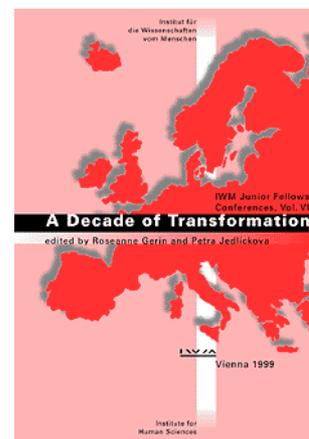


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# Conservatism as an Answer to Liberalism in Politics: The Case of Contemporary Poland

Piotr Korys

## 1. Introduction

The main subject of these considerations is conservatism as an economic ideology. The author takes it for granted that the economic views of conservatives are coherent with the core of ideology, and, in this way, grounded in political philosophy. It also is obvious that the ideology is an easier, more trivial and sometimes degenerated version of political philosophy since it must be useful in political practice.

In the beginning I shall formulate a thesis about the coexistence of ideologies and the real world, then I shall concentrate on the definition of ideology, and in particular, on the definition of conservatism that is created for empirical analysis. The next step will be the analysis of Polish conservatism, divided into a few parts. I will present a panorama of conservatism in contemporary Poland and its roots, and then focus on the economic programs of conservatives during the process of transformation to analyze their influence and originality. I then will examine some economic problems. The point of reference in this consideration is liberalism treated as

an ideology which has dominated both public discourse and political activity since the transformation of the political system in 1989.

The main questions of these considerations are as follows: Is the economic and even wider political project of conservatism significantly different from the liberal one, particularly in Poland? Is Polish political conservatism a real opposition force to Polish liberalism? The answers to these questions are only partial since the sphere of culture, which is important in indicating the differences between conservatives and liberals, is not at the center of my concern. This analysis concerns the problems of the state and the economy.

### *Ideology*

Ideology can be described as a set of consistent views for interpreting the social world. These views concern moral, economic, cultural, social and political spheres. What is significant is that ideology is connected with politics and political power, that is, ideology is the point of reference in politics and makes it possible to attain political power; from the other side, political power is a tool for making ideology in the real world. Hence, ideology is associated with political philosophy and with political power.<sup>1</sup>

The important methodological question in analyzing ideologies concerns the connections between ideology and the shape of the real world and, in particular, economic ideology and the shape of the real economy. The preassumption made by the author is that in our civilization ideology is one of the factors which affects the real world. It means that ideology not only echoes the changes (which are natural and impossible to avoid), but also is a factor of these changes. Actually, this is a two-way interaction in which different ideologies interact with each another. In recent years, liberalism (or, rather, many forms of liberalism) has been the dominant ideology, especially in the economic sphere. Hence, my thesis is that liberalism's influence on conservatism (and on other ideologies) is visible.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Scruton described ideology as "any systematic and all-embracing political doctrine which claims to give a complete and universally applicable theory of man and society, and to derive therefrom a program of political action." Scruton (1996:250).

## 2. Conservatism, Liberalism and the Contradictions Between Them

### 2.1 Liberalism

*Common to all variants of liberalism is a definite conception, distinctively modern in character, of man and society. What are the several elements of this conception? It is individualist, in that it asserts the moral primacy of the person against the claims of any social collectivity; egalitarian, inasmuch as it confers on all men the same moral status and denies the relevance to legal or political order of differences in moral worth among human beings; universalist, affirming the moral unity of human species and according a secondary importance to specific historic associations and cultural forms; and meliorist in its affirmation of the corrigibility and improvability of all social institutions and political arrangements.<sup>2</sup>*

This is the definition of liberalism put forth out by John Gray. It is possible to derive from it many conceptions of the economy and its interaction with the state, but I will discuss only one - the one which is popular and described strictly as liberal in recent years, namely neoliberalism. It is influential, especially as an economic ideology. The main points of neoliberalism include the following: sovereignty (autonomy) of person, private interest, rationality of actions, strong property rights and spontaneous order.<sup>3</sup> These points are derived from the bundle of ideas which constructs liberalism. It is easy to indicate that liberal individualism is transformed into a concept of private interest, and that the idea of "sovereignty of person" is a version of liberal meliorism and egalitarianism. In turn, rationalism of action, a preassumption often made in economic theory, means that a large part of human actions, especially in the market, is rational, and because of this, "spontaneous order" is attainable.

There are two possible interpretations of the Hayekian idea of "spontaneous order:" liberal and conservative. From the liberal point of view it can be treated as the means of "corrigibility and improvability of all social institutions and political arrangements;" from the conservative point of view, it can be treated as proof that social changes ought to be undesigned and evolutionary. This idea is a kind of bridge between some versions of liberalism and conservatism.

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<sup>2</sup> Gray (1986: X-XI).

<sup>3</sup> Wojtyna (1995: 20).

## 2.2 Conservatism

Conservatism often is treated as an ideology contradictory to liberalism. This assumption sometimes misses the point; but before explaining why, I will consider what can be described as conservatism. The answer given here is only partial and subjective since the phenomenon is too wide, too complicated and too differentiated. Some of my considerations are focused on one type of conservatism which falls under the influence of West European conservatism rather than East European traditionalism and nationalism.

The contexts of the notions of conservatism are very different. Three of them are described in Samuel P. Huntington's article "Conservatism as an Ideology."<sup>4</sup> The notion of conservatism can describe the set of relatively permanent prepositional attitudes of resistance against any change. That form of conservatism always becomes active in social life during periods of sudden and deep changes, and is one of consequences of fear of the future. This form of conservatism is in no sense any kind of an ideological motivation and, therefore, is meaningless to reflective thought.

The second version of conservatism, in Huntington's formulation, is conceptualized as a method of political action, which in turn, is employed to defend the *status quo* in circumstances of danger. The defense of the *status quo* or the trend towards the restoration of *status quo ante* defends the particular interests of a certain social group. With this definition, one is surprisingly permitted to call governments in communist regimes in Central Europe from the 1970s to the 1990s conservative.

Finally, Huntington defines conservative ideology as a style of thought which is typical for the transitional stage between feudalism and capitalism, what he refers to as the age of bourgeois revolutions. It could be understood as follows: It is possible to strictly define a historical emergence and development of this kind of phenomenon. The beginning of conservatism as an ideology is seen in the age of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. The founding fathers of the ideology were a group of thinkers who made a theoretical effort to conceptualize the threats of the consequences of the revolution.

This is an effective differentiation when considering that the French Revolution is treated as a creative impulse which opened the age of all contemporary ideologies and even initiated the discussion of the notion of "ideology" itself. But, on the other hand, this is not a very successful differentiation since it is only a situational one. Thus, Huntington defined neither the subject of conservative reflection nor

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<sup>4</sup> Huntington (1957), Szacki (1979: 92-93).

the style of political action and thought that was attributed to conservative politicians and thinkers.

Twenty years after the article, at the beginning of 1980s, Huntington had become a member of an informal group of intellectuals described as "neoconservatives." Neoconservatives certainly do not belong to this historical scheme since the case of Huntington falsifies (at least partially) his own definition.

The second possible way of avoiding the content of conservative ideology is the assumption that a conservative is anyone who calls himself or is called conservative. Let me denominate this method of definition as "the semantic approach." But for me, the main consequence of this approach is the statement that there is nothing common in conservative thought apart from the name and the undefined aversion to changes that occur too quickly.

I suppose that the analysis of the subject or content of conservative thought is necessary for a further consideration of conservatism as an ideology. Therefore, I present the interpretation of Włodzimierz Mich.<sup>5</sup> Mich viewed traditionalism as a set of attitudes which consisted of an "aversion to the change" (or a distrust of the unknown).<sup>6</sup> In other words, it is the situational approach to conservatism. In special moments (like the French Revolution) this "natural conservatism" is inadequate. In these cases traditionalism is rationalized and, hence, traditionalism as an ideology is shaped. But the content of ideology or political thought is omitted in the situational approach of conservatism, and in this way one can describe only some versions of conservatism. Conservatism as traditionalism is an ideology which rejects any changes or eventually accepts only those types of changes which restore old and lost order.

Since I am interested not only in this version of conservatism, I will analyze the entire content of conservative ideology as well. Mich has offered four ways of interpreting this content, although he writes only about Polish conservatism. First, he points to conservatism conceived as a Catholic *integryzm*, that is a conservative stream in Catholic thought that is hostile to any changes or compromises concerning the doctrine of the Church and its position in the state and society. In this theoretical context the conservative standpoint is identical to the standpoint of the Catholic Church on many issues. Catholicism is not only a revered religion, but also a foundation of the order in society. The state, family, society and power all exist "as a kind of entity independent of the wills of individuals and the reason of

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<sup>5</sup> Mich (1995).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

the existence of the above set of social entities, treated as a natural order of things, is given by God."<sup>7</sup> Hence, from this point of view, the rejection of religion is an obvious symptom of a crisis.

Mich identified a second type of conservatism, one conceived as an idea of the efficient division of labor, which he called productivism. At the base of this conception is the assumption that social life is subordinate to the production of goods (although conservatives divide themselves into two camps: productivists and anti-productivists). It is often emphasized that there is a close relationship between the productivism of conservatives and the economic liberalism of neoliberals.

Mich regarded Christian liberalism as a third type of conservatism. The conceptions of social stratification are described in this part of the doctrine. Mich locates Christian liberalism somewhere between individualism and collectivism, or between anarchy and slavery. He wrote: "Conservatives need freedom in God not freedom from God."<sup>8</sup> The role of the state ought to be minimized: limited interventionism is accepted in the economic sphere, whereas in the public sphere state authority is obligated to provide for the safety of its citizens, to ensure rules of law and, last but not least, to protect the sacredness of property (property rights).

Fourth, Mich said conservatism could be viewed as authoritarianism. Conservative conceptions of power can be called "authoritarian" when power is rooted deeply in the social nexus, which is built on the foundation of the authority and law.

All the dimensions of this doctrine, however, do not occur together frequently. Thus, the following statement of Marcin Król<sup>9</sup> may be useful: the inevitable feature of conservatives is moderation in action and thought. In my opinion, this statement means that some persons who call themselves conservatives are not conservatives but only use conservative phraseology in radical thought.

I want to supplement the propositions of Mich and Król with a few additional points about conservative ideology which are important for my present concerns. They are as follows:

First, although human beings have been granted free will and freedom of action, these features may be used only in the world of social institutions. Absolute freedom, freedom without any institution, is, in fact, the state of anarchy, or as Thomas Hobbes said, the state of *bellum omnium contra omnes*. This is the source of the

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<sup>7</sup> Moszynski (1933).

<sup>8</sup> Mich (1995: 43).

<sup>9</sup> Król (1979: 30-41).

conservative aversion to radically developed freedom of action since it can undermine the foundations of social institutions. From this point of view, "to destroy" is much easier than "to build."

Another feature of conservatism is the conviction of the permanent imperfection of man. The idea of designing and building a perfect order of society, a paradise on earth, rests on two stipulations: first, the completely positive or flexible inclination of human beings, and second, the possibility of refusing pain and suffering. Conservatives do not believe in these stipulations, and this is another reason why conservatives do not believe in constructivism.

In conservative thought, reason is treated as an important instrument to experience the world, but it ought to be rooted in common experience and tradition and be supported by faith. Hence, science is important for people, and technical development is useful, but people cannot take for granted that the only reality is the one described by scientific formulas.

A second important observation of conservative ideology is that since "man is a social animal," the best form of society is a community linked by the bonds of culture or civilization, that is, a community of tradition, rules and institutions of social life. This type of bond is a better foundation of that state than only free-market bonds (i.e., the stock exchange, individual interests, buying and selling). The proper activity of social organisms is based on the functions of the various institutions of civil society, namely the family, schools, religion, tradition and authority; but they can easily be destroyed by the state on one hand or by revolution on the other.

The source of the main threat to conservatism is the belief in the imperfect nature of man. Society and other communities, which mediate between human beings and the state, guarantee that the dark side of human nature will not prevail. These communities build nets of informal constraints of human behavior and also prevent the omnipotence of the state.

A third observation of conservative ideology in the foundation of social life is the role of tradition and the heritage of the past. Supposing that the past is always idealized is not my intention (although some conservatives like Joseph de Maistre or Henryk Rzewuski dreamed of a "golden age" lost in the past). It could be explicated that the conservatives can, want and are prepared to exercise the heritage of the past since they are conscious of cultural continuity and change. They also ought to be conscious of the impossibility of returning to the past.

Tradition is not such a clear-cut notion in conservative political thought. In general, this is the Judeo-Christian tradition combined with national and local versions (for example, English, French or Polish traditions). This tradition is not taken as a

whole; conservatives make a selection. One of the methods of this selection is indicating the moment in history when civilization began to decay. Before this moment positive elements - those connected with traditional hierarchies and local communities, such as Christian ethics and virtues, spiritual attitudes and the idea of personal responsibility - had dominated civilization, and after it, negative ones. The negative elements are often connected with the disintegration of traditional hierarchies and local communities, a decline in virtues, Christian ethics and metaphysics, and a crisis of the ethic of responsibility - all of which were followed by the domination of materialistic and consumptionist attitudes. Conservatives always try to defend native, historical tradition against alien "arbitrary power." First in this way of thinking was Edmund Burke whose position was described by Robert Nisbet as follows:

*In France, the assault upon traditional government and morality came from a small group of Frenchmen, the Jacobins, but, Burke argued, the essential principles of the matter were no different from those obtained in his defense of the American colonists. The issue was freedom then and it was the same now; the violation of freedom was no less due to the fact that the minority governing was of French blood. From Burke's point of view the Jacobins were as much aggressors upon French history and tradition as the British East India Company had been upon Indian culture.<sup>10</sup>*

This statement means that European conservatism, built on the base of the Judeo-Christian tradition, was possible only in Europe.

My fourth observation of conservative ideology concerns the social world, the world of social institutions which serve as both formal and informal constraints on human action. Social institutions are products of long-term evolution. They have to change since "each form of government might be good in its time, and each, unfortunately, can and even has to get spoiled," as Stanislaw Tarnowski, a nineteenth-century conservative from Cracow, once wrote. And they have to change continually; for if they do not, they will become dysfunctional. But on the other hand, conservatives think that the situation becomes very dangerous if changes occur too rapidly and too deeply, in other words when tradition is "cut adrift."<sup>11</sup>

Conservatives do not give convincing interpretations and descriptions of evolutionary changes; they almost always give "accidental" ones. For example, for Burke, England was the state where social environment changes evolved continually. But

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<sup>10</sup> Nisbet (1986: 5).

<sup>11</sup> Arendt (1963: 161).

he did not design any generalizations. Attention to evolutionary changes causes discrepancy in some cases because of the necessity of choosing between evolutionary changes in political and social systems (which are not accepted by conservatives) and revolutionary changes founded on conservative values. This dilemma, or paradox, also can be posed in another way: either one will cease being a conservative if he admits that the system, which at its roots broke all conservative values, or one will cease being a conservative if he accepts radical social and political changes in this system. This is the dilemma that German "revolutionary conservatives" faced in the Weimar Republic; it is also the dilemma faced by American neoconservatives and, especially by Polish conservatives after 1989.

This dilemma became well visible in our century with religion becoming weaker and weaker within society, and as Ryszard Legutko observed, turning into a "shopping mall" in that interpersonal relations have been reduced to the level of individual interests.<sup>12</sup> In the long-standing methods by which conservatives justify social order and hierarchy, nature (in terms of the natural diversification of talents and power or knowledge) is rejected or is considered less important than wealth.

Our century is also the age of totalitarianism and other political systems founded on values hardly accepted by conservatives. Considering this situation, the conservative dilemma was and still is the dilemma of choosing either situational conservatism and conservative revolution or counterrevolution. Since now, counterrevolution has not broken out, and probably never will since conservatives have to wait for "the miracle of counterrevolution," as Joseph de Maistre wrote. He also claimed that counterrevolution is not the opposite side of a revolution, but rather the opposition of a revolution. Hence, planning, preparing and unleashing the revolution are nonsense. Because conservatives do not choose the way of counterrevolution and, in general, do not want to be only situational conservatives, they look for the third way. Namely, they look for a niche in society where their political issues can be realized.

A fifth observation about conservative ideology is that the conservatives stress the very idea of the state, but not as a total or totalitarian organization which intends to interfere with or to absorb the private lives of individuals. In its conservative meaning, the state is treated as an institution of formal constraints on human actions and an institution founded on local traditions of rules, laws, experience and persistence. Thus, the state has to guard the laws, guarantee the safety of its citizens and secure the stability of its institutional background. The free market is an insti-

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<sup>12</sup> Legutko (1994: 35).

tution which needs the assistance of the state,<sup>13</sup> although the state should not be an actor in the market game. The role of state is only to be a guardian of institutional and legal order. When the administration of state is involved in the market game, it causes confusion in the market's mechanisms. Furthermore, in this situation the state acts in two ways: as the guardian of laws and as the entity which is restricted by the same rules of law. The decline of state activity in the economy is possible under two conditions: when a civil society exists and when it takes over part of the state's obligations in some spheres of the economy.

According to the principle of subsidiarity, the state is involved in social life only in the cases where the smaller institutions are not capable of solving their problems. The main issue of the state is to protect civil society from its enemies and to provide the best possibilities for development. It is easy to indicate that the conception of the state is grounded in the assumption of the imperfect nature of man. Social institutions are too weak to be capable of defending themselves against each enemy; the state can defend them, but on the other hand, the state, which is too omnipotent, may weaken these institutions or even damage them. And, from the conservative point of view, this is very dangerous.

My final observation of conservative theory is that private property is the foundation of the economy. "Private" means individual and small or medium-sized property, which is always connected with every individual's responsibility for his actions. Private property is strongly stressed since ownership is considered the "good school" of responsibility and is "the last metaphysical right."<sup>14</sup> Attention to tradition and the notion of liberty are strongly connected to the conservative idea of private property.

Changes in the economy, one of the main social institutions, are not the effects of rational and prepared human actions, but the consequences of the actions of many agents. Because actions are not planned and coordinated, their final outcome is, as Hayek says, "the spontaneous order."

Conservatives offer no clear answer as to how to change the structure of ownership or how to make people more responsible. They find the "modern corporation and novel form of private property hard to accept as the way of life."<sup>15</sup> Richard

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<sup>13</sup> This problem has been signalized in economic theory for the last twenty to thirty years. This is a main point of institutionalism, a quickly developing stream of economic thought. See North (1990).

<sup>14</sup> Nisbet (1986: 67).

<sup>15</sup> Nisbet (1986: 67).

Weaver wrote: "We are looking where a successful stand may be made for the logos against modern barbarism. It seems that small-scale property offers such an entrenchment, which is of course a place of defense. Yet offensive operations too must be undertaken." Since there now are no projects of such an offensive operation, I suppose that the only possible, but rejected way, is counterrevolution.

### *2.3 Contradictions*

The contradictions or differences between conservatism and liberalism are often elementary. Although the philosophical foundations of the ideologies are very different, their realization in political practice, especially in practice of economic policy, may be very similar. This similarity has been well visible during the political and economic transformations of Eastern and Central Europe. Both liberals and conservatives accept the state as the institution that guarantees a successful transformation and necessitates the projected transformation of the state.

I already have discussed conservatism's problem with counterrevolution. The second main problem of conservatism is the lack of positive answers. Conservatives are masters of diagnosis and masters of critique, but because their positive program is built on wishful thinking, they have lost. It seems that conservatives esteem the idea of equilibrium between contradictions. Sometimes it produces interesting effects, but often their views are unclear. In the contemporary world, the lack of complex positive answers often turns conservative thought into footnotes of liberalism.

Although conservatives do not accept too radically developed liberal individualism (by which an individual human being is considered the most important part of the social world and cannot be subordinated to any community), they do not offer any type of collectivity which may be considered more important than individual interest. And I believe that they do not want to offer it. Conservatives only try to say that we should not forget about our duties to society and to smaller social groups since these duties make society possible.

To some extent, conservatives reject liberal egalitarianism, especially when it turns into a political crusade. For conservatives, egalitarianism is a moral value; and as liberals, they "confer on all men the same moral status," but not the same status of ownership or knowledge, or even the same possibilities.

The majority of conservatives agrees with the statement that there is something akin to a universal nature of men. But they also underline the role of specific historic associations and cultural forms. In the end, they reject liberal meliorism and the liberal conception of history. Conservatives do not believe in the idea of prog-

ress, nor do they affirm, in contradiction to liberals, the possibility of improving all social and political arrangements.

In particular, it is easy to show the connections between some version of contemporary conservatism and neoliberalism. Both attach importance to the ideas of "spontaneous order" and clearly distinct laws, especially concerning property rights.

Perhaps the vagueness of conservative programs caused John Gray to write that "twentieth-century history shows no example of a successful anti-liberal conservative movement, and the greatest of conservative statesmen - de Gaulle and Adenauer, for example - have adopted a managerial and realist attitude to modern society which accepts its intractable individualism as an historical fate that wise policy may contain but not reverse."<sup>16</sup>

In the next section I will attempt to show how conservatism works in practice using the example of Poland. I shall present my version of the history of conservatism in Poland, then I shall concentrate on its actual situation and on conservative programs within the economy.

### 3. *Polish Conservatism*<sup>17</sup>

Before the age of the first "Solidarnosc" government, conservatism in the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) can be interpreted only as an intellectual movement, although contemporary political conservatism flourished at the base of this small movement. After World War II, there were some circles which could be called conservative.

Publications provided an opportunity for conservatives to publish their points of view. The Catholic paper *Tygodnik Powszechny* has been published in Cracow since 1947. One of the most prominent persons of post-war Polish conservatism, Stefan Kisielewski, a productivist who wrote under the pen name Kisiel, was a columnist for this magazine. *Znak* was another Catholic paper from Cracow and also the name of a club in the Polish Parliament which existed from 1956 to 1976. The representative of this club, Stanislaw Stomma, rejected the new Polish Constitution in 1976 since it stressed friendly cooperation between Poland and the former Soviet Union and, thus, was not in accordance with conservative attitudes. He was the

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<sup>16</sup> Gray (1985:141).

<sup>17</sup> For the history of Polish opposition and political thought of opposition, see Skorzynski (1995), Friszke (1994) and Bankowicz (1996); particularly on conservatives, see Szlachta (1998), Dzielski (1995) and Lagowski (1994).

only member of the Parliament who abstained from voting at that time. Both *Tygodnik Powszechny* and *Znak*, which can be described as Christian-liberal, stressed the role of the individual in society and the connections between Catholicism and liberalism.

Another important stream of conservatism in Poland has been national conservatism. This style of thought became visible in the publication *Tygodnik Warszawski* at the end of 1940s, in the underground organization "Ruch" in the 1960s, in the Movement for the Defence of Human and Citizen Rights (ROPCiO) in 1970s, in some streams of "Solidarnosc" and in the Movement of Young Poland (RMP) in 1980, and in the Christian-National Union (ZChN) in 1990. This stream of conservatism is connected with Catholic *integryzm*. The Catholic Church, from this point of view, was a very important defender of tradition and stabilizer of the social nexus. Coupled with Catholic *integryzm*, the doctrine of national conservatism was influenced by the writings of Roman Dmowski, Zygmunt Balinski and other ideologues of the National Democracy (ND).<sup>18</sup>

The RMP was a political movement established in 1977 in Gdansk by a group of people centered around the paper *Bratniak*. The second underground magazine connected with RMP was *Polityka Polska*, published in Gdansk from 1983 to 1989. A group of intellectuals who comprised the founders of the RMP tried to create intellectual links between the political beliefs of Polish conservatism and political beliefs of the ND. The RMP was an important movement for contemporary Polish political conservatism, and a few influential conservative politicians, such as Aleksander Hall and Wieslaw Walendziak, started their careers there. The RMP also can be interpreted as national conservative movement, although this interpretation is only partially true. While the idea of the nation was well stressed in the programs of the RMP, this idea was built on two pillars: a nationalistic pillar (stressing the nation as an organism and the role of the nation in the lives of individuals) and a conservative pillar. The RMP rejected some nationalistic ideas as either social Darwinism, that is, the domination of large social groups (nations) over the lives of individuals, or as a subordination of the social nexus to the needs of the nation. The idea of the nation developed by RMP was connected with the conservative idea of the state and its authoritarian conceptions of power.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The National Democracy was a Polish political movement established during the first years of the twentieth century. The political philosophy of ND was built on nationalistic and organic ideas.

<sup>19</sup> Matyja (1996).

There also were a few papers focussing specifically on conservative ideology in Poland. The first, *Res Publica*, has been published by Marcin Król and his colleagues since 1979. The publication prompted a conservative style of thought, moderation in action and in thought as well as the concept of national consent for building a new state. Rett R. Ludwikowski, a historian of ideas, wrote of the paper:

*The theory of conservatism as an instrument of political dispute was worked out by the circle of young writers assembled around Marcin Król, the editor-in-chief of the first legalised underground magazine, Res Publica...Król's...works focused on the program of [the political group] Stanczyks, which he viewed as a symbol of political wisdom and moderation. Both Stanczyks and Król's group faced the same question: Is conservatism possible in a country deprived of sovereignty and subject to a commonly challenged social system? What is to be conserved if the nation is oriented toward change rather than toward preservation of the political and social structure?*<sup>20</sup>

Ludwikowski also commented that: "*Res Publica*, previously an independent and uncensored magazine, after it was legalised became a prominent and widely read vehicle promoting liberal and conservative ideas in Poland."<sup>21</sup>

The second of these magazines, *Arka*, was published in Cracow until 1995. Since the beginning of 1990, its editors have been publishing another magazine called *Arcana*. These two magazines are somewhere between classical and national conservatism. In relation to the publications, there also were two noteworthy persons - Henryk Krzeczkowski and Mirosław Dzielski. Krzeczkowski can be called one of the intellectual fathers of the RMP and *Res Publica*, while Dzielski, a Christian liberal from Cracow, was the founder of the Cracow Industrial Society (KTP) and one of the leaders of the political club "Dziekania."

It is important to say a few words here about one of the ideas created by conservative circles in last decades of the PRL - the idea of the fight for the state, not against the state.<sup>22</sup> The PRL was described as an imperfect, but Polish state, with the difference between the state and the communist party (PZPR) underscored. Hence, from this point of view, the state ought to be saved while the communist party, as the greatest enemy of the state, ought to be destroyed. This view took into account that even a compromise with the communists would be a possible method

<sup>20</sup> Ludwikowski (1991: 287).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 288.

<sup>22</sup> See Mazewski (1997), Turek (1997).

of saving the structure of the state. The development of this idea had met its demise in rightist circles before the end of the PRL, although some people like Bronisław Lagowski still defend it.<sup>23</sup> This idea was in contrary to the idea popular with the left-wing opposition - the idea of fighting against the state or building an alternative, underground state and society. This is an idea typical of Polish conservatism, which is derived from two stipulations: first, that it is much easier to destroy than to build and second, that the state is an unremovable part of a larger social mechanism which guarantees social order.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the right side of the Polish underground political scene was weak. There were few radical rightist parties, such as the Confederation for Independent Poland (KPN), but none of them was comparable in strength to the leftist Committee for Defending of Workers (KOR).

Then, when "Solidarnosc" was established, its ideology failed to provide a place for a conservative set of values. Since "Solidarnosc" was a Catholic movement, its leaders emphasized their connections with the church. During those years when the Catholic Church and the family were often described as the most independent parts of society, some other conservative values were visible only on the margins of the movement. But room for political conservatism was made.

Conservatism was not an important mode of thought in Poland after World War II.<sup>24</sup> It only occasionally shaped the politics of opposition, although the prevalent style of thought in the anti-communist movement was leftist ideology.<sup>25</sup> Even when the above-mentioned idea of "fighting for the state" was used by the opposition (especially as one of the justifications of the "Round Table Agreements"), the opposition was represented by the members and friends of KOR.<sup>26</sup>

### *3.1 Conservatism in the Third Republic of Poland<sup>27</sup>*

In 1989, before the first parliamentary election in the Third Republic of Poland, or rather the last in the PRL, a movement called the Citizens' Committee was established and formed the basis for the electoral campaign. Both conservative/rightist

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<sup>23</sup> See Lagowski (1994), Lagowski (1997a), Lagowski (1997b).

<sup>24</sup> This was in contradiction to the mid-war period when conservative thought was influential.

<sup>25</sup> The Church can be treated as a social movement connected with ideas of the right, but for me, it is not a fruitful method of analysis.

<sup>26</sup> Actually, it is the strongest intellectual base of opposition.

<sup>27</sup> For the political history of the Third Republic of Poland, see Dudek (1997), Bankowicz (1996).

politicians, such as as Kazimierz Michal Ujazdowski and Wieslaw Chrzanowski, and socialist/leftist politicians, such as Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik, were committed to this movement and campaign. This decision was the consequence of the presupposition that the opposition as a whole was the only real competitor of the communist party (or representatives of the *ancien regime*). The main impact of this was the weakness of the movement itself, built only on an aversion to the communist regime in Poland. In the short term, it was the best possible decision, but its great failure came in trying to suppress the different streams of political views inside the Citizens' Committee. For this reason the deconstruction of the Citizens' Committee began soon after the party won the elections on June 4, 1989. In the spring of 1990, Jaroslaw Kaczynski established the Agreement "Centrum" (PC) as the party of the moderate right. Then in the summer of the same year, the Citizen's Movement-Democratic Action (ROAD), the party of the moderate left, came into existence. The distinction between these two parties was not so clear due to personal connections, one of the most significant factors during the construction of the political party structure of the former opposition. During the next few years, mainstream Polish conservatism was connected with ROAD, with many conservatives assembled around the Forum for the Democratic Right (FPD) and after the emergence of the Democratic Union (UD), which was renamed the Fraction for the Democratic Right. Many of the leaders of the RMP and the KTP (whose founder, Mirosław Dzielski died in 1989) became members of the FPD and, consequently, members of ROAD as well. Few conservative circles were connected with the PC, the ZChN and the Liberal-Democratic Congress (KLD).

The total destruction of the political camp rooted in "Solidarnosc" finally took place during the presidential election campaign in 1990. This campaign was dominated by the confrontation of the two leaders of "Solidarnosc," Lech Walesa, the legendary president of the trade union, and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a Christian-democratic activist, former editor-in-chief of the weekly paper *Solidarnosc* and the country's first non-communist prime minister. Mazowiecki lost after coming in third behind Walesa, the "black horse" who won the election, and Stan Tyminshk, a populist from Canada who place second.

During the next few years conservative politicians slowly abandoned the UD. Aleksander Hall and others from the RMP left the UD in 1992 and established the Conservative Party; in 1997, Jan Maria Rokita left the Union of Freedom (Unia Wolności) became the new name of the UD after a unity congress with the KLD in 1996). In 1994 this party split into the Conservative Party and the Conservative Coalition after a conflict arose between its leaders Hall and Ujazdowski. Now the

UW's conservative viewpoints are represented by the Christian Democrats, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Hanna Suchocka as well as by a conservative liberal from Cracow, Tadeusz Syryjczyk.

Between 1991 and 1993 the right side of the Polish political scene was strong, but after 1993 it became very weak and split. Although it is difficult to pinpoint a specific reason for this split, in general it was either a consequence of the 1993 electoral defeat or of the conflicts and weaknesses of the right. The defeat was an impulse for constructing a coalition of smaller rightist parties. Prior to 1996, there were a few unsuccessful attempts to form a coalition, but small conservative parties were active in at least two of them: the Conservative Party in The Eleventh of October Agreement and the Conservative Coalition in the Alliance for Poland. On the political scene, the last important representative of the Polish right was the president, Lech Walesa, but he was in permanent conflict with most of the leaders of split right.

The defeat of Walesa was one of the important impulses for the emergence of the first strong rightist coalition after 1993, but, ironically, it was established more on the basis of the "Solidarnosc" trade union. This new coalition, the Electoral Action "Solidarnosc" (AWS) emerged in 1996 and was founded on three political pillars: the liberal conservatives assembled around the Conservative Peasant Party (SKL), the Catholic conservatives assembled around the ZChN, the trade union, and sometimes the Christian Democrats, assembled around the Ruch Społeczny AWS (Social Movement AWS). The SKL was founded on the basis of the Conservative Party, the Christian Peasant Party (SChL) and a group of politicians (Rokita and his friends) who left the UW. Then, some others, such as Wiesław Walendziak and K.M. Ujazdowski and his Conservative Coalition, joined the SKL.

Before the last parliamentary election, the direct influence of conservatives on state policy was weak. Some conservatives, such as Aleksander Hall and Jerzy Eysmont, were ministers in the first governments of the Third Republic of Poland (i.e., the governments of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, Jan Olszewski and Hanna Suchocka); and conservative parties were in governmental coalitions. Now, the AWS is a stronger pillar of the government coalition since some conservative ministers are in the government. The most important one was Wiesław Walendziak, a chief of the prime minister's chancellery, although he was dismissed at the end of February, 1999.

The effects of the conservative policy were hardly visible before the last parliamentary election in 1997. Since the election, the most important challenge of the conservatives has centered on the preparation and implementation of four state

reforms, namely health-care reform, administrative reform, social-insurance reform and retirement-system reform.

The main ideas of conservative ideology appear in the programs of the political parties, but they have had hardly any effect on the political reality of the Third Republic of Poland. In turn, in some spheres conservatives themselves have a few propositions of their own, especially concerning their economic program, which is the focus of the next section.

### *3.2 Case Study: Economy in the Political Program of the Conservatives<sup>28</sup>*

Economic affairs seem to be a very important part of contemporary politics. Voters are inclined to support the political programs of different parties only because they are interested in seeing the victory of those parties which will offer economic programs to benefit them financially. Hence, this sphere of culture or metapolitics<sup>29</sup> may be treated as less important since a candidate has to win a democratic election in order for his ideas to come to fruition. My stipulation is that conservatives do not dispose a good economic program, and as a consequence, they become similar to liberals, or else they become ineffective. This is the simple explanation of my decision to analyze economic programs.

### *3.3 Capitalism*

At the beginning of the 1990s, conservatives were fascinated by Anglo-American capitalism, the type of economy where the role of trade unions is minimized, where the state does not interfere in the economy and where the labor market is a very unstable but effective one in an economic sense. The conservative views of the economy and of capitalism were being transformed into a model which is sometimes called "alpine," in that they were Christian democratic or even social democratic in nature. This became visible after 1993 during the political crisis of the Polish right. This vision flourished under the influence of "Solidarnosc," which became the most powerful movement on the right side of the political scene. From Solidarnosc's point of view, the market is an effective mechanism for the allocation of goods, although it does not always work properly. In my opinion, this transfor-

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<sup>28</sup> The sources used in this chapter are the programs of various political parties: SKL, Koalicja Republikanska, FPD, Partia Konserwatywna, Koalicja Konserwatywna, Ruch Stu, Republikanie. Other sources are indicated in the footnotes.

<sup>29</sup> See Gasper (1998).

mation is not a transformation from one model of conservatism to another; rather it is possible inside only one style of thought.

This transformation may be interpreted as a neoliberal or Anglo-American economic model of capitalism which has not solved the main problems of the transformation, namely, poverty, unemployment and the rise of an underclass. Another unresolved problem is that although the informal connections between politics and the economy are easy to build, the free market is not immune to corruption. This assumption may be an impulse for conservative politicians to change their economic views.<sup>30</sup> There is also a more pragmatic interpretation of the change in that it can be joined with the political successes of the SLD. The victory of the SLD in 1993 was proof that people do not want a free-market system without a welfare state. Furthermore, since conservatives were connected with the AWS,<sup>31</sup> it was and still is almost impossible to defend the neoliberal economic program in this situation.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.4 *Private Property*

At the beginning of the 1980s conservatives promoted privatization as one of the most important issues of the economic policy of the state. It was presented as the way of carrying out changes in the public state-owned firms. The "second best" way was commercialization (i.e., imposing market rules in the public sector), but it quickly became ineffective.

Privatization, especially the Program of General Privatization (PPP) was treated by conservatives as programs to change the society from one of consumers and clients of the state to one of owners. But the PPP only partially fulfilled conservative hopes. A large part of the population participated in this program, but people quickly sold the bonds (certificates of participation) they had received from the state, and bought consumer goods instead. Furthermore, the PPP was the part of the great process of privatization in which one social group, namely the *nomenklatura* of the *ancien regime*, continued to benefit. And, subsequently, access to privatization for persons and social groups, which were not connected to the *nomenklatura*, was actually hindered. This has been strongly reflected in the Polish political scene since the source of power of the post-PRL parties has been the enfranchised

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<sup>30</sup> See Gawin (1998).

<sup>31</sup> The strongest force in this coalition is the trade union "Solidarnosc."

<sup>32</sup> The exception to this rule is Czeslaw Bielecki, the leader of the small liberal-conservative Ruch Stu party; Ruch Stu is a member of AWS.

*nomenklatura*. Based on this point of view, the PPP is treated as only a symbolic action.

For conservatives one of the important issues of privatization was the creation of a private sector to dominate the economy. Unfortunately, some of the new entrepreneurs and investors were (or still are) strongly connected with the old *nomenklatura*. In general, the connection between business and politics is not transparent in Poland; furthermore, it is also criticized as the source of corruption.

Conservatives have said that reprivatization is an inevitable part of privatization since it is believed that it would reinstate the continuity of the state law which was broken during the period of the PRL. It is also a moral action which can absolve some of the injustices the PRL committed. The next benefit of reprivatization lies in the possibility of breaking up the class of emerging and false elites (those who are bound by friendship and dependency, who used to act in the centrally planned economy and who remain close to the elites of the former USSR). The new elites, who emerged during the process of reprivatization (and the installation of other mechanisms of the free market) when property was returned to its former rightful owners during the mid-war period, will continue to be conservative, patriotic and Western-oriented in their views. But these assumptions are somewhat problematic and naïve since a legal act concerning reprivatization still has not been proclaimed as of the end of April, 1999.

### *3.5 Small and Medium-Sized Firms*

Conservatives stress the importance of small and medium-sized firms in the free-market economy. In Poland it is one of the focal points of the conservative political agenda. It is easy to explain: privatization and reprivatization are not as effective as they could be, hence other methods for the promotion of the emerging middle class are needed. From this point of view, an interesting social group is the group of owners and managers of small and medium-sized firms. This group is sometimes treated by conservatives as their "natural" political base. This social group can also be a source of support for the conservatives during the continuation of the transformation of the state and the economy. Small firms can help to solve the problems of unemployment in towns and overpopulation in the country. They also may be a good foundation in the development of a modern service sector which is extremely important in post-industrial economies.

Failures in the process of privatization and the unstable fiscal policy of the state restrict the development of small firms. The government's policy is too egalitarian and does not promote men of initiative. In addition, the basic infrastructure is not

well developed. Last but not least, the banking sector is not interested in financing small and medium-sized firms since they are still too risky and inefficient. The existence of small firms, therefore, is rather short-term. A long-term existence seems impossible at times due to the deficiencies of having neither well-prepared laws nor a solid institutional background.

### *3.6 The Agricultural Sector*

The process of rebuilding Poland's agricultural sector will be a long-term one. At present, it is impossible to change it to make it similar to the agricultural sectors in Western Europe without overcoming the problems of overpopulation and poverty in the country. In addition, the process of modernization may occur at a slower pace under the influences of the PSL and the protests of small farmers. But without modernization, the agricultural sector will be damaged after Poland enters the European Union.

The most significant aspects of the agricultural policy proposed by conservatives are the reduction of the civilization gap between large towns and the countryside, the creation of foundations for the further development of schools and medical facilities in the agricultural regions, the privatization and reprivatization of industry connected to the agricultural sector, the creation of an effective agricultural market and the beginning of true cooperation (in the conservative sense as the effect of social peace) between producers (farmers) and consumers. The structure of ownership has to change, but family farms will continue to be the most important part of the agricultural sector. The average sizes of individual farms must be increased to provide a viable livelihood for farmers, but this seems unlikely since some small farmers would have to give up their lands and find other jobs.

### *3.7 State Intervention*

Polish conservatives have accepted state intervention in the economy, especially after the change to a capitalist system. In contemporary Poland there are special circumstances or special conditions in which the state can interfere in the economy. The state is treated as the only power which is able to complete and solidify the process of transformation.

The state should not intervene in the area of property rights, but rather defend them. There are a few economic spheres in which the activity of the state is demanded. The first is the agricultural sector. The conservative propositions concerning this sector have been described above. The second is heavy industry. State assistance during the transformation and reduction of this sector can counteract

structural unemployment. The third is the development of the infrastructure, specifically with improving roads and the telecommunications system. The fourth is protecting the country's economy from across-the-border "dumping." The fifth is the restructuring of state agendas. And the final one is the development of the housing sector. Indeed, the level of the state's intervention in the Polish economy can be summarized as follows: "As much market as it is possible, as much state as it is needed."

It is also taken for granted that this level of state intervention ought not be unlimited since responsibility is one of the most important motives of human action. If the state took over this role, the consequences would not be consistent with conservative hopes. Instead of good democracy then, we could build a permissive and egalitarian social-liberal state.

### *3.8 Other Problems*

The conservatives have affirmed the main parts of the stabilization program (concerning monetary policy, the balancing of the budget and export and import levels) set forth by Leszek Balcerowicz.<sup>33</sup> Only the state fiscal policy is sometimes criticized for its instability. Consequently, the situation of investors, and especially small investors, is more uncertain and undermines the development of Polish firms and increases the costs of the transformation.

It is also emphasized that the state ought to conduct a pro-family economic policy, in that political programs providing tax-cuts for families and other forms of state assistance should be put forth. Unfortunately, it is not a clear-cut notion, and the suggested instruments of this type of policy are often ineffective or impossible to use.

Finally, somewhere between the economy and politics there are problems in the four major areas of reform made in Poland in 1999 (i.e., health-care reform, administrative reform, reform of social insurance system and retirement-system reform). Although Polish conservatives were active in the design and implementation of these reforms, their work in these areas does not distinguish them from liberals.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> There are some critics, but they are rather uninfluential and unimportant.

<sup>34</sup> The interpretation is different in that conservatives indicated the idea of the common good and the principle of subsidiarity as the intellectual pillars of these reforms.

#### *4. Final Assumptions: Conservatism and Liberalism in Poland*

There is political consent concerning the model of transformation from a communist state to a democratic one. It can be interpreted as neoliberal<sup>35</sup> although the state is often treated as the engine of change. Thus, both liberals and conservatives forgot about the idea of "spontaneous order" that was the consequence of consciousness during the inevitable revolutionary transformation.

As I have shown, the liberal and conservative conceptions of the economy were not and are not very different. In the situation of post-1989 Poland in particular, conservatives faced a paradox - namely, they had to accept radical changes. Of course, they still can defend the position of the roles of the family and Catholic Church in Poland, which were not undermined during period of the PRL. They also sometimes try to build a link between the past (in particular during the Second Republic of Poland and the Third Republic of Poland) with concepts of reprivatization. They also attempt to build or create communities and social peace, for instance, with programs of reform and conceptions of restructuring the agricultural sector; but, actually, their propositions concerning economy are often secondary to liberal and social democratic programs. Polish conservatives try to locate themselves between a minimalistic state and a welfare state, but nevertheless, treat the free market as the highest value in the economy. And now, after the economic catastrophe of real socialism, it is impossible to find another convincing proposition. It is also impossible to return to the feudal model of economy. Hence, Polish conservatives must accept the free market.

Conservatives are not a very influential faction in mass democracies. Their role in modern democracies is rather to moderate the process of change and act toward balancing market progress and the needs of welfare. They ought to defend what is worthy of defense (in the spheres of culture and ethics). Therefore, they can fulfill an important role in the sphere of culture, which is egalitarian in its roots.

But on the other hand, conservatives do not offer any special economic programs; their programs are secondary. Their propositions concerning state affairs are similarly secondary in that conservatives moderate liberal conceptions of the state and the economy, although this moderation cannot be treated as a real opposition against liberalism.<sup>36</sup> The political power of conservatives is not very impressive; it seems as though they can only be partners in party coalitions, for example, with liberals or Christian Democrats.

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<sup>35</sup> There is some doubt that this model is not very stable. See Wojtyna (1994).

<sup>36</sup> It is signalized also in conservative papers. See Mich (1997), Turek (1997), Merta (1998).

The next conservative problem is the situation which I call "the convergence of ideologies." Perhaps Daniel Bell's and Raymond Aron's assumptions that we are the witnesses of the end of ideologies will not come true, although in political practice it is hard to find differences between social democrats, liberals, conservatives and the rest. Economic problems dominate politics. Everybody wants to balance the budget, minimize inflation and unemployment, privatize the economy and become a member of the European Union. So, there is very little place for political debates, and, furthermore, citizens are not interested in these debates. Politics now is only a technical problem; hence, instead of politicians we have technocrats. They call themselves liberals, conservatives or social democrats, although these labels are meaningless since they all are just technocratic liberals. I suppose that it is possible to say that we all are, more or less, liberal. And sometimes our liberalism ought to be rooted in pre-liberal values. From this point of view, the statement of Maciej Zieba and Krzysztof Dorosz that "if one wants to be liberal, one also has to be conservative" rings true.<sup>37</sup> The conservative vision of policy-making was always significantly different from the technocratic model. Conservatives never have accepted efficiency as the central political virtue, as I tried to show in defining conservatism. Instead, they concentrate on the role of national interests, on taking care of the institutions of civil society and even on developing the welfare state. Conservative politicians also try to hold themselves to certain models of behavior by promoting family and citizens' virtues in everyday life. In opposition, the virtue of the liberal style of policy is efficiency; the main role of liberal politicians consists of being a good manager (i.e., using in the best possible way the available political and economic resources). This means that liberals ought to look for the most efficient methods of allocating these resources despite their search for the best model of social order. In addition, liberals fail to take into account tradition as an important value.

The differences concerning the role of the state in liberal and conservative thinking also is worthy of notice. As I already have noted, from the conservative standpoint the state is a very important structure. Contemporary conservatives accept the needs of the world economy, but on the other hand, they emphasize the role of the state and national interests. The nature of these interests is not only economic, but also political.

My final supposition is that in the economic sphere, conservatism cannot be treated as a real opponent of liberalism. The great mistake of conservative politi-

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<sup>37</sup> Dorosz (1991).

cians is an acceptance of the role of market mechanisms in spheres other than economic ones. For instance, market mechanisms can damage the sphere of culture since they often promote the radical development of mass culture (which ought to be taken as a sphere separate from high culture) as we can currently witness. This has been signalized in conservative programs, although conservatives have not developed any cure per se. But from the author's point of view,<sup>38</sup> the possible sphere of competition is the sphere of culture or pure policy. In these spheres the opposition is clear, but it is not the topic of my considerations.

*All translations from Polish were made by the author*

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<sup>38</sup> And not only the author. See, Merta (1998), Legutko (1995).

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