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“Brave New Poland”

Results of the changes in Poland during the last 12 years are comparable to the country having been ravished by war. The official unemployment rate is 18.7% (3.321 mln) and rising. Hospitals do not pay their staff and many do not have food for the patients. The impoverished farmers are blocking the roads. Students graduate with no prospects of jobs. The birth rate has dropped down to catastrophic levels. But if you visit the offices of the President and Premier you see smiling faces of joy and satisfaction from yet another successful publicity stunt. In summary, the neo-liberal reform has failed. You can only see the good life on government controlled TV.

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights whereas the recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace. However we find that many impoverished Poles, 12 years into neo-liberal market reform still want to sing the “Internationale”: Arise ye workers from your slumbers, Arise ye criminals of want... because the life of millions has become hell and misery below levels of human dignity and in violation of the basic UN Declaration of Human Rights. A life without hope.

But what else can one expect from former Communists, who practically own Poland today? Communists have never concealed the fact that they reject all absolute concepts of morality. They scoff at the idea of good and evil being indisputable categories. Communists consider morality to be relative. Depending upon circumstances, any act, including the impoverishment of millions, could be good or bad. It all depends upon class ideology, defined like the irreproachable neo-liberal reform by a handful of people... it is considered awkward to use seriously such words as good and evil. But if we are deprived of these concepts, what will be left? We will decline to the status of lowly animals and become just like them.

During the whole time of this brutal change from extreme communism to a vicious neo-liberal economy people have been led like a sheep to the slaughter house by a handful of treacherous leaders, who have never made a single dollar in a free market country. Therefore the people have been duped into supporting the preposterous idea of building capitalism without capital. Once the Communists disbanded their Party they made a quick run on the banks, mines, steel mills, shipyards, factories, even hospitals - anything that was of value. They wanted to grab it all for themselves.

Now that the world economy has reached its limits, and the turmoil is evident, the “owners” of Poland are making a single-minded effort to sell out national independence to a much stronger and predatory European Union. Considering the economic disparity between Poland and the EU there is no doubt that Poles, shackled by the rigid rules of the Old Europe, will become the slaves. At this time, the average earnings of Poles are 6 times lower than those of EU members, Poland’s economy has slid from 10th to 56th place and the country has become one of the most corrupt in the world.

All this despite the fact that millions of righteous and patriotic Poles have dreamed and voted for an entirely different future. However there is clear evidence that their voting rights have been manipulated and muddled by the proportional election law that practically guarantees former Communists permanent ownership of the country. Civilized persons argue respectfully, Barbarians and Communists use clubs. Caught in this trap the Poles seem to be unable to form the legal opposition needed to confront the Communists, who still have total control. However even though the Communists have been able to grab the wealth of the country they have not been successful in taking away the dignity of the Polish people.

The fight for human dignity has thus become the last frontier for the independence of Poland. The above mentioned Universal Declaration of Rights clearly states that “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude, everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” and it clearly establishes property rights. The post-communist governments of Poland have been in clear violation of these principles, regressing the standard of living by at least one hundred years to the dark ages. This is human exploitation.

We must thus concentrate on those things that will give oppressed Poles some hope: the four main principles whose force is felt in every one of the thirty principles of the Universal Declaration. Every human being without exception is worthy of dignity, liberty, equality, and brotherhood. In other words, the very term “person” implies a vision of a universal “society”, which for reasons of practicality and local autonomy, and by the natural workings of culture and history, is organized through countless local associations and businesses of varying sizes and horizons. Even the Soviet Union when it still existed found it difficult to object to these principles entirely, although its representatives did in fact object.

Having argued that the UN Declaration of Rights is the useful tool to use in the fight for social justice and to improve the standard of living in Poland I must stress that the time for a final battle over the destiny of the country will come when Poles recover from the shock of the recent “reform” and find themselves in a situation where the loss of human dignity is staring them in the face. Many in order to survive are already forced to commit despicable acts.

The battle for human dignity also gives us a promise of non-violence. This is exactly what happened in India where the British lost their authority to exploit because of the insistence on non-violence by the national leader Mr. Mahatma Gandhi. When India was so poor that it could give no more, the British by attacking a non-violent crowd lost their moral right and authority to rule. Oppressors love violent responses as it gives them the right to use force. This is why in confrontations with Communist rulers of Poland, who are armed to the teeth, violence must be avoided at all cost. It is preferable to organize peaceful marches of millions to disband the corrupt and immoral Parliament rather than launch violent partisan attacks with firearms and Molotov cocktails.

I stress the importance of fighting for human dignity as in our history even German and Russian occupants have not been able to take it away from us. Even the Swedish invasion, supported by some of the Polish magnates, failed when Swedes threatened to take our dignity away. At that point, united Poles mounted formidable resistance and managed to push them away across the Baltic sea.

Of course the fight over human dignity will not be easy. As in the past the Communists will try to subvert such a movement and to take over leadership and control of this initiative. This is already evident today where the communist controlled publications already pretend to side with the poor and unemployed, crying out loud for their misery with crocodile tears. But we must not fall for these diversion tactics. We must remember the past. We must not forget that these same Communists are the creators of the current misery in Poland. These sleazy individuals are of the opinion that the Poles who used to be their subjects are loathsome, lazy people incapable of independent self-rule. They accuse us of having unrealistic expectations from the state and they scheme to humiliate us with extreme unemployment and poverty. Anyone who will hum the tune of their old "Internationale" song is now the evil enemy of the state and a terrorist. However they govern only to steal and plunder. They have lost the right to preach morals to the Polish people.

People are raised over a long period in a family environment, and it is in families that their identities, habits and characters are established. Families further participate in whole networks of kin, neighborhood, religious tradition, and other intermediate associations, natural and civil, and through those relationships live out a solid social identity. In this sense, societies take shape long before the states do. The point is that the Communists have tried, but have never been fully successful, in shaping society in Poland. People are social beings even before they are aware of having their own distinctive personalities. Persons come to fulfillment only in a community, and communities have as their end purpose the raising of persons worthy of their inherent dignity. Dignity is inherent in them because they are destined to be free to reflect and to choose, and having this freedom over the course of their lives, they are then responsible for their own actions. A person is capable of insight, love, and long term commitment. Such beings are deserving of respect from other rational beings. Their inherent nature makes civilization possible, since civilization is constituted by conversation, the art of persuasion through reason, mutual respect. Civilized people argue respectfully. The Communists who rule Poland are loosing their control because the impoverished Poles have already given all they can. And now they want our dignity!

We, who live afar from Poland in the still prosperous countries of the West consider dignity as an intellectual or philosophical ideology because nobody threatens to take it away from us. However those who live in Poland have given all they can and have no more to give. With the Communists loosing control over the issue of human dignity I know that the time for change is near. When the Communists are gone, brave new Poland will rise again.

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