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## Globalisation and Free Market – from the Perspective of European Sociology<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

Globalisation is indubitably one of the most important civilisational processes of modern times. I will not get involved in disputes about the meaning of the very term “civilisation”. Suffice it to recall Władysław Tatarkiewicz’s standpoint, who viewed it in the context of processes leading to man’s and his culture’s development. “*Civilisation is a product – he wrote – made by people who have culture, but it is also soil on which further culture is created*”.<sup>2</sup> This notion is similarly tied to historic processes<sup>3</sup> in the views of the French historic school of thought. Civilisation may then be a temporally changeable “framework” or perhaps a “horizon”,<sup>4</sup> within which the Giddensian process of structuring takes place, including the structuring of culture.<sup>5</sup> This form (“framework”, “horizon”) undergoes long-term periodisation. Therefore the term “civilisation” is sometimes linked to the term “era”. Civilisation determines then a specific

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<sup>1</sup> In this article I reconsider and develop certain themes included in: *Globalizacja, geopolityka i rynek (Globalisation, Geopolitics and Market)*, “*Studia Europejskie*”, no. 1/2004, p.9-21. I also touch on other subjects, not contained therein.

<sup>2</sup> W. Tatarkiewicz, *O filozofii i sztuce (Inquiries into Philosophy and Art)*, Warsaw 1986, p.150.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. F. Braudel, *Historia i trwanie (Historical Writings)*, Warsaw 1971 (*Écrits sur l’histoire*, Paris 1969).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. K. Wielecki, *Podmiotowość w dobie kryzysu postindustrializmu. Między indywidualizmem a kolektywizmem (Subjectivity at the Age of Postindustrial Crisis. Between Individualism and Collectivism)*, Warsaw 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. Giddens, *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge 1984 (*Stanowienie społeczeństwa*, Poznań 2003); cf. also J.-C. Kaufmann, *Ego. Socjologia jednostki. Inna wizja człowieka i konstrukcji podmiotu (Ego. The Sociology of an Individual. A Different Vision of a Man and a Construction of a Subject)*, Warsaw 2004 (*Ego. Pour une sociologie de l’individu. Une autre vision de l’homme et la construction du sujet*, Paris 2001).

cultural frame, which can be characterised by referring to a specific time (era) and a specific space. Such an interpretive proposal is more radical and restrictive, and thus more precise, than Henri Marrou's<sup>6</sup> understanding, who suggested restricting "culture" to the dimension of personal life, while civilisation would be its counterpart on the social scale.

One can speak – if not of lower and higher – then at least of earlier and later civilisations. At the same time I follow Arnold Toynbee's concept, as he understood civilisations as a challenge of sorts, made by nature to human societies.<sup>7</sup> However I am of the opinion that today it is challenges made by products of culture itself that are more important than those made by nature.

We can then imagine civilisation as a cultural formation, which is a reaction to important historic challenges presented by historic events like great natural disasters, political events (*e.g.* wars), social (*e.g.* migrations, demographic revolutions) or cultural events (*e.g.* new technologies, scientific discoveries). The factors creating a new civilisation are, as I have been explaining, of epochal character, that is they are a breakthrough in the lives of individuals and whole societies, a breakthrough whose symptoms and effects mark the boundaries of the era. They then cause a social crisis, which people need dozens if not hundreds of years to adapt to by means of necessary and deep changes in the whole social order, that is the institutional organisation, social, cultural and economic structures. One of the deeply grounded in tradition concepts is to link civilisational changes with technological revolutions.

What we are touching here is an extraordinarily important issue, namely social crisis and social time. The notion "crisis" has its origin in ancient Greek, where it means a breakthrough or turning point. Thus a new civilisation can be analysed in terms of a social crisis. A crisis is related to social change. Causes of social dynamics, though they can vary greatly, generally fall into two categories: "endogenous" and "exogenous", or internal and external with regard to the society being analysed.<sup>8</sup> Exogenous changes may have their roots in such factors as wars, migrations, trade or cultural exchange (cultural diffusion). Among factors that are most important for social dynamics, and most likely to undergo diffusion, are factors of civilisational change, including new technologies, scientific discoveries, *etc.*<sup>9</sup> Therefore a new civilisation causes all-encompassing social changes, whose chief characteristic is that they create a crisis – for the most part, a crisis of the society's cultural framework.

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<sup>6</sup> H. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (*The History of Education in the Ancient World*), Paris 1948.

<sup>7</sup> A. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, London 1934-1971.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. Pacholski, A. Słaboń, *Słownik pojęć socjologicznych* (*The Dictionary of Sociological Terms*), Kraków 1997, p. 219.

<sup>9</sup> R. M. McIver, *Social Causation*, Boston 1942.

Any crisis can affect one or more dimensions of social life. In general, a social crisis may threaten the continuity and durability of the society it affects to a greater or lesser degree. It may even cause the society to fall apart or cease to exist – or bring only relatively small losses. In its wake fundamental social changes may follow – or only marginal ones. The society may feel immobilised by the feeling of crisis, or conversely – mobilised to swift action, sometimes suicidal in effect. It may also react rationally and adequately to the kind and scale of crisis. In any case, a crisis is felt in terms of loss, suffering and risk.<sup>10</sup> If a crisis has a global character, it affects the whole of mankind; if it is local, it occurs only in a certain area, or among certain societies. It may be total, that is affect all areas of social life, or not – that is influence only some of them. Civilisational social changes are a source of crisis of a global and total nature.

Seeking clear determinism at the roots of historical processes is a risky endeavour. In sociology, which finds ever more often processes behind social phenomena,<sup>11</sup> world is seen as a dynamic reality, full of change. It is a natural temptation to try to grasp its rules and conditioning. However, it is not common for attempts to build far-reaching and universal generalisations to succeed. Still, it appears not ungrounded to link critical, long-term, deep, total and global changes with the appearance of breakthrough scientific discoveries and technological inventions, perhaps not as a sole cause, but one of the most essential ones (weak determinism).

It is more and more common for modern theories to appreciate not only the problem of changeability of social phenomena, but also of time itself.<sup>12</sup> Time has become a sociological category in the sense that sociologists are interested in how societies conceptualise chains of events, in how people construe social time, but also in how these constructs affect people, societies and history.<sup>13</sup> The conviction is more and more widespread that we are living in a *new era*, a time of the civilisation of new technology – information technology. Actual technological change is accompanied by the feeling of uniqueness of the times

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. U.Beck. *Spoleczeństwo ryzyka, W drodze do innej nowoczesności (The Society of Risk. Towards a Different Modernity)*, Warsaw 2002 (*Risikogesellschaft*, Frankfurt/M 1986); A.Giddens, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość. "Ja" i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności*, Warsaw 2001 (*Modernity and Self-identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge 1993); Z.Bauman, *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień (Post-modernity as a Source of Suffering)*, Warsaw 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. e.g. N.Elias, *Zaangażowanie i neutralność*, Warsaw 2003 (*Involvement and Detachment*, Oxford 1987); esp. N.Elias, *Przemiany obyczajów w cywilizacji Zachodu (Transformations of Habits in Western Civilisation)*, Warsaw 1980 (*Über den Prozess der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, Basel 1939) and J-C.Kaufmann, op.cit.

<sup>12</sup> E.Tarkowska, *Czas w społeczeństwie. Problemy, tradycje, kierunki badań (Time in Society. Problems, Traditions, Directions of Study)*, Wrocław 1987.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

we are living in; of significance and novelty of changes not only in the reality of everyday life, but also in its most basic *framework*. One of the most important processes shaping this framework of everyday life which results from the development of the civilisation of information technology is globalisation.

Significant phenomena constituting globalisation have often been understood as the process of convergence and explained on the basis of the theory of convergence. This is a mistaken approach, as it confuses the cause and the effect. Convergence is (or at any rate used to be) most often treated as a process of assimilation of two political-economic systems: capitalism and socialism. A theory derived – on the grounds of political science – from Raymond Aron,<sup>14</sup> it lends basis to thinking that both systems aim at the same goals (economic growth, efficient management), which requires similar institutions. It was also believed that modern capitalism will adapt from socialism social values, but it will realise them earlier and better, since it is more efficient. There were theorists who claimed that the world has reached its apex in the democratic-liberal order. They announced therefore the end of the time of history or ideology.<sup>15</sup>

Today we can say that certain aspects of convergence do exist among countries similar to each other with respect to the level of civilisational advancement and wealth. However the differences are now even greater where they used to be big, and nothing appears to suggest that they may become less pronounced. What the Occident has lately been learning in Arab countries clearly shows how drastic these dissimilarities can be. Owing to these differences neither of the sides of the conflict is able to mentally grasp the gist of the clash. Even within the European Union, where on the ideological soapbox levelling economic disproportions is preached, nothing has changed in the desired direction with respect to this issue. Although all member states are more and more wealthy, the differences between them are becoming ever greater. Now it can be seen clearly that the new members from Central and Eastern Europe should not have too high hopes of shortening the distance to the rich societies of the West.

Such visions are far from being universally acclaimed. Theories abound that – on the contrary – the world is actually diverging and is going to continue doing so. Some thinkers foresee, instead of global convergence, global reshufflings,

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<sup>14</sup> R.Aron, *The Industrial Society. Three Essays on Ideology and Development*, New York 1967.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. D.Bell, *The End of Ideology, On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, Cambridge, Mass. 2000; D.Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society. A Venture in Social Forecasting*; F.Fukuyama, *Koniec historii*, Poznań 1996 (*The End of History and Last Man*, New York 1992).

conflicts,<sup>16</sup> collapse or at least degradation of what are now global powers and emergence of a new power set-up. Such visions include also the creation of new centres of political and economic dominance.

If the theory of convergence is to be taken seriously, some provisions must be borne in mind. First of all a question needs to be asked as to what should the convergence relate to after the dissolution of the USSR and the “socialist bloc”? Perhaps convergence can be upheld as a hypothesis that in the world a process is operating of assimilating political and economic systems. This assimilation may have two causes. One is the globalisation of market, following from which is the process of adaptation in many parts of the world, whose citizens wish to participate in the global game. This adaptation triggers a series of assimilations in many other spheres of social, cultural etc. life. In other words: economic processes influence the already-mentioned *framework* of everyday life so greatly that a derivative process of directing forms and models in various spheres of this life occurs. The other cause may be that common global problems and threats bring about similar reactions. These reactions include the creation of similar institutions, values, rationalisations etc. A side-effect may be the carrying over (contagiousness, diffusion) of models, mental attitudes and values from one sphere of life to another and among different social areas (among different societies).

Convergence may then be understood as a limited range side-effect of globalisation processes or as a now groundless prophecy of homogenisation of the post-industrial world, which is created for the most part owing to globalisation. It will therefore be more accurate to concern ourselves with the processes which are the leading factors in civilisational changes, which create if not a new civilisation or era, then at any rate a historical civilisational crisis.

It is quite beyond doubt in today’s world that the process that will significantly change the balance of power on our planet is globalisation. For reasons of space, this paper cannot deal with these dramatically important issues in any detail<sup>17</sup>. Still, we can state this much: globalisation breeds numerous problems of the greatest importance, which reach the very foundations of the global and social order, the fundamental human values. It creates tensions and challenges of the greatest significance, including eschatological.

Globalisation is a civilisational process which began, more or less, in the second half of the 70s as a result of the accumulation of numerous scientific and technological advances and their ever more consistent application in everyday practice of the industrial society. New technologies, not for the first time in

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<sup>16</sup> S.Huntington, *Zderzenie cywilizacji*, Warszawa 1997 (*The Clash of Civilisations and Remaking of World Order*, Free Press 1996).

<sup>17</sup> More on this in: K. Wielecki, *Podmiotowość...*, op.cit.

history, changed the world. In this case, they brought about the downfall of the industrial civilisation, which had lasted since the 18<sup>th</sup> century scientific and technological revolution. One significant effect of the development of the new civilisation, civilisation of information, was what is often called the shrinking of social space-time. The world is becoming one organism.

A very important manifestation of this is the creation of globalised market. New technologies allow instant communication with practically any place in the world. This in turn allows current bookkeeping of great financial operations made anywhere and controlled from anywhere. One can transfer capital at any time from one continent to another in less time than it would take to carry it across the street. It is now also possible to efficiently manage production in many parts of the world from a single economic headquarters. The organisation of supplies, marketing, finances, distribution, credits etc. in one global computer network is nothing unusual these days.

New technologies, and especially globalised communications make it possible for great global organisations to be created, organisations whose economic potential and area of operation exceed not only countries but whole continents. *Cyberspace* constructs the boundaries of the new, global, unlimited market, where small and medium-sized countries are too weak players to matter with any degree of significance. Local limitations that the state may impose can be circumnavigated on the global market e.g. by moving production to a different country, even half the world away, where the labour is cheaper or the taxes are lower. You can register your company wherever you think will be more profitable and move it whenever you feel like it in the legal virtual space. What country apart from the biggest can seriously oppose great corporations that are able to cause a huge increase in unemployment in a short time, or an outflow of capital that will lead to a sudden and economically deadly financial crisis? Who but the strongest can stand up against corporations that have all but unlimited possibilities to influence officials and MPs?

We have touched an immensely important though greatly complex problem of the “welfare state” and globalisation. The latter changes the functions and capabilities of states, with all the effect of this fact that we still have not quite realised. Political, economic and social balance attained by countries where the democratic-liberal order exists is now in serious crisis. The great civilisational change and related globalisation processes have shaken from the inside and from the outside the foundations of mechanisms that stabilise this social order.

Perhaps one of the most important of the corrections made to capitalism, which after the Second World War became the stabilisers mentioned above, and one which speaks well for the ability of capitalist societies to draw their conclusions, was the regulation of the “freedom” of market by the state – which from a class state changed into the citizen state.

This may look different from the perspective of the USA, which has never been seriously threatened by a communist revolution, but in Europe, where revolutions were abundant and communism exerted constant pressure, it can be clearly seen how grave a danger was averted in the west of the continent thanks to the democratic-liberal order and the *redistribution correction* of the welfare state. The state became above all a mediator and a guarantee of the social compromise between the employers and employees, the new classes constituting the political, economic and social order, which have replaced the Marxist labourers and bourgeoisie.

The history of capitalism in Europe, especially in its more advanced form, late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century, is little but endless wars, revolts, economic breakdowns, tensions and tragedies. One important reason for this sad state of affairs was the growing “freedom” of the national market, that is – lack of a compromise on this market. A class state was unable to provide this compromise. The experiences of the Second World War, but also the possibilities and necessities of the developed phase of industrialism made attaining this above-mentioned compromise possible, especially in Western Europe. Where it was attained, there has been no revolution or war for almost 60 years now; instead, nearly continuous economic growth and progress in protecting the rights of individuals has been in place. This is an experience unprecedented in the history of this part of the world.

New technologies and resulting globalisation have shaken the foundations of this balance. First, by lessening the importance on the market of employees, one of the two parties of the historic compromise. This was partly due to the very fact that computers and machines took over part of their work. Not unimportant is also the fact that information processing is becoming the main area of economic endeavour, and that capital gravitates towards it (shifting of production factors). Marginalisation of employees stems in part also from the possibility of freely migrating production to any part of the globe where the labour is cheaper. Another, not less significant consequence of these processes is the concentration of supranational markets. This makes political intervention in the operation of the market much more difficult, and with time – wholly impossible.

“Free” market, dreamt of by many, is coming true – but this time as a global, and not national one. This may result in new revolutions and wars of global character, and above all – terrorism, which, as we all are now aware, knows no barriers despite state of the art invigilation techniques and means at the disposal of the police, army *etc.*

A separate problem is the possible marginalisation of vast numbers of individuals, something that can be analysed not only in terms of political, economic and social rationality, but also in terms of moral values. To visualise the scale of this danger it is enough to think that the powers to counter these

problems will be states with a burden of responsibility but only scarce strength and means of effective action.

It appears that there is but one solution that can stop the cataclysm, as I take civilisational progress and globalisation processes to be unavoidable. This solution consists in the creation of global political control over the global market and re-creation in these new conditions of the historic compromise that will balance out the anticipated tensions. A disputable question is how and by what global institutions should this compromise be negotiated, reproduced and guaranteed. A global world must have global politics, a global market – a global economic policy, and a global society – a global vision of social policy. There is also a problem of effective mechanisms and their potential side-effects.

The most important issue, however, is how can historic achievements of liberal democracy be re-created in the globalised world. An attempt at this is what I take the integration in the European Union to be. EU constitutes a big market which counts in the global game of economy and politics, and by the principle of subsidiarity it has the advantages of both direct and representative democracy. Simultaneously, it points to a new important function of the state: to be the instigator, organiser and sponsor of political and economic processes on the level of the citizen society, as well as an institution that will represent local interests in the regional forum. A separate responsibility of state understood as such an institution is caring for culture and cultural identity.

## 2. The democratic-liberal order of the last phase of industrialism

We need to clarify certain basic thoughts presented in the *Introduction*. The Second World War not only radically changed the balance of power in the world, but also created conditions for the emergence of a new type of social order. It was a catalyst of sorts for the changes which led to the tensions created by the industrial era to be overcome. The end of the war marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Europe.

The phase of industrialism that falls between 1945 and, more or less, mid-1970s might be called balanced industrialism or late industrialism. As has been said, many fundamental tensions of earlier phases found their solutions in this phase. Most of them sprang from the evolution of free market as the chief economic regulator of industrialism.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> R.Cameron, *Historia gospodarcza świata. Od paleolitu do czasów najnowszych*, Warszawa 1997, p.178-396 (*A Concise Economic History of the World. From Paleolithic Times to the Present*, Oxford 1993); D.Bell, *Kulturowe sprzeczności kapitalizmu (Cultural Contradictions in Capitalism)*, Warsaw 1994, p.10; D.Bell, *The End of Ideology...*, op.cit.; D.Bell, *The Coming...*, op.cit.; W.Morawski, *Socjologia ekonomiczna (Economic Sociology)*, Warsaw 2001, p.74-93; G.Soros, *Kryzys światowego kapitalizmu, (The Crisis of Global Capitalism)* Warszawa 1999,



The social order that developed in democratic countries after the war differed significantly from what was known before the war. Above all, the long and complex process of civilisational, educational, economic and social changes shifted the social rift so that it was no longer between labourers and bourgeoisie, as in Marx's times, but rather between the employees and employers.

An important factor in these changes was the development of non-industrial means of income, which made the ownership – or lack thereof – of means of production (especially of heavy industry) cease to be the main determinant of social position for individuals and social layers, and the decisive factor for the whole social system.

As for the other determinant of the social order, that is institutional order, modern industrialism laid foundations for the historic compromise between the classes of employers and employees, which, as we recall, are in modern industrialism the two classes that constitute the whole of the social order, just as labourers and the bourgeois used to be in the past.

Industrialisation had – according to Polanyi – effects so negative that the welfare state became a necessity. Without its “redistribution correction” further development of industrial societies would be impossible.<sup>19</sup> One of the main reasons why industrialism was bad before 1945 in Polanyi's opinion is the free market itself, which he also dubs “seductive market”. Man's economic activity is, according to this sociologist, a function of his needs and thus must be dependant on them. “*Man values material goods as means to attain these social goals*” – he wrote.<sup>20</sup> Polanyi also claimed that uncontrolled free market, characteristic of 19<sup>th</sup> Century *laissez faire*, must have catastrophic effects on civilisation, society, culture (especially morality) and man.

The state, which used to be a class institution, gradually started to change its functions. After the Second World War it becomes finally and above all a safeguard of this historic compromise between the employers and the employees, which we have mentioned before. This function can be fulfilled via the parliamentary and party system.

Both employers and employees have their political parties whose main role is to articulate their interests and represent them on the political arena. The parliamentary system is supplemented by the mechanism of periodic elections, which give one of the parties the upper hand and the possibility to construct a government, which means realising the interests of its class by executing

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Greenwood Press 1998; R.Dahrendorf, *Rubież demokracji (Crests of Democracy)*, (M.Graczyk – interview), “Wprost”, 02.11.1997; C.Offe, V.Ronge, *Theses on the Theory of the State in: Contemporary Political Philosophy. An Anthology*, eds. R.E.Goodin, Ph.Pettit, Oxford – Cambridge 1997.

<sup>19</sup> K.Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, Boston 1957.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p.113.

legislative and executive power. The fundament of such a system is naturally the acceptance for the idea of this compromise on the part of the majority of citizens, which is expressed for the most part in parliamentary elections.

The mutual indispensability of the employers and the employees, as well as their common aversion to violence (especially to revolutions) makes both sides interested in a compromise. In the interest of the employers, the compromise must guarantee inviolability of private property,<sup>21</sup> civilised conditions of possible renegotiation of its conditions (above all, ensuring personal safety), predictability of the conditions of economic activity, capital flow etc. As for the employees, this historic compromise must guarantee them a minimal level of existence and the feeling of elementary control over their own life and the society's, as well as fundamental freedom.

This idea was expressed thus by Lester C.Thurow: "*In the course of history external military threats, internal social disorders and alternative ideologies were used to justify overcoming interests engaged in maintaining the status quo. It was them that allowed capitalism to survive and flourish. Wealthy people were more intelligent than Marx had thought. They understood that their own long-term survival depends on the elimination of conditions favourable for revolutions – and they did it*".<sup>22</sup>

To make this great compromise possible<sup>23</sup> in the last modern phase of industrialism, wisdom had to be shown by both parties, which would probably never have happened without the above-mentioned historical factors. It is important, however, that it did happen and that it became – for several dozen years – the basis of the social order in countries with advanced industrialism.<sup>24</sup>

An important, if not the most important, component of this historic compromise was the acceptance on the part of the employers to partially limit the "freedom" of the market for the benefit of social balance, among other factors – for the satisfaction of elementary social needs of the employees. The

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. C.North, *Understanding Economics Change in: Transforming Post-Communist Political Economies*, eds. J.M.Nelson, Ch.Tilly, L.Walker, Washington 1996, p.704.

<sup>22</sup> L.C.Thurow, *Przyszłość kapitalizmu. Jak dzisiejsze siły ekonomiczne kształtują świat jutra*, Wrocław 1999, p.13 (*Future of Capitalism*, New York 1996).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. e.g. G.Esping-Andersen, *The Future of the State. A Survey of the World Economy*, "The Economist", 20.09.1997; N.Luhmann, *Teoria polityczna państwa bezpieczeństwa socjalnego (Political Theory of Social Security State)*, Warsaw 1994.

<sup>24</sup> I especially recommend: J.Gray, *Dwie twarze liberalizmu*, Warsaw 2001 (*Two Faces of Liberalism*, Cambridge 2000); J.Habermas, *Kryzys państwa dobrobytu i wyczerpywanie się energii utopijnych (The Crisis of Welfare State and Depletion of Utopian Energies)* in: "Colloquia Communia", no. 4-5(27-28)/1986, July-October (*Die Krise des Wehlfahrtsstaates und die Erschöpfung utopischer Energien* in: Idem: *Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit* Frankfurt 1985, p.141-169); J.Rawls, *Teoria sprawiedliwości (The Theory of Justice)*, Warsaw 1994; W.A.Robson, *Welfare State and Welfare Society. Illusion and Reality*, London 1976.

regulation of the market for greater social good became then another crucial function of the modern state. The ability to re-create the social balance and the acceptance of both major social powers for the range of the concessions became the chief virtue for politicians.

Also culture, another factor of the social order, favoured the creation of social, political and economic balance after the Second World War, as well as the lessening of tensions peculiar to earlier phases of industrialism. The most important values propagated and shared publicly were the values of the democratic-liberal order, such as the freedom of the individual, respect for human rights, tolerance and respect for cultural diversity and political pluralism, and belief in democratic procedures.

### 3. Post-industrial crisis

In the 1970s a breakdown of the fundamentals of the social order in late industrialism, *the balanced industrialism*, occurs; above all – a breakdown of its economic and cultural foundation. Much is written about such issues as the crisis of institutional order or simply of the modern liberal democracy and the great changes taking place in the social structure. A clear and growing dislike can be seen among ever larger proportion of voters for the whole political system together with the very institution of election; people start reverting to nationalism and racism.

The reason for this is not for the most part – I claim – an internal crisis of industrialism, because this crisis has just been largely lessened, as I have written above, by the model of market economy oriented towards social goals; by the modern state, representing the interests of all its citizens and finding its sense in the role of a mediator and guardian of the compromise between the main social classes, the employers and the employees;<sup>25</sup> by international balance guaranteeing peace (at least on the global scale and in the regions where the order functioned).

This order had its own evident disadvantages and severe critics. Among the bad sides we can count the narrowing of the actual political choice due to the stabilisation of the party system, and consequently the assimilation of party programmes; economic burdening of the welfare state as a result of the distribution correction – the compromise was often unbalanced the other way; expectant and demanding attitude of the people; lack of social space for the young generation, who defined the state as double-faced, ridden with

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. also: J. Habermas, *op.cit.*, p. 157 ff.

hypocrisy.<sup>26</sup> Notwithstanding the many tensions that the after-war years brought, this social order remained functional until mid-seventies.

The reasons for the disintegration of industrialism are numerous. Among them, one of the most important is the civilisational development, including scientific and technological discoveries, which have been causing in the most advanced societies significant technological changes since the seventies. From these follow deep and all-encompassing changes constituting an intense and very complex crisis, in addition – a very rapid one.

Attitudes towards the consequences of this crisis broadly fall into three categories:

1. Pessimistic and catastrophic;
2. Optimistic, envisioning progress and a better fate for both individuals and societies;
3. “Open tab”.

Personally, I subscribe to the last group, but at the same time am of the opinion that the present day is a situation of a very serious crisis, comparable in scale to that caused by industrialism, though very different in its essence. It really is the case, as – among others – Z.Bauman claims, that we are witnessing a disintegration of the traditional social order.<sup>27</sup> The world ceased being unambiguous for people, much as society itself is in substance not unambiguous. Nor is it going to be. This largely results from the processes triggered by the “information revolution”. People will have to learn to live with this ambiguity.

#### **4. New technologies, globalisation and “free market”**

I believe there are two fundamental processes that form our reality: technological “revolution” and globalisation, which – *nota bene* – is one of the effects of technological change. These two processes influence especially today’s social order.

In modern day, thanks to new technologies, the greater portion of the gross national product is not produced in agriculture (like an era ago) or in industry (as was the case at the peak of industrialism), but in information processing. Therefore the entire traditional industrial structure is losing in significance and

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<sup>26</sup> K.Wielecki, *Spoleczne czynniki tożsamości pokoleniowej młodzieży (Social Factors Behind Generation-wise Identity of Youth)*, “Studia Socjologiczne”, no. 1-2/1990.

<sup>27</sup> Z.Bauman, *Ponowoczesność...*, op.cit.; Z.Bauman, *Socjologia i ponowoczesność (Sociology and Post-New Times)* in: *Racjonalność współczesności (Rationality of Modern Times)*, eds. H.Kozakiewicz, E.Mokrzycki, M.Siemek, Warsaw 1992, p.11 ff; Z.Bauman, *Wieloznaczność nowoczesna. Nowoczesność wieloznaczna (Modern unambiguity. Unambiguous modernity)*, Warsaw 1995.

will continue doing so. Such a situation must cause huge transformations of the social structure, but also of the institutional order, and especially the state.

The other factor of the modern day crisis is globalisation. This process also has its roots in the development of new technologies (although, naturally, they are not the sole culprit). The state, which in the past safeguarded and mediated the strategic compromise, now stands between more and more atomised, less and less numerous and ever weaker employers on the one side, and a partner who is becoming increasingly more powerful, but more importantly – often difficult to identify and, owing to the creation of a global market, characterised by a large degree of freedom and is beyond jurisdiction, and largely beyond control and influence, of single states. It is not uncommon for the state to be weaker than a corporation that works within its boundaries. In such a situation, how can the state fulfil its role as a mediator and guardian of the historic compromise?

A side note: the situation of smaller states is in fact often even more difficult. They have to protect their internal social and economic balance in the game with the globalised and largely “freed” market, which, however, is only partly “free” and partly is a chessboard for the most powerful states. Their influence on international corporations is still quite significant.

If, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the idea of free market was advocated, it was clear that the market as part of a national state was to be free of the state itself, of political power. Social revolutions, economic crises – both local and global, wars, totalitarian systems and other forms of radicalism verified this idea. It also appears to have been wholly demystified in the last phase of industrialism. For what does it mean that the market is “free”? We know that it is free of the national state, but what is it that is free? Market is not a subject that can possess the characteristics of freedom. It is a social area where conflicts between leading actors of economic relations are resolved. Market cannot be free, but its participants can realise their interests to a greater or lesser degree.

If there is a compromise in the market between the major social powers, and the state safeguards this compromise, then the hypocrisy of the slogan of “free market” means that somebody among the participants is not satisfied with the shape of the compromise as it is, but they do not want to say so openly. This compromise cut short the tragic thread of almost two centuries of history of our globe, and especially Europe. As we have stated earlier, it was no windfall, but a wisdom bought for blood and suffering of millions. “Free market” is a utopia, of which capitalism, thanks to its capability of “learning”, is now cured. A utopia, let us add, that has already been proven wrong – everywhere it used to be introduced, as it no longer exists anywhere. The compromise of the last phase of industrialism, *i.e.* the idea of a welfare state, is not utopian, as it is often claimed, but a real outcome of a learning process of trial and error that lasted for nearly two centuries.

Perhaps it is the case that this compromise is not in some countries off balance for the benefit of the employees. Perhaps in the late seventies the system of the welfare state cost too much, especially with weakening economy (although this is far from obvious, but I do not wish to take up this discussion here for reasons of space). Perhaps it demoralised employees. Perhaps then it needs to be changed. But what has to be borne in mind is that this change has to be carefully orchestrated so as not to create a basis for another great conflict between the now most important social classes and other players in the social game. The solution is thus not a “free market”, but some form of a real balance of interests.

Let us repeat then, that there are two reasons why the question of a “free market” is now being taken up anew. First, technological changes have weakened the position of employees (and not just labourers at that). Second, globalisation processes have largely liberated from the weakening state capital, which in turn has been strengthened as a result of the global concentration.

We need to fully realise the consequences of these changes in the realm of social structure. Many of them have already been mentioned here, like the weakening of the employees. This process involves also a major part of the so-called “middle class”. New technologies invade the traditional areas of the so-called “intellectual work” as well. But what is especially noteworthy is the ever-growing number of people who do not have and are not going to have work. Their being unemployed will therefore probably be hereditary. This conclusion appears the more plausible in the light of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory.<sup>28</sup>

In present times capital has the opportunity to “free the market”, or rather to have complete freedom on the market for itself. I mean by this freedom of the state and any and all organisations and institutions aiming to protect the social compromise on the level of the state (like trade unions, *etc.*). As long as there are no mechanisms enforcing the compromise on the global level, the world will be in danger of a great global conflict between the desperate excluded (and part of the employees) and the global employers, who now have the upper hand. The “marginalised”<sup>29</sup> ones, who are weak out of any proportion (Kowalik; Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Grotowska-Leder) and employees will then resort to **terrorist** methods of combat. It will not be easy, as new technologies are employed by the institutions of enforcement. Still, we know it now better than ever that there is no police effective enough, nor are there walls thick enough to

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<sup>28</sup> P.Bourdieu, J.-C.Passeron, *Reprodukcja. Elementy teorii systemu nauczania (Reproduction. Elements of the Theory of Educational System)*, Warsaw 1990 (*La reproduction. Eléments pour une théorie du système d’enseignement*, Paris 1970).

<sup>29</sup> T.Kowalik, *Marginalność i marginalizacja społeczna (Marginality and Social Exclusion)*, Warsaw 1998; W.Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, J.Grotowska-Leder, *Wielkomiejska bieda w okresie transformacji (Big City Poverty in the Period of Transformation)*, Łódź 1996.

protect one against an act of vengeance from a desperate terrorist, especially one who is also aided by new technologies.

The scenario I am sketching here is, naturally, pessimistic. It may be, as is promised by some, that new jobs will be created precisely thanks to the new technologies; it may be that a modern global citizen society will emerge, as a serious partner for the global capital. If it happens, it is unlikely to happen “by itself”, but rather as a result of global politics oriented towards a humanised but effective economy. However, thus far the traditional mechanisms that stabilise the society and economy are losing their efficiency, and carefree disputes of the future ought to be replaced by reflections on new mechanisms to stabilise the world. It is certain that a simple return to the situation from the last phase of industrialism (the balanced industrialism) is absolutely impossible. History cannot be undone. But it should also not be reverted to the era of severe, open, uncontrolled conflict. There is no need to resurrect Marx.

## **5. Game of “globalisation” as exemplified in the EU**

The new situation in world economy causes, as I have mentioned, significant changes in the institutional order of every society. One of the fundamental ways to attempt to participate in this global game is by creating supranational political organisms. An example of these is the European Union.

At present two processes co-occur globally: the crystallisation of a global “free market” and the emergence of structures of global organisations. Time will tell whether the “free” market will keep its “freedom” or rather will fall under the influence of global power structures.

Among the economic, political and civilisational factors of these processes also cultural causes should, I think, be noted. Of special importance is here the development of mass culture. It brings, along with the commonly known shortcomings and dangers, the function of deepening social divisions and preserving them together with the privileged position of the well-educated elite and the homogenisation of the rest of the society on the lowest cultural level possible. This would contribute then to the creation of a mass society and to the degradation of greater and greater parts of society to the state of participants of the social “mass” (and therefore not of society). Another result would be that the new social structure would soon contain a very narrow elite (in terms of education, but probably other status factors would be convergent), limited transitional layers and a vast majority degraded to the level of mass society. Therefore we should re-define the notion of mass culture and understand it as a *quasi*-culture of social masses, and an important factor in degrading society to the level of mass.

The formula of the EU creates an opportunity to protect the identity of small and medium-sized nations, to save the main values of the democratic-liberal order, to balance the advantages and disadvantages of direct and representational democracies, makes it necessary to respect the principles of economic effectiveness and social balance based on the compromise of the main powers of the social structure. In order to take this opportunity to successfully counter these and other dangers of the new civilisation, systematically displacing late industrial society and replacing it with the so-called information society, a great effort is necessary, especially intellectual effort.

Traditional foundations of the order in EU have been shaken. A new fundament needs to be found, one that protects its traditional values but also is adequate against modern-day civilisational challenges. In the globalised world, where capital and power are being concentrated on the supranational level, small and medium-sized countries stand little chance. Unless they use the formula invented by the novel and, I daresay, brilliant “founding fathers” of the European Community.

It is in the EU that the small and medium countries find an institution capable of truly participating as a fully fledged player in the global game of the modern world. This will mean that their interests will be represented, but it will also create an opportunity to emerge for an institution capable of limiting the freedom of the free global market, or subject it to political control on conditions close to the European tradition.

The EU is also capable of playing the global game to protect the political, cultural and ethical identity of small and medium states and societies; the game for their significance and agency in the world. It is precisely what the citizens of the new members of the EU are so afraid to lose – sovereignty, identity, agency and cultural traditions – that I am convinced can be saved in the globalised world only by being a member of the EU. It is probably a much more valuable profit than access to the EU subsidies, though it may often seem otherwise. The expansion of the EU was also in the best interest of the „old” member states, which is also sometimes forgotten. A larger EU will have greater strength to conduct global politics and protect traditions and interests of all its members, including the old ones.

## **6. Political crisis and the challenges facing the EU in the globalised world – Epilogue**

The benefits of the existence of the EU and its agency in the global game depend on whether within it the most crucial problems and tensions stemming from the post-industrial crisis are resolved. First they need to be noticed and clearly defined, together with their civilisational context. An attempt also needs



to be made at specifying the possible scenarios for the ongoing civilisational transformation and at constructing a more or less optimistic vision. The viewpoint adopted here, formulated as an “open tab perspective”, consists in a conviction that anything may happen, but that the future depends on the wisdom of people and their ability to engage in a common effort to an unparalleled so far degree. Therefore the processes of European integration cast a ray of hope as attempts to create this commonwealth of effort, a form of social existence that appears to be fundamental, even dramatically indispensable for the optimistic view of the future world to come true.

Sadly, science and politics are in crisis as well. Although there are sociologists who truly attempt to pierce the fogs of time and see what future brings,<sup>30</sup> it is much more common to hear others feed people with clichés to cover their own helplessness and sense of loss.

In order to counteract the effects of the crisis of the democratic-liberal order and capitalist economy that we are witnessing right now, it needs to be understood first; among thousands of symptoms and manifestations fundamental tendencies need to be discovered and understood in terms of historic processes.

I have attempted to point at some of these. Let us recall then that I believe that it is the development of modern information technologies that caused the gradual and growing erosion of the democratic-liberal order and of the foundations of the market economy, triggering such phenomena as the increasing unemployment, radical changes in social structure (disappearance of certain layers and classes, emergence of others, shift in power set-up); economic, cultural, social and political marginalisation of great numbers of individuals and whole societies; loss of balance between social powers which was maintained by the historic compromise of the welfare state, which in turn triggered the creation of other, not yet institutionalised and unbalanced, dynamic conflicts of interests and social tensions; “the liberation of market”, disappearance of national markets and the emergence of a global market; the creation (as a result of uneven distribution of new technologies in the world) of significant disproportions in wealth, which causes migration, disturbing the cultural, political and national balance inside countries and thus brings about the growth of intolerance, racism and new forms of nationalism; as a result of the above processes a disillusionment with political parties and the institution of the state can be seen

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<sup>30</sup> As examples, the following writings of European sociologists may be mentioned: J.Habermas, *Przyszłość natury ludzkiej. Czy zmierzamy do eugeniki liberalnej?* (*The Future of the Human Nature. Are We Bound Towards Liberal Eugenics?*), Warsaw 2003 (*Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur. Auf dem Weg zu einer liberalen Eugenik?*, Frankfurt am Main 2001); A.Giddens, *Trzecia droga. Odnowa socjaldemokracji*, Warszawa 1999 (*The Third Way. The Renewal of Social Democracy*, 1998); *Runaway World*, New York 2000; U.Beck, *Spoleczeństwo ryzyka...*, op.cit.; U.Beck, A.Giddens, S.Lash, *Reflexive Modernisation*, Cambridge 1994 i inne.

in liberal-democratic countries with capitalist economy, as they are considered to be unable to solve the increasing problems; this phenomenon takes the form of indifference towards the whole political order together with the traditional party set-up, or even towards the liberal-democratic system and the capitalist principles as such – which in turn leads to increasing popularity of parties which do not fit the democratic political system at all.

New technologies make the phenomena mentioned above – globalisation in politics and culture (here understood above all as the development of a new, “cancer-like” mass culture) – much more complex and dramatic. Among the chief dangers of globalisation understood in this way are:

- the spreading of mass culture and atrophy of culture proper;<sup>31</sup>
- the growth of economic and political discrepancies in the world, which in turn will lead to an increase in conflicts and must end in globalised terrorism;
- a severe and dramatic culture shock (and thus also a mental one) for numerous nations in the world – as if a leap several centuries and civilisations ahead – for whom sharp confrontation with new technologies and the lifestyles, values, models *etc.* that they carry, coupled with anomy and the disintegration of “horizons of reference” and “frameworks of activity” must lead to the integrity of the foundations of individual and social identity being broken, and so to the global struggle intensifying, even to the most extreme limits of international terrorism;
- “liberation” of the global market, and so intensification of tensions within societies, atrophy of the state, migration of conflict into global space and thus endangering the world with global revolutions, wars, economic crises, terrorism *etc.*

The chaos that necessarily accompanies such radical and dynamic civilisational changes makes people lose their bearings, politicians and scientist become disorientated. There are, however, countries, sometimes their regions, local communities or groups of individuals that are able to find their way around this new world more easily, who understand it better than others and are more successful in dealing with it. Such cases are worth studying. Perhaps it is in them that we can find if not the future social order, then at least better ways to adapt to the times of the present crisis. Naturally, cases of helplessness and counterproductivity are also numerous.

In Europe we can find examples of the former kind in Scandinavia, and to an extent in the UK; of the latter – in France and, especially, in Germany. A comparison of their approaches makes it apparent that there are a number of

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<sup>31</sup> I realize that this thread begs more extensive explanations. However, these would reach far beyond the scope of the present paper.

paths to success in the world that is being born. It is also clear that none of these paths involves attempts at a regression, return to well-known ideologies, economic or political manoeuvres from past eras.

Faced with economic difficulties, Germany tightens their policy in various areas, suspend social services, focus on itself and its own problems. This results in the social-democratic government using more and more aggressive neo-right-wing tactics, which brings worse and worse results. This strategy does not help the economy at all, and internal conflicts increase. What also increases is distrust that others feel for Germany, whose excursions into nationalism, cold egocentrism or even revisionist tendencies cannot buy any hearts. The alliance with France may prove to be transitory, and the nightmares of the past – lulled to sleep with great effort for several dozen years may awaken again.

It is naturally bad for the EU and the future fate of Europe as a whole when one of the most important member states cannot understand that the importance of the greatly exceeds that of an instrument for open trade and freer business. It is worth realising how important an investment is being made on our continent, and also that the only place to run away from the current problems to is the future, and one with broadly understood social solidarity. Where people understand this, like in Scandinavia, things turn out better as well.

I have no ambition of exhausting the topic of globalisation and the great civilisational change of the present day. What I do is rather point to certain aspects of these issues which I believe to be important. It seems to be obvious today that globalisation is both a risk and an opportunity. It will be the cause of numerous local and global problems, which will require novel solutions, and above all – a change of the traditional categories of thought. The values of post-war liberal-democratic order need to be re-created, but in completely new conditions. We need more than just local social policy – a global one; a compromise needs to be found on the scale of the “welfare state”, methods need to be developed to strengthen cultural diversity as well as culture that will be capable of fulfilling its tasks in a bigger and different world.

One of the most important problems is preventing a global disaster that may be caused by the “global free market”. Just as long years of revolutions, wars, economic crises, nationalist and communist madness were ended by the compromise of a market subjected to the mediatory function of the state, built on the economic thought of John M. Keynes, so new means are needed to re-create this compromise in the new circumstances and on the global scale. What we need is a new Keynes, a new “welfare state”, but both on the global scale.

What we also need is a great care for the identities of societies that are so diverse mentally, culturally and economically. Therefore not only economic compromise is needed, both on national and global scale, but a cultural one as well. Completely new politics is necessary. Unemployment is a problem that no

policy of so-called animation of employment or courses of self-presentation for the masses will solve. In the same way the problems of today's world require the creation of global institutions mediating the new historic compromise of the information era, capable of efficiently safeguarding mediation and re-creation of the compromise in the changing conditions. But first of all a modern scientific and political thought is required, as well as a modern education. Because at the very fundament of the "open tab perspective" lies the condition of having an open mind, capable of searching in the spirit of solidarity and Habermasian discourse for the fundamentals of the world, which is radically changing before our very eyes.

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