

The Karol Adamiecki University of Economics
in Katowice

Volume 2

2005

Journal of

**Economics &
Management**

Anna Adamus-Matuszyńska

**SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN
A TRANSFORMING SOCIETY.
A CASE OF POLAND AND
THE POLISH SOCIETY**

I. Introduction

Where are the roots of social conflicts? In this article I suggest that a partial explanation revolves around the role of history, as it influences the creation of collective consciousness and social identity and pushes social action to assume political import. This framework highlights the importance of living memory in driving conflicts and the impact of history on social conflicts in a transforming society.

The events in Central Eastern Europe in the year 1989 and after, when political freedoms and a pluralistic political system were re-established revealed latent problems which needed to be resolved.

I begin the paper with a series of assumptions. First, when thinking about others, individuals employ opinions and attitudes pre-fixed in the mind. Second, by referring to well-known beliefs and convictions, people more easily place both themselves and others in a societal context. These ideas are not new. Numerous studies examine the relationship between collective consciousness, individual awareness, and individual behaviour (Ossowski, 1957; Słomczyński, 1999). They rigorously apply social-scientific theory and methodology in an attempt to expand our understanding of the social events. In the paper I apply these assumptions to an investigation of the roles of the Eastern Europeans communist past as well as current changes, as they influence the interplay between collective consciousness, social identity and socio-political action resulting in conflict situations.

II. Some methodological questions

Considering a long debate on the theory of social conflict since the time of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Georg Simmel I will follow the thought of Kenneth F. Boulding, who stresses that conflict between nations, industrial groupings or others are not only the conflicts between formal representatives, they are conflicts between people who think, feel, and have a feeling of group identification (Boulding, 1962). This is why the concept of identity must be considered when thinking about conflicts.

The main thesis of the paper is the assumption that a long-term conflict situation is one of the major costs of the post socialist transformation, and those who deal with that process must be aware of it. The second thesis says that

a conflict is a natural element of social realm. Social conflict emerges in every social system because of the necessity to control resources such as goods, power, facilities, industrial production and people. All of these are closely linked to the individual and social needs. Only through revealing the roots of conflicts we are likely to find worthwhile solutions to them. Every conflict is affected by the existence of the social bonds such as ethnic, religious, cultural, kinship, economic or political. They influence both the dynamics of conflict and ways of its resolution.

Social identity forms the core of inter-personal interaction, as behaviour between individuals either within one group or representing two or more groups, in large part is determined by how individuals evaluate the person or persons with whom they come into contact. Association between individuals and even subsequent interaction may in large part depend upon social identity, where each person tends to assess and behave towards others, according to the significant values of the group of which he or she is perceived to be a member. Social identity theory suggests that inter-group relations determine all interpersonal behaviours. A person behaves as a representative of a group towards the person from the out-group or towards the out-group as a whole. In this manner, social identity provides members of a given group with a basis for differentiation, categorisation and comparison. According to one's identity, an individual becomes and feels like a group member, to some extent sharing its values, customs, stereotypes and prejudices and attitudes towards other groups, social events and facts.¹

Social identity as Tajfel (1981, 256) writes can be described by the following features:

- a. the group membership (role of values)
- b. the individual's satisfaction (role of needs)
- c. the personal integrity (role of personality, emotions)
- d. the place of an individual in a community (social roles).

Social identity becomes an objective reality when group comparison occurs. "*The characteristics of one's group as a whole (such as its status, its richness or poverty, its skin colour or its ability to reach its aims) achieve most of their significance in relation to perceived differences from other groups and the value connotation of these differences*" (Tajfel, 1981, 258). A person belongs to a given group when he/she shares norms, emotions and values significant to him/her and at the same time significant to the group as a whole. A person who suddenly has found out that values he/she used to share are no longer present in a group activity feels excluded from a group and may find her/his situation conflictive with the group as well as with her/his own acceptable self-image.

¹ Social identity theory falls short of providing a complete analysis of inter-group relations; it aids solely in helping to explain the links between collective consciousness and social behaviour.

“When, for whatever reasons, this consent (means stable) begins to break down, an interaction between three forms of legitimacy must be taken into account: ‘the legitimacy of the inter-group relationship as it is perceived by the disaffected group; the legitimacy of this relationship as it is perceived by the other group involved; and an “objective” definition (i.e. a set of rules and regulations) of legitimacy, whenever such thing is possible”. (Tajfel, 1981, 320) According to the Tajfel’s explanation one conclusion is bringing to light when analysing the post-socialist society. What is very important an unstable social system is more likely to be perceived more illegitimate than a stable one. As a socialist state, which gave certain stability to the society in terms of egalitarian values, was perceived as stable (although one must remember that in terms of human rights it was illegitimate). That was achieved by the special policy, as for example ethnic issues were suppressed by the socialist regime and the problem seemed not to be crucial for the Polish society. Since 1989 a state has become unstable due to systemic changes and – among other issues – minority-majority relations have to be defined in terms of a new political and social realm. In the case of ethnic minority and majority relations we have to consider some evidence, which in fact shows that some of the social psychology definitions cannot be accepted in the case of post socialist countries as Poland used to be. As Tajfel suggested the illegitimate but stable state may lead the disadvantaged group to reject the status quo and *“there is less convincing evidence that the same would happen in a system perceived as legitimate but unstable”* (Tajfel, 1981, 321). Suppressed social groups such as the intelligencia in 1956 in Hungary and in 1968 in Prague, or the workers in Poland in 1970 and 1980 attempted to reject a communist status quo, but it had never happened in terms of ethnic minority groups. However, in every communist country such groups have existed since the end of the II World War. Concluding one may have noticed that ethnic conflict did not existed in the collective consciousness however the problem was latent.

A conflict may appear when a society is changing due to reforms. This is a typical situation in which social changes are accompanied by social mobility. A social group is able to protect its identity when it still manages to distinguish itself from other groups. In a condition when a process of new group creation has started an old group and its members will search for support by undertaking relevant social action. It may lead directly to conflict situation because a new social grouping tries to establish new values which suit to the current situation when the old groups do not want to loose their social position and try to defend their values. In the post-socialist society there are new social divisions and social bonds. Traditional social groups such as heavy industry workers and farmers try

to place themselves in a new social, economic and political reality and protect at the same time what they managed to gain during the socialist times.

Values play a crucial role in constructing an individual and group identity. In the time of modernisation one may ask the question: What is the role of values at present? In communist times they used to be crucial for people living under totalitarian regime control. People gathered around them as for example, in Poland where people practised their catholic religion. These catholic values were opposed to communist values. They, in fact, helped people to live on and find a basis for their sense of living and psychological and social stability.

At present one may notice the new challenge for both a social and individual's identity, as Foucault says: "...the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he follows, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve his moral goal." (Foucault, 1986, 28). What political and social changes brought to a post communist society is relativism that may be difficult to be properly understood by people in the post socialist countries and in that way originates conflicts.

In explaining past events it should be emphasised that relationships between peoples living in East-Central Europe have had a long story. History plays a crucial role in the process of creating the collective consciousness of a particular social group. It merely helps to build and confirm national identity; it is also a background for political activities. Every political movement, when building its ideology, looks for social support. In this process it deals with the prejudices, stereotypes, values, judgements and attitudes which are elements of a collective consciousness and which are the foundation for the differentiation between groups of people. Historical grievances and memories provide the basis for the national identity, which is a form of social identity. The national identity relates to the past events. It reminds us of the factors, which suggest that there is a link between current members of a social group and cultural, social, political, religious and national past experiences (Donohue, 1995). It serves as a link between the present members of a given group and the past experiences. At the same time the current political, economic and cultural events within the community shape social identity and indicate differences between a given group and other groups.

While events in the society are perceived by every individual, and thus are reducible to an inter-personal level, there likewise exists a perception within the cultural entity of the occurrence. This is not to say that some sort of being interprets an event for the group as a whole; rather, that which defines the group itself contributes to the over-arching ideology in which events can be interpreted. Individuals may or may not choose to view a particular event in the manner in which cultural identity – which is itself comprised of historical claims, griev-

ances, and aspirations – might. However, if a person or group is confronted by what is perceived as either an out-group threat, or exclusion from the in-group, an individual may well be more prone to interpret events in the manner dictated by one's in-group.

Taught history and immediate experience of a person constitute the two ways in which historical events may be accessed, augmented, and replaced by impression, perception, and recall. In the face of a significant internal or external confrontation, historical events accessed either by taught history or immediate experience – may serve as a confirmation of group identity. In societies which embark on transformation past events, both taught and experienced, influence the perception of the current situation. History stimulates the manner in which an individual and/or a social group recognises and evaluates current events and changes in a social realm.

III. Past and present for post socialist societies

In the time of socialist regime a social conflict was clearly shaped in a society. It was a two-party conflict between a society as a whole and a communist regime (socialist authority) (Adamski, 1996; Staniszkis, 1989)². In fact, people in those countries as well as in many democratic ones did not believe that the communist (or socialist) regime would have ever been abolished. One of the recent political complaints expressed by some historians is that such a possibility had not been predicted and even believed.

As John Rex points out social conflicts in communist states were not purely economic conflicts but they depended upon non-economic, political sanctions. The communist parties, which tried to join people with different interests, were inside a field of struggles for power and control of resources (Rex, 1981, 49). This is why the communist heritage left in Poland some characteristics influencing the contemporary society performance:

- social heritage such as social structure consisted of a large number of industrial workers, who constituted a particular social class (in terms of the Marx' theory); the social group called 'nomenklatura', what means those who kept

² There were many differences between states and societies in so-called socialist countries. No one can see all Eastern European countries in the same perspective. Every society had its own characteristic and way to democracy. In every country there was the various opposition against socialist institutions such as the censorship and the secret police. Poland and the Polish society was rather socialist than communist country due to the political institutions and authority.

high ranks within communist regime³; small number of university graduates and large number of low educated people; peasants and the unemployed who in fact were the hidden social group;

- ideological heritage: specially cultural values tied with heavy industry ethos; egalitarian values as well as an important role of a traditional society;
- political heritage with the tradition of significant role of workers due to Lenin's political ideas and their role in the process of economic development. For example in Poland the communist party gave privilege to the coal miners with special facilities in the region such as luxury shops, health resorts, access to rare goods, e.g. cars etc.; political values such as utter social equality; social policy which gave most people feeling of stable social security in terms of basic needs such as employment, health and housing.

The communist regime left its own characteristic impress. There have been many researches done which acknowledged that post-communist heritage plays still significant role both in the economic, political and social changes and in people attitudes towards the transformation at all. (Staniszki, 1991 Sztompka, 1996, Millard 1999).

IV. Types of the social conflicts in society in transition

Economic conflicts

When political changes began in 1989, a vast majority of people in East-Central European countries accepted the course towards democracy, free market and industrial privatisation. Nobody was able to predict what difficulties they might face on the path of political and economic reform. They expected and readily accepted a vision of a smooth transformation that would give rise to better possibilities for employment, self-development, and future overall progress.

Radical reforms of the national economy began during the closing days of 1989 and followed indispensable political change demonstrated in the form of appointment of the first non-communist governments. The „big bang” for business and society came at the beginning of 1990. Few people had expected such a radical change. It is fair to say, that the business people spent the first quarter of

³ As Staniszki stresses nomenclatura managed create merely political class but also economic class (Staniszki, 1991). Due to access to know-how as well as to managerial posts they managed to keep many of profitable jobs in a new era.

the year trying to understand the changes and attempting to calculate their costs (the only exception being the banks which earned huge profits thanks to inflation). The option chosen was structural change centring on deflationary policy.

One of the crucial elements of the Polish economic reforms is privatisation. As Williams and Balaz stress there have been three phases of privatisation:

1. So-called 'small privatisation' of small and medium businesses which were sold to domestic investors following the first political changes.
2. Privatisation of medium and large state-owned enterprises by selling them to both domestic and foreign investors.
3. Mass privatisation programmes with the aim to satisfy society's expectations. (Williams & Balaz, 1999).

The process of transformation and especially privatisation awoke many hopes but also many fears. What is more, the process is strongly bound up with the political changes, which influence people's attitudes towards the economic transformation. Along with the privatisation the restructuring came. State-owned enterprises were decentralised and were made accountable for taxes, dividends, and credits as well as for maintaining profitable and effective production. These changes exerted a great influence on workers who had to find their place in a new reality. A number of social benefits, characteristic of previously state-owned enterprises, were sharply reduced (e.g. easily available free medical services, cheap holidays for adults, free holidays for children, etc.); and unemployment became a real fact of life, which people began to fear. Moreover, the changes severely affected the standard of living of workers through the limited wage increases. Hence, there surfaced conflicts between employers and employees and strong trade unions, which started to organise many forms of protest.

It is very difficult to estimate the total number of conflicts and mass disputes which have taken place in the post socialist countries during the last 14 years which are due to economic reforms. There have been many forms of protest: banners on buildings, expressions of willingness to strike, demonstrations and two kinds of strikes: lightning and long-term. For example, in Poland in 1990 there were 250 strikes (source: Central Bureau of Statistics), in 1991 – 305, in 1992 – 6351, but approx. 80% of those in 1992 were at schools, the total in industry was only 674. The situation in 1993 was severe that out of 7364 strikes, 7055 were at schools and only 150 in industry. Analysing strikes in Poland since 1989, one may conclude that there are conflicts typical of a transformation era. There are three main factors influencing the conflict situation namely the social costs of economic transformation, transfer of property from public to private ownership, and the lack of people's approval for social reforms. For example in mid 1999 only 26 per cent of Poles supported the government which just introduced many important social reforms.

Primarily, the economic protests often assume political significance in a country where the whole economic system is undergoing transformation, since economic demands can go against the main thrust of government policy. Sometimes strikers explicitly demand the reversal of a given governmental decision. A great number of protests have centred on the state budget. Frequent protests in the educational and medical sectors began in 1991 in Poland, and have continued up to the present day. Strikers always demand better conditions at their workplace, e.g. in schools and hospitals higher salaries and measures to cushion the blow of reforms. The majority of disputes are fuelled primarily by discontent with the level of public funding allocated to these two sectors. The protests against the government and the parliament exemplify conflicts that have their roots in political and economic change. In fact, most strikes have been in reaction to the failure of government policy to ease the path to the free market economy.

The effect of the trade unions' activities on the restructuring of state enterprises is often destructive (the fight to maintain social welfare benefits and raise wages at any cost) especially in Poland. A government as well as a parliament relay on the trade unions voting in elections' campaign. However, conflicts broke out also because government involvement in restructuring was insufficient or incompetent. Social conflicts over privatisation – particularly in industry – should gradually disappear after the process of privatisation is completed. However, the restructuring of production in heavy industry has undoubtedly taken place amidst growing controversy and social conflicts; here, apart from the workers, entrepreneurs have an important role to play (Górka, 1995. p.187-188).

Unemployment in post-communist countries has created a new class of poor people. It has also led to large parts of society harbouring feelings of threatened social security. Unemployment as a real social fact causes, on the one hand, a fall in the income of the State and other institutions as well as in consumer spending, and on the other hand, it increases the state expenditure on social benefits. In Poland unemployment has resulted in growing social tension, unrest and pathological behaviour. *“The growth of unemployment, increasing poverty and deprivation, the emergence of visible and deepening inequalities between rich and poor, and a pervasive insecurity and uncertainty had a profoundly dislocating and demoralising impact on Polish society”* (Millard, 1999, 148)

One of the most important sources of conflict connected with the economic transformation in post socialist countries is what social psychologists called relative deprivation. As Gurr (1970) stresses it is a failure of expectations and as such it becomes an independent variable of social action. There are two dimensions of relative deprivation: intra-personal and interpersonal. Both are important when analysing the present conflicts in post socialist countries. The

first one relates to unfavourable comparisons between individual past status or expectations and the present status or expectations. The second one relates to comparisons with others having in the past or at present very similar status and social position. According to social psychology theory one may notice that relative deprivation may drive towards hostile behaviour and aggression.

Among the workers in Poland one may find those who are skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled. Taking into account a group of coal miners we must stress that in the present situation their condition is very severe. Those who are skilled have more opportunities to find a well paid job. Such a division within one social group as coal-miners who not long ago all had the same status and social position creates now unequal social conditions. Those with poor qualifications will feel relative deprivation comparing their present situation with the previous one. Those who have failed to be adapted to market economy feel a new situation as unfavourable compared with their former status (Zaborowski, 2000; Słomczyński, 1999). It is not only about conflict of interests, it is about values and social differentiation. In such a situation social identity may be an intervening causal mechanism in the situation of 'objective' changes. The group of coal miners who were clearly socially defined and consensually accepted as 'superior' in the socialist time in some important respect (by the socialist government, privileges, as well as by the ethos of workers existing in a collective consciousness), when their position is threatened by the social and economic changes they feel insecure and exploited. As Hoggart stressed (1957), a working class has its own working class culture which builds class norms and traditional *Gemeinschaft* in Tonnies' terminology (Tonnies, 1988). This working class solidarity has been threatened by the new norms of the local and regional community, free market economy, individualism and international perspective (EU membership and globalisation). Associations and secondary type bindings have exchanged strong bounds of the community. Lack of security is one of the most important causes of social conflict. This is the condition for creation of a new ideology, e.g. injustice of present situation and justice of former one. The working class in post-communist countries has to find a new role in society. They are also searching for any support to protect their old values. Such circumstances influence conflicts due to traditional values and norms protection.

One of the most crucial costs of transition is social polarization unknown in the previous period. Income differences, a deepening gap between the highest and lowest incomes, poverty and wage inequalities are major sources of social tension between various social groups. During the process of transition newly emerging classes in these countries should also be explained very carefully. Class structure is undergoing a dramatic transformation. It consists of new

classes resulting from the privatisation, such as managers of state-owned enterprises, owners of middle and small business, a slowly developing middle class and an underclass. These are entirely new social groupings in the class structure of transitional societies at present (Domański, 2004). Although it has been fifteen years since the transformations started, there still exists social tensions amongst them. One may point to the following roots of social conflict.

1. Tensions between the so-called *nomenklatura* (old communist bosses who managed to keep high position in enterprises) and the rest of the society. At the beginning of the process of transformation it was said (Staniszki, 1991) that due to know-how and access to the privatised companies in terms of funds many of them were sold to the old economic elite (*nomenklatura*). Such a situation was found mainly in Poland and Hungary.

2. Conflict between working class and government over restructuring industry and privatisation. In Poland the process of privatisation has taken different forms compared to other CEE countries. This is due to the role of the working class which, through the Solidarity movement and later Solidarity government, was able to institutionalise its power over that process. In fact, the working class is among others causes partly responsible for a standstill of this process. One can see two-dimensional conflict over privatisation reflected in governmental and working class views. This conflict has taken different forms due to the different governments which have taken power. The process was very slow during the post-communist party government in 1993-1997; at present it is a little quicker. The working class mainly coal miners and workers in the steel industry are terrified of job losses therefore still resist privatisation. In Poland the legal norms say that the staff and workers must agree to implement the process voting in favour of it. This is why every government in Poland since 1989 wants to gain trade unions support considering the result of the next election.

3. One of the most crucial causes of the social conflicts is people's attitudes and opinions. There have been many sociological surveys of people's subjective class identification. In all post-socialist countries the increasing wealth of a minority appears illegitimate (Peter, 1999, 125). Such attitudes cause dissatisfaction of people with their present living standard and influence many psychological difficulties. It should be stressed that they are syndromes of anomie and alienation. There is a crisis of values and a feeling of powerlessness. There are two sides to this issue. Firstly, such feelings also existed during the socialist period although they may now be deepening. Secondly, a state of anomie influences crimes and deviance in a society. This has become a real problem. The society does not feel secure and the number of crimes grows rapidly.

4. The last possible economic root of the conflict situation is the class structure. New economic divisions in the society, a slowly emerging middle class, as well as an underclass have an effect on internal and external tensions in the society. What is more, economic changes in post-communist countries have brought not only a new class structure and new division of wealth, they also brought the process of globalisation and its consequences what creates new challenges for the society and class structure.

In conclusion, it must be stressed that there are several reasons why the new free market economy being adopted in the post-socialist countries is creating a vast range of the conflict situations. The process of transition generates circumstances, which affect society in general and its attitudes towards the change. One may notice the following problematic conditions which are making more difficult both the process of democratisation and the process of economic transition. These are unemployment, large number of poorly skilled workers, regional employment imbalance, existence of pressure groups, and decline in real wages, incomes, economic diversity and increasing poverty. Despite many differences among the former socialist states, there are numerous commonalities, which allow us to stress the importance of analysing the roots of economic difficulties in these countries.

Ethnic and national identity

Political, economic and social changes are also important causes of the ethnic tensions. As Aklaev notices transitional periods encourage ethno-political dynamics due to three factors: perceptual, institutional and security-strategic (1999). The first reason for the emerging ethnic conflict in East-Central European countries is the rebirth of the ethnic identities, and perception of ethnic group uncertainty. In most of the former communist countries ethnic identity, as well as nationalism, was silent until 1989. Just after 1989 it became the most crucial factor influencing the social realm (Brunner, 1996). It has shown itself a variety of social action forms. In some of the post-communist countries Roma people started to present not only a worldly known culture but also their ethnic identity and claims for the human rights. The Roma started to organise themselves into different social, cultural and even political organisations revealing their values, norms and rights to live peacefully within a given community.

As with other newly-established regimes, the formation of the post-socialist Polish state placed minority issues on the back burner. The government did not introduce any special legislation to address the relationship between the Polish state and sub-state minority ethnic groups. To some extent, the needs of

the minorities continue to be ignored. However, there was a real turning point in the approach to national minorities in years 1989-1993. The government with Tadeusz Mazowiecki as the Prime Minister adopted the rule of cultural pluralism what allowed to develop existing mass media such as newspapers, magazines as well as radio and television programs. In that time any kind of control and censorship of minorities' media was completely reduced.

Numerous difficulties still exist in overcoming the difficulties in mutual minority and majority relations. For example in case of the Ukrainian minority in Poland, no consensus has been reached even on the exact size of the Ukrainian minority in Poland.⁴ Ukrainian social institutions operating in Poland are the only source of current data. According to these organizations, it is estimated that in the Przemysl Region there are between 10,000 and 20,000 Ukrainians – approximately 6% of the people living in this region. Other estimates place the number between 180,000 and 300,000 in the whole of Poland. Lack of the concrete information is at least in part due to the mass transfers and relocations, which have dispersed Ukrainian concentration throughout the country. While some Ukrainians still remain in their old territories in Małopolskie and Podkarpackie – they also live in Dolny and Górny Śląsk, Pomorskie and other places. Further, it remains extremely difficult to distinguish between people of Ukrainian origin, who feel Polish, and those of Ukrainian nationality who view it as their ethnic heritage.

The majority of Ukrainians living in Poland are Greek-Catholic – a term which has recently been replaced by the religious derogation Byzantine-Ukrainian. In 1991 the Greek-Catholic Diocese in Przemysl was recreated and at present in Przemysl wojewodztwo alone there are more than 100 pastoral offices. While some Ukrainians are Orthodox, the population sharing these beliefs is smaller than the Unites community. For example, in Przemysl there are only four parishes. Recently, a small number of Orthodox Ukrainians have changed their religion and decided to attend the Byzantine-Ukrainian Church.

Next to religion, Ukrainian social and cultural organizations play a key role in the process of confirming national identity. In 1993 there were more than twenty such associations existing in Poland: for instance, the Union of the Ukrainians in Poland, the Ukrainian National Homeland in Przemysl, the Bishop Grzegorz Lakota Scientific Society, the Lemkos Union, and the Union of Ukrainian Youth. There is also the Ukrainian Culture Foundation, which supports the social, educational, scientific, and cultural activities of the Union of Ukrainians. Most of these organizations have worked to improve Polish-

⁴ The last statistical calculation, made in 1954, claimed that approximately 162,000 Ukrainians lived in Poland, or 0.6% of the whole population. (Kwilecki, 1963, p. 98)

Ukrainian relations. In 1993 the Second Congress of the Union of Ukrainians noted that recent changes in Poland have stabilized the national minority policy. The Congress also stated that the 'mutuality rule' could govern neither the Polish nor the Ukrainian governments' treatment of minorities in their midst: Ukrainians in Poland could not be used as hostages in policies toward the problem of the Polish minority Ukraine.

Apart from these positive forms of co-operation there have been several less encouraging events which continue to influence relations between the two groups. Occurrences such as arson in the Orthodox Church in Grabarka Mountain, theft in the Orthodox Church in Jablonna, stormy discussions revolving around the dome of the Greek-Catholic Cathedral in Przemysl, and anti-Ukrainian graffiti on the walls in Premise demonstrate the need to evaluate and try to correct relations between the two ethnic communities. Media sources, particularly on the border areas, exacerbate the situation. The recent event took place in July 1998. There was the Congress of Poles (IV Zjazd i Pielgrzymka Kresowian) who used to live (before WWII) in old Polish territory at present being the Ukrainian part (e.g. Lviv and surroundings). It was supposed to be a meeting of those who wanted to recall their past and old times. In fact it was such event. Before the Congress there was a huge media discussion whether participants may have put flowers at the commemorative plaque in the church in Przemysl. The plaque gives honour to the memory of the Second World War. Apart from the eagle, the Polish symbol it also has the *tryzub* – the national emblem of the Ukraine and the swastika a sign of the Nazi Party both lying under the eagle. The commemorative plaque arose many controversies when it was open and it is still problematical. Many articles in magazines and newspapers, talks on TV and radio as well as reactions of some MPs and politicians recollected stereotypes and prejudices in place of revealing all disagreements. The past events – and stereotypes built on them – continue to fashion choices made by decision makers. Various associations and political parties, particularly in the border areas, try to recall the past and employ everyday events to manifest their extreme pro-Polish views or pro-Ukrainian perspectives. Thus, primarily social issues, like that mentioned above or others such as: the rebuilding of a monastery, taking up the local office by people of Ukrainian origin, are usually interpreted in terms of one of the two options: pro-Polish and against the Ukrainians living in Poland, or pro-Ukrainians living in Poland and against Polish identity. These seemingly a-political social events awaken feelings and activate stereotypes based on historical events. Recently, the strong political as well as the Polish society support for the Ukrainian democratic election in December 2004

might build a new platform for both Ukrainian – Polish mutual co-operation and the Ukrainian minority role in the Polish society.

Every post-socialist country, after more than 40 years of silence on the ethnic minority rights, since 1989 has had to learn how to deal with such an issue. One does it better, the other worse. Poland has to learn about the Jews and their history within the Polish society (e.g. the Jedwabne case), as well as understand how to accept the culture of those who are of German or Ukrainian (Lithuanian, Byelorussian) origin and their activities in social realm.

Political conflicts

Political conflicts have accompanied post-socialist societies since the beginning of the process of transformation. There are several reasons for this:

1. Disintegration of the united front against communism into separate groups and interests. Those groups, who struggled against the communist regime creating a common front in that battle, are now divided into different groupings with different interests. Such process has resulted into destabilisation of the political authority. In Poland after few years of anticommunist party's government the political power came back to the so-called post-communist parties.

2. Emergence of new groups unfamiliar with the political process or reject the political process in favour of corruption. Some former communist dissidents have had difficulties to deal with democratic governance. Because policy making and economy are closely tied, the newly emerging middle class and a group of businessmen try to influence political authorities using sometimes illegal ways what resulted in the bribery.

3. The role of nomenklatura. It is a social group who has the class image through its economic bounds which also influences the political stage due to its connections with the post-communist party (which at present is called social democrats party).

4. Repeated replacement of the political authorities. Political stage is like a pendulum, once right wing parties have power, next time – post-communists. Volatility is a typical characteristic of post socialist society. Political replacement has a very significant influence on the stabilisation of democracy, government and parliament during its period in office seeks support from future voters. It creates a never-ending political campaign between elections.

5. The democratic systems that have emerged in ECE countries reveal a political nostalgia for the old political regimes that were simpler, stable and discouraged people from analysing political issues. Today people are forced to think who and what kind of policy they prefer. They are taught about civil soci-

ety rules and regulations. From peaceful, but at the same time dependent, harmony members of the present society have to find their role in the stormy dimension of politics.

Philosophical conflicts

From the literature one may notice very similar dilemma existing in many post-socialist societies. As Tismaneanu says "... *the post-communist arena is one of the uncertainty, confusion and ongoing struggle between pro-western, pro-liberal and anti-democratic forces*" (1999, 232). The phrase 'philosophical conflict' is taken from Millard's book *Polish Politics and Society*, she observes that several problems have appeared since 1989, and they have much wider and much deeper significance within the Polish society.

One of the most important sources of conflict, which, is hidden deeply in the people's motives and behaviours, is the atmosphere of uncertainty (Millard, 1999). This is why there is a necessity to recognise the new values, new cultural and social norms and a new social perspective and how they are placed in a contemporary social life. Such an issue involves understanding of individual's mentality as well as social awareness and public opinion. One may see the following types of philosophical conflicts in the present post-communist society:

- a. Philosophical conflicts between pluralism and monism. (Millard, 1999, 126). Such a conflict emerged several times in Poland when the society was witnessing the parliamentary discussion on abortion, concordat and the death penalty. Discussions on such topics always engage people's needs and values. As Burton theory of conflicts says such sources generate deep-rooted conflicts, which need much time and scrutiny to be resolved within a society (Burton, 1990).
- b. In the case of Poland one must stress the role of the Church as an institution. "*Its ambivalent attitude to aspects of the democratic process, the difficulties with which it adapted to the new context of political pluralism, and its moral conservatism all raised problems of adaptation to modern society*" (Millard, 1999, 142). However, a dual set of values exists in social consciousness: socialist values (40 years of communism touched people in positive and negative ways) and Christianity. These do not go well with commercialisation, marketization and postmodernist ideas. Once the commitment to the capitalist democracy was made, it created moral and cultural dilemmas, which people have to resolve on their way to democracy.
- c. In all ECE countries workers are among the most committed to the egalitarian and collectivist values of the 'paternalistic state'. Transformation has

- brought new meanings to social justice, equality, and equal opportunities. Hungarians have the most positive attitude towards the old economic system; Slovaks are second in their positive orientation toward the past, while Czechs and Poles tend to be negative about the old command economy (Rose, 1999, 195). In case of Poland one must notice the difference between the attitudes towards the command economy and towards the socialist past in terms of social security. Poles have negative attitudes towards the command economy, which was very weak in the past, but they still long for some kind of social stability and clear rules and regulations typical of the socialist period. Adopting a Western style made people compare the past conditions and present circumstances as well as evaluate the differences. The dilemma between the socialist values and the new capitalism influences conflict situations on two levels: interpersonal and intrapersonal. An individual needs to find his/her place in the new society as well as build his/her judgement of new circumstances. It pushes people to make comparisons between past and present which creates a conflict situation in both individual and social dimensions.
- d. Another philosophical clash in post-communist countries is the conflict of interests between liberal democrats and conservative nationalists (Millard, 1999, 12). Such a conflict has lasted since the very beginning of transformation, especially in Poland. *“In every area of civil liberties there were conflicts over the exercise of rights and the appropriate limits to be established. Some were practical, others were philosophical: the Christian Right opposed the new Criminal Code’s lenient attitude to pornography, for example, on the grounds of its damaging social consequences. Many of the general civil rights provisions of the Constitution remained to be clarified by specific laws. Some areas of collective rights, for women or gay people, for example, remained very marginal, due to deep-seated cultural and religious attitudes.”* (Millard, 1999, 76) Democracy brought to the post-communist society pluralism and choice possibilities. What people used to fight for e.g. freedom to express opinion, free access to the sources of information have suddenly become predicaments. Variety of opinions, differentiation in style life, new patterns of behaviours is now openly expressed by some of social groups. It creates tensions between the people who have adapted to democracy and civil liberty and those who still try to protect conservative values and norms inherited from the previous times.
- e. Last but not least philosophical conflict appearing in a time of transformation is a dilemma for individual choice. The transformation-related changes are accompanied by an enormous price paid by the society. In fact, every individual has to make a choice between modernity and tradition. This is a di-

lemma as to whether to protect traditional life styles and internalised values or to accept the challenges of modernity. Such a situation carries benefits and costs. A person who has chosen modernity may succeed in adjusting the social and economic changes, but at the same time losing ties with tradition and the past. For those who decide to defend their cultural bonds, every single protected traditional value will be their success. However, avoiding the possibility to benefit from modernity will mean their loss.

The process of transformation leads to changes in the social system of values, which is essential for every society; it gives them a sense of stability but it is also resistant to new circumstances. According to John Burton ideas (1990b), simultaneously with the transition from command economy to free market economy and from totalitarian system to democracy, the process of conflict resolution should go in line. It will initially allow the revelation of the essential social values and needs and, only later, will help to put into practice programme of reforms to avoid tensions and obstacles.

Conclusions

In general, societies of post-socialist countries understand the necessity for the process of democratisation, marketisation and transformation. However, when discussing inevitable social costs of the process complications usually appear. There are several consequences, which should be expected during the implementation of the required changes:

1. structural shock in regions undergoing restructuring;
2. increase of the rate of unemployment;
3. appearance of a new „under class” in the society;
4. development of vertical and horizontal social mobility;
5. changes in cultural values and norms;
6. changes in personal and social needs;
7. changes in lifestyles;
8. the need to choose between modernity and tradition;
9. growth of social pathology;
10. long-term conflict situation in regions as well as in the country as a whole.

Transformation has brought to these societies freedom, human rights, and a free market economy and at the same time the possibility of economic development, commercialisation, globalisation and modernisation. The problem is

that many people in the region do not understand and many do not want to understand the values and norms, which underpin in the process of transformation. There is a gap between expectations and reality, between what was seen as a 'Western community' and what is perceived as the reality being implemented in their own societies.

People living in the society of transformation may face at least four dilemmas. First, the choice between nostalgia for the old times accompanied by the lack of self confidence vs. modern, open for challenges personality. Second dilemma is a typical for every period of changes. It is an alternative between tradition and modernisation. Third is connected with democracy which allows making a decision between different political preferences, in post-communist countries dilemma between conservatism and liberalism has the particular significance. Fourth strait has a sociological meaning – it is a choice between conflictual or consensual framework for a new model of social reality explanation

Social conflict is not openly revealed, it is deep in individual's identity and leaves the individual alone searching for a conflict resolution, which will help to accustom to a new social reality. The problem for an individual living in a post-socialist country is his individual's identity, which he/she tries to name: Who am I? Where am I going? *"The fact that we feel isolated from other and thus, from our own selves, says something about the type of social relations in which we live in the modern world, rather than saying about our essential nature as human individuals"* (Burkitt, 1999).

As illustrated in the above explanation, communist past events serve both to create and to support the continued maintenance and manifestation of the various social groups' identities. This process heightens both individual and community awareness of social identity, in which historical events are piled upon each other to define further the common character of each group.

As discussed in the theoretical exposition, political, ethnic, and social groupings demonstrate types of social communities. While such derivations may cross over, they nevertheless indicate inter-group boundaries. When they do overlap, such that a community is defined in terms of its political ideology, ethnic identity, religious beliefs, and economic position in society – or any combination thereof – divisions between in- and out-group members becomes even more incisively ingrained. Existence of inter- group divisions, values differentiation and the necessity to fulfil individual and social needs have become the roots of social conflicts.

The examples I have chosen for this paper illustrate that a dynamic approach must be adopted in any approach to analyzing and resolving social conflicts existing in the post-socialist society. Neither stable social identity nor con-

stant collective consciousness exists. In the face of the developing possibility of cooperation and a new dimension of inter-group and inter-personal contacts typical for modern times, it is critical for social scientists to understand the dynamics of such relationships. It is for this reason that I have conducted this inquiry into the interplay between history, social identity, collective consciousness, and the galvanization of social action to political extremes. In this sequence, social awareness and social identity are understood as intermediary phenomena in the correlation between history and social conflicts.

Bibliography

- Adamski, W. Ed. (1996). *Polacy '81. Postrzeżenie kryzysu i konfliktu* (Poles '81. Perception of crisis and conflicts). IFiS PAN Publishers: Warsaw.
- Aklaev, A. R. (1999), *Democratisation and Ethnic Peace. Patterns of ethno-political crisis management in post-Soviet settings*. ASHGATE: Aldershot.
- Boulding, K. E. (1962), *Conflict and Defence. A general Theory*. Harper & Row, Publishers: New York.
- Brunner, G.: *Nationality Problems and Minority Conflicts in Eastern Europe*. Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers: Gutersloch 1996.
- Burkitt, I. *Social Selves. Theories of the Social Formation of Personality*. SAGE Publication: London 1991.
- Burton, J. (1990a). *Conflict: Resolution and Provention*. St. Martin's Press, Inc.: New York.
- Burton, J. ed. (1990b). *Conflict: Practices in Management, Settlement and Resolution*. St. Martin's Press, Inc.: New York.
- Dąbrowski, M. *Privatisation Routes, Methods, Goals*. In: J. Mujzel (ed.) *Privatisation and Transformation in Eastern Europe: A Trade Union Perspective*. Friedrich Ebert Foundation Poland. Warsaw 1993.
- Donohue, L.; A. Adamus-Matuszyńska (1995) *History Revealed: Social Consciousness, Ethnic Identity and Socio-Political Action in Poland and Northern Ireland*. Paper presented during the Ethnic Studies Network Conference on „Ethnic Conflicts: Internal and International Dimensions” Denmark, June 1995.
- Drąg, Z. Indraszkiewicz, J. *Employee Consciousness and Reforms of Government System in Poland*. Friedrich Ebert Foundation Poland, Economic and Social Policy Series No. 20. Warsaw 1992.

- Górka, K. Conflict of interest over privatisation and the Restructuring of the Polish Economy. In: J. Hausner, O. K. Pedersen, K. Ronit (eds.). *Evolution of Interest Representation and Development of the Labour Market in Post-Socialistic Countries*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Kraków 1995.
- Gurr, T. R., Why men rebel. Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1970.
- Held, D. (1995), *Democracy and the Global Order: from the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hoggart, R. (1957), *The Uses of Literacy*. Penguin Books Ltd: Harmondsworth.
- Kloc, K. *Strajki i spory zbiorowe w latach 1990-1994*. (Strikes and Disputes in Poland in the years 1990-1994). Warsaw 1995 (manuscript).
- Kudłacz, T. Conflicts of Interests Arising in Connection with Regional-Scale Structural Transformations. In: J. Hausner, O. K. Pedersen, K. Ronit (Eds.). *Evolution of Interest Representation and Development of the Labour Market in Post-Socialistic Countries*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Kraków 1995.
- Millard, F. (1999) *Polish Politics and Society*. Rutledge: London and New York.
- Olko-Bagieńska, T., Ruskowski, P. *Privatisation Policy in Eastern Europe: A Union Perspective*. In: J. Mujżel (ed.) *Privatisation and Transformation in Eastern Europe: A Trade Union Perspective*. Friedrich Ebert Foundation Poland. Warsaw 1993.
- Ossowski, St. (1957). *Struktura klasowa w społecznej świadomości*. (Class Structure in the Social Consciousness). Polish Scientific Publishers: Łódź.
- Rex, J. (1981), *Social Conflict. A conceptual and theoretical analysis*. Longman: London and New York.
- Rose, R. (1999) The Long and the Short of Transformation in Central Europe. In: *A Society Transformed. Hungary in Time-Space Perspective*. R. Andorka, T. Kolosi, R. Rose, G. Vukovicz Eds. CEU Press: Budapest.
- Rychrad, A. Federowicz, M. eds. (1993). *Society in the transformation*. IFiS PAN Warsaw.
- Słomczyński, K. M.; K. Janicka; B. W. Mach; W. Zaborowski (1999). *Mental Adjustment to the Post-Communist System in Poland*. IFiS Publishers, Warsaw.
- Staniszki, J. (1989). *Ontologia socjalizmu* (The Ontology of Socialism). In Plus Publisher: Warsaw 1989.
- Staniszki, J. (1991). *The Dynamics of the Breakthrough in Eastern Europe. The Polish experience*. University of California press: Berkeley, Los Angeles.
- Tismaneanu, V. Introduction. An EEPS Round Table: The Revolutions of 1989: Lessons of the First Post communist Decade. *East European Politics and Societies* 13 1 (1999): 231-235.

Tajfel, H. *Human Group and Social Categories. Studies in social psychology*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1981.

Tonnies, F. (1988). *Wspólnota i Stowarzyszenie (Community and Society)*. PWN Publisher: Warsaw.

Wawrzyniak B., Bieguński L. *Difficult Change: Corporate Behaviour in the Process of Reforms*. Friedrich Ebert Foundation Poland, Economic and Social Policy Series No. 21. Warsaw 1992.

Williams, A. M.; V. Balaz, (1999) Transformation and Division in Central Europe. In: *Divided Europe. Society and Territory*, ed. R. Hudson & A. M. Williams. SAGE Publication: London.

Zaborowski, K. M. ed. (2000). *Social Patterns of Being Political*. IFiS Publishers: Warsaw.