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Politics of Resistance in the Context of Polish Democracy

Introduction

Democratic government [...] is bad when it is allowed to be corrupted by democratic society, which wants for everyone to be equal and for all differences to be respected. It is good, on the other hand, when it rallies individuals enfeebled by democratic society to the vitality of war in order to defend the values of civilization, the values pertaining to the clash of civilizations¹.

Jacques Rancière's words are consistent with Chantal Mouffe's² proposal of the project of agonistic democracy whose central category is a conflict resulting from the opposition between different but equivalent voices. However, the pluralism advocated by Mouffe requires a distinction between the demands accepted in the agonistic debate and the ones which are excluded from it. Exclusion of some of the demands results from the fact that they challenge the fundamental principles of the society³. In this concept, exclusions are considered in

¹ J. Rancière: *Hatred of Democracy*. Trans. S. Corcoran. London-New York: Verso, 2014, p. 4.

² Ch. Mouffe: *The Democratic Paradox*. London-New York: Verso, 2000.

³ Ch. Mouffe: *Polityczność. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej* [On the Political. Krytyka Polityczna Guide]. Trans. J. Erbel. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2008.

relation to the political, not moral, framework, as in the case of John Rawls's theory⁴.

Such vision of democracy, which significantly deviates from its liberal and post-political model⁵, particularly strongly emphasizes the meaning of resistance in its functioning. This approach demonstrates a political character of this category which is still poorly defined and blurred, despite its cognitive and explicatory usefulness⁶. In the article I try to analyze the resistance category in the light of its politics. The task is to show the political potential instilled in every act of resistance. This subject was touched upon by, among others, James C. Scott whose works are classics of everyday resistance literature. The analyses presented in the article go beyond Scott's conclusions in this matter because in order to interpret the phenomenon of the politics of resistance I employed a construct developed by Rancière called "the distribution of the sensible". The practicality of the said category means it allows to grasp the multidimensionality, discursiveness, and (in)visibility of this phenomenon.

The Political Context of the Actions of the Opposition in Poland

The current political situation in Poland, we are dealing with after the Law and Justice party (Polish *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) lead by Jarosław Kaczyński seized power in the country, has become an arena of fighting for the empowerment of various displays of resistance that Polish society has not faced on such scale since 1989. On the one hand, we are dealing with the resistance of the ruling conservative party towards the established liberal democratic structures present in Poland and in the European Union. The rule of the Law and Justice party is an example of resistance towards values which are neoliberal and promoted

⁴ J. Rawls: *Liberalizm polityczny* [Political Liberalism]. Trans. A. Romaniuk. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2016.

⁵ According to Chantal Mouffe, the post-political approach is represented by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, whose visions of democracy eliminate the notion of "adversary" and are based on a dialogue leading to a consensus, which seemed utopian for her. She claims that it is only possible to achieve a short-term conflictual consensus. Ch. Mouffe: *Polityczność...*, pp. 50–67.

⁶ J.C. Scott: *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1985; J.A. Hollander, R.L. Einwohner: *Conceptualizing Resistance*. "Sociological Forum" 2004, vol. 19 (4). doi:10.1007/s11206-004-0694-5; E. Bielska: *Koncepcje oporu we współczesnych naukach społecznych. Główne problemy, pojęcia, rozstrzygnięcia* [Concepts of Resistance in Modern Social Sciences. Main Problems, Notions and Solutions]. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2013.

by the culture of Western societies, often referred to as the culture of liquid modernity (Zygmunt Bauman), the culture of late modernity (Anthony Giddens), or the culture of post-modernity (Jean Baudrillard). On the other hand, some part of the society that wants to maintain present solutions and social order manifests resistance towards the decisions, ideas, and activities of the government. It is therefore resistance oriented at no change and at maintaining the *status quo* based on equality for all citizens and people, regardless of their origin, race, religion, sexual orientation or sex.

The situation in Poland, as well as other countries (e.g., in the United States, after Donald Trump's election, in the United Kingdom, and in Hungary), has been conducive to the polarization of their societies into ardent supporters of conservative, traditionalist, and often nationalist parties and groups, and their ardent opponents who want pluralism, equality and democracy. In the latter case, it is about deliberative democracy, based on the idea of public sphere⁷. According to Chantal Mouffe, the co-occurrence of two opposing factions is what conditions the existence of democracy⁸. Lack of sharp divisions between parties as well as weakening antagonisms between them lead to populism and nationalism which we are undoubtedly facing in the contemporary political arena, not only world-wide but also nationally.

In Poland, democracy is currently understood as a struggle between Us (the Law and Justice party followers) and Them (citizens who resist and do not support this right-wing party). It results from the fragility of democracy in the country. In his introduction to the Polish translation of the Chantal Mouffe's book *On the Political*, Maciej Gdula claims there are two styles of conducting politics that dominate in Poland: return to normality and protection of the national community. "The first type of politics is about legitimizing one's activities by referring to normality, which is usually identified with the prosperity of Western societies [...]"⁹. The result of such politics is economic growth. However, this positive effect may increase social disparities, unemployment and deepening poverty. The second style of conducting politics – protecting the national community – can successfully compete in this situation with the first approach. "It is founded on a belief of the existence of a pure and moral community whose development is arrested by ex-

⁷ J. Habermas: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. T. Burger. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991.

⁸ Ch. Mouffe: *Polityczność...*

⁹ M. Gdula: *Wstęp. Nie bójmy się konfliktów* [Introduction. Let Us Not Be Afraid of Conflicts]. In: Ch. Mouffe: *Polityczność...*, p. 7.

ternal enemies and traitors. These foreign elements do not allow the nation to develop properly and deprive it of vital forces"¹⁰. This vision presumes the existence of enemies who carry a stigma and thus cannot become real Poles, real citizens¹¹. It is worth stating that this stigma is independent of the individual who is carrying it.

In Poland, we are currently facing politics similar to the latter vision. There has been a divide in the society into "a better sort of Poles" and "the worst sort of Poles", meaning, respectively, the supporters and the opponents of the so-called good change, one of the electoral slogans of the Law and Justice party. In this social, political, economic, and cultural context, it is worth reviewing the category and meaning of resistance actions exhibited by both camps which are in an antagonistic¹², not an agonistic¹³ relation to each other. Entangling this category into politics reveals its complexity and multiple dimensions which I will try to show in the further part of the article.

The Political Character of Resistance

Following Kazimierz Przyszczykowski's approach¹⁴, it can be assumed that the term politics of resistance indicates that resistance is somehow fully political and it cannot function outside this dimension. Similarly to this understanding, James C. Scott¹⁵ thought that even everyday acts of resistance which are neither spectacular nor collective are a form of defense against subjugation. In this sense, we can talk about politics of resistance as some kind of potentiality that this type of act entails. The political in resistance indicates that resistance can also have non-political dimensions. Due to limitations of space, I will only present an outline of what can be described as politics of resistance. For this reason, I will refer to the concept of the political, created by Carl Schmitt and developed by Chantal Mouffe. According to Zbigniew Blok¹⁶, the

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 8.

¹¹ A "true Pole" is a conservative patriot believing in the messianic vision of the Polish nation.

¹² C. Schmitt: *Teologia polityczna i inne pisma* [Political Theology]. Trans. M.A. Cichocki. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Aletheia, 2012.

¹³ Ch. Mouffe: *The Democratic Paradox...*

¹⁴ K. Przyszczykowski: *Polityczność (w) edukacji* [The Political of/in Education]. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2012.

¹⁵ J.C. Scott: *Weapons of the Weak...*

¹⁶ Z. Blok: *O polityczności, polityce i politologii* [About the Political, Politics and Political Science]. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Politycznych i Dziennikarstwa UAM, 2009, p. 38.

political is a category preceding politics, because it constitutes a genetic prerequisite for the existence of the latter. Mouffe¹⁷ emphasizes that the ontic level, which is related to the practical dimension, is reserved for politics, whereas the political refers to the ontological level connected with the theory and philosophy of politics.

The starting point of Carl Schmitt's theory of the political¹⁸ is the "friend-enemy" distinction, thus the key relation here is the appearance of an antagonism between groups which define themselves in opposition to each other based on exclusions. The political is when groups of people in conflict enter a relation based on hostility. However, it does not refer to an enemy in the sense of an individual feeling of resentment or hate towards another person. As Dorota Drałus¹⁹ rightly pointed out, while creating the concept of an enemy, Schmitt used the distinction between the public and the private enemy proposed by Plato. Schmitt²⁰ did not define the enemy as a rival or an opponent in a general sense. For him, the enemy was a collective organized into a group, ready to fight or already fighting for their beliefs. In this sense, the enemy is of public character. "In the existential sense, he [the enemy] is 'the other', 'the stranger' [...]"²¹. The way Kenneth Reinhard interprets Schmitt's outlook is that the political resulting from the friend-enemy relation is conducive to the existential situation of "recognition", "understanding", and "assessment" for its participants. "The Friend and the Enemy form twin *imagos* for the national and subjective ethos, figures of positive and negative political ontology by which the interior 'we' (the 'I' and its friends) is identified as such, as distinguished from the exterior 'they'"²².

Conflict is crucial to understanding the issue of resistance as it is what creates the conditions for resistance to appear. As Rancière points out²³, the sides of the conflict do not exist prior to the emergence of

¹⁷ Ch. Mouffe: *Polityczność...*, p. 23.

¹⁸ C. Schmitt: *Teologia polityczna...*, p. 198.

¹⁹ D. Drałus: *Esencjalizm w koncepcji polityczności Carla Schmitta* [Essentialism in Carl Schmitt's Political Concepts]. In: *Polityka i polityczność. Problemy teoretyczne i metodologiczne* [Politics and the Political. Theoretical and Methodological Problems]. Eds. A. Czajowski, L. Sobkowiak. Wrocław: Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe Atla 2, 2012.

²⁰ C. Schmitt: *Teologia polityczna...*, p. 200.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 198.

²² K. Reinhard: *Toward a Political Theology of the Neighbor*. In: *The Neighbor*. Eds. S. Žižek, E.L. Santner, K. Reinhard. Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006, p.16.

²³ J. Rancière: *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Trans. J. Rose. Minneapolis University of Minnesota, 1999, p. 27.

the dispute because it is them who define a given situation as a conflict and can position themselves as opponents (enemies, adversaries), which means determining their social identity. It is worth stressing, however, that a conflict is a hegemonic construct²⁴ because its framework is defined by the dominant discourse.

Chantal Mouffe looked at Schmitt's approach to the "friend-enemy" opposition and concluded that political identities are the aftermath of the identification processes and cannot be set once and for all. They are of a relational character and therefore identifying oneself as "we" is constituted by some "they" from which one distinguishes itself. Wanting to make "curbing" of the irreducible antagonism of the conflict possible, Mouffe²⁵ introduces a third type of relation – agonism (apart from hegemony and antagonism). "Agonism is a we/they relation where the [...] parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents. They are 'adversaries' not enemies"²⁶. Agonistic confrontation is a necessary condition for democracy. Acknowledging and validating the conflict are key elements here. Agonistic pluralism is not about embracing and coming to terms with the ideas which are contrary to our axionormative system; it is about offering our opponents the right to voice and defend their beliefs and views. What all opponents have in common is being a part of a shared symbolic universe²⁷. We share a common base with our opponent, which results from the respect for the ethical and political principles of liberal democracy, that is, freedom and equality. We differ in the way we apply those principles and their meaning.

Michel Foucault²⁸ claimed that where power is, there is also resistance. Therefore, it is an integral element of politics and we can talk about its political character. However, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe are of a different opinion. They claim that not every display of resistance is political. In order to talk about the political character of a particular act of resistance it has to concern the establishment of "the social, that is, of the definition and articulation of social relations

²⁴ E. Laclau, Ch. Mouffe: *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. 2nd edn. London–New York: Verso, 2001.

²⁵ Ch. Mouffe, *Polityczność...*, p. 35.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ K. Przyszczykowski: *Polityczność (w) edukacji...*

²⁸ M. Foucault: *The History of the Sexuality*. Vol. 1: *An Introduction*. Trans. R. Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

in a field criss-crossed with antagonisms”²⁹. Eugene D. Genovese³⁰, assuming the criterion of consequence and intention of a particular act, differentiates between political and pre-political resistance. The former, also referred to as “the real resistance”, is characterized by organization, regularity, and cooperation. It results from following the rules that the group has formulated, or it can be selfless. An important feature of this type of resistance is the revolutionism of its consequences or the embodiment of the ideas and intentions that deny the bases of dominance. At the opposite pole of resistance defined in such a way is pre-political resistance which can sometimes take an apolitical form. Its attributes are defined by the contrast to political resistance. Its basic objective is to accommodate to the existing dominance structures, not to change them.

James C. Scott³¹ disagrees with this approach as he claims that the distinction proposed by Genovese completely omits daily resistance actions which are of economic and political significance. According to the author, defining resistance only in the context of its consequences and motivations is just simplifying the complexity of such a form of action. Actions which have revolutionary outcomes, despite not being defined as oppositional, are an example of the multidimensionality of the category of resistance. An example can be the phenomenon of symbolic inversion which was described by Peter McLaren³² and which can appear as a result of passive rituals of resistance.

In the context of the outlined conflict concerning the political character of resistance, Rancière’s category of the distribution of the sensible may prove to be helpful. It defines what is shared and what its distinct parts are. The distribution of the sensible is determining what is seen, heard and possible³³. Through this practice, some sounds are treated as voices, while others are defined as “jabber”. Therefore, it is the order of those who are visible and have a voice³⁴. Thus, which ac-

²⁹ E. Laclau, Ch. Mouffe: *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy...*, p. 153.

³⁰ E.D. Genovese: *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Vintage, 1974.

³¹ J.C. Scott: *Weapons of the Weak...*

³² P. McLaren: *Schooling as a Ritual Performance. Toward Political Economy of Educational Symbols and Gestures*. 3rd edn. Lanham-Boulder-New York-Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999.

³³ J. Rancière: *The Politic of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Trans. G. Rockhill. London-New Delhi-New York-Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2013.

³⁴ G. Biesta: *Lerner, Student, Speaker: Why It Matters How We Call Those We Teach*. In: Rancière, *Public Education and the Taming of Democracy*. Eds. M. Simons, J. Masschelein. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

tions are considered resistance depends on how the authorities define them. It is the police, in the definition ascribed to them by Rancière³⁵, who steer the social interpretation machine. Hence, it is to its benefit to uphold the reigning order by reenacting the dominant discourse. This discourse may be disrupted by acts of resistance that allow those who by definition are kept voiceless to speak up, that is, the nation (*demos*).

According to Rancière³⁶ nothing is political in and of itself. The idea of the political can be discussed when a space for the logic of the police (supervising logic) and the logic of equality is created. "The same thing – an election, a strike, a demonstration – can give rise to politics or not give rise to politics. A strike is not political when it calls for reform rather than a better deal or when it attacks the relationships of authority rather than the inadequacy of wages"³⁷. However, the act of taking a resistance action itself puts the subordinated social subjects in the position of an equal interlocutor, or adversary. The voice of the nation is heard just as well as the voice of those in power in the moment of contestation. It is in this moment when two opposing worlds collide. The consequences of this encounter seem to be of secondary importance. The most important matter is for the people who are hegemonically deprived of social identities to take action which leads to their coming into being in a society and disrupting the functioning of the dominant interpretation machine.

Actual acts of resistance and civil disobedience will sometimes be defined by the police as violent, criminal or insignificant behaviours, which will depreciate their objective, course, and scale. This serves to undermine and obfuscate the actual collective, organized and spectacular resistance targeted against the authorities which we have been witnessing on numerous occasions in Poland over the recent months. Examples include the following demonstrations: the Black Protest, protests of the Committee for the Defense of Democracy, the National Student Protest.

The Discursiveness of Resistance Illustrated by the Example of the Situation in Poland

The current political and social situation in Poland emerges as a fighting arena for the definition and acknowledgement of the prevailing

³⁵ J. Rancière: *Dis-agreement...*, p. 28.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

formal and informal signs, symbols and rights. In the multiplicity of truths, one can lose sight of what is and what is not real, just like in Franz Kafka's surreal novel *The Trial*. Politics of resistance and politics in resistance are apparent here, since the antagonism existing in this process is visibly marked³⁸. The authorities' resistance is conducive to the growing social divide into "the better sort of Poles" and "the worst sort of Poles". The first group comprises the supporters and, usually, the electorate of the Law and Justice. The second group includes citizens who oppose all morally reprehensible and often antidemocratic actions taken by the authorities. Since "resistance is a normative category defined by the authorities in various ways"³⁹, some of its forms will be accepted by those who decide what is "sensible"⁴⁰, while some of them will not.

In the Polish political and social discourse we can differentiate three ways of defining and displaying resistance. The first is the resistance of the conservative authorities towards the government of the Civic Platform (Polish *Platforma Obywatelska*) which governed Poland for two terms and the liberal values they stood for. The Law and Justice also objects to many EU directives⁴¹ and liberal-democratic social movements promoting, for example, homosexual relationships, gender equality or women's right to abortion. Generally speaking, the party objects to democratic values, freedom of speech, religion and conscience, equality of all people, and the principles of the free market and competition, which are, to a large extent, recognized in the Polish society. However, trying to justify its actions, the party uses a rhetoric based on notions,

³⁸ M. Karwat: *Cecha polityczności i dziedzina teorii polityki* [A Feature of Politics and the Field of Political Theory]. In: *Carl Schmitt i współczesna myśl polityczna* [Carl Schmitt and the Modern Political Thought]. Warszawa 1996; M. Karwat: *Polityczność i upolitycznienie. Metodologiczne ramy analizy* [Politics and Politicization. Methodological Framework for Analysis]. "Studia Politologiczne" 2010, t. 17.

³⁹ A. Babicka-Wirkus: *(Nie)normatywność rytuałów oporu w szkole* [(Non)normativity of the Rituals of Resistance at School]. "Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja" 2016, vol. 19 (1), p. 82.

⁴⁰ J. Rancière: *Estetyka jako polityka* [Aesthetics as Politics]. Trans. J. Kutyła, P. Mościcki. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2007.

⁴¹ J. Rankin, A.D. Smith: *Poland Gets Official Warning from EU over Constitutional Court Changes*. "The Guardian", 2016, June 1. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/01/poland-gets-official-warning-from-eu-over-constitutional-court-changes>. Access: 12.01.2018; European Commission: *State of the European Union and Rule of Law in Poland*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/state-european-union-and-rule-law-poland-2017-sep-12_en [12.01.2018].

such as “democracy”, “freedom”, “solidarity”, and “equality”, which it defines differently from their liberal semantics. Such actions evoke social tensions and lead to disagreement. According to Rancière, “disagreement is not the conflict between one who says white and another who says black. It is the conflict between one who says white and another who also says white but does not understand the same thing by it or does not understand that the other is saying the same thing in the name of whiteness. [...] Disagreement occurs wherever contention over what speaking means constitutes the very rationality of speech situation. The interlocutors both understand and do not understand the same thing by the same words”⁴². Disagreement is structured within disputes about the matters of social discussions and over those who are capable of creating such matters of discussions. The problem here is that part of the society is not able to grasp the way a given occurrence is defined by the others, because they do not understand words or phrases these others use but which sound familiar. An example of this situation is a commonplace disagreement when it comes to the use of words such as “democracy”, “equality”, and “freedom”. The different scope of their use is perfectly seen in the example of the Polish social reality. It leads to a state where values shaping a democratic society become meaningless, and the way they are to be understood is set by the group which wins the fight over hegemony⁴³.

Robert Górski, a famous Polish satirist, comments the language proficiency of the Law and Justice leader: “The Chairman [Jarosław Kaczyński – A.B.W.] uses language very well. I have to admit that he knows how to manipulate with words, when to let go, when to be a nice elderly man, when to be a strong leader who yields to none. He reverses the meaning of many words. Naturally, this is what propaganda is about – for everything to be not as we think it is, but he can also effectively force this language on everyone”⁴⁴. The coherent rhetoric consistently supports the ideology of the ruling party which works to achieve its vision of changing Poland, from paralyzing the activities of the Constitutional Tribunal and introducing a substantially unjustified school reform, to glorifying coal industry in a situation where

⁴² J. Rancière: *Dis-agreement...*, pp. x, xi.

⁴³ Ch. Mouffe: *The Democratic Paradox...*

⁴⁴ A. Kublik: ‘Ucho Prezesa’. Robert Górski: *Mogę robić to, co chcę. Naprawdę jestem Człowiekiem Wolności* [‘The Chairman’s Ear’. Robert Górski: *I Can do What I Want. I Am Truly a Freedom Man*]. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 2017, February 4. Retrieved from <http://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/7,124059,21331735,ucho-prezesa-robert-gorski-moge-robic-to-co-chce-jestem.html> [5.02.2017].

most countries are seeking ways to introduce and develop renewable energy sources,⁴⁵ while Poland is increasingly affected by smog.

The governing party has, in many dimensions, a vision that is an opposite one to the political and social trends currently dominating in Europe. However, they are not alone in their opposition because tendencies to return to traditional, homogenic national values are also visible in other countries in Europe as well as in the world, which is reflected in the increase in the popularity of right-wing parties and their political visions⁴⁶. This divide was particularly clear while dealing with the issue of refugees.

The second way of displaying resistance in Polish political and social discourse is the resistance of the opposition parties towards the governing party. It is the resistance of the privileged, that is, those who co-govern and therefore have influence on the dominant discourse. This resistance is dominant in groups which are heterogeneous in their political visions for the country and are too focused on their own interests to create strong opposition to the ruling party. Due to lack of willingness and ability to resist the authorities commonly, the opposition parties become targets of their own resistance activities⁴⁷ which, paradoxically, strengthens the governing party. In reference to the typology of resistance proposed by Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, this type of activities can be described as missed resistance⁴⁸. These are intentional acts recognized as resistance towards the

⁴⁵ D. Wanut: *'Der Spiegel': Najbrudniejsze ze wszystkich paliw jest polską dumą* [*'Der Spiegel': The Grimest of All Fuels Is the Pride of Poland*]. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 2017, February 8. Retrieved from <http://krakow.wyborcza.pl/krakow/7,44425,21349348,der-spiegel-najbrudniejsze-ze-wszystkich-paliw-jest-polska.html> [8.02.2017].

⁴⁶ R. Thun: *Polityka w czasach populizmu* [Politics in the Time of Populism]. "Polityka" 2017, February 8; *Zobacz, jak zmieniało się poparcie dla partii prawicowych w Europie* [See, How Support for Right-Wing Parties in Europe Has changed], "Polityka" 2016, May 26. Retrieved from <http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/swiat/1662746,1,zobacz-jak-zmienialo-sie-poparcie-dla-partii-prawicowych-w-europie-mapa-interaktywna.read> [9.02.2017].

⁴⁷ *Niezachwiana pozycja Kaczyńskiego? Opozycja bez lidera* [Kaczyński's Unquestionable Position? Opposition without Leader] "Newsweek" 2017, January 9. Retrieved from <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/opozycja-w-sejmie-ka-czyński-niezachwianym-liderem-słaba-opozycja,artykuły,403239,1.html>. Access: 9.02.2017; M. Szuldrzyński: *PiS może teraz przegrać wyłącznie ze sobą* [The Law and Justice Party Can Now Only Lose with Themselves], "Rzeczpospolita" 2017, January 5. Retrieved from <http://www.rp.pl/Komentarze/170109549-Szuldrzyński-PiS-może-teraz-przegrać-wyłącznie-ze-sobą.html> [5.01.2017].

⁴⁸ J. Hollander, R.L. Einwohner: *Conceptualizing Resistance...*, p. 546.

target they are aimed at. However, these activities are not interpreted as resistance by the observer (in this case, the citizens). Actions taken by the so-called opposition are often spontaneous and poorly thought-out, and they do not produce the expected results, as we have seen in the case of occupying the main parliamentary house by some MPs during the Christmas break (2016). It was a major initiative which turned into a complete failure of the opposition. The reason was weak involvement of the leaders of parties and a lack of identifying with the idea of the protest. According to Michał Szuldrzyński⁴⁹, deputy editor-in-chief of “Rzeczpospolita” daily, one of the leading Polish newspapers, “nowadays the opposition has a huge problem, not only image-wise but, in a sense, also an existential one. Somehow, it has managed to undermine the values for which it has fought. So, if it does not come up with a new narrative, a new idea or just simply does not mature politically, it has no chance of having an even fight with the Law and Justice party”.

While considering resistance actions of the opposition, it is worth paying attention to the fact that the opposition is a privileged group that claims the right to “the distribution of the sensible”. It is therefore a form of the police as seen by Rancière. Because of the current political situation, it plays the role of a so-called good cop, seemingly concerned about the wellbeing of the people. However, this role, imposed on the opposition as a result of election, does not change the fact that it is still authorized to determine and give meaning to the existing social order⁵⁰. Being a good cop is a part of the game for the hegemony over giving and defining meanings which can lead to victory and taking over the role of a bad cop who does not have to pretend friendly acts in order to realize his or her goals.

The political character of the third definition of resistance is especially visible in bottom-up social initiatives and movements that can be divided into those which oppose the authorities and those which identify with the policy of the authorities and are against all anti-government activities. In this space of resistance, according to Rancière⁵¹, voice is taken by the masses who do not have their established social position (demos). The social position of this group is determined by the status given to it by those who have a social identity, and therefore, have the opportunity to define and give meanings. Hence, people who manifest resistance both in favour of and against the authorities exist socially as the opposition to entities wielding power (a good and a bad

⁴⁹ M. Szuldrzyński: *PiS może teraz przegrać wyłącznie ze sobą...*

⁵⁰ J. Rancière: *Dis-agreement...*, p. 31.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

cop)⁵². Despite the fact that this division results from the acts of the police as understood by Rancière, there is a political potential contained within it, because it can lead to a resistance to appear. "Politics exists when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part"⁵³.

According to Robert van Krieken⁵⁴ groups identified with oppressive power publicly support it because it is a result of socialization, coercion, or gentle persuasion. In the second half of 2016, in Poland, various activities resulting from social indignation became extremely vigorous. We witnessed different forms of protest, from individual, through collective, to group protests. They concerned various areas of social functioning of citizens. Individual citizens could express their resistance towards the government activities or to anti-government actions on social media, they could sign petitions, for instance, those opposing the introduction of lower standards of prenatal care. An example of a grassroots resistance against those who dared to oppose the authorities was a public prayer in front of the City Hall in Słupsk for the president of the said city who belongs to a sexual minority. On the other hand, an instance of resistance of the people against the authorities was the Black Protest. The Black Protest, which took place on 3 October 2016, was a social action that involved a lot of people (especially women) not only in Poland, but also all over the world. It came as an answer to a government draft law on a total ban on abortion. Many social movements took part in the nation-wide strike, among them Girls to Girls (Polish *Dziewuchy Dziewuchom*), which opposes tightening the regulations of the Family Planning, Human Embryo Protection and Conditions of Permissibility of Abortion Act of 7 January 1993, and Save Women (Polish „*Ratujmy kobiety*”) Regulatory Initiative Committee. The citizens protested by wearing black clothes, not attending work and actively taking part in marches organized in

⁵² Authority is understood here as a access to "the distribution of the sensible" which is participating in the process of distribution and redistribution of space and time, as well as places and identities, and the visible and the invisible. While this process is taking part a certain unstable configuration emerges, which is sensitive to political reconfiguration that has the power to expose, share and make thinkable again." See: J. F r a n c z a k: *Błądzące słowa. Jacques Rancière i filozofia literatury* [Wandering Words. Jacques Rancière and the Philosophy of Literature]. Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN Wydawnictwo, 2017, p. 120.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 11.

⁵⁴ R. v a n K r i e k e n: *The Poverty of Social Control: Explaining Power in the Historical Sociology of the Welfare State*. "The Sociological Review" 1991, vol. 39. doi:10.1111/j.1467-954X.1991.tb02967.x

many Polish cities. This bottom-up citizens' initiative was reported by the most important foreign media⁵⁵. The action was global in scope because words of solidarity with Polish women came from everywhere in the world. As a result of the protests, the government backed down from introducing a total ban on abortion but is still working on a new draft law which is to tighten regulations in this matter. The consequences of participating in the Black Protest are severe for some people, like in the case of ten teachers from Zabrze (a Polish city) who were threatened by their employer with taking a disciplinary action against them⁵⁶.

The protests in Poland were prepared by numerous professional organizations and social groups which tried to express their objection. Among the protesters were the Committee for the Defense of Democracy, students and the Polish Teachers' Union, which conducted a nation-wide "School Referendum" aimed at collecting signatures from citizens who object the introduction of the 2017 school reform which, according to specialists, has been poorly prepared and takes Polish education back to the communist era⁵⁷. People associated in citizens' initiatives, such as Citizens of Academia (Polish *Obywatele Nauki*) and Polish Humanities Crisis Committee (Polish *Komitet Kryzysowy Humanistyki Polskiej*), state their opposition to the reform of higher education.

Forms of displaying social resistance are more or less spectacular; they take place in both real and virtual life, and take the form of rep-

⁵⁵ H. Agerholm: *Poland Abortion Strike: Thousands of Women in Over 60 Cities Refuse to Work in Protest over Restrictive Laws*. "The Independent" 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/poland-women-abortion-strike-protests-black-monday-polish-protestors-industrial-action-a7343136.html> [7.02.2017]; *Polish women strike over planned abortion ban*. "The Guardian" 2016, October 3. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/03/polish-women-strike-over-planned-abortion-ban> [7.02.2017].

⁵⁶ *Pierwsza z dziesięciu nauczycielek bez kary za Czarny Protest* [The First Out of Ten Teachers without Penalty for Black Protest]. TVN24. 2017, February 10. Retrieved from <http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/nauczycielki-poparły-czarny-protest-stana-przed-komisja-dyscyplinarna,714399.html> [13.03.2017].

⁵⁷ M. Świąchowicz: *Powrót do PRL-u* [The Return to the People's Republic of Poland]. "Newsweek" 2016, NR 29; K. Małanowska: *Starczewska: Powrót do PRL-owskiego systemu oświaty uważam za szkodliwy* [Starczewska: I Find It Damaging the Return to People's Poland Educational System]. "Krytyka Polityczna" 2016. Retrieved from <http://krytykapolityczna.pl/kraj/starczewska-powrot-do-prl-owskiego-systemu-oswiaty-uwazam-za-szkodliwy/> [12.01.2017].

resentation or performance⁵⁸. While using resistance as representation we have to refer to what is already present and use the language established by the representation of interests. In the case of resistance as performance, opposition is treated as creation. Gestures used in this type of resistance are of transgressive meaning which penetrates more into the sphere of production than representation. An example of such resistance is a political mini-series *The Chairman's Ear* (Polish: *Ucho Prezesa*) created by Robert Górski, a satirist from the Cabaret of Moral Anxiety (Polish *Kabaret Moralnego Niepokoju*). The series is set in the office of Jarosław Kaczyński, where the leader of the Law and Justice party summons high-ranking government officials – the President and ministers – to present to them his vision of Poland and influence their decisions. It is a performative satire on the way Poland is governed, which Górski also did during the rule of the previous government. The series is very popular (four of the episodes were viewed over 20 million times) not only among government opponents but also among its supporters and the parodied individuals. In his interview for “Gazeta Wyborcza”⁵⁹, Górski explains that he wanted to tease Kaczyński but instead he managed to soften his image. However, his main objective was not to attack the politicians of the ruling party. The series is an example of performative resistance⁶⁰ which exceeds the existing political and social framework. It shows a different dimension of politics that is invisible for most citizens. Nevertheless, it does so in a non-aggressive and non-violent way. Due to such strategy, it reaches both pro-governmental and anti-governmental recipients.

This kind of resistance bears a transformative potential because by making their audience laugh it simultaneously shows them (in a distorting mirror) the behind-the-scenes mechanisms of wielding power. It unveils the methods of “the distribution of the sensible”, producing meanings and senses which are then presented by the media as the valid definitions for situations and events.

⁵⁸ M. Hynes: *Reconceptualizing Resistance: Sociology and the Affective Dimension of Resistance*. “The British Journal of Sociology” 2013, vol. 64 (4). doi:10.1111/1468-4446.12038

⁵⁹ A. Kubik: ‘Ucho Prezesa’...

⁶⁰ D.M. Ølgård: *Play, Politics & the Practice of Resistance*. “Journal of Resistance Studies” 2015, vol. 1 (1).

Conclusions

Resistance is a varied and multi-contextual phenomenon⁶¹. As emphasized by Henry A. Giroux⁶², it should be perceived as a multi-dimensional phenomenon which takes different and complex forms, and whose course depends on contexts and levels of political struggle. It results from opposition to unaccepted aspects of reality, especially dominance⁶³. Rose Weitz⁶⁴ adds that resistance not only rejects submission but also challenges ideologies which maintain inequality and subjugation. It is based on antagonism, and sometimes even agonism. However, it results from the division into “me-you”, “we-they”. This type of opposition, especially in the contemporary world of politics, is based on “friend-enemy” relation which Schmitt wrote about, and not on the “adversary-friend” relation, as Mouffe claims. It probably results from lack of harsh divisions between the Left and the Right, which precludes the extremely opposite visions of the country and politics from clashing. According to Mouffe’s reference to Niklas Luhmann: “modern democracy calls for a ‘splitting of the summit’, a clear divide between the government and the opposition [...]”⁶⁵. The absence of a clear demarcation line between political groups results in antagonism which can take forms that are dangerous for democracy⁶⁶.

Resistance carries some political potential; that is why we can discuss politics of resistance. Even individual acts of resistance displayed by individual social actors can lead to changes in their lives and the lives of local communities, or even to changes at macro-level. Their effectiveness and visibility mostly depend on the government which creates the sphere of “the distribution of the sensible”. Nevertheless, resistance carries the potential for a change and breach of

⁶¹ E. Bielska: *Koncepcje oporu...*; A. Babicka-Wirkus: *A Three-Dimensional Model of Resistance in Education*. “The New Educational Review” 2018, vol. 51 (2).

⁶² H.A. Giroux: *Public Pedagogy and the Politics of Resistance: Notes on a Critical Theory of Educational Struggle*. “Educational Philosophy and Theory” 2003, vol. 35 (1), p. 9.

⁶³ J.A. Hollander, R.L. Einwohner: *Conceptualizing Resistance...*

⁶⁴ R. Weiz: *Women and Their Hair: Seeking power through Resistance and Accommodation*. “Gender & Society” 2001, vol. 15 (5), p. 670. doi:10.1177/089124301015005003

⁶⁵ Ch. Mouffe: *Polityczność...*, p. 138.

⁶⁶ Ibidem; Ch. Mouffe: *The Democratic Paradox...*

this structure. It enables to notice an anti-structure⁶⁷ that is mostly visible due to the forms of performative resistance which exceeds the existing framework and breaches conventions. Everything that is “sensible” changes through transformative gestures because of the fight for the hegemony of meanings. Stephen Lawler⁶⁸ stresses that “Fields are always sites of struggle and part of this struggle centres on the struggle for legitimate ownership of various forms of capital, including the ownership of authority. This has implications for how we theorize resistance”.

Current political and social situation in Poland forces numerous bottom-up opposition initiatives which manifest themselves in more or less spectacular forms. The effectiveness of any resistance aimed at the activities of the authorities is poor. Most of these opposition acts are forms of representation because they move within a set framework defined by an imposed explanatory order⁶⁹. In this context an interesting form of resistance is *The Chairman's Ear*, which shows the behind-the-scenes reality of the Polish government by means of performance. Therefore it constitutes a place for discourse and speech⁷⁰ and that is why the effectiveness of this form of resistance can be major. The series is a scene for “the distribution of the sensible” which can contribute to the violation of the existing order. However, it is a peaceful and symbolic form of opposition which, according to J. Scott, has a significant transformative potential.

The manifestations of resistance discussed in this article are indicative of the existence of multiple layers of social disagreement. It has both horizontal and vertical dimensions. Within the framework of these dimensions there appear antagonisms which separate the social from the anti-social and that which belongs to citizens (“the better sort of Poles”) from that which is unobtainable for the non-citizens (“the worst sort of Poles”).

The opposition acts are inscribed with a political potential because in an act of resistance two colliding orders meet: the supervising and the egalitarian⁷¹. Undertaking an action of a contesting character it-

⁶⁷ V. Turner: *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*. New Brunswick-London: Aldine Transaction, 2008.

⁶⁸ S. Lawler: *Rules of Engagement: Habitus, Power and Resistance*. “The Sociological Review” 2004, vol. 52, p. 120. doi:10.1111/j.1467-954X.2005.00527.x

⁶⁹ P. Blyton, J. Jenkins: *Mobilizing Resistance: the Burberry Workers' Campaign against Factory Closure*. “The Sociological Review” 2012, vol. 60. doi:10.1111/j.1467-954X.2011.02043.x

⁷⁰ J. Rancière: *Estetyka...*

⁷¹ J. Rancière: *Dis-agreement...*

self constitutes the people speaking up who before doing so constitute merely a nameless mass. The inequality, supported by the supervising logic is therefore disrupted, that claims: "Ways of being, ways of doing, and ways of saying – or not saying – precisely reflect each person's due"⁷². Resistance is therefore a gauntlet thrown at the privileged in order to start a discussion and listen to the so-far unrecognized voice of the people.

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⁷² Ibidem, p. 27.

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Anna Babicka-Wirkus

Politics of Resistance in the Context of Polish Democracy

Summary: The aim of this article is to discuss the issue of the politics of resistance based on the example of current social, political, and cultural changes after the conservative party took over power in Poland. The example of Poland reflects the situation in many other countries where parties holding traditional, conservative, and nationalistic views are gaining more and more public support. In the context of these changes, the significance of political resistance emerges; on the one hand, it is within the limits set by the dominant power structures but, on the other hand, it extends beyond them, revealing the existence of other possible realities. In this case, opposition acts lead to the formation and strengthening of social antagonisms, which shows their political character. On this basis, we can distinguish resistance of the ruling party, resistance of the opposition parties, and resistance resulting from social opposition which can take two forms: resistance towards government activities and resistance towards anti-government activities.

Key words: the political, resistance, democracy, the distribution of the sensible, protest, Poland

Anna Babicka-Wirkus

Die Widerstandspolitik im Kontext polnischer Demokratie

Zusammenfassung: Der vorliegende Beitrag bezweckt, den politischen Charakter des Widerstands anhand der gegenwärtigen sozial-politisch-kulturellen Umwandlungen in Polen nach der Machtübernahme von konservativen Parteien zu erörtern. Polen stellt hier ein Beispiel für ein Land dar, in dem eine traditionelle, konservative und nationalistische Werte bekennende Partei immer mehr an Popularität gewinnt. Im Zusammenhang mit besagten Umwandlungen kommt die Bedeutung des ganzen Potenzials des politischen Widerstands zum Vorschein, der einerseits den von herrschenden Machtinstitutionen abgesteckten Grenzen entspricht, andererseits aber diese Grenzen überschreitet und dadurch andere mögliche Wirklichkeiten offenbart. In dem Fall tragen solche Widerstandsmaßnahmen zur Entstehung und Festigung von sozialen Antagonismen bei, was den politischen Charakter der Maßnahmen bestätigt. Auf der Grundlage lassen sich unterscheiden: der von herrschender Partei zum Ausdruck kommende Widerstand, der Widerstand von Oppositi-

onsparteien und der durch Unzufriedenheit der Bevölkerung hervorgerufene Widerstand, der zweierlei Formen annehmen kann: Widerstand gegen Handlungsweise der Regierung und Widerstand gegen regierungsfeindliche Handlungen.

Schlüsselwörter: politischer Charakter, Widerstand, Demokratie, Protest, Polen