracy", including organizing a referendum according to which major decisions concerning the distribution of national income would be made. Both Kuroń and Modzelewski were sentenced to three years in prison for writing the Letter (Editor).

went further and further apart. When in the West movements turned into institutional Green parties, in the East the disaster of 1968 gave rise to the slowly emerging "democratic opposition".

What was the democratic opposition? Primarily – a sign of abandoning the dreams about democratic socialism in favour of the language of human rights, and particularly formal political freedoms. The critique of a multitude of relations of power was substituted with a sharp differentiation between totalitarianism and democracy. Broad platforms of opposition against the system, stepping beyond the division between Right and Left, were created in several countries in Central Europe. The supporters of the Czechoslovak Charter 77 had in their ranks Socialists, Liberals and Christians. In the Polish context, Adam Michnik called for crossing the "chalk circles" between the "secular Left" and the Catholic Church, and for the creation of a joint front against the totalitarian authorities (The Church and the Left, 1977). At the same time, language of political analysis gave way to language of morality – "apolitical politics" (György Konrád), "power of the powerless" (Václav Havel), the ethos of "authenticity" (Adam Michnik). The blurring of political differentiation and declared repugnance towards the authorites were accompanied by the creation of a shared oppositional identity based on the concept of "decency", and the sense of moral advantage over the opponent. One of the first diagnosticians of this situation was Leszek Kołakowski. In his essay *Jak być konserwatywno-liberalnym socjalistą? Katechizm (How to Be a Conservative-Liberal Socialist? A Credo*, 1978) – with its ironic motto: "Return forward, please" – he warned against the attitude leading to erosion of great political projects as "capable of living, and mutually exclusive options".[14]

## What was lacking in the East

In this climate it was difficult for social movements, which might have developed into Green politics, to emerge. Nevertheless, some sources of those difficulties lay further in the past. The movement of the 1960s and 1970s in Central Europe was, right from the start, devoid of the cultural aura it had in the West; issues like women's rights, the ecological crisis or social marginalisation of lesbians and gays were never politically articulated. The opposition movements in Central Europe, focused on fighting "totalitarianism", missed out on two important lessons: decolonisation and the internal critique of liberal democracy.

There were many contributing factors. As far as gender relations were concerned, women in the East experienced paradoxical benefits of forced emancipation. The issues, which in the West had become a spur for the feminist movement – pushing women out of the job market, ban on abortion (e.g. in France, the US and Germany until the mid 70s), and sometimes even contraception (the US and France), limited civil rights of married women (in France) etc. – did not concern women in the countries of the Eastern Bloc. After Stalin's death, abortion was legal in most of those states, and women were encouraged by the state to take paid jobs. On the other hand, women's problems specific to real socialism, mainly working "two jobs" (at home and at work), were seen as the disadvantages of living under the economics of shortage. Only years later was it acknowledged that they were also the results of patriarchal division of labour in the society.

As far as environmental questions were concerned, in the West they were connected with a critique of thoughtless industrialisation and consumer society. Social pressure to consume a lot and conspicuously was questioned, and demands were made to acknowledge the consumers' right to durable, ecological goods improving their quality of life. In the East, the critique of industrialisation meant mainly demands to change priorities: from heavy to light industry, from forceful modernisation measured in tonnes of mined coal and smelted steel – to consumer needs of the public. In spite of certain similarities, this critique had totally different meaning in the western "societies of plenty" than in the eastern "economy of shortage". In the East, the environmental costs of modernisation were never an issue. Not because expert knowledge was lacking, but because it did not translate into political action. *Oskalpowana Ziemia (Scalped Earth)* by Antonina Leńkowa, published in 1961, unlike *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson,[15] which was published a year later, did not become a bible of a social movement.

14 Leszek Kołakowski, *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony i 27 innych kazań [Can the Devil Be Saved and 27 Other Sermons]*, London 1984, p. 205.

15 Rachel Carson (1907-1964) – American biologist. Her book, *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, warned against the effects of environmental degradation, e.g. resulting from use of pesticides. The book is widely considered as an impulse for creation of ecological movements. *Silent Spring* was never translated into Polish, but it was mentioned in Henryk Sandner's preface to the third edition of *Oskalpowana Ziemia (The Scalped Earth)* by Antonina Leńkowa (Warsaw, 1971).

Another difference concerned the significance of counter-culture. Countercultural motifs were present in Eastern Europe, but in the process of arriving from the West they lost their political edge. Some people might have grown cannabis on their allotment, others – used a salt-cellar shaped like a penis, and Tibetan bells.[16] However, neither the authority, nor the opposition made that into a political issue. True political stakes here concerned national traditions of individual societies, rather than cultural novelty. Simultaneously, in the West the situation was quite the opposite: both governments and protest movements chose to wage war in the sphere of culture. The symbolic figure here is John Sinclair, arrested in 1969 for handing two joints to a police agent, and sentenced by an American court to 10 years in prison. Two and a half years later, John Lennon stood in his defence composing a special protest song, and Sinclair was released.

Similarly, the issue of gay rights did not have a political dimension in the East. In the countries where sexual acts between men were not prosecuted, such as Poland (since 1932) or Czechoslovakia (since 1961), they remained a private matter. In other countries, such as the USSR or Cuba, they were prosecuted, nevertheless considered a pretext for suppressing the opposition by a totalitarian regime, rather than persecution of a sexual minority. At the same time, in most western countries (except France), strict laws prevailed, often leading to dramatic situations. In 1954, an outstanding mathematician Alan Turing committed suicide, having been sentenced by a British court to hormonal "therapy", after which he begun to grow breasts. Oppression resulted in resistance, and eventually – rebellion. In June 1969, patrons of the Stonewall bar in New York stood up to the police, which led to several days of riots, and marked the beginning of an open LGBT movement. Gays and lesbians on the other side of the iron curtain had no analogical experiences.

More important than the sources of those differences, are their long-term consequences. When finally new social movements emerged in Central Europe (i.e. in the mid-1980s), they found little understanding among the generation of 1968, who were now leaders of the opposition. All through the 80s, those movements were treated as an ambiguous ally; in the 90s, they became a dead weight "full of claims" to the young democracy, and an obstruction en route the "return to normalcy". Analysing the attitude of former opposition elites towards environmental protests (Czorsztyn, St. Anna's Mountain), or towards imprisoned conscientious objectors (the case of Roman Gałuszka), the best we find is indifference. In the early 90s, a part of those elites became involved in civil committees demanding a referendum on the planned ban on abortion, but most accepted the sham compromise of almost complete prohibition on terminations. The imagination shaped in the struggles of the 1970s did not include the notion that issues like the environment, pacifism or feminism could be genuinely important, and that even in a liberal democracy human rights can sometimes be violated.

Perhaps the differences between West and East were most apparent in the context of the American attack on Iraq, when a vast majority of former members of new social movements in the West opposed the war most decisively, while the vast majority of their peers from the East supported the war. Both have come a long way since the 60s, turning from rebels to elites (political, journalistic and cultural). In the year 2003, however, it became apparent that the iron curtain still separates their visions of the world.

**What is to be done?**

The conditions are not conducive to breaking the impasse. Conditions for Green politics in Central Europe were best at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. It was the time of strong civil movements – environmental, pacifist, anti-nuclear. The early 80s saw the beginnings of the feminist and the gay and lesbian movements. The environmental crisis was more perceivable in the lives of ordinary people than ever before (or after). Closing down the nearly finished nuclear power plant in Żarnowiec was a success, which could have constituted a basis for further struggle. Unfortunately, after the initial success, several failures followed, social movements transformed into increasingly apolitical non-governmental organisations and the political scene and public discourse were divided between the heirs of the former regime and the former opposition.

16 See: *Kwiaty we włosach (Flowers in the Hair)*, Krystian Lupa in an interview with Katarzyna Bielas, „Duży Format" 22/2008, supplement to „Gazeta Wyborcza", 9/6/2008; Kinga Dunin, *Zadyma (Riot)*, „Krytyka Polityczna", 6/2004.

Under such circumstances, it is neither possible to follow the path of Green parties in the West, nor to copy their present formula of Green politics, which had been emerging for several decades. There is no shortcut. Green politics in Central Europe must grow out of local responses to local and global challenges, both organisationally, and in terms of ideas. Three questions seem most important in this context.

Firstly, just as the Green parties in the West grew out of political experience of social movements, the Greens in Central Europe must base their politics on actual social background. The priority should be to recognise real hot spots of social discontent, particularly those ignored by the parties of the political establishment, and created by people with various visions of a better world. There is a need for an organisational alliance with social movements close to the Green politics (particularly with protest movements), and with trade unions. The simultaneous political professionalisation and tightening of links with social movements are a great challenge, but there seems to be no alternative for the Greens in Central Europe.

The second challenge is finding the Greens' own tradition, particularly telling anew the history of the Polish transformation. Today, Polish public life is dominated by the narrative about 1989 created by former oppositionists.[17] In this tale about Poland's latest history there is simply no room for Green politics. Existence of a significant Green party is neither needed, nor possible. That is why it is important to create a narrative about the year 1989 from the perspective of ecologists, feminists, pacifists and other groups whose voices have been ignored. Great support for Green politics could come from an archive documenting the history of those movements. Before this happens, it is worth referring to books by David Ost, Agnieszka Graff, Bronisław Świderski and Elizabeth Dunn. David Ost *(The Defeat of Solidarity)* and Elizabeth Dunn (Privatizing Poland) write about transformation of labour relations and the changing function of trade unions in the new situation; Agnieszka Graff – about exclusion of the voice of women from the emerging liberal public domain *(Świat bez kobiet – World without Women)* and about connections between gender and nationalism *(Rykoszetem. Rzecz o płci, seksualności i narodzie – Ricochet: on Gender, Sexuality and Nation), Bronisław Świderski (Gdańsk i Ateny - Gdańsk and Athens)* – about the role of the intelligentsia in the process of transformation, and its influence upon the evolving democracy. Each of those books is different, but each, in its own way, blazes a trail for Green politics.

The largest challenge facing the Greens today is the rethinking of the fundaments of Green politics. The difficult situation of Green parties in Central Europe is, paradoxically, an opportunity. Green politics has never been a catechism, a set of ready answers for the world's troubles, but rather a way of painstakingly connecting various social demands. The fundaments of Green politics, defined in the 70s, constituted an attempt of progressive critique of the Western welfare states. Today, we are dealing with advanced neo-liberalism, which, in Central Europe, is particularly advanced. It is therefore necessary to recognise the sources of social discontent, and redefine the Green dreams about a better world. In the 70s, the main issue was individual freedom, most of all the right to authenticity and self-realisation. Today, however, the main threat to freedom is not so much the persistence of tradition, but the risk continuously created by the global market, which people have to face alone. That is why the Greens – not just in Central Europe – ought to demand the common good.

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17 As indicated by research of Przemysław Sadura, this version is accepted by "post-Communists" as well. See: Przemysław Sadura, *Ideologie elit III RP (Ideologies of the Elites of III RP)*, in: Jacek Raciborski (ed.), *Elity rządowe III RP. Portret sociologiczny (Ruling Elites of III RP. Sociological Portrait)*, Warsaw 2006.

## 3. The Green Finale of the People's Republic of Poland

Ewa Charkiewicz

I remember the late 80s as the time of alternative and Green intellectual ferment. In those days, I derived my sense of cause from participating in the creation of the ecological movement. Many of my Green acquaintances at the time shared a similar experience. In 1980s Poland there were almost 200 local groups, organisations and nationwide networks.[18] This movement, the political conditions of its emergence and its diverse character (from the League for Protection of Nature and the Polish Ecological Club made up of experts, through counter-culture groups, to the "Freedom and Peace" movement), have been described in some detail in scientific publications, e.g. in books by Przemysław Czajkowski, Piotr Gliński or Józefina Hrynkiewicz.[19] Many organisations founded in those times still operate, several of the movement's animators still identify with ecology as a philosophy of life, interdisciplinary knowledge and a social movement. Still – with exception of events like the Rospuda protests or the activity of Zieloni 2004 – the ecological movement today is politically invisible. In this chapter, I would like to focus on the unique conditions of those times, which turned the activity of individuals and groups into a social movement - or, as Piotr Gliński put it, into a movement of public protest - as well as to analyse what became of the ecological movement of those days. Did it pass away with the People's Republic of Poland (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL)? If not, what transformation did it undergo under the new political order?

### The ecological movement in the 1980s

Looking back, one might easily conclude that the project of state socialism, known today as the PRL, experienced a crisis of legitimisation and of the economy in that decade. Nevertheless, in the late 80s none of us were expecting sudden political changes. It was the Round Table talks, which allowed us to see such possibility, even if their effects were hard to predict. The ecological movement was well prepared for those talks, both in terms of programme, and politically. The number and variety of organisations, their political visibility and social influence of their environmental slogans and ideas legitimised the experts participating in the negotiations of the ecology group. The position of experts[20] was enhanced by several pre-prepared studies of the Polish natural environment, including the endangered zones, energy, transport, organic agriculture and participatory democracy.

People who at the time identified with the ecological movement could be divided into two rather arbitrally defined groups, both aiming for similar goals. Each of them questioned the status quo. The first chose conditions and quality of life as their starting point. Pure environment and healthy people were the issues decisive for their identification with the movement, motivating them and stimulating their activity. Striving for healthy food "without chemical additives", pure air, healthy buildings, quality drinking water, and protests against construction of the nuclear power plant in Żarnowiec or the dumping ground in Międzyrzecz - those were some of the subjects of the Greens' concern in those days. A large proportion of ecological organisations at the time assumed an anti-system position (though in different ways). Some blamed the destruction of the environment on the "communists" and industrialisation identified with the PRL; others sought the sources of the environmental crisis in the culture, in various forms of relations of violence between people, and between people and nature, as well as in the way the economy operated. I remember we used to read Fromm's *To Have or to Be?*, Jungk's *The Nuclear State*, Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality*, the Club of Rome's report *Limits to Growth*, Mishan's *The Economic Growth Debate*. In time, many Polish publications appeared: from the reports of the Poland 2000 Committee – the Polish branch of the Club of Rome – to books like *Człowiek przeciwko sobie (Man against Himself)* edited by Antonina Leńkowa, and many other titles by Polish authors.

In Poland, as in the West, protests were underway against installation of American Cruise rockets and Russian SS-20's. Reading the same books and subscribing to the same ecological and pacifist ideas brought us together with the Greens

18 Piotr Gliński, *Polscy Zieloni. Ruch Społeczny w czasie przemian (The Polish Greens. A Social Movement in the Time of Changes)*, Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warsaw 1996, p. 155.
19 Przemysław Czajkowski, Piotr Gliński, Józefina Hrynkiewicz – Polish scientists working on social issues (Editor).
20 About the participants and the negotiations, see: *Ekologiczny „Okrągły Stół" po trzech latach (Ecological "Round Table" after Three Years)*, "Biuletyn InE", 1/1993.

from other countries. Sometimes, the contacts were close: the "Wolę Być" ("I Prefer to Be") camps – which now we would probably describe as summer schools, due to their educational character – were frequented by environmentalists and eco-feminists from Italy, Sweden, Great Britain (Greenham Common). Books and contacts facilitated the creation of an environmental community across borders, and commenced the process of constructing the ecological philosophy of life, without which the movement could not exist.

The ecological movement of the 80s gained – from various sources - the knowledge about the state of the environment in Poland, including one concerning particular problems and local conflicts. The "operational knowledge" was provided by, among others, expert organisations, such as the Polish Ecological Club, the flagship project of which was the report on 27 ecological danger zones in Poland. The report was in fact an environmental audit of the PRL (we could do with one today). Many organisations collected information and processed it into critical knowledge used in local actions. "Wolę Być" decided to take a closer look at production, transport and distribution of sulphur; we met with decision makers, local and university experts, we organised meetings and local protests in Tarnobrzeg and in Gdańsk. We educated ourselves, as well as others. Similar actions were undertaken in relation to the construction of a nuclear power plant. The projects most visible today are those connected with international campaigns, e.g. with lobbying around the EU directive on registration and evaluation of potentially toxic chemical compounds (REACH), or around the Convention on Climate Change. They are easier to find financing for. The reports in the past were of local character and they satisfied local needs. I do not question the value of international projects – pollution knows no national boundaries – nevertheless, I would like to draw attention to the trajectory of the movement's development, emphasising the significance of its roots and of larger autonomy in planning its actions. Without critical local knowledge based on people's experience, the ecological movement has little social influence.

Large numbers of environmentalists not only shared their philosophy of life, anti-system attitude and predilection for using critical knowledge of the society. They belonged to the counter-culture as well. The ecological movement of the time was formed by three generations: the then 50 – 60-year-olds connected with the tradition of environmental protection; the generation of 30-year-olds, whose life philosophy was formed under the influence of the counter-culture of 1968, and the generation most widely represented in the movement: people in their teens and twenties, opposing the consumerism of their parents. The political point of reference was the conflict between the establishment of state socialism and the "Solidarity". The ecological movement grew, among others, as a reaction to the escape into private life, which took place after the introduction of martial law in 1981. Some participants were mobilised by the dream to deepen the "Solidarity" project (which was a type of humanistic and democratic socialism, or socialism with a human face, which can be easily found in the famous "21 demands of MKS"[21]) by the ecological perspective, or – in the case of the few people interested in the subjectivity of women – by the perspective of feminism. This also translated into alternative social projects based on non-authoritarian relations of power (one example can be the Green Federation's manifesto, proposing democreation[22]).

For very many of us lifestyle and the model of inter-personal relations were an element of the shared "Green identity". This particularly concerned the younger generation of the movement. Vegetarianism and dreams about setting up green schools were common among us, we worked on organic farms, were active in alternative culture circles, talked about models of power relations within our groups and organisations. This part of the ecological movement saw two symbolic enemies: authoritarianism, and the resulting violence against nature.

To avoid nostalgia, I would like to add that the position of the not particularly numerous ecological movement was decided not only by the movement itself, but also by the social resonance connected with broad environmental awareness, further prompted by the Chernobyl disaster. Within individual organisations, as well as between them,

21 "21 Demands of MKS" *(21 postulatów MKS)* were a list of demands issued on 17 August 1980 by the Interfactory Strike Committee *(Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy, MKS)* (Editor).

22 Democreation was understood as creating human communities, particularly local ones, but also within organisations. The concept signalised the necessity for profound respect for individual voice, consideration for minority views in the group decision-making process.

political and philosophical divisions existed, and conflicts were as commonplace as cooperation. At the same time, shared participation in concrete actions facilitated the creation of a collective green identity. The plans to build a nuclear power plant and a dumping ground for nuclear waste in Żarnowiec in the latter half of the 1980s, influenced consolidation of the ecological movement, just as depriving women of their right to abortion by the parliament dominated by the post-Solidarity Right and Liberals and fulfilling the wishes of the Catholic Church prompted the development of the feminist movement in the 1990s. The meetings on energy policy were attended by Greens wearing suits, punks and hippies.

Also today, Rospuda[23] has become more than merely a protest against the destruction of a unique local natural habitat. Shared actions create a political "Us". However, the emergence of this shared identity requires investment in awareness building, gathering of critical knowledge, creation of a network of inter-personal and inter-organisational relations.

The ecological movement of the 80s operated in different material conditions than today. Most young people studied or worked and had a substantial amount of free time. People worked one job. Before the electronic technological revolution, which sped up the pace of human life (as well as circulation of products and money), everyday life was slower, and we had more control over our time. A lot could be done without money. Costs of communication (from phone bills to railway tickets) were lower than today. Local community centres and schools provided free accommodation for our activities. We did not waste time on writing grant applications. Consequently, within three years the "Wolę Być" movement developed into a network of 24 local groups. I remember that as late as 1991, I would bring 120 dollars from Holland, and that would suffice for organising a week-long movement meeting for 50 people. Nevertheless, no movement is created spontaneously (as was suggested by Piotr Gliński, who probably used the term in the sense of "independence from the state"). A social movement is created from organisations or groups and initiatives. Creating a group requires "invisible" organisational work, bringing together people and ideas, and materialising those connections into new organisational forms. Even today, a straightforward registration in court does not suffice.

What has become of those people and organisations? Some organisations did not survive, but even a superficial web search reveals organisational continuity and constant presence of people active over the past 20 years. The ecological movement of the 1980s did not die, but was marginalised and lost its public visibility. Its language, organisational model and conditions of operation underwent a transformation. A symbolic date for the end of the ecological movement of the 80s can be the moment, in which the Foundation for the Support of Ecological Initiatives announced that due to financial reasons it would end the publication of "Zielone Brygady" ("The Green Brigades"). The first magazine of ecologists, which had been published since 1989, articulated and represented the collective identity of the ecological movement, combined ecology with political and social critique, and was one of the first places where ecology and feminism met. It ceased to exist in 2007.

## Rewriting history and political stakes

"The early 1990s were not too bad, there was an ecological sub-table (at the Round Table – E.C.), which dictated certain sensible directions, and everybody was hopeful about good protection of natural values. With time, however, politics ceased to be interested in the problem" – said Professor Roman Andrzejewski in an interview for "Dzikie Życie".[24]

In the narratives about the totalitarian and backward PRL, and in subsequent reconstructions of the history of transformation, there is no place for the ecological movement. Its activity and broad influence do not fit the message about passive victims of communism. The ecological movement was obscured by the powerful discourse of transformation as a passage from totalitarianism, poverty and backwardness, to the free market and democracy. Although, as I said, there was an ecological sub-table next to the Round Table where the representatives of "Solidarity" were seated along representatives of the Church and the PRL's

23 The Rospuda is a small river in north-eastern Poland. Around 2006 the river was threatened by planned construction of the Augustów bypass expressway, which was to cut across the protected wilderness area in the valley. After an intense campaign of protests in Poland and abroad and also counter-protests of the local community, the plans have been changed (Editor).

24 *O świadomości ekologicznej Polaków (On the Ecological Consciousness of Poles)* – interview with Professor Roman Andrzejewski by Marta Lelek and Janusz Korbel, „Dzikie Życie" ("The Wild Life") 3/69, 2000, http://pracownia.org.pl/dzikie-zycie-numery-archiwalne

establishment, in the process of the first dealing of power, the green perspective and the programmes constructed earlier were pushed into oblivion. This was not without a reason, though the reason had nothing to do with weakness of the ecological organisations. The discourse legitimising the transformation had been produced on the basis of the ancient cultural narrative pattern about being exiled from paradise and then returned to it. Hence, from the communist hell we must pass through the purgatory of transformation to finally end up in the free market Eden. Within the framework of this discourse, only the PRL could be guilty of destroying the environment, and the return to "Europe" (in inverted commas, since the Europe of this discourse - disciplining to neo-liberal transformation - is not real Europe) was to automatically lead to fixing the problem. After all, paradise is a state of virginal purity. If this is connected with temporary costs, then, as one of Polish ministers of environmental protection put it before the Earth Summit, we must get rich first, and then we can afford to protect the environment. This statement, which was not a scandalous excess, but something typical, reflects the mentality of political elites in modern Poland. It does, however, contain a grain of different truth: the incompatibility between the money chase and the cult of economic growth measured by flow of money in the economy (GNP), and the alternative projects of sustainable development.

Reconstructing history is a game of high political stakes. Not so long ago, the ecological movement was mortified anew, this time as an accidental victim caught in the line of fire in yet another political war. Cezary Michalski wrote in his critique of the III Polish Republic's founding myth about victory over communism: "Polish society crawled over to 1989 completely pacified and passive".[25] In their struggle for power, the young right-wing generation must kill their fathers by re-writing history to make room for themselves in the political scene. In this confrontation, ecology (as a political project and inter-disciplinary knowledge) is once again erased, not admitted to the new dealings of political power. Another opening in the same game is proposed by trackers/producers of sins from the Institute of National Remembrance, who resurrect the ecological movement, but re-write its history in a way, which turns it into an anti-communist movement, rather than an anti-system one. Such an approach reduces the ecological movement and traps it in a historical cage of political discourse. It obscures and prevents new questions: about changed patterns of production and consumption, about exiting the neo-liberal calculated take-over of ecology, in which the value of the environment is reduced to its monetary dimension and shifted to individuals; there is no room here for old questions about participatory democracy.

## In the neo-liberal melting pot

In the 1990s, particularly in their latter half, the ecological movement and the language it used, the discourse and principles of organisation, began to transform. It was not just in Poland that the ecological movement, or at least its mainstream, entered into the orbit of neo-liberal policy of truth, and even participated in creating it. In the early 90s, business and the state were criticised for ignoring or excluding environmental costs in business plans and calculations of national income. In the neo-classical economists' vocabulary and imagination, the environment plays the part of a resource, or a dumping ground. In time, those costs were included into national calculations, but it happened according to the principles of the economy, and in the context of a new discourse, which evaluated nature through monetary calculations. Among global examples are the reports by the World Bank, estimating the value of the environment.[26] Nature has been transformed into a commodity, and the costs shifted to the final user (a consumer), while all the burdens and limitations have been lifted from those who draw income from exploiting the environment. Along with the new discourse, changes took place in the policy of environmental protection – from "command and control" to self-regulation by business, i.e. to management via voluntary contracts, codes of conduct, principles of business ethics. With such management, the mechanisms of verification of implementation of the principles, and sanctions for violating them, are practically non-existent.

Michel Foucault provides a valuable critical tool for naming the problem of economisation of life and politics, by indicating that neo-liberalism

25 Cezary Michalski, *Długie pożegnanie z „Solidarnością". Krytyka mitu założycielskiego III RP o zwycięstwie nad komunizmem (Long Farewell to "Solidarity". Critique of the Founding Myth of the III Republic of Poland about the Victory over Communism)*, „Europa", supplement to „Dziennik", 18-19/10/2008, p. 2-3.
26 Ismael Serageldin, Sustainability and the Wealth of Nations, World Bank 1996.

subjects all public goods and domains of public life to economic rationality, and a company becomes the regulative ideal. The free market operates as a permanent economic tribunal, which requires constant adaptation.[27] While in the late 90s the discourse of global neo-liberal governance was subjected to intense criticism, in Poland the political conditions were not conducive to such critique. For example, criticising the "free market" was ridiculed as communist nostalgia. The neo-liberal transformation of the state and the economy was accompanied by analogical projects of new subjectivity. Neo-liberalism governs using freedom, authorising individuals to live on their own account. Freedom is not a state or a right, but technology of power, used to transform the society into a market. Socially orientated, i.e. unpractical "suckers" from PRL are contrasted with new individuals; practical, rich, always available, always flexible, self-centred and capable of fending for themselves. The measure of an individual's value is their purchasing power, and the new regulative ideals – a rich businessman and a rich businesswoman. In this context, the ecological movement in its 1980s version could either preserve itself in niche organisations, or adjust to the new order.

Furthermore, neo-liberalism transformed principles of organisation and relations of power within organisations. NGOs replaced informal groups, community spirit and social movements. Lawmakers and sponsors force non-governmental organisations to operate on the same principles as businesses. A board is responsible to sponsors, to a foundation council or to members of an association, but it is not responsible for the state of the environment to the people it is supposed to represent. The time and imagination of activists are effectively occupied by writing and reporting projects, analogically to business plans and profit and loss reports prepared in companies. Nothing is expressly forbidden, but there is only one path on offer. There is no room here for the common good, just interest. Non-governmental organisations are forced to operate as representation of interest groups, equipped to compete for grants, as well as for political gains. Consequently, the civil society is transformed into a market. This process is facilitated by leader training, which privatises the movement from within and turns it into a collection of individuals. Every movement needs leaders, the problem is, however, that those actions complement and enhance neo-liberal trends of hyper-individualisation. Lobbying – however useful – and communication via celebrities has eradicated strategies of building a social movement. At the same time, the operation of the ecological movement and other social movements is shaped, to a large extent, by agencies of remote sponsors or global priorities, which redirect the operation of organisations towards those priorities, while local priorities not suited to the agenda cannot obtain funding and fail to be implemented. Consequently, certain issues or methods vanish from the ecological discourse, while others simply cannot be discussed under the neo-liberal pressure.

Changes have been emerging for some time now: the dictate of neo-liberal discourse of transformation, which forced NGO's into the realm of philanthropy, charity and auxiliary work - since politics belongs to political parties and critique is forbidden and useless – has weakened in the public imagination. Today it is possible to talk about the political airing, which shakes up the old thinking habits. However, when windows are opened, one finds out that neo-liberalism has left immense devastation in its wake.

**A new beginning?**

Every movement needs its own ideal. One of the obstacles for restoring the position of the ecological movement (without the support of which no Green party can enter the political scene), is the lack of ecological and social critique of transformation. With the exception of undertakings like the "Recykling Idei" magazine and website, new alternative initiatives do not integrate ecology and feminism in their everyday operation. There is a number of detailed critiques, such as reports on transport policy, but there is little analysis of the changes of patterns of production and consumption, which would include social and environmental effects. There is no Green critique of the free market excess, which transformed social movements and privatised the common good. Social and ecological criticism is of local character and seldom gets paired off with criticism of the democratic deficits of the transformation, or rather of democracy serving as a spectacle to disguise private interests. The Polish transformation was no particular historic exception, nor, as the neo-liberal–conservative myth would like to present

27 Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France 1978-79*, Gallimard, Paris 2004.

it, a miraculous passage from totalitarianism to freedom, made possible by a few leaders of the democratic opposition. The transformation conforms to the processes of economic globalisation - such as programmes of structural adjustment of the South, or restructuring of the "old" OECD countries – and becomes one of its local forms. In Poland, too, the transformation took a neoliberal form. Those processes must be named and interpreted from the ecological perspective. Without such analysis, it will be impossible to relate to social suffering, to slow down the process of destruction of nature and fundaments of life, to see the alternative paths of development, or to propose a political project, with which broader masses might identify. Their political invisibility was forced on the Greens, and overcoming it will require a new, socially positioned critical knowledge.

**Ewa Charkiewicz** – animator of the Ecological-Pacifist Movement "Wolę Być" ("I Prefer to Be"; organiser of the first bicycle demonstration in Warsaw, in 1986. Since 1988 she has worked at universities in Holland, USA and India. Coordinator of international networks and research projects concerning bases of sustainable development, pro-environmental patterns of production and consumption; coordinator of External Gender Consultative Group of the World Bank. Author and co-author of books, including *Women, Environment and Sustainable Development. Towards Theoretical Synthesis* (1994), *Sustainable Production and Consumption. Concepts, Policies, Actions* (2001). Since 2005, director of Tomek Byra Foundation Ecology and Art, co-founder of the Feminist Think-Tank.

# 4. Zieloni 2004 – scenes from a long march

Agnieszka Grzybek, Dariusz Szwed

## The origins

Zieloni 2004 was created as a party of protest. It entered the political scene when the first symptoms of crisis resulting from growing dissatisfaction with the course of Polish transformation were beginning to emerge. Those symptoms coincided with the commonly criticised rule of the Post-Communist Left.

The authors of Polish transformation allowed for escalation of unfounded economic and social inequality, which led to a sense that Polish democracy does not give numerous social groups a chance to develop, condemning them to pauperisation, exclusion and no access to benefits of transformation. One such group were workers of large industrial plants, whom the transformation deprived of their jobs; employees of the budget sector (teachers, doctors, nurses), who experienced a combination of deteriorating material status and declining prestige of their worse paid professions; also women, whose rights were limited by the introduction of the restrictive anti-abortion laws at the beginning of the 1990s, and whose situation in the job market was far worse than the situation of men (higher risk of unemployment, lower pay, difficult access to promotion, professional training etc.). Furthermore, public debate of the 1990s was characterised by silent approval for the assumption that the costs of the transformation (social, environmental, etc.) are not to be questioned, since they are inevitable and ought to be shared jointly by everybody. Hence all articulation of social conflicts (albeit burning underneath the surface of changes) was dismissed, as a demanding attitude and an obstacle in the way of changes.[28] Until 2004, Polish public debate was dominated by the language of "return to normalcy", which could not be questioned. Several sacrifices were made in the name of "Poland's return to Europe": the accession to NATO and the European Union. According to the architects of this process, those aims were worth every price.

During their time in power (2001-2005), the Post-Communists (SLD-UP[29]) strayed from their left-wing orientation and the ideals they proclaimed during the election campaign. The government identified as "the Left" conducted anti-welfare policy (e.g. raising public transport ticket prices for students or closing the Alimony Fund); abandoned the principle of the secular state, allowing the Catholic hierarchy to interfere with public life; involved Poland in the war in Iraq; led public healthcare to the brink of collapse. All this was combined with corruptive practices and the style of executing power, which finally resulted in a dramatic fall of the ruling parties' opinion poll results, and, most importantly, discredited the politics and made people lose their trust in its actors.

Disappointment in current politics and broken election promises, criticism towards the post-1989 transformation benefitting only selected social groups on unequal terms, inspired the idea of building the Green Party.

This was not the first green project after 1989. Since the beginning of the 1990s, environmental activists have made several attempts to create a Green party which would deal primarily with pro-ecological tasks and actions for the protection of the environment. Interestingly enough, at the beginning of the 1990s (e.g. during the local election of 1990) the questions raised by environmentalists won significant public support, although environmentalism itself was not perceived as a political issue. The character of the Polish system transformation, Balcerowicz's "shock therapy" and the resulting effects of economic reforms – mass unemployment, pauperisation of several social groups, diminished standard of living – led to marginalisation of environmental issues, which were treated as a "luxury" that would only become available after the completion of construction of a free market society. The situation was similar in the case of women's rights, which had to be sacrificed to the primacy of building a free market. Due to that, and to internal divisions, the attempts to create a strong political group able to effectively compete for votes failed.[30] Eventually, many environmental activists withdrew from strictly

28 An excellent analysis of reasons for the defeat of the Left and the Liberals, and for the victory of the Right, who managed to employ the anger of all those unsatisfied with the shape of Polish transformation, was presented by American political sociologist David Ost, in his book *The Defeat of Solidarity. Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*, Cornell University Press 2005.

29 The coalition of Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance) and Unia Pracy (Labour Union).

30 Due to personal disagreements, in the 1991 parliamentary election the Greens presented two lists: Polska Partia Ekologiczna – Zieloni (Polish Ecological Party – The Greens) won 0.82% votes; Polska Partia Ekologiczna – Polska Partia Zielonych (Polish Ecological Party – Polish Green Party) won 0.63% votes. Due to further splits, by 1995 there were as many as 17 green parties in Poland, but none of them managed to permanently retain public awareness.

political activity, while others got involved with the Environmental Forum of the Freedom Union (Unia Wolności, UW).

The key difference between Zieloni 2004 and the previous Green initiatives was a far broader range of values it wanted to refer to, and openness to new, not just environmental, circles. The party was created with participation of activists of environmental, feminist, human rights and LGBT non-governmental organisations, but also of members of political parties, mainly the Environmental Forum of the former Freedom Union, as well as of the former democratic opposition – the "Freedom and Peace"[31] movement. Although non-governmental organisations never officially declared cooperation with the newly created party, the people participating in the Green project included representatives of Klub Gaja, the League for Protection of Nature, the Polish Ecological Club, Amnesty International, the eFKa Women's Foundation, Campaign Against Homophobia etc. It is important that the Greens won the support of renowned feminists (publicists, writers and activists), who were present at the Founding Congress in September 2003, and who became founding members of the party: Kinga Dunin, Agnieszka Graff and Kazimiera Szczuka.[32]

One of the most crucial issues which had to be solved by the founders of Zieloni 2004 was the character of the new Green project. There was a debate about whether it ought to become a broad social movement, or rather the beginning of a new political party. This had been discussed right until the beginning of the Founding Congress, which took place on 6-7th September 2003. Those who opted for Zieloni 2004 remaining a social movement were of the opinion that people in Poland were weary of politics, that they had lost their trust in political parties and politicians, therefore – according to them – a movement would better secure implementation of Green objectives. On the other hand, for those in favour of creating a political party, the formula of a social movement was too amorphous, it lacked a strong core, definition and effectiveness. People needed a concrete initiative to get involved in. Few were aware of the legal and financial realities defining the framework of operation for political parties. Polish politics proved to be a closed circuit, in which it is very difficult for new political actors to emerge. The option of creating a political party won, and Zieloni 2004 was finally registered on 24th January 2004. Its first co-chairpersons were, in parity, Magdalena Mosiewicz and Jacek Bożek.

Another fundamental dispute concerned not the form of operation, but the programme pitfalls; the issue of women's right to decide about their own body divided Zieloni 2004 into two fractions. One of them opted for definite declaration of support for liberalisation of the anti-abortion regulations, while the other was against referring to the issue in the programme. Finally, the *Green Manifesto* - the programme document accepted by the Founding Congress - contained the following stipulation: "(...) we are in favour of achieving the state in which the law does not regulate the issue of abortion, leaving room for individual decisions", which resulted in withdrawal of some of the founding members from further works on building the party.

The *Green Manifesto* lists the following as the basic goals: "respect for human rights and abiding by the principles of balanced social, environmental and economic development, in particular: social justice and solidarity, civil society and state, protection of the environment and its resources for future generations, equal status regardless of gender and age, respect for national, cultural and religious diversity, respect for the rights of minorities, non-violent conflict solution." Zieloni's programme was built around those principles and values, and the newly created party was to constitute an effective tool for securing them in Poland – by its actions it wanted to return the moral and the civil dimension to politics.

The non-governmental pedigree and strong links with social movements, as well as explicit expression of the rights of women and sexual minorities in the Green Manifesto, and combining them with the philosophy of balanced social, environmental and economic growth make it possible to draw a parallel with other West European Green parties, distinguished by their focus on post-material values and their new middle class electorate. It is symptomatic that the emergence of Zieloni was

31 "Wolność i Pokój" ("Freedom and Peace") – a social and political movement, opposed to the Communist regime, active between 1985 and 1992. It was initiated by a hunger strike in defence of a student imprisoned for conscientious objection. It conducted, among others, pacifist and pro-environmental actions, organising protests against the construction of the nuclear power plant in Żarnowiec.

32 Kinga Dunin, Agnieszka Graff and Kazimiera Szczuka – well known Polish feminists and activists (Editor).

unequivocally perceived by the Polish media as the arrival of a party of generational revolt, and protesters against the petrified framework of political arrangements. We were interpreted as a voice of the generation, which was to crack the "historical division between the post-Communist and post-Solidarity parties, shaping the politics".[33]

### From protests to the mainstream

From the very beginning, the programme of action was supported by four pillars: 1) sustainable economic and social growth, 2) human rights and women's rights, 3) protest against war and use of force in conflict solution, 4) participatory democracy. We stood out from the so-called "grey parties", due to radicalism of our demands and our taking to the streets, which was a reference to the grassroot traditions of the movement. Apart from the first campaign, "To the Union for Change" and the later ones, "Green Transport" and "Stop Climate Change. Choose Green Solutions" – which promoted, respectively, transport policy consistent with the principle of balanced growth and acting for protection of climate - one of the most famous actions was the Freedom of Speech Day organised in February and March 2005, when a Polish court heard the case of Dorota Nieznalska.[34] On the day of the trial, in Poland's largest cities Zieloni organised pickets in front of court buildings, protesting against the restricted right to creativity and freedom of expression. In November of the same year, we co-organised manifestations of solidarity with Poznań in Poland's 10 largest cities - a protest against the brutal police attack on the March for Equality and Tolerance in Poznań (the largest manifestation in Warsaw was attended by over 2000 people). At the turn of 2006 and 2007, Zieloni, along with women's and feminist organisations, protested against an amendment to the Polish constitution proposed by the far-right parties, aimed at introducing an absolute ban on abortion.

Certain political commentators reckon that it is due to the Greens' radicalism – both regarding the nature of their actions and their demands concerning identity issues (e.g. women's rights, rights of sexual minorities), that they still cannot obtain significant support of the voters. Those commentators think that Polish society is still too conservative and not ready for the vision of shaping a communal identity open to diverse outlooks and based on inclusion of Others and securing full rights for them, as proposed by Zieloni. However, those demands, called "radical" by some, include calling for social egalitarianism and justice, which in most EU countries has for years been a part of mainstream politics.

Conservatism of the Polish society is up for discussion, nevertheless it is true that we have not experienced a post-materialistic orientation typical for the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, when the Green parties emerged in the West. The research of Polish General Social Opinion Poll in mid 1990s indicated that the Polish society was dominated by materialistic attitudes, and only 3.5% of respondents believed in post-materialistic values. The voters were more interested in material issues and problems of economic and social security, than in quality of life, sensitivity to human rights or social and environmental dangers.

The above factors certainly did contribute to the fact that Zieloni could not, as yet, manage to win any seats, either in the European Parliament (2004), the national parliament (2005) or in the local election (2006). An equally important - if not decisive - obstacle are strong institutional barriers resulting from the electoral law unfavourable to small parties, introduced in 1993 as an antidote for fragmentation of the Polish political scene. The 5-percent election threshold for participation in division of seats in elections of various levels is less of a problem. The real obstacle is the necessity to collect signatures of support for candidates, without which it is impossible to register a list of candidates in a particular constituency.[35] This means that before an election campaign starts for good, a preliminary selection takes place. In Poland, where social capital is the lowest in the whole of the EU, people know little about democratic mechanisms, are increasingly sceptical about politics and politicians and are afraid to sign a list of candidates, because they think this is synonymous with joining the party -

33 Amelia Łukasiak, Piotr Zaremba, Barwy Zielonych (Colours of the Greens) [in:] Newsweek Polska issue 44/2003, 2/11/2003.
34 The artist was charged with offending religious feelings with her installation Passion. After the first trial, she had been pronounced guilty and sentenced to community service.
35 In a European election the condition for registration of a list in a particular constituency is the collection of 10 thousand signatures of voters residing permanently in this constituency; in a national parliamentary election, the number of signatures is 5 thousand for the Sejm candidates and 3 thousand for the Senate candidates.

the condition to collect signatures favours large parties. The mechanisms mean that the voters' choice is limited: a part of programme offers never even reaches the voting stage.

The Polish Greens are struggling with institutional barriers making it difficult for them to enter the public scene. On the other hand, they are trying to overcome their image as a counter-cultural formation promoting a particular lifestyle, rather than a political party. They want to leave the fringes of the counter-culture, and enter the mainstream. While first green projects of the early 1990s focused mainly on environmental issues, the activity of Zieloni 2004 (at least in the first stage) was dominated by freedom and identity issues (freedom of speech, liberalisation of the abortion law, women's rights, rights of sexual minorities). An image of moral Left, a party of "gays, lesbians and feminists" sticks to Zieloni in the media. Recently, mainly thanks to the defence of the Rospuda Valley,[36] raising the question of power safety, protests against plans to construct a nuclear electricity plant and installation of elements of a missile defence system in Poland, the Greens managed to partially change this previously one-dimensional image. A definite success was linking the party with the civil movement for the protection of the Rospuda Valley. Zieloni not only actively participated in the protests, but organised them as well (e.g. in February 2007, during the visit of Jose Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission), and used the institutional path by submitting a petition to the Committee on Petitions at the European Parliament, and by cooperating with the Greens/EFA group at the EP. At the moment, Zieloni 2004 is building its image as a competent European party dealing with key challenges of sustainable growth: integrating the social, environmental and economic issues, as in the case of the "Energy Efficiency Package" proposed in October 2008.

## Can Zieloni be the Polish New Left?

Consolidation of the Polish political scene has been advancing consistently since 1993 – since the introduction of the quoted election law aimed at preventing fragmentation of the Polish political scene, and the Act on political parties of 1997. Certain political commentators go as far as talking of cartelisation and oligarchisation – Polish politics is in principle a closed circulation blocking a possibility of entry for new political actors. The existing political parties share public subsidies between them and are not interested in allowing new participants onto the scene. And although the intentions to regulate the political scene, to make it more predictable in order to allow for effective government can be considered right, nevertheless, as Adam Ostolski put it, "there is a difference between a thesis that a few less parties in the Sejm would be better, and a thesis that the fewer parties in politics, the better".[37] Furthermore, the effect of consolidation of the political scene is enhanced by the media focusing solely on the parties leading in opinion polls during election campaigns, and after an election - on the ruling coalition and the main opposition party.

Is Poland condemned to bipolarisation of the political scene, and has the Greens' political offer no chance to reach the electorate? Is there no room in Poland for a left-wing project? According to some sociologists this division can be overcome, since the opposition PO-PiS[38] is not able to articulate certain problems and conflicts important to people. This may be a chance for left-wing parties.[39] In support of this thesis one might quote the results of a poll indicating that the Poles would welcome a better left. Almost two-thirds of the respondents stated that Poland needs a party helping the poorest, the excluded, a party concerned with equal chances for all citizens; over a half of respondents reckoned that such party ought to stand for the interests of hired workers, separation of the state and the Catholic Church and the rights of women and sexual minorities.[40]

Since the only Left currently represented in the parliament are the groups recycled after 1989, where the key role is still played by politicians active in Communist Poland and more interested in maintaining the status quo than in the crea-

36 The Rospuda is a small river in north-eastern Poland. Around 2006 the river was threatened by planned construction of the Augustów bypass expressway, which was to cut across the protected wilderness area in the valley. After an intense campaign of protests in Poland and abroad and also counter-protests of the local community, the plans have been changed (Editor).

37 Adam Ostolski, *Czy polskiej modernizacji potrzebna jest polityka? (Does Polish Modernisation Need Politics?)*, unpublished article. We would like to thank the Author for providing it.

38 Platforma Obywatelska, PO – Civic Platform, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS - Law and Justice.

39 Speech by professor J. Raciborski during the discussion panel "The Future of the Political Scene in the Eyes of Scientists", in: *Przyszłość sceny politycznej po wyborach 2007 roku (The Future of the Polish Political Scene after the Elections in 2007)*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warsaw 2008.

40 A telephone survey for „Rzeczpospolita", conducted on 3/4/2008 by GFK Polonia on a sample of 500 adults.

tion of a European progressive Left in Poland, the Greens undertake a difficult task of positioning their party "ahead" – according to Joshka Fisher's maxim: "neither to the left, nor to the right, but ahead". We substitute the Left-Right polarisation of the political scene with a proposition of green modernisation: enhancing democracy by increasing access to public information and public participation in decision making, improvement of quality of life of the Polish society by protecting natural resources and sustainable economic growth, as well as by creation of green jobs, separation of the state and the Church and building an egalitarian society by equalling opportunities of women and men, or protecting the rights of workers and consumers. The instruments of green modernisation are: increased expenses on public education, a pro-environmental tax reform, development of transport policy based on railway and public transport, climate and energy policy based on increasing energy efficiency and promotion of renewable energy sources, introduction of equality regulations etc. We criticise the neoliberal corporate globalisation, indicating the need to build a global civil society and supranational democratic institutions which will ensure effective execution of the international law, and rise to the new global political challenges, such as the environmental and energy crisis, or the climate change.

Such a political mix positions the Greens crosswise from the existing Left-Right divisions of the political scene in Poland. We are aware that this signifies the need to surround our political project with broader intellectual and social backing, and to translate the issues into the language of the voters' everyday life. In this sense, one of the most important challenges facing the Greens is the creation of an original, consistent political narrative, within which various issues connected with Green modernisation can be articulated. Another challenge is communicating to people that issues like education, healthcare, taxes, power safety, infrastructure, possess a political dimension. Yet the most important condition is to overcome the conviction that "there is no alternative", which dominates public discourse.

At the same time, Green demands are becoming increasingly popular among the public, not only due to the amount of attention devoted to them by the mainstream press. Each election brings higher support for Zieloni – e.g. the Green list during the local election in Warsaw in 2006 won the support of three times as many voters as during the European election of 2004. In the early election of 2007, our senate candidate in Katowice won almost 5% of votes. This is all the more significant, since in the difficult region of Upper Silesia, where the entire economy is based on the coalmining industry, environmental ideas to reduce the use of this material in the power industry are very unpopular. This is why we are optimistic about the future of the Greens. At the moment, we focus on preparation for the 2009 European election, and, in a further perspective, on building alliances with local and parliamentary elections in mind.

**Agnieszka Grzybek** – Chairwoman of Zieloni 2004, in parity with Dariusz Szwed, since March 2008. Translator, feminist activist, expert in the field of equal status of women and men, active in the Polish women's movement since 1997. Graduate of Polish language and literature studies, the Human Rights School organised by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (1998) and the Institute for Women's Global Leadership organised by the Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University (2001). During the years 2002-2005, a member of the Consultation Board for the Government's Plenipotentiary for Equal Status of Women and Men and of the EQUAL Monitoring Committee. Employee of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

**Dariusz Szwed** – Chairman of Zieloni 2004, in parity with Agnieszka Grzybek. Graduate of International Economic Relations at the Cracow University of Economics, and of Economic Tools for Environmental Protection at the University of Warsaw. For several years has acted as a consultant on sustainable development and the non-governmental sector to many institutions/organisations, such as the World Bank, the Environmental Law Centre, Greenpeace International, the Institute for Sustainable Development, Milieukontakt Oost-Europa, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Regional Development Center, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, WWF.

## 5. The boundaries of Green politics

Maciej Gdula

An old cliché has it that supporters of Green politics wish to preserve whatever is left of nature, and halt the development of civilisation, or even put it in retrograde. Such a label effectively prevents people from identifying with actions of Green parties and movements, since hardly anybody would want to "live in a clay hut and eat roots". Even if for some ecologists conservation of nature is central, the real challenge today is to show that Green politics is not about something external, or about returning to the past – it is about looking to the future and taking responsibility for the shape of the world inhabited not only by people. The places addressed by Green politics are equally our estate, and the Amazonian jungle, the city we live in and the Vistula valley. Green politics is not related solely to "ecological issues", since by referring to issues as diverse as quality of drinking water, urbanisation and the shape of the international order, we face up to the fundamental questions about freedom, equality and development.

**It is happening around you**

You need not be a nature lover to discover that the issues of Green politics are neither abstract, nor remote. Many of us, as children, used to spend time in the areas surrounding our neighbourhoods. We went to the fields to watch tadpoles in puddles of water, walk the dog or play ball. At some point, new tower blocks and houses appeared in the places, which were outside our estate, nevertheless belonged to our world in an obvious way. The usual attractions disappeared. To us, this was the end of the pleasures we were used to, but we were being convinced that this is the way the world is, and the cities must expand. Green politics means that we no longer have to accept all appearing solutions, just because someone called them a natural way of development.

The Green perspective means readiness to reshape the world around us, to make it as friendly as possible. The alternative to blocking urbanisation is reflexive urbanisation, which takes into account the diverse needs of people and the environment. Reflexive urbanisation is the openness to human needs of communication, contact and rest. If cities are created in a manner, in which space for pedestrians and cyclists is taken over by cars, recreational grounds are tightly built over with houses and office buildings, and the only meeting places outside work are shopping malls, their inhabitants have lesser chances for enjoyable living. Such environment reduces human activities to work and shopping, and only well off people can feel they belong there. For others – older, poorer or choosing different lifestyles – there is less and less space. Reflexive urbanisation is an idea for shaping urban space with consideration for means of transport other than cars; for protecting public places and ensuring equal access to them; for treating green areas as a space for the co-existence of humans and non-humans, and not just a place for human entertainment and expansion; and for remembering that not only the rich have the right to participate.

Such space is difficult to create without combining expectations of diverse people, often divided by barriers of age, gender or income. When the issue of bicycle paths is presented as an isolated question requiring resolution – just as quality of tap water, friendly parks or defending cheap shopping at a local market – we lose the chance to build a broader support base for creation of a friendlier city. Until we recognise and define the needs of cyclists, pensioners looking for cheap shopping and mothers looking for playgrounds, isolated cases will have little chance of a positive solution. Green politics means the readiness to bring people together in the name of democratic formation of the world around them.

We are far from initiating dynamics of this type yet, and organisation of life in cities is governed by false obviousness, which makes our living increasingly difficult. One of the important examples is the construction of gated residential estates on the outskirts of cities. Consent for their creation is connected with subscribing to the thesis that everyone has the right to choose where and how they live, providing they have sufficient resources. As long as there is just one private estate of this type, its inhabitants enjoy all the advantages of a fence-free world, while retaining their sense of exclusivity and security. As more and more such estates appear in the vicinity, the space available for use shrinks. Eventually, we end up with space, where "at home" means literally inside one's apartment, because the area is blocked off by fences forbidding access to guarded zones. Emergence of archipelagos of private estates can be seen as a model example

of a development, in which free individual choice leads in fact to restricting freedom. Fencing illustrates the pitfalls of believing in spontaneous mechanisms which will organise our world. We must understand that we live in a public space, which we must jointly create. If we try to organise it individually, we shall all fail.

**Ecology of courage, instead of ecology of fear**

The "closeness" of Green politics must not obscure the fact, that part of its issues reach far beyond direct experience. Important impulses for mass interest in ecology emerged in the 1970s, along with the crisis of the modernist conviction about the infinite possibilities of expansion of human civilisation. Predictions about the limits of development quoted energy sources coming to an end, the demographic bomb and water and air pollution. If we add to it the uncertainty caused by pesticide use or operation of nuclear power plants, it is easy to understand the doubts about whether development of technology, which used to be a source of human power, is not going to lead to the demise of mankind. Fear of unpredictable consequences of development became the driving force behind the discussion about environmental issues; today they have become one of the rightful subjects of public debate. Appreciation of the importance of ecological problems is accompanied by a sense of powerlessness and lack of faith in our ability to cope with them. In the experience of a man or a woman in the street, the alternative is either rejecting modern civilisation, or developing it – even if it should end in death.

Green politics must aim for showing another way. It can become possible, if we employ the potential of mobilisation carried by ecological issues, and at the same time politicise the questions of technology and science. The concept of "risk society" created by German sociologist Ulrich Beck, which was hugely successful in the early 1990s, could be of some help here.

The concept was often simplified to the statement that traditional questions, such as class struggle and inequalities, become insignificant in the context of the upcoming era of uncertainty, and the increasing risk in the lives of individuals. Beck did not simply say that we live in increasingly uncertain times, but that we begin to experience limitations in applying the old tools used for coping with uncertainty. Even if in a developed western country we are more likely to live until old age, we also notice that our civilisation is capable of generating improbable risks, which might make life on Earth impossible. Beck's theses very well illustrate the potential of mobilisation and universal importance of ecological issues. When the climate changes, food is contaminated, or we are threatened by nuclear disaster, their consequences will afflict, to an equal extent, the Caucasians and the Africans, the rich and the poor, the Poles and the Germans, women and men. The problems of the risk society are democratic, and Beck had high hopes for direct democracy connected with social movements. The democratic answer, however, does not come automatically, because people continue to have different interests, identities and habits. The answer may lie in another question discussed by Beck.

He talks about the crisis of faith in the omnipotence of science. Scientists used to be treated like demiurges, attributed with the power to control reality. Today, nobody doubts that scientists and engineers do not possess full control over their own creations. This discovery may lead to an assumption that since even experts do not possess full knowledge, any control over science and technology is impossible. However, instead of fatalism, one can announce the end of independent ideology, based solely on the criteria of instrumental effectiveness of science and technology. If technological solutions can influence ordinary people in an unexpected manner, why should people not have at least partial control over the process of creation of technology? Discovering that science is constructed socially does not signify that anybody can act as an engineer, but it definitely means that everybody has the right to know the consequences of a given design. Once we know who will gain, and who will be excluded from participating in benefits, once we know the dangers connected with particular solutions, we shall be able to initiate a democratic decision process, so that the chosen solutions serve the largest possible number of actors, and are accepted with the knowledge of the risk they may carry.

**Have we achieved freedom yet?**

One of the important elements defining the Greens' policies in Western Europe in the 1960s and 70s, was the search for opportunities to conduct politics outside the official institutions. The Greens preferred involvement in the form of a social movement to creating inflexible political parties. Instead of procedural democracy based

mainly on repetitive voting for political parties, a social movement practiced democracy in the sense of broadening the areas of freedom. By doing so, they could make demands, which could not possibly be made by establishments of traditional political parties. Today it has become clear that basing politics solely on social movements is not enough, and that fighting for a better world via participation in the parliamentary system does not have to be compromising. It often allows for the postulates not only to be heard by all, but for transforming them into legal and institutional solutions. Still, Green politics continues to be based on the impulse not to trust anyone who says we have achieved the state of complete freedom and democracy.

Such an attitude is rooted in the history of emancipation, which was implemented via the introduction of subsequent groups excluded from the existing political order. Such was the case with the bourgeoisie, which blew up the feudal system and established democracy limited by property requirement. This system was opposed by the workers, who rightly noticed that such democracy was for the rich only. Even including the poorer into democracy did not eradicate the issue of the absence of women from the political system, as was observed by the feminists. Once we tell the history of democracy from this perspective, it becomes apparent that it cannot be brought down to a set of procedures, since it signifies a struggle for the principles of participation and recognition.

In Poland, democracy is treated not so much as a set of procedures, but as a state of affairs different from totalitarianism. This sharp juxtaposition of democracy and totalitarianism has become one of the important elements supporting the status quo. Critics of the transformation's shortcomings – in the context of the economy, as well as values – were silenced by a statement that things were worse during the Communist era, so they should be happy to be able to vote and not end up in prison. Disagreements were stubbed in the name of achieving the goals of economic transformation and integration with the structures of the European Union and NATO; people who demanded more freedoms were accused of inciting "ideological wars". Today, still, demanding broader reproductive rights, asking questions about the place of the Catholic Church in social life, or striving for recognition of one's sexual distinctness are defined as a sort of political rowdiness. The suspicion about faith in the victory of freedom, typical for Green politics, can serve as a rejuvenating impulse leading to the understanding of democracy as a possibility to expand freedom, rather than simply as a state other than the Communist rule.

**The new world order?**

The appealing thing about Green politics is the fact that it does not stop at state borders, and it asks questions about the principles of constructing the world order from a perspective transcending national interests. Even if today we are far from the 19th century apotheosis of the civilising mission of the West, still the model of development implemented in Europe and North America remains dominating, since it is treated as a way of life worth following. At the same time, it is difficult to deserve a possibility to live in accordance with it. Western domination is expressed by maintaining the differentiation between civilised and non-civilised communities. This becomes particularly apparent in case of armed conflicts, which are used for emphasising the absolute difference between the prudent and pragmatic people of the West, and the impetuous and barbaric peoples of the East and the South. The role of barbarians can be played by the far away Hutus and Tutsis, as well as by the closer Serbs and Croats. The conflicts and war crimes are supposed to reveal the true face of the peoples outside the global centre. Other dimensions of their lives, such as poverty, underdevelopment, diseases or corruption only confirm the depth of the core division between the civilised and the barbarians.

The critique of the vision of the world thus constructed is easy to figure. The West, responsible for two world wars and death camps, is not particularly convincing as an advocate of love and peace. Furthermore, the fact that individual western countries contribute to inciting conflicts outside their borders for the benefit of their interests in those regions, renders the West unfit to lecture others. The view of the countries outside the centre as a breeding ground for disease, poverty and war is not complete either, and has a lot in common with the media creation aimed at convincing people in the West that happy life is possible only within the model prevailing in their home countries. The countries outside the centre could simply reject the division of the world, which is unfavourable to them, and stop chasing after the West. Self-worth could be an alternative for the divisions made under the assumption that

beyond the boundaries of the West people may at best aspire to full humanity.

This proposition has serious limitations, because although domination of the West has its symbolic dimension, i.e. the imposition of the sense of inferiority on others, it is also connected with the real differences in profiting from work, the level and quality of life and the power over the decisions concerning global solutions. The developed countries owe their position to the control over the most profitable branches of production, and the profits they draw from cheap labour of workers from the South are not without significance. This division of labour and profits cannot be changed purely by altering attitudes and freeing oneself from domination of western culture. Furthermore, the alternative for participation in the international division of labour - the profits from which are not distributed symmetrically - is often the disintegration of state and descending into chaos, which had happened to a part of African territories. The West, so willing to call for openness when it comes to circulation of capital and goods, offers refugees nothing but closed borders and refugee camps.

Is the situation hopeless? It is not, but we must notice and support new possibilities for conducting politics, emerging on the junction between the North and the South. Those opportunities are often connected with questioning of the rules, which are taken for granted in the West. A good example is the attitude of the Brazilian government, which at the turn of the century decided to challenge intellectual property agreements, and in order to save lives of its citizens, decided to break patents for anti-AIDS medication. This move saved thousands of people, whom international treaties had sentenced to death. The Brazilians put their citizens' right to life and access to modern therapy before property rights, which in practice serve higher profits of western companies. Hence the chance for the South lies in at least partial abandonment of the logic of free trade, which benefits mainly the developed countries. Another important strategy is the creation of horizontal systems of cooperation, facilitating overcoming the dependence upon the developed countries. One such successful project is the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDI). The organisation brings together public research centres from Kenya, India, Malaysia, Brazil, as well as the Pasteur Institute from France and Doctors Without Borders, in order to work on medicines for diseases, which due to poverty in the countries where they occur do not interest international concerns. The objective of the organisation is to produce drugs not only effective, but also cheap, so that poor people can afford them.

Noticing those issues in Poland is a value in itself, but it is also a condition for revitalising political life. In Poland, thinking about international politics is reduced either to rivalry between nations or to "entering into Europe", which is a version of politics of normalcy. This means that the space for political choice disappears, because either national interest is being defended, or normal – i.e. not up to discussion – solutions are being introduced. Once we notice that no standard of global politics is innocent, and that its actors are not only nations, but also classes, religious groups or ethnic minorities, we may be able to finally conduct a policy, including the policy within the European Union, which will no longer be reduced to defending national particularism.

## Crossing the boundaries

If we look for the lowest common denominator combining different dimensions of Green politics, we might discover it to be the readiness to cross boundaries. When we seek allies in designing public space, try to find democratic procedures which would solve problems beyond the national state territory, or when we are concerned for people left with no hope in the modern world, we try to step beyond the politics aimed at cutting off problems, and beyond illusions that some spontaneous mechanisms can make the world a friendlier place. Conducting Green politics means readiness to operate without hard bases, when neither a nation, nor the market, are obvious. The one certainty is that there is a challenge awaiting us beyond.

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## 6. Green modernisation

Edwin Bendyk

"If there was no global warming, someone ought to invent it" says Jeff Immelt, head of General Electric, the world's largest industrial conglomerate. And he adds: "Green means greens", as in "dollars".

**Germs of change**

Long before the first symptoms of the financial crisis appeared in the summer of 2007, bosses of many major corporations had begun to notice that the existing model of capitalism was exhausted. This discovery was made at a most surprising moment, in the 1990s, when it seemed that neoliberal capitalism was celebrating its ultimate triumph, and history really did end. In 1989, the system of real socialism fell apart; in 1991, the Soviet Union ceased to exist, ending the great experiment of construction of a centrally-planned, state-owned economy. Paraphrasing Marx, socialism collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions.

In the same moment, after a short and shallow depression, capitalism quickly regained vigour. In came the crazy 90s, the era of accelerating processes of globalisation, cheap resources, cheap labour from the countries behind the former iron curtain, cheap capital and unlimited growth, which was to be guaranteed by the growing consumption in both the old, mature, and the new, starved markets. As Thomas L. Friedman of *The New York Times* cleverly put it, the new world order arrived - globalisation with free market ideology - and behind it stood the hidden fist of the American army. We might add that the hidden network of the internet and digital communication pulsates behind this new order as well.

The new era required new theories, so the prophets of the New Economy emerged soon afterwards. In 1994, American Republicans went for victory in the Congress election, waving their programme document, *Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age.* The text, written by Alvin Toffler, Esther Dyson and George Gilder, commenced with the words: "The central event of the 20th century is the overthrow of matter" (by information). One year later, the internet investment fever begun at the world's stock exchanges, and index values surged to the levels inconceivable a few years earlier. Sceptics said the miracle could not last forever. The theoreticians of the New Economy announced the miracle to be the new norm. There are no limits to development, wrote Peter Schwartz in a text entitled *The Long Boom*, arguing that capitalism was no longer under threat from economic cycles and crises.

Cheap natural resources, particularly oil and gas, made dematerialisation of the economy credible. Consumption became the problem, which was nevertheless swiftly solved by the instant development of techniques to stimulate consumer desires, and financial instruments facilitating satisfaction of those passions. Cult publications of the 1970s, such as the Medowses' *Limits to Growth* (1972), went into the dustbin. There are no limits, because there are no limits to innovation creating a permanent supply of new products and services. And there are no limits, because the desire at the root of the demand-generating consumption is unquenchable.

The late 90s brought first symptoms of change. It soon turned out that behind the New Economy and infinite growth there was the good old capitalism founded on exploitation of all possible resources. However, in the new, globalised world, the inconvenient truth was impossible to conceal. Global public opinion learned about the rebellion of the Chiapas indigenous farmers, children's labour in Vietnamese sweatshops, ecological devastation in Nigeria and Brazil, and it finally said: "Enough!" Armed with the internet, it begun to create a discourse, which was critical of the official neoliberal doctrine. The discourse was followed by action. Radical innovation decided about its results. New social movements, which questioned the official model of development in the 1990s, discovered that the best weapon would be to employ the main driving power behind modern capitalism – consumption. As the weapon of the workers fighting for their rights against the capital was strike, i.e. the refusal to work, at the end of the 20th century, the refusal to consume proved the most effective tactics.

Consumer revolt, or refusing to buy products of particular brands, coordinated via the internet, brought the largest corporations to their knees. Nike or Coca Cola were among the first miraculously converted, who earlier believed their only responsibility was for the profit expected by their shareholders. Obviously, those corporations did not suddenly turn into philanthropists forced by an emotional impulse to look after their employees and the environment.

## Crisis of the future

Consumer revolts made the more enlightened of capitalist helmsmen realise that, contrary to the assurances about eternal indestructibility if growth, the key resource – the future - started to erode. For Capitalism, the future is as important, and at the same time as obvious, as the air. The future simply does exist, and must be better than the past, because all development takes place at the expense (literally) of the future. That is why the GNP is such a fetish; it must grow, because its growth guarantees politicians, that the repayment of public debt will be possible. Even cataclysms like both world wars did not question the faith in the future, because every time a war ended, the conviction that this time we will manage to form a better world and avoid the next world war resurfaced.

Late in the 20th century, in the conditions of peace and unprecedented increase of prosperity (albeit unevenly distributed, nevertheless unquestionable), the crisis of the future arrived, identified perfectly by Polish historian and philosopher Krzysztof Pomian, as early as 1980. The crisis was multidimensional and involved the exhaustion of natural and psychological resources. Its symptom was the entire decade of the 1970s, with its two energy shocks: in 1973 and 1979. The programmes of Green modernisation of capitalism commenced. U.S. President Jimmy Carter, an engineer by education, personally activated solar panels on the White House roof. Little Denmark set itself a goal of developing without increased consumption of energy. Germany, Japan, Sweden and France changed their development strategies.

After 1980, divisions formed. The United States decided that green capitalism was a costly whim. Ronald Reagan removed the solar panels and negotiated higher oil supplies from Saudi Arabia. The price of oil dropped rapidly, and the Soviet Union fell into financial trouble, from which it never recovered. However, the question whether a non-exploitative capitalism was possible, remained open. Positive examples of Denmark, Sweden, or even large Germany were no real evidence, since those countries operated within an international system propelled by the United States.

That is why the present crisis causes so much concern – it emerged from the very heart of the global system. What of the fact that the German economy is fundamentally healthy, if the Americans cannot at the moment afford German Mercedes cars? The condition for the return of the global economy to growth is the restoration of the dynamics of demand and supply, as was the case with all previous crises. This time, however, the problem is more serious, because the new condition is to overcome the crisis of future.

It will not suffice to initiate a large programme of public investment, as in the times of the 1930s New Deal. It will not suffice, as in the 1980s, to strike a deal with Saudi Arabia, to once again begin pumping the cheap oil. Capitalism entered the phase of large restructuring. If it is to end the crisis for good, it needs a new model of development, taking into account the future as the key component of development capital and not, as before, a factor, which is external and given. Certain corporations, confronted with the powerful effect of consumer revolt, began to discover this in the late 1990s. They realised that their survival depends not merely on short-term profit, but on the expectations, values and dreams of consumers in 10, 20, 30 years time.

## Green spirit of capitalism

Bosses of economic giants discovered the truths expressed 100 years earlier by German sociologist Max Weber. He argued that the propeller of development, according to capitalist logic, is the spiritual disposition of the society, which can be favourable or unfavourable to the objectives of the economy. Weber argued that it was the Protestant ethic, which facilitated the triumphant emergence of capitalism 200-300 years ago. It commends diligent work and turns it into a vocation, it accepts profit as reward for efforts, and appreciates individual achievement, considering it a form of serving God. The values of protestant ethics became the foundation of the so-called capitalist spirit, i.e. the system of commonly recognised values facilitating the operation of the system.

Capitalism, however, is a very dynamic system, therefore what served it in the beginning, during the primary accumulation, is not necessarily good for it whence it matured, as observed by Weber's continuator, French sociologist Luc Boltanski. What mature capitalism discovered, was that the demand-generating passion for consumption served it better than the protestant ethics of economising. In the 20th century, therefore, we

witnessed a large transformation of the spirit of capitalism – the Protestant ethic was substituted by the ethics of hyper-consumerist hedonism. This ethics, however, ultimately expired with the fall of the Lehman Brothers and the nationalisation of AIG.

Right now, we are witnessing the emergence of the new, Green spirit of capitalism. To better understand the dynamics of this process, it is worth referring to Boltanski's analyses. A transition from one system of values to another takes place as a result of critique of the existing system. The critique arises on the fringes. It is initially expressed by artists, and then penetrates into sociological thinking. Consequently, there is a growing number of symbols and concepts, which may propose an alternative description of the reality. As in the fairytale, someone exclaims: "The system is naked!" With time, others begin to call out, and barricades are built in the streets, as in 1968. The system defends itself, but only until it discovers, that it will be better off switching over to the values expressed by its critics. Effectively, the values of the critique become the values of the system. That is how the slogans of the 1968 student revolt became the foundation of the spirit of neoliberal capitalism.

Thus, in the late 1990s, consumer revolts revealed gaps in the neoliberal system, and the helmsmen of capitalism with slightly more insight begun to steer their corporations towards the values of the new spirit. They discovered an irreversible shift in the socially accepted system of values. The future is becoming increasingly significant, and the key factor influencing the quality of the future is the condition of the broadly defined environment. The new spirit is being constructed exactly in the manner described by Boltanski. It all began with the aesthetic critique expressed by the hippie movements, then science joined in. Books like *Silent Spring, Limits to Growth*, or Club of Rome reports, although fiercely criticised (often deservedly) for numerous inaccuracies, effectively undermined the paradigm. The culmination point was the crisis caused by the discovery of the gap in the ozone layer, and the role of humans in its creation, and later, of the global warming caused by emission of hothouse gases.

Whoever spotted the upcoming change early, and instead of resisting it, got involved with the development strategy, is going to win. The examples of Nike, Coca Cola, Du Pont or General Electric prove that it is possible to completely reorganise production cycles in such a manner, that not only pro-environmental expenses bring no loss, but they yield profit thank to increased efficiency and improved image among consumers, who control the most dangerous weapon – they may refuse to consume. Those who treated the change as a whim of Green Eco-Leftists, e.g. the Detroit car manufacturers, are today knocking at the federal government's door, begging for help. Nobody wants to buy their fuel-consuming monstrosities, and it is too late to prepare a new offer.

The situation is similar in the case of entire national economies. Countries who noticed the change early enough are today the leaders of eco-development, but also of development measured by classic parameters: level of employment, quality of life, dynamics of economic growth. Denmark, Sweden and Finland are model examples of reorientating the development mechanisms in line with the green spirit of capitalism. Poland, on the other hand, just like an automotive giant from Detroit, has only just discovered that the world has changed, that it is no longer possible to implement the neoliberal formula, and that it might be too late to switch over to the new model. Such a state of affairs is particularly apparent as far as the EU negotiations on the climate and energy package are concerned.

## Polish dilemmas

The Polish government argues that fulfilling the goals of climate policy defined in the package would mean huge costs, which would kill the economy. The economy is facing a perspective of blackouts within 2-3 years, due to decapitalisation of the power system. Huge investments are required in order to reconstruct the necessary energy infrastructure – each year the power sector should add about 2.5 GW in order to turn off the old plants and, at the same time, keep up with the growing demand. Simultaneously, according to the package, Poland should reduce emissions of hothouse gases. According to experts, the necessary investments and payments for $CO_2$ emissions will radically increase energy prices, which in turn will dramatically reduce competitiveness of several energy consuming branches of the Polish economy. To ask Lenin's question, what should be done? Can we still catch up with the green revolution, or are we doomed to the faith of the Russian bourgeoisie after the Great October?

Unfortunately, there is no easy answer. Certainly, Poland possesses numerous resources, which might make the green transformation possible. Obviously, we must start by defining the goal. There are, however, several possible scenarios of constructing the so-called energy mix in a manner corresponding with the goals of climate policy and the conditions of sustainable growth. We can, therefore, base our future on intensive development of renewable energy sources, as recommended e.g. by Greenpeace in its report *[R]ewolucja energetyczna dla Polski (Energy [R] evolution Scenario for Poland)*, and at the same time systematically reduce the share of coal in the economy. There is a possible scenario, in which there will be room for renewable energy, as well as for clean coal technologies, which is recommended by the experts of the National Programme Foresight Polska 2020. Some circles promote including atomic energy in the mix.

There are favourable technical conditions for each variant. Choosing one of them, however, will bear consequences for the structure of our further socio-economic development. The Greenpeace variant will signify gradual extinguishing of the Polish coal industry. The coal lobby, on the other hand, argues that coal, in connection with investment in developing coal technologies, can become a driving force for development, a Polish equivalent of the Finnish Nokia. Atomic energy will mean centralising the energy supply system, whilst development of renewable power production is conducive to its dispersing, which might be socially beneficial in a country where the population is very dispersed and a large proportion of people live in the countryside.

I will not attempt to analyse any of the variants, because each of them, technically and from the point of view of the presently available knowledge, can lead to the strategic target – the green transformation and putting Poland on the path of sustainable eco-development.

Technical conditions are necessary, but not sufficient for the success of the process. There are other components. The first one is time. Unfortunately, the package does not provide enough of it. As economist from Oxford Dieter Helm argues, in constructing the package politics won over common sense and economic reasoning. This is expressed by, among others, promoting a single technology, i.e. renewable energy, although the objectives of climate policy can be obtained via various energy mixes. Consequently, the lack of time and the political favouring of certain technologies will result in allocating resources in one development trend, while research works on clean coal technologies, for example, will be neglected.

The final effect will be the deindustrialisation of countries like Poland, which will not signify achieving the objective target - the global reduction of carbon emissions. Helm illustrates this paradox with the example of Great Britain, which since 1990 reduced its $CO_2$ emissions by 15%, of which it is very proud. However, if we were to calculate the carbon footprint of products consumed by the British, most of which are imported, Britain's effective input in carbon emissions would grow by 19%.

**Who will be the champion of eco-development?**

The above analyses indicate that the objectives of the green revolution will be just as difficult to achieve, as the objectives of the socialist revolution were, if they are enforced under any kind of dictate. Pressure results from political dynamics, which masks various interests of the actors of the EU's political game. Rationality of the game is not always in line with economic and technical rationality, and what is worse, it is counterproductive as far as the overall objective is concerned. If this objective is to be the transformation of the economy, public awareness – the earlier quoted transformation of the spirit of capitalism - must come first.

In Poland, this transformation has only just begun. Public discourse is still dominated by the language inherited from the neoliberal period, when the environment was an external factor and introducing it into the economic calculation was treated as a cost rather than a productive component of capital. The attempt to speed things up by institutional pressure, which, in fact, involves enforcing solutions not only incomprehensible, but, due to objective reasons, often questionable as well, is bound to fail.

The situation is perfectly illustrated by the case of the United States, for many years the most consistent opponent of institutionalisation of the green revolution. At the same time, inside the American society a dynamic process of transformation was underway. Thanks to this process, American business and American politics began to change. Ending his election campaign in

Des Moines on October 31 2008, Barack Obama announced that over the upcoming decade he would provide 150 billion dollars for development of green technologies. If he sticks to his promise and treats the present crisis as a signal for radical change, the United States will beat Europe to the position of the leader of eco-development.

Why so? Do EU countries not dominate in development of green technologies? This is true, as far as the number of patents is concerned. The US, on the other hand, has larger ecological scientific resources (measured objectively, by number of publications) and more entrepreneurship, which both await to be mobilised by the third factor – financing. That should not pose a problem, since the present spirit of capitalism uses its hidden hand to command streams of risk capital. Should this take place, it will be a cause for celebration. Success in overcoming the crisis and, at the same time, success of the global green revolution, depend largely upon the United States.

Similar transformation in Poland is possible, providing that great changes take place in public awareness, and the leading elites emerge, who will channel the newly stimulated social energy into new progressive projects. The question today is not whether the green revolution is possible. There is no other model of modernisation. The alternative would be a collapse of civilisation.

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## 7. Let us not free the state from responsibility

Przemysław Sadura talks to Agnieszka Graff about the road from "Solidarity" to NGOs, and what will happen next.

**Przemysław Sadura:** For some time now, your views have seemed to evolve from liberal feminism to social feminism. When I was researching the Green electorate, I noticed the voters still find it difficult to associate issues like social justice and freedom of convictions. How did you conjoin those two?

**Agnieszka Graff:** My turn towards the Left is the case of evolution of sensitivity rather than views. Similarly to a larger part of humanistic intelligentsia in the 1990s, I had no views about the economy and – more importantly – I did not consider it my duty to have any. We treated the economy as an area to be dealt with by experts, such as Balcerowicz. We turned to literature, culture, ethics, we believed ourselves to be "liberal", and in terms of values, we wanted to break the bishops' monopoly. The market seemed transparent to us. In those days, in my thinking, capitalism did not constitute a subject for debate – it was just "normal". This ended some years ago, thanks to my talks with Adam Ostolski and Kinga Dunin, who made me aware of gaps in my thinking. During one of the debates at TR,[41] Adam Ostolski made a short speech about the status of experts and ideological blindness which leads us to leave the area of the economy to so-called "experts", as if we were assuming they had no views, only knowledge. It occurred to me then that consenting to omitting certain topics is, in fact, intellectual indolence. So I started to read, which was all the easier, since Klein's *No Logo,* Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed* and Stiglitz's *Globalization* had just been published, and "Krytyka Polityczna" was beginning to publish texts about ideological functions of economics. This is how I started to understand that economics, too, is a world view, and not knowledge. It is not as if in the 1980s the holy ghost descended from heaven and enlightened our Earth with true, objective economics. It was more of a landing operation: American neoliberals and neoconservatives were read and admired. This trend had a massive influence on a certain part of Polish intelligentsia; it infected people creating new Poland with categories of peculiarly interpreted economics. Neoliberalism in Poland has been treated not as a theory, but as a dogma, the very fundament of "normalcy". This is a result of an allergy to left-wing views, which was natural after the experience of "real socialism", but ought to be viewed as a historical process, rather than a revealed truth. Anyway, this process is reaching its end. I did not contribute to this state of affairs, in fact I am surprised and ashamed I grasped it all so late.

**PS:** I observe a similar evolution in many feminists, perhaps with the exception of Magdalena Środa.[42] Women's organisations change, and nurses and trade unions participate in the March Manifas.[43]

**AG:** I think the key experience for these circles was the nurses' "White Town".[44] At least for me, it was a breakthrough. It was not merely about the generally defined intelligentsia remaining silent about economic issues, but about the painful breach in Polish feminism. For a long time, a media story has dragged behind us, about privileged upper-middle class ladies who practice feminism at their universities, and about so-called "normal women", such as cashiers at Tesco or divorced women who cannot execute child support payments for their children, who have nothing to do with us, and to whom we have nothing to offer. "Feminists vs. the normal ones" was a mythical and unfair opposition, because right from the beginning, our feminism was about women's rights, it went beyond universities... There was, nevertheless, a pinch of truth in the juxtaposition. We went to nurses' demonstrations, we supported the fight for reinstatement of the alimony fund. Those were, nevertheless, individual actions. The breakthrough took place because of various coalitions created thanks to Kasia Bratkowska, Wanda Nowicka and Kazia Szczuka.[45] The Greens

41 TR Warszawa – TR Warsaw, a theatre and a modern cultural centre in Warsaw.
42 Magdalena Środa – a well known philosopher (University of Warsaw) and feminist, former Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Status (2004-2005) (Editor).
43 Manifa – an annual parade through different Polish cities to celebrate International Women's Day. Each parade has its own "theme" that refers to current women's issues (Editor).
44 Between June 19, 2007, and July 15, 2007, about approx. three thousand nurses from Poland's state hospitals camped out in tents in front of the Prime Minister's office. Their protest was aimed at raising their wages. The tent action itself was triggered by the fact that the Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński refused to meet with the representatives of a large nurses' demo on June 19 (Editor)
45 Katarzyna Bratkowska, Wanda Nowicka and Kazimiera Szczuka - well known Polish feminists and activists (Editor).

and "Krytyka Polityczna" made their contribution as well, with their strong presence in the "White Town". Also, there was the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, which conducted several court cases combining gender and social issues: sexual harassment at Frito Lay, exploitation at Biedronka supermarkets, the case of Alicja Tysiąc.[46] I cooperate with the Helsinki Foundation, and, while observing these cases, I underwent a sort of prolonged ethical shock: I kept realising that the drama of those women is not the fact that they were deprived of abstract rights, but their poverty and helplessness in confrontation with those in power. And that this is male power, but embedded – in the case of harassment – in market mechanisms. The gender perspective is important here, but not sufficient.

We were also strongly influenced by Ost's *Defeat of Solidarity*. I do not completely subscribe to the thesis that Solidarity was a trade union movement, which betrayed workers by crossing over to the neoliberal side, because I believe "trade unionism" had never been a key to that movement – it was a national spurt, which for historical reasons took the form of a trade union. It is not totally unfounded, though, because as well as other things, Solidarity was indeed a union, a movement of workers. Ost spotted a gap in the awareness of oppositionist intelligentsia of my generation, and older. He showed that the workers' anger after 1989 was justified, and that populists' exploitation of it was no accident. It is tell-tale that – as you said – Magda Środa still thinks as she used to, while younger people found it easier to see Poland's latest history in a new optics. We managed to understand the futility of the juxtaposition: "enlightened modernisers vs. irresponsible populists". The victory of Lepper, Giertych, Rydzyk,[47] was brought about not by the stupidity of the masses, not by nostalgia for communism, but by a sort of betrayal by the elites.

**PS:** How permanent is this seduction and the resulting marriage of intelligentsia and the socially marginalised groups?

**AG:** The intellectual breakthrough is irreversible. I do not know about the others, but reading Ost's book "reorganised" my head. A strategic marriage, however, is fragile, if only because the cultural, linguistic and, to some extent, economic gap between us still exists. We can share similar views, but we often talk of different subjects, and are fearful of different issues. Let us not be misled, for women outside larger cities, "feminism" is still a strange and terrifying word. Nurses are afraid of the "shame" we got used to over the years. For a person living in a traditional environment outside Warsaw, a decision to go to the Manifa is very difficult to make. This apprehension about radicalism – not as much of the views, but of forms of political expression – is apparent in the process of building national coalitions, such as the recently created Citizens' Forum of Women (Obywatelskie Forum Kobiet). We sometimes abandon "embarrassing" ideas, to make other women feel better. As Joanna Piotrowska[48] put it, "the girls are waiting to see if we are not sending soiled sanitary towels to the ministry again. As soon as they realise we are not, everything is fine". That is why I consider yesterday's event in the Sejm[49] - celebrating the history of the suffrage - a great success. The suffragettes are uncontroversial, since no one, except Korwin-Mikke,[50] would say today that women should not have the right to vote. At the same time, they are controversial, since they can be quoted in a way, which makes the present government uneasy. To come to the Sejm is an ennoblement, a touch of excitement. I could feel it myself. That is why we swapped wigs, which had their role in the history of the Polish feminist movement, for beautiful hats, which evoke an element of conventional femininity, as well as history. Feminism, as a rule, means parting with the

46 Alicja Tysiąc - a Polish woman who was denied access to abortion although the pregnancy posed a real threat to her health and she was legally entitled to it. On March 20, 2007, the European Court of Human Rights announced its verdict in favour of Alicja Tysiąc (Poland was urged to pay compensation to A. Tysiąc). This case reignited public debate about the restrictive Polish abortion law (Editor).

47 Andrzej Lepper (Leader of Samoobrona – Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland, a left-wing agrarian and populist party) and Roman Giertych (Leader of Liga Polskich Rodzin - The League of Polish Families, a right-wing political party) built the Polish government coalition (together with Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – Law and Justice) from May 5, 2006, until August 13, 2007. Together with Tadeusz Rydzyk (an influential Roman Catholic priest and Redemptorist, creator and head of the controversial Radio Maryja station and leader of the Radio Maryja Families conservative movement they were symbols of the victory of the right-national-conservative groups of society in Poland after the parliamentary elections in 2005 (Editor).

48 Joanna Piotrowska – a Polish feminist, director of the Feminoteka Foundation (Editor)

49 On November 18, 2008 the event to celebrate the 90-anniversary of the election rights for Polish women took place in the Polish Parliament (Sejm) (Editor)

50 Janusz Korwin-Mikke – a Polish conservative liberal politician a former leader of Unia Polityki Realnej - The Real Politics Union (Editor).

stereotype of traditional femininity. But the patriarchy punishes women for it; it entails genuine costs. It is difficult to abandon one's "normal" image without the support, which the Warsaw intellectual circles do possess. This is not to say that there are no radical feminists outside Warsaw. They exist, and I get the impression that they are more "iron jawed" than we are, since they bear greater risk. But we also try to build a coalition with those, who want equality, but are afraid of feminism. We approach each other cautiously. We begin to have views about economic issues, they begin to have feminist views. Furthermore, we no longer assume, as we used to, that not having feminist views is "false consciousness"; we learn to respect our differences.

**PS:** You mentioned building national coalitions. How do you see the existing and the future role of women's and feminist organisations in developing the movement, which brings together such different circles?

**AG:** I do have a broader reflection about non-governmental organisations and their position within the system. Organisations like the OŚKa Foundation, the Women's Rights Centre, the eFKa Women's Foundation, and the recently very resilient Feminoteka, have done a huge and very useful job. At the same time, I cannot help thinking that by doing certain things so well, women freed the state from its responsibility for the social sphere. We thought we were putting pressure on the state and forcing it to pay attention to, for example, the issue of violence against women or the need for sexual education at schools. In recent years, I have come to the conclusion that we provided the state with an alibi, we let it resign from looking after the social sphere. I am not alone in my diagnosis; there is an extensive literature on so-called "NGO-isation" of the women's movement and social movements in general. Most generally speaking, the NGO-isation involves creating professional institutions instead of social movements for dealing with various painful issues, and the state delegates the social sphere to them. The NGOs, trying to patch up the gaps left behind by neoliberalism, fall into a spiral of depoliticisation. The more we are preoccupied with patching up and fundraising for it, the less time and energy we have for lobbying and changing the reality. Some people believe that feminism succumbed to this to a lesser extent than NGOs of other types, because it is political by nature, nevertheless it is not immune. Besides, it is no coincidence that the NGO sector is so intensely feminised. The activists – not just feminists – assumed a traditional women's role here: carers, cleaners, the ones who remain responsible when others run riot. The market messed up certain things, left people in the lurch... and women from NGOs bustle around, help, repair the damage.

**PS:** What do you think was the origin of this phenomenon?

**AG:** I believe the concept of "civil society" was of key significance here. People born in the late 1960s grew up reading texts by Michnik, Havel, Kołakowski, which presented a beautiful vision of depoliticised dissident idealism: we shall overthrow communism, keeping our purity and nobility intact. We shall build a new language, we shall speak the truth in spite of communist newspeak. Nobody told us then that political views are worth having, all you needed to do was to be against communism. We were convinced that the intelligentsia was not to be preoccupied with politics – it was to support the truth and democracy, i.e. to create the civil society. I have recently spoken with Barbara Einhom, British sociologist, who wrote a book about feminism and the concept of civism in Eastern Europe. She quoted the opinion of a Hungarian activist of non-governmental organisations: "We thought we were building a civil society, and all we created were NGOs". I had heard this opinion before, from Polish feminists. The sentence circulates, because it is conveying something important. We wanted to create a brave new world, and we created a network of small foundations, which, to make things worse, are usually conflicted, because they compete for the same modest resources.

We sometimes have disputes about why there is so much conflict between women's organisations: is it a question of female predilection to conflict, an internal characteristic of feminism? It is not. It is an immanent feature of NGOs, an outcome of the system in which they have to operate. Their interest requires monopolising a particular issue and guarding their boundaries, it is not conducive to cooperation. One western organisation donates towards women's reproductive rights, another to victims of domestic violence. If we were given a grant for "project x", they will not give us funding for something similar. This makes it impossible to build coalitions around current, urgent issues. Politically, it is obvious: it is necessary to organise a demonstration. But who is supposed

to do it, if all organisations are busy applying for grants or implementing a project on something else, or reporting. Is it not where all those Polish feminists work? I remember employees of a certain feminist foundation painting banners for the Manifa after hours, or sending Manifa faxes with a sense of guilt about stealing time from their proper work. Perhaps I am naive, but I believe their office should have been the Manifa's headquarters. Instead of a foundation I go to, I should have an organisation I belong to... If our suffragette grandmothers operated like we do, we would still have no right to vote. NGO-isation is a great waste of our generation's energy.

**PS:** This reminds me of a workshop for Polish social workers I used to conduct. The participants were shocked to hear that Scandinavian social workers were active members of trade unions, which not only defended their rights as employees, but represented political interests of their clients as well. In Poland, a social worker – governmental or non-governmental – deals with solving practical problems of people in his or her care, and not with representing them.

**AG:** It is also considered a peculiar thought that an NGO is responsible to its employees as an employer, and that those employees might protest. I know many people, who fled NGOs, because they were, and still are, notoriously bad employers. Unlike in business, it is assumed that an employee is an activist, a noble changer of the world and distributor of goods. Such vision implies that wrong-doing to employees and clients is possible. And there is the issue you mentioned: do we treat recipients of those goods as political subjects? It does not occur to us that we ought to be elected by those people; that this is about representation, and not about charity work. We admire the democratic structure of the first Solidarity, but where is the democratic structure of the civil society? NGOs are foundations, their boards do not change for years, they are managed by the same people all the time. Those people treat their organisations as their property, their private companies. I have great respect and appreciation for them, but the structure deeply lacks transparency and is very frustrating. NGOs are a little world of its own – there is no room for development here, no continuation. That is why, after several years, people burn out instead of changing the world.

**PS:** You indicate the fear of politicisation...

**AG:** It is not a fear. It is idolising anti-politicisation. Yesterday Kazia Szczuka said that it was incredible to be inside the Sejm, rather than picketing outside it. Only a few years earlier we felt much better outside. The idea to go inside did not seem very trendy.

**PS:** Then perhaps this is the time to build a political party, or join one of the existing ones?

**AG:** There is a huge barrier in Poland as far as building political parties is concerned. Both Zieloni 2004 and the Women's Party crushed against it. Their emergence was an attempt to break through this wall. Gretkowska[51] said repeatedly that she was fed up with standing outside the Sejm. I cannot pretend it had no influence upon me. Reading her interviews, I was annoyed by her conformism on the issue of the right to abortion, but she gave me food for thought about the futility of picketing outside the parliament. And it was she who attracted thousands of women. She failed, so perhaps a party is not the right formula either. But isolated NGOs locked in their offices are no good, and that is for certain.

**PS:** If we abandon the formulas of a non-governmental organisation and a political party, what alternative are we left with for an institutional basis for an alliance between "ordinary women" and "women from the media"?

**AG:** I see no overall solutions. What I do see are mainly coalition strategies, temporary, or if possible – more permanent frameworks of cooperation. I am involved in the Citizen's Forum of Women – I see it as an important hope for Polish feminism. The Forum facilitates joining the efforts of women involved in political parties, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, and a few free electrons – women connected with universities. Feminoteka acts as a magnet: it does not organise, but enables the members of the Forum to create their own organisation. Each of us has a sense of cause; e.g. the event in the Sejm was thought up and coordinated by Małgorzata Tkacz-Janik, a Green and a feminist from Silesia. The group has a long-term programme for getting united around various demands – and for me it is crucial that we are not afraid of the political ones.

51 Manuela Gretkowska – a Polish writer, the founder (2007) and the first leader of the Polish Women's Party - Partia Kobiet (Editor).

The hats were most visible in the Sejm, but it was all about the political dimension of the women's cause, about the fact that, as women, we have our own history, and that that history is political. Professor Małgorzata Fuszara from Gender Studies at the University of Warsaw, and later the former Government Plenipotentiaries for Equal Status made beautiful speeches about it.

About forms other than parties and NGOs, as a person fascinated by American feminism and the history of fighting for civil rights of African Americans, I promote a vision of membership organisations. Democracy and progress in minority rights in the US are not based on small foundations, but on giants, like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) or the National Organisation for Women (NOW). They are large organisations with hundreds of thousands of members, with budgets based on subscription, which lobby, bring people into the parliament and – importantly – are internally democratic. NGOs often complain about the lack of civil activity, but one must remember that an average person participates in political activity by writing a check or sending an e-mail, and not by taking to barricades. In Poland there is little opportunity to get involved in civil activity, and it is those little actions and the ensuing esprit de corps, which constitute a foundation for building a politicised civil society. At the moment, NGOs are not connected with the society, because a citizen approaches an NGO as a supplicant. Neither do they have a connection with the political system, which they theoretically should influence, because they lack political power derived from representation. This is a vicious circle we must break free from.

**PS:** I get the impression that membership organisations are a step towards professionalisation of social movements, but not necessarily towards participatory democracy.

**AG:** I would not agree. Professional does not necessarily mean undemocratic, and being a member of something large gives a sense of participation. We cannot lose sight of the specific characteristics of our history: in Eastern Europe, there was a transition from the dissident participatory democracy of the communist times to the facade civil society after 1989. Participatory democracy ought to accompany parliamentary democracy rather than be substituted by it – politics is not to be left entirely to politicians as soon as the election is over. Participatory democracy, as the New Left understood it in the 1960s, was highly saturated with ideology. Meanwhile, in our part of the world, civil society uses categories like "service", "idealism" and "good taste" instead of the categories of political views and group interests. There is still a lot of resentment towards the Left in the Polish civil society, because it brings into mind Marx and Lenin. This is not acceptable to people born in Communist Poland. This lack of political involvement facilitates smooth operation of the system: we left the economy to neoliberal experts, values to the bishops, left-wing views to the Post-Communists and idealism to NGOs. Thus we built a gap between the needs of our potential electorate and whatever we are able to offer to it. We need to think it over anew. Perhaps my generation is already lost to the revolution, but yours – not necessarily so.

**PS:** Thank you.

**Agnieszka Graff** – specialist in English language and literature, feminist, co-founder of Porozumienie Kobiet 8 Marca *("The March 8 Women's Alliance")*. Member of the "Krytyka Polityczna" editorial team. Scholarship holder of the Fulbright Foundation. She publishes scientific and journalistic texts in, among others, "Krytyka Polityczna", "Feminist Studies", "Res Publica Nowa", "Kultura i Społeczeństwo", "Ośka", "Zadra", "Gazeta Wyborcza", "Rzeczpospolita". She works at the American Studies Center of the University of Warsaw, and is a lecturer at post-graduate Gender Studies. Her book *Świat bez kobiet (World without Women*, 2001) is one of the most important publications of Polish feminist literature. It analyses the mechanisms of gradual exclusion of women's voice from the public sphere in conditions of system transformation. In her next book, *Rykoszetem. Rzecz o płci, seksualności i narodzie (Ricochet: on Gender, Sexuality and Nation,* 2008) she takes a look at relations between Polish nationalism and gender.

## 8. The Greens without ecology?

Przemysław Sadura talks to Jacek Żakowski about the future, frogs and people.

**Przemysław Sadura:** Since the 1970s, and certainly since the 1980s, Green parties have been a permanent element of the West European political scene. Recently, the Greens have joined power structures in some of the new EU countries. Why are they still confined to the fringes of political life in Poland?

**Jacek Żakowski:** Obviously, the reasons are numerous, but the main one is the weakness of leadership. To create a political movement one needs a certain charisma, and there is no charismatic personality in Poland who could become a symbol for this party. Look at Germany: Joschka Fischer has never been the leader of the Greens there, but he symbolises the party.

**PS:** So the obstacle is not the lack of potential electorate?

**JŻ:** It depends on how we define "green". If we do not limit it to conservation of frogs and trees, but treat it broadly, as seeking harmony between civilisation and nature, maintaining balance between work and home, supporting values other than consumption, the demand is going to be very high. There is no shortage of people who will support the vision of a society founded on social cohesion, equality of roles and opportunities. The problem is that the Greens in Poland are associated with frogs. There is this ad, in which cows stop to let a snail cross the road. This is what the Greens do: they teach cows to make way for a snail. This is a dead end – you cannot win an election by defending snails. You can win it by defending life and the world. This stereotype has established itself by now, and it will be difficult to change, but I see an urgent need for such change. In Poland, we have a large group of people thinking about "being green" in a holistic manner. This group either did not take part in the elections, or sought support from the SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej - Democratic Left Alliance), and earlier from the Freedom Union (Unia Wolności, UW). It is nevertheless necessary to find leadership, which will be able to define a vision distinctly different from the traditional Left, class-oriented, interested in steelworkers and miners, while opposing the conservative, PiS-style Right (PiS, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość - Law and Justice Party) and the Liberals from the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO). It is a massive operation requiring broad mobilisation and defining the "being green" in a manner yet unknown to Poles. Such a formation could replace the dying SLD.

**PS:** Such a party – as anyone wanting to get practically involved in Polish political life – will face a difficult task. Cartelisation of the party system is not conducive to introducing new actors to the political scene, as the Women's Party (Partia Kobiet) has recently found out. How do you see the chances of breaking the monopoly of PO-PiS in politics?

**JŻ:** The Women's Party was more affected by being an element of a promotion campaign for a book by a certain female writer than by the cartelisation of the party system. How do I see the evolution of the political scene? I expect advancing marginalisation of PiS, which has gone into a slide, just as Samoobrona (Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland) did a few years earlier. The difference is that Samoobrona was becoming increasingly up-market, whilst PiS is radicalising in an anarchic sense. The worse they are doing, the more anarchic they become, and the more anarchic they become, the deeper they slide. This will push them to the bottom, i.e. to support level of 7-10%. The SLD has no potential. The recently publicised results of the research of the party's activists confirmed what had been obvious for a long time: it is a party of right-wing Post-Communists, which has nothing to offer to anybody except the Post-Communists. That is why, in fact, the system we have is a mono-party, and not a bipolar one. There are two theories about further developments. According to one, the mono-party system is going to consolidate, and the Platform will win the presidential election and obtain 48-55% of votes. I do not believe it possible. Sooner or later, all sorts of processes of erosion and disintegration are going to commence, as they usually do in a mono-party. The only exception was the CSU,[52] but that is exactly why it used to be a global phenomenon. Were we to conduct a market analysis and ask if there is room for a "green product", I believe the answer would be "yes".

52 Die Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands - The Christian Democratic Union of Germany.

**PS:** Are the PO voters the target group for this product?

**JŻ:** A large proportion of PO voters voted for it as an anti-PiS party. This could be significant during one election, but along with the weakening of PiS the weight of this factor is going to decrease. Were the election to take place today, the turnout would be some 10 percentage points lower. Those who would miss the election this time are the potential electorate of the new, Green, Left-Wing or New Left party. The trouble is that at this point we encounter a barrier of various programme elements, such as the attitude towards nuclear power. I believe it would be difficult to find anybody opposed to nuclear energy among this group.

**PS:** It looks like Jacek Żakowski, without any research, knew what we discovered after months of field work. Before I change my profession, there is one more issue: we have a problem, because the Polish Greens are distinguished from SLD activists by their great ideological passion. The entire movement is going to face the dilemma of how far it can diverge from its present postulates in the name of increasing its influence upon Polish politics.

**JŻ:** This is a tension, which – to reach for a vocabulary from a different era – is always present during the phase of transition between an elite-based party and a mass-based party. Once again, everything depends on how you define "being green". To me, one of the elements of this concept is rationality, which is difficult to reconcile with doctrinal enmity towards nuclear power. Particularly in the context of what we know about the harmfulness of other energy sources. If you want to occupy a serious position at the political scene, you cannot limit yourself to merely expressing your views. You must consider other factors, not necessarily opportunistic ones. It can be down to the sense of responsibility. Today, I would not be persuaded that nuclear power plants are more harmful than those powered by lignite.

**PS:** And how do you see the phenomenon, which has been occurring for some time now, of certain green demands being taken over by the media and politicians of mainstream parties often not connected with the Left? Even if this process is shallow and concerns issues like recycling, it does take place. To what extent do those actions facilitate development of "green" thinking in the society, and what danger do they pose for Green politicians?

**JŻ:** We are already dealing with both. On the one hand, the Right has stolen a large part of the Left's programme. It is a sort of vicious revenge for what had happened in the times of Tony Blair and Bill Clinton, when the Left stole the programme from the Right. In other words – it is payback time. Most of the Left-Wing and Green slogans – except those concerning the economy - have been appropriated by the Right.

**PS:** What you are talking about now, is the situation abroad, and the New Right Sarkozy style.

**JŻ:** I am talking about Poland as well. Perhaps not frogs, but organic farming is an element of the PSL's programme (PSL, Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe - Polish People's Party) and its vision of Poland. Obviously, in the West this process is far more advanced. But even here, if we look at things from the equality perspective, the first female prime minister was Conservative-Liberal Hanna Suchocka. This is arriving with the EU. You mentioned recycling – it is important. Today, if you have a small detached house, it is impossible to avoid segregating waste. A patrol comes and it can fine you – it is ecological terror. No civil servant ever visits about other issues, but about this – they do. In this sense, the Greens cannot demand recycling in this day and age, since it has become a form of state oppression. In this way, the Greens are becoming victims of their own success, because ecological repressions are gaining momentum. Unlike in Germany, where environmental awareness is very high, in Poland protection of the environment is not well rooted in convictions of the public, and it is viewed as a new sort of oppression.

**PS:** And Poles do not like force.

**JŻ:** Ecology is like socialism. If Communist Poland was created as a result of a class revolution, it would be socially accepted, maybe even successful. We do not know. But it arrived on Russian bayonets. Conservation is rigorously imposed on Brussels and then on Warsaw. This causes resistance. How can a patrol come and dig in my rubbish? I put away batteries, but voluntarily. If some day, to buy a battery, I will have to return a used one (as used to be the case in Communist Poland), I will get angry. The Greens' success turns against them, because their ideas are introduced by way of state force. In this context, it seems all the more important to show the symbolic place of a container for used batteries in the holistic

vision of the world. This requires a charismatic leader, who will translate those messages to social ideas, and mobilise people. In America, such a person was Al Gore.

**PS:** This sounds better, because for a moment I was afraid to hear: this cannot be done, unless you go through a May '68 and a spontaneous, grassroots green revolution.

**JŻ:** No. I believe it is a question of strong, intelligent, persuasive leadership. In Poland there are no writers, publicists or journalists who would describe the world from this perspective. It is always frogs, rubbish, $CO_2$. This is not about $CO_2$! To the Germans it is completely obvious, and they are protesting against longer working hours for the same reasons as against the extinction of frogs. It is only the Poles, who cannot put the two together.

**PS:** And when this leader finally appears, he or she will carry away the masses and the young? In your latest texts you expressed high hopes connected with the young generation of Poles. You wrote about their increasing social and political involvement. Our research shows something opposite. How is it then? Will they become politically active, like the young Americans during the last election?

**JŻ:** I do believe so. It requires fulfilling a few conditions though. Why are Zieloni 2004 and "Krytyka Polityczna" unable to create a united front? Change will be impossible without it. Obama could combine aspirations of different groups of Americans who were against the neoliberal and neoconservative style of thinking. How come the feminists are friends with the Greens, and at the same time the Women's Party emerges, and it competes with the Greens? I believe this is a result of the fact that the Greens in Poland are still seen – and they see themselves in this way – as an ecological party in the traditional sense of the word. There is no social ecology. This is a trap. Such an approach may make sense in Germany, but environmental sensitivity there is at a different level. In Poland it fails to mobilise, because it is perceived as eccentricity. All the Greens can see are the frogs. I remember a conversation between one of the outstanding Solidarity politicians and Waldemar Pawlak,[53] during which the former said to the latter: "to us it is people who matter, and with you it is just cows and horses...". Perhaps this was true about the PSL at the very beginning, perhaps all they saw was farming. But Pawlak managed to rebuild his party. Today, the PSL has views about the stock exchange, about interest rates and operation of banks. Does the Green party have an opinion about the way the stock exchange operates and how it should be regulated? Either it does not, or its opinion is not audible. If the party proposed paternity leaves and at the same time dealt with protecting the frogs, it would embrace the Green vision of reality in a broader sense. If the Greens pull away from the environment a little, they may change their party into an important political formation dominating the new Left.

**PS:** We are ending on an optimistic note. Thank you.

**Jacek Żakowski** – journalist and publicist. Currently cooperates with the "Polityka" weekly. Former spokesman of the Civil Parliamentary Club (Obywatelski Klub Parlamentarny – OKP), one of the founders of "Gazeta Wyborcza" and the first President of the Polish Information Agency (Polska Agencja Informacyjna). Winner of several prizes: Ksawery Pruszyński Polish PEN Club (1988), Journalist of the Year (1997), two Wiktors (1997). Author and presenter of many excellent television programmes. Director of the Journalism Programme at Collegium Civitas in Warsaw.

53 Waldemar Pawlak – leader of the Polish People's Party (PSL); currently (as of December 2008) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Economy in Poland (Editor).

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