

## The Collapse of Real Socialism in Eastern Europe versus the Overthrow of the Spanish Colonial Empire in Latin America: An Attempt at Comparative Analysis\*

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### *ABSTRACT*

After the collapse of real socialism, Fukuyama proclaimed the ‘end of history’ and the triumph of liberal democracy. However, history of Latin America shows that the democracy is a very fragile political system. Its stability depends on the social contexts in which it exists. Therefore, it is worth to ask about future of democracy in Eastern Europe. Based on Nowak’s non-Marxian historical materialism, author distinguishes class societies where separate classes of rulers, owners and priests exist and supra-class societies where class divisions are cumulated. This distinction allows for answering this question in the following way. The durability of the democracy depends on the relationship between the social classes. The more these relations approximate the class society, the more stable the democracy is. The more a given society is distant from the class society, the more the democratic system is distorted. This thesis is illustrated by analysis of social transformation in Mexico and Poland.

### **I. Introduction**

One can meet an opinion that transformation of real socialism is a unique historical process incomparable with all what happened before in history. However, social transformations on such a scale are not unusual in history – suffice it to mention the Meiji Restoration of 1868 in Japan, the modernisation of Turkey carried out by Kemal Atatürk and reforms in post-war Egypt (Trimberger 1978). Because means of comparative analysis give a deeper understanding of above-mentioned historical processes, the aim of this paper is to compare transformation of social system in Latin

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America after the collapse of the Spanish colonial empire with transformation of social system in Eastern Europe after the decline of real socialism using Mexico and Poland as examples. Owing to such a comparative analysis it will be possible to identify parallels in historical development which might have been due to similar types of factors in operation, and the thesis of my paper will find thereby additional vindication.

The comparative analysis will not be limited to juxtaposition of historical facts; it will be based on a social theory – non-Marxian historical materialism (Nowak 1983, 1991), which will serve as a basis for comparisons. In section two, a fragment of this theory – typology of societies – will be summarised. Furthermore, in the third section, the notion apparatus of this theory will be extended. It is from the perspective of non-Marxian historical materialism the structure of Mexican and Polish society will subsequently be interpreted (fourth section). In the following, fifth section a historic transformation of the Mexican society after it gained independence and of the social changes recently underway in Poland will be presented. The paper will end with conclusions and corollaries.

## **II. Theoretical Assumptions**

Non-Marxian historical materialism assumes that class divisions exist not only in economy but also emerge in other spheres of human activity such as politics and culture. These three separate domains in social life: culture, politics and economy have similar internal structure. Within each of these domains, one can further distinguish three levels: material, institutional and the level of social consciousness.

The material level of political life encompasses the means of coercion. The relation to the means of coercion determines the division of society into two groups: the class of rulers, which decides about the use of the means of coercion, and the class of citizens who are deprived of such possibilities. These two vast groups of people are organised in such bodies as political parties, civic organisations, and associations, which form the institutional level of politics and are a platform on which social activities are played out. In turn the political consciousness of classes, that is, the ideological doctrines and political programmes make up the spiritual dimension of political life.

Economic life is characterised by similar internal structure. Also here, the material level is made up of the means of production, which determine the division into the class of owners and the class of direct producers. The institutional dimension of economy encompasses trade unions, employers' associations, and consumer groups. The level of consciousness of the economic domain includes doctrines and economic views, which provide large social groups with a rationale for actions they undertake.

In the cultural domain the material level consists of the means of spiritual production – for example printing presses, radio, and television. The relation to the means of spiritual production determines the division into two social classes: the class

of priests, who decide about the use of the means of spiritual production, and the class of the indoctrinated, which is deprived of such influence. The institutional level of spiritual life includes organisations of priestly castes: churches, writers' associations, groups of artists. On the other hand the meta-cognitive level of cultural life consists of these fragments of disseminated doctrines, which provide the rationale for actions taken by particular priest castes.

The above theoretical framework of social life makes it thus possible to distinguish three separate and autonomous types of class divisions. In the political domain, the class, which has at its disposal the means of coercion, increases the overall range of its influence by limiting the autonomy of the citizens. In the economic domain, the class which at its disposal the means of production increases their profits at the expense of the wages of the direct producers. In the cultural domain, the class, which has at its disposal means of spiritual production, enhances the spiritual domination over the indoctrinated and limits their autonomy. Social antagonisms resulting from unequal access to material means of society (means of coercion, production and indoctrination) in each of these three domains of social life have thus an autonomous character. Class divisions from other domains of social life can only strengthen antagonisms in a given domain or, conversely, weaken them. Class divisions can also become cumulated when, for example one social class, keen on increasing the range of its social influence may take over the control of both the means of coercion and production or both the means of coercion and spiritual production.

The control of material means is thus the basis of division of societies according to the theory of non-Marxian historical materialism. Using this criterion one can distinguish class societies, where the existing classes are separated, and supra-class societies, where the class divisions are overlapped. One can distinguish various variants of the class society depending on which social class, the rulers, the owners or the priests is the dominant one.

Within supra-class societies, one can distinguish two variants of totalitarian society. In totalitarian society of political variant, the double class of rulers–owners uses the means of production for maximisation of power. In turn, in totalitarian society of economical variant, where the double class of owners–rulers exists, the maximisation of power is instrumentally subordinated to maximisation of profit.

Analogically, one can distinguish two variants of supra-class society where, the cumulating of power and spiritual domination exists. In theocratic society, the double class of priests–rulers uses the means of coercion for maximisation of spiritual domination. In the fascist society with the rulers–priests, the maximisation of spiritual domination is subordinated to the maximisation of power.

At the end, one can distinguish a socialist society with triple class of rulers–owners–priests. In this kind of society class divisions reached their extreme because one social class monopolises the control over the three material means of society:

means of coercion, means of production, and means of indoctrination and three domains of social life: politics, economy and culture (see Figure 1).

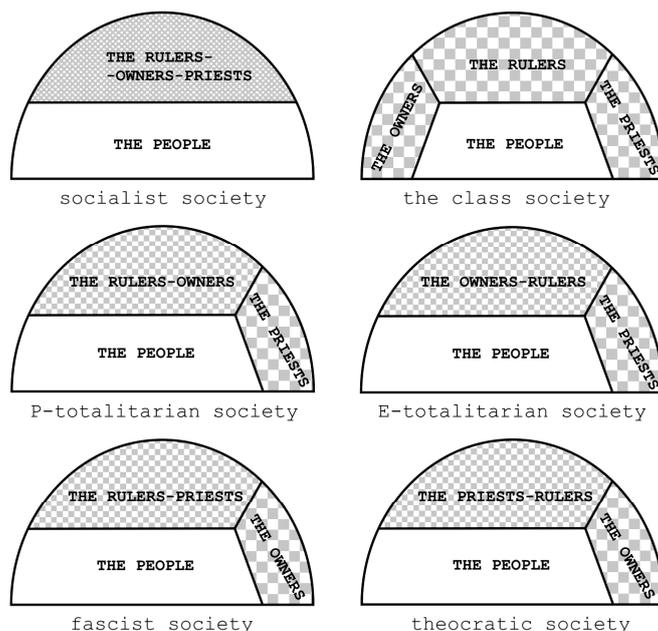


Figure 1 Typology of societies in non-Marxian historical materialism

One of the basic categories describing these class structures is the notion of the state of social equilibrium (Nowak 1989: 227–29). Each of mentioned class structures taken in isolation: economical (owners – the direct producers), political (rulers – the citizens) and spiritual (priests – the indoctrinated) has three pure states of affairs: class peace, revolution and declassation.

In the state of class peace both antagonistic classes may realise their social interests. In the state of declassation the class of oppressors (e.g. the owners, the rulers, the priests) maximises its class interest (profit, power, spiritual domination) at the expense of realisation of social interest (variable capital, political autonomy, spiritual autonomy) of the oppressed (the direct producers, the citizens, the indoctrinated). Finally, the revolution is an open confrontation between antagonistic classes where both of them are not able peacefully to realise their social interests.

Let us begin from economical class structure. It is obvious that the state of revolution can not be a state of social equilibrium because process of production, and hence maximisation of profits by the owners is not possible during revolutionary perturbations. For the economic structure social equilibrium is attained in the state of class peace. In the state of declassation, the owners have social peace but at the cost of

low productivity of their employees. Therefore, in the long perspective, isolated economic class structure naturally tends to the state of class peace as its state of social equilibrium.

For the isolated political class system – contrary to economical one – the social equilibrium is achieved by declassation of the citizens because the growth of power is possible in conditions of the enslavement of the citizens. Although class peace allows for maintenance of political domination, it hampers the maximisation of power regulation. Therefore, isolated political class structure naturally tends to the state of declassation where rulers' class interest may be maximised without obstacles.

Finally, let us characterise the spiritual class structure. It is obvious that the state of spiritual revolution excludes the realisation of the class interest of the priests. The social equilibrium' may be attained in state of class peace or in state of declassation. Because the class of priests, devoid of means of coercion, is not able to protect itself against spiritual resistance of the indoctrinated, the state of social equilibrium is class peace. Therefore, isolated spiritual class structure naturally tends to the class peace as its state of equilibrium.

### **III. An Attempt at Extension of Typology of Societies**

A further refinement of the presented typology of societies is necessary in order to grasp more precisely the relations between the social classes. For the sake of simplicity we shall deal only with the possible relationship between political power and economy and between political power and culture. First of all it is possible to distinguish two versions of supra-class society: pure and mixed. In the pure supra-class system there exist the double class, which disposes two materials means of society. This society consists of three classes: the double class, the single class and the people's class.

In the mixed version of the supra-class society the control of a given double class of disposers over two domains of social life is never complete because there exist a single class which disposes one of two types of materials means controlled also by the double class. This society, therefore, consists of four classes: the double class of disposers of material means, two single classes of disposers and the people's class.

In mixed totalitarian society of economical variant, the separate classes of rulers and priests exist, apart from the double class of owners–rulers. The owners, however, take over part of rulers' sphere of regulations connected directly with the sphere of production, playing both the role of the ruler (in some limited scope) as well as the owner for direct producers employed by them.

In mixed totalitarian society of political variant, the separate classes of owners and priests exist, apart from the double class of rulers–owners. The rulers, however, controlling means of production, play both the social roles of the ruler as well as owner for some citizens employed by them.

Along similar lines, it is possible to distinguish two mixed versions of society with cumulation of spiritual and political power. In the theocratic society of the mixed version, there exists a single class of rulers, but the priests take over a part of their sphere of power regulation connected directly with spiritual life by playing the role of rulers for the class of the indoctrinated.

In the fascist society of the mixed version there exists a single class of priests but the rulers take over a part of sphere of spiritual regulation connected directly with political life, playing the social role of ruler and priests for the class of citizens. Moreover, in these kinds of societies there exist a separate class of owners and the peoples' class.

Also, it is possible to distinguish mixed version of socialist society. In this kind of social system, apart from the triple class of rulers–owners–priests, there exist class of owners and of priests (see Figure 2).

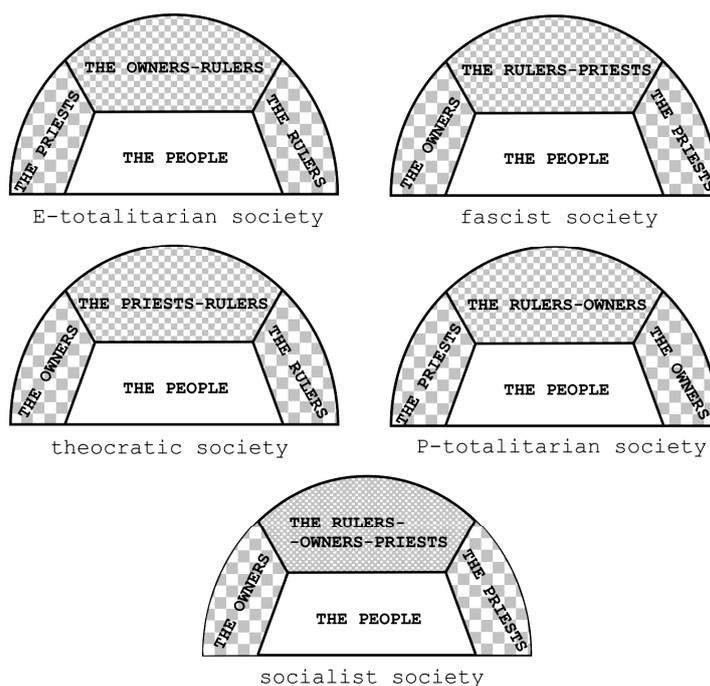


Figure 2 Mixed supra-class societies in non-Marxian historical materialism

The extension of conceptual framework of this theory allows distinguishing two versions of class society: democratic and authoritarian. The differences between them can be also described by a category of social equilibrium. In a class society of democratic version, the social conflicts between the rulers and the citizens, the owners and the direct producers, the priest and the indoctrinated are dissolved by concession

given by 'higher' classes (the rulers or/and the owners and/or the priests) to 'lower' classes (the citizens and/or the direct producers and/or the indoctrinated). In this way, the state of social equilibrium of democratic class society is state of class peace in three domains of social life: culture, politics and economy. This state of affairs is strengthened by direction of class alliances. On the one hand, by getting involved in economic life, the rulers support direct producers in their disputes with the owners. In this way the attainment of class peace in economy is accelerated. On the other hand, the class of owners supports the limitations imposed on the rulers by the class of citizens accelerating the attainment of class peace in politics. A further stabilising effect is also achieved in democratic society by the class of priests, that enters into alliances with the weaker social partner in order to oppose the stronger one. The class peace in both domains of social life: economical and political strengthens also the attainment of class peace between priests and the indoctrinated in the culture. The empirical approximation of the above-presented model of society is democratic capitalism. In this system, the separate major classes mutually check and balance their influences. This makes possible to build the parliamentary democracy, in which everyone is guaranteed a right of free choice and free association in political parties, secure possession of property and the right to form free trade unions, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. Only in such social conditions are the main factors of social development transferred from the material level onto the institutional level of social life.

It is also worth to consider the problem of preconditions of stability of parliamentary democracy. In the light of non-Marxian historical materialism the answer to this question is the following. The durability of this political system depends on the relationship between the social classes. The more these relations approximate the balanced class society, the more stable the democracy is, and the more effective its procedures become. The more a given society is distant from the model of the balanced class society – or, in other words, the more the supra-class social structures appear in a given society and give one class control over more than one type of material means of the society (e.g. means of coercion and production), the more the democratic system is gradually eroded or may even vanish altogether.

An authoritarian society is an another version of a class society. Contrary to its democratic version, social conflicts between rulers and citizens in politics, between owners and direct producers in economy and between priests and believers in culture are dissolved by declassation of lower classes by higher classes. Therefore, the state of social equilibrium is attained by declassation of the peoples' class what is possible by the direction of class alliances. The condition of permanent declassation of the oppressed by a given class of the oppressors is using the material means of society, which is at the disposal of an another class of oppressors.

According to directions of alliances between higher classes, it is possible to distinguish many sub-versions of authoritarian society. For the sake of simplicity one

shall deal only with the possible relations between classes of rulers and owners and between classes of rulers and priests.

In authoritarian society of the economic-political sub-version, neither class of rulers nor class of owners cannot independently strive for the achievement of its social interest (the enlargement of the sphere of power regulation and the maximisation of profit), so they must support each other. The owners support (e.g. by economical resources) the rulers in their disputes with citizens and rulers support (e.g. by using the force or by legal regulation) owners in their disputes with direct producers. In this system the social equilibrium in both domains of social life is attained by declassification of citizens and direct producers, which is possible owing the alliance between two class of oppressors.

In authoritarian society of the hierocratic-political sub-version, neither class of priests nor class of rulers can independently strive for the achievement of its social interest (the enlargement of power regulation and the enlargement of spiritual domination), so they must support each other. On the one hand, the rulers in order to control more efficient the citizens must seek the support of priests (e.g. in form of ideological legitimisation). On the other hand, the class of priests in order to deepen its spiritual domination, must seek the support of the class of rulers (e.g. in form of state law).

Finally, it is possible to distinguish authoritarian society in political-economic-hierocratic sub-version. In this social system, each class of oppressors in order to maximise its social interest needs the support of the remaining two classes of oppressors.

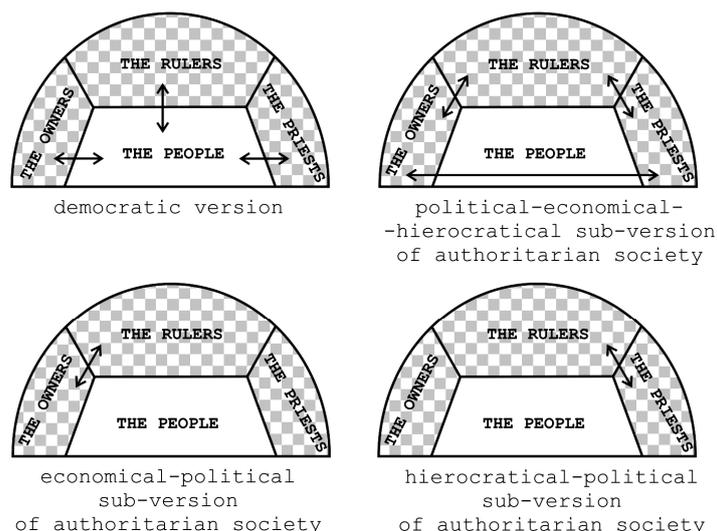


Figure 3 Versions of class societies. The arrow shows the direction of class alliances

Now, it is worth considering differences between the supra-class and authoritarian society. In both types of society the state of social equilibrium is attained by declassing of the people. However, there is different mechanism of declassification of the oppressed in the two societies. Namely, in the authoritarian society the declassification of the people by a given class of oppressors in one domain of social life is possible owing to support of class controlling another domain of social life. In supra-class society the double (or triple) class is able to declass the people independently without necessity of entering into alliances with other classes. Because, as a rule, alliances between higher classes are unstable and changeable, the declassification of the people in authoritarian society is less durable and not so 'deep' as in supra-class society.

#### **IV. Latin American and Eastern European Societies: The Similarities and Differences**

##### *The Structure of the Mexican Society*

Let us now embark on an analysis of the structure of Latin American society from the perspective of the outlined theoretical framework (larger presentation: Brzechczyn 2004b: 168–229).

Latin America was considered a property of the Spanish crown on an equal basis with the viceroyalties of Castile, Catalonia, Leon, Aragon and other provinces (Alba 1972: 69–72; Bailey & Nasatir 1969: 169–86; Fagg 1977: 155–71; Foster 1956: 62–65; Jones 1975: 18–21; Kirkpatrick 1939: 22–34; Rippey 1958: 63–69; Sarfatti 1966; Szemiński 1977: 13–17; Thomas 1956: 85–101). The king ruled by means of the Council of the Indies (*Consejo de Indias*) established in 1524. This body exercised the legislative, administrative and judiciary powers with respect to Spanish possessions in South America. The Council submitted for approval of the king all the appointments to all political posts in the New World except for those, which were within the sphere of competence of the local self-government. It drafted all the decrees and laws concerning the colonies. Within the first hundred years of its existence the Council issued 500 000 regulations and decrees (Fagg 1977: 162). This institution heard appeals from the decisions of the courts of law. Also, the Council had the right to censor all the books and documents sent to the colonies. Moreover, it exercised financial and economic control over various aspects of life in the colonies. In order to achieve these tasks it had at its disposal a specialised agency – the House of Trade.

The next level of administration were four vice-royalties: New Spain with the capital in Mexico City, Peru with the capital in Lima, New Grenada with the capital in Bogota and La Plata with the capital in Buenos Aires. The viceroy, as a deputy of the Spanish king in his vice-royalty, was the supreme military commander. He supervised the collection of taxes and sat in courts. The viceroy had the right to appoint officials whenever such decisions were not reserved for the Council of the Indies. He also exercised extensive economic powers – he established new cities, supervised public

works and played the role of the defender of the native Indians against the excessive exploitation by great landowners.

The provinces (*gobiernos*) headed by governors formed the third level of administration. Within the sphere of competencies of each governor was the collection of taxes and assisting the church in converting Indians to Christianity. According to Spanish law the population of Latin America was divided into two communities – Spanish and Indian. Indians belonged to the Indian community, all the rest of population including the slaves and *mestisos* being counted as members of the Spanish community. The *municipia*, or administrative districts inhabited by Spanish population were subject to the authority of the Spanish governor. The Indian rural communities, on the other hand, were ruled to an official called *corregidor*, who was subordinated to the governor. In the areas the governor held where the Indian population was in majority this office himself, wherever there were few Indians the *corregidor* was subordinated to local municipal officials.

As a result of an agreement (*patronato real*) made by the Spanish crown with the pope, the Roman Catholic Church was subordinated to the state in the New World (Fagg 1977: 172–74). The Council of the Indies confirmed the appointments of bishops and archbishops, which elsewhere were made by the pope. The state played the role of an intermediary between the spiritual hierarchy in the Old and the New World. As a result of this policy no cleric could set out from Spain to America without the consent of the king. The king, and the viceroy as his deputy, decided about the borders of bishoprics and appointed bishops and parsons. The authorities controlled the correspondence of church institutions. The Council of the Indies supervised the letters of abbots and bishops in the New World sent to their counterparts in Seville and Madrid. The Council also served as an intermediary in the relations between the archbishop of Mexico and the pope. All the papal bulls, and primarily those, which referred to the colonies, had to have the approval of the Council before they were made known in the colonies.

In exchange the authorities were obliged to support the church with money and help in the conversion of the indigenous population. The authorities collected the tithes on behalf of the church and assisted institutions run by the church.

The royal bureaucracy exercised economic control over the colonies. An increased degree of fiscalism was a direct result of that:

The Spanish crown drew private profits from the New World. The *Quinto* or the fifth of all precious metals belonged to the king. He also owned vast areas of arable land as its direct owner as well as all herds and crops on them. Mercury, gunpowder, playing cards, lotteries, salt, pepper, snow and ice brought down from the mountains to cool the drinks in the cities of Lima and Mexico – all of these were the king's monopolies (Bailey & Nasatir 1969: 210).

The Council for the Indies had at its disposal a specialised agency – the House of Trade in Seville, which controlled commerce between the colonies and Spain as well

as levied and collected the taxes. The House of Trade issued licenses for trade with Spanish America registered the ships, merchandise and merchants as well as passengers departing from the Old World.

Having at its disposal the means of coercion and exercising control over other aspects of social life, the royal bureaucracy in Latin America can be considered a class of rulers which was not fully independent in its actions but subordinate on Spain.

The Roman Catholic Church played an important role in Latin American society (Alba 1972: 75–81; Bailey & Nasatir 1969: 203–17; Jones 1975: 21–24; Fagg 1977: 171–85; Foster 1956: 104–20; Szemiński 1977: 22–25; Thomas 1956: 131–38). The church in America played a civilising role: it ran hospitals, orphanages, parish schools as well as secondary schools and universities. But this mission was inextricably entangled with class aspects of church activity which consisting in maintaining and deepening of the spiritual rule of the church hierarchy over its flock. As early as in 1522 first officials of the Holy Inquisition arrived in the New World. In 1570 King Philip II issued a decree establishing the Inquisition in America. In the same year an appropriate tribunal was established in Lima and in 1572 in Mexico City. In 1610 another tribunal was established in Cartagena. The official objective of the inquisition was to maintain the purity of faith and defend it against heresy. To achieve this goal the Inquisition used punishments such as fines, penance, flogging, galleys, banishment and burning at the stake. In the years 1570–1820 when it operated in America around 6 000 cases were processed by its tribunals, as a result of which 71 people were burned at the stake (30 in Lima and 41 in Mexico) (Fagg 1977: 181). The relatively minor number of victims was a result of effective preventive measures taken by the inquisitors. The Inquisition enforced the strict observance of the index of prohibited books drafted in Rome and in Spain. Books written by Jews, Muslims and Protestants found their way to the index together with works of philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment which professed the power of the people. These books were not allowed to be sold, read, printed in the colonies or obviously to be imported into the colonies. The control was exercised not only by specialised agencies of the church but the whole church structure at large:

The bishops and priests assisted the Inquisition, supervising tirelessly the reading of their parishioners. The agents of the church had a right to enter private houses, question the crew about the cargo carried by a ship, search for any smuggled books or documents as well as control the stock in bookstores in all the cities of the New World (Bailey & Nasatir 1969: 215).

The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church had not only at its disposal the means of spiritual production but was also the largest landowner on the continent:

If their estates are to be counted together, in some parts of the New World various church institutions accumulated in their hands more than half of all arable land. Land was acquired through wills, donations, mortgages, and tithes, which were

collected in cattle or in the land. The income the bishops earned from these estates was equal to the income of the viceroy (Bailey & Nasatir 1969: 215).

The church having at its disposal such means was also the mightiest banker on the continent and most landowners owed money to it (Łepkowski 1977a: 44). One can put forward a claim that the church hierarchy in South America was a double class of priests–owners, having at its disposal both the means of production and the means of spiritual indoctrination.

The structure of ownership in South America took shape as a result of the conquest of the continent by the Spaniards, who brought with them the social institutions born during the *reconquista* on the Iberian Peninsula (Alba 1972: 81–89; Bailey & Nasatir 1969: 186–201; Fagg 1977: 185–201, 250, 261; Foster 1956: 61–104; Frank 1979; Gibson 1964; Semo 1991; Szemiński 1977: 30–35; Thomas 1956: 100–110). Having conquered land from the Arabs, the crown gave it with the titles to the nobility, which took part in the war. This mode of conduct was applied to South America when it was recognised as a property of the Spanish Crown. But in the New World shortage of manpower posed a major problem. The system of *encomienda* or forced labour, which was introduced for the first time in Hispaniola in 1503, was to remedy this situation:

Under this system, the coloniser was charged to protect Indians he received and to educate them in the Catholic religion; in return, he could demand labour from them. This included not only labour on the land, but also in mines, and so on. The Council of the Indies had expected by this device to transform Indians into faithful and loyal subjects, for the privilege of the *encomienda* was in theory not to be passed on to the grandson of the *encomendero*. But in fact new *encomiendas* were granted, and the system lasted until the eighteenth century. The *encomienda*, which was intended as a provisional instrument of protection, was changed into a permanent institution for exploitation (Alba 1972: 82).

Later the institution of *encomienda* was introduced in other parts of the South American continent. The conqueror of Mexico Hernando Cortés received the title of the marquis of the Oaxaca Valley together with 25 square miles of land and 22 white settlers and 115 000 Indians living there. The conqueror of the Inca empire Francisco Pizarro received the title of the Marquis of the Conquest together with the land inhabited by 100 000 Indians. This model was copied on lower levels of social hierarchy – the victorious military commanders gave land to their soldiers. The social significance of this system consisted in resigning by the political power from some spheres of regulation. It is the concession made by the authorities in favour of the owners, which made possible the creation of this social class. The state resigned from its prerogatives, entrusting the owners “protection” of Indian. In exchange for ‘protection’ of owner, the Indians had to work for them.

The fact that the Indians were not used to backbreaking work accounted for high mortality rates among them. In Hispaniola – the territory where *encomienda* was applied for the first time – the number of Indian population decreased from 500,000

(before 1492) to 14,000 in 1514 (Simpson 1966: 179). Because the Indians paid taxes to the state and tithes to the church, these institutions tried to limit the economic exploitation of the Indian population. The effect was that in 1542 the *New Law* for the Colonies was promulgated, which at least in theory abolished the system of *encomienda*. But as a result of the resistance of the owners – an open revolt broke out in Peru – this law was never completely implemented. The authorities limited the scope of forced labour by refraining from giving more Indians to the Spanish landowners. System of *encomienda* lost its social significance by the end of the XVIth century where was replaced by other forms of forced labour (Simpson 1966: XII).

The most important of them was the *mita* (in New Spain called the *repartimento*) which was based on an agreement between a state official – the *corregidor* and the owner:

under which the Indians had to serve periodically in mines, fields, workshops, fisheries, on public works, or as domestic servants – all without pay, and often far from their *pueblos*. Indians who worked in the mines had a quota set for them, and those who did not meet it were punished; they had to buy their own food, the coca they chewed, and even the candles they used in their work in shops run by the mine owners. By the eighteenth century, one-seventh of the Indians of Peru were subject to the *mita*, one-fourth in New Spain, one-third in Chile, and one-twelfth in Paraguay and the Rio de la Plata (Alba 1974: 84).

Officially the system of forced labour (*encomienda* and *repartimento*) was abolished between 1718 and 1720. This did not change, however, the situation of the Indian population, which was transformed into the peons, that is peasants indebted to big landowners who had to pay back their debts with their work.

One can say that the landowners profiting from forced labour of Indians or the Blacks were a double class of owners–rulers. For direct producers, the landowner played a social role of the owner as well as that of the ruler – by using some of the prerogatives of political power. The abolishment of *encomiendo* and other forms of forced labour can be interpreted as the transformation of owners–rulers into separate class of owners entering, however, into social alliance with the class of rulers.

The Latin American society was a supra-class society with two double classes of owners–rulers and priests–owners as well as a single class of rulers which, due to the dependence on the imperial power of Spain, dominated over the former two classes. The dominance of the class of rulers was visible in the fact that neither the priest–owners, nor the owners–rulers (transformed later on into single class of owners) could achieve their social interests (spiritual power and the increase of profits) without the support of the political power, which was given in exchange for the increase of the political control over social life.

### *The Structure of Polish Society*

In Eastern Europe the system of socialism was forcefully imposed in the years 1939–1948. In the history of this part of the continent supra-class structures had

already existed before, delaying the development of democratic capitalism. The system of triple power in the state of the Teutonic Knights in the XIIIth and XIVth centuries (Brzechczyn 1993b), the manorial–serf economy developed in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries (Brzechczyn 1998b, abridged version in Italian: 2004a), and the authoritarian political systems in the years between the world wars (Brzechczyn 2001) can be considered examples of such supra-class structures.

A considerable acceleration of the emergence of supra-class social structures occurred as a result of subordination of all East European countries by the Soviet Union. The ensuing rise of the communist parties to power resulted in nationalisation of key industries, introduction of the spiritual monopoly of Marxism and abolishment of civil liberties through terror and wholesale suppression of dissenting views (Kersten 1988; Paczkowski 1995; Wandycz 1992). In the Stalinist period (1948–1956) the power of the communist party in East European societies reached its peak. The party apparatus controlled political life as well as the economy and culture. Socialism can be thus interpreted as a system of triple power, in which the tripartite ruling class is at the same time the ruler, the owner and the priest.

The system of socialism imposed in Eastern Europe encountered the strongest resistance in Poland. Some structural peculiarities of Polish society also decided about the Polish lead in the process of dismantling of socialism. In Poland the full-fledged system of triple power never managed to take shape because beside the tripartite ruling class there existed a single class of priests and the class of (petty) owners. Presumably in such a way one should interpret the existence in Poland of a strong Roman Catholic Church and private farms and artisans.

After the Poznań revolt in 1956 the communist party had to come to terms with the spiritual influence of the Roman Catholic Church and acknowledge the existence of private farms. After December 1970 the communist authorities recognised economic aspirations of the society the program of constructing – as official propaganda called it – ‘Second Poland’ was in a way an opaque attempt at satisfying economic needs of the Polish society. The foundations of the system were however undermined to the greatest extent by the Solidarity revolution of 1980. Mass circulation of information independent from the control of the authorities began, independent political life started to form then and attempts were made to liberalise the economy. The process of construction of a balanced class society was slowed down by the imposition of martial law in 1981. Eight years later, in 1989, the Round Table Talks, which were preceded by two waves of strikes in May and August 1988, initiated the transformation of the system, which was far more profound than all the previous concessions of the communist authorities forced by independent social forces.

#### *An Attempt at Comparison*

One can see therefore that the social systems in Eastern Europe and Latin America were supra-class systems. In Eastern Europe real socialism was the system of

triple class rule in which one class had control over the means of production, coercion and spiritual production. In the Polish version of socialism one should also distinguish a single class of priests (Roman Catholic Church) and the class of petty owners (peasants and artisans). Slightly less cumulated class divisions could be found in Latin America. In Latin American society, beside the single class of rulers existed two double classes of owners–rulers and priests–owners. In the course of the XVIIIth century the class of owners–rulers was transforming into single class of owners staying in class alliance with rulers. We should add in conclusion that the societies in both areas were dependent on external decision making forces: Latin America on Spain and Eastern Europe on the Soviet Union, both of whom actively contributed to the rise of supra-class social structures in the subordinated countries (an analysis of Polish case: Brzechczyn 1993c).

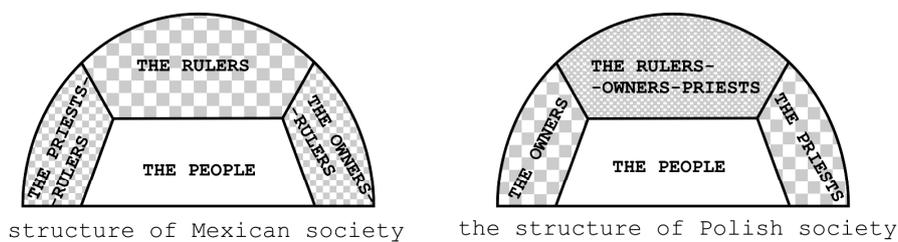


Figure 4 The structure of Mexican society in colonial period and structure of Polish society in period of real socialism

## V. The Course of Transformations

Let us present therefore a picture of social transformations in Latin America and Eastern Europe from the perspective of the outlined theoretical framework using Mexico (larger presentation: Brzechczyn 2004b: 229–91) and Poland as examples.

### *The Overthrow of Spanish Rule in Mexico*

The Mexican war of independence (1808–1821) was triggered by the news, which reached the capital of New Spain in July 1808, that Ferdinand VIII had been forced to renounce the Spanish throne (Anna 1985; Katz 1986; Łepkowski 1977ab, 1986; Sinkin 1979). In response to the king's resignation, *Creoles* demanded independence for Mexico. Their claims were supported by the viceroy Iturrigaray. Iturrigaray's radical stance brought about a backlash from the royalists, who arrested the viceroy and other leaders of the independence movement. Supporters of the Spanish rule managed to stay in power for the next two years. In 1810 the Indian and *Mestizo* population staged an anti-Spanish uprising which continued for the following 10 years. Since the rebellion was also directed against wealthy *Creole* landowners, the latter had to abandon the cause of independence and unwillingly support the maintenance of ties with Spain. The compromise struck by the viceroy Augustin

Iturbide and leaders of the uprising turned out to offer a viable solution to the problem. The deal led to the declaration of Mexican independence on 24 February, 1821. Taking advantage of the political turmoil in the country, the viceroy Iturbide concentrated political power over the country in his hands and proclaimed himself the emperor of Mexico. It was only after his deposition, that the constitution was adopted in 1824, which brought to completion the process of formation of the independent Mexican State.

The Mexican independence brought about first of all changes in the composition of the class of rulers. Offices in administration, previously reserved for Spaniards born on the peninsula, were now made available for *Creoles*. What is more, there followed an enlargement of the sphere of influence of the Mexican class rulers, that is, certain decisions (about the army, foreign policy etc.), traditionally reserved for Spanish kings were now in the hands of local authorities. Nevertheless, in other respects the social structure of Mexico remained unchanged.

The Church still controlled the means of material and spiritual production:

The Church was a great political and economic power. It had survived the Indian-peasant rebellion in the second decade of the XIXth century and actually even benefited from gaining independence by Mexico. Not only did the church keep its wealth but it even increased it (the church owned more than two thirds of all cultivated land), maintained its judicial and tax privileges and remained a great banker and usurer. As a result of abolishment of the so-called royal patronage (the control over the appointment on higher offices in the church hierarchy), the church completely liberated itself from the control of secular authorities. Immensely wealthy princes of the church, most of them Spanish-born, had two thirds of the church income for their personal consumption (...) The church (like the army) was a state within the state, and, to put it more precisely, in fact it was a state which dominated the secular state. There is a meaningful fact: the bishop of Mexico had the annual income, which was almost four times higher than the salary of the president of the republic (Łepkowski 1977a: 285).

The Church consolidated its influence onto political structures, ensuring that the constitution proclaimed Catholicism as the state religion.

No changes were introduced into the structure of ownership of the Mexican economy, which still maintained its agrarian character. Large estates – the haciendas, dominated it. Having subordinated local political structures the landowners indirectly or directly (by means of private armed forces at their disposal) played the role of the class of rulers for the peasants under their control. In addition to large landowners there existed a class of middle owners (*rancheros*) mostly in the northern and central parts of the country. Because most of them owed money to the church, they supported the division of the estates belonging to the church and the oligarchy.

To sum up, what has been said so far, it is reasonable to claim that after gaining independence Mexican society continued to be a supra-class society. In the social structure of the country we can distinguish the class of priest-owners, and class of

owners transforming into double class of owners—rulers and a single class of rulers. In some regions of Mexico there existed the single class of owners depended on the class of priests—owners. The weight of the supra-class connections made the working of the parliamentary democracy impossible, notwithstanding the provisions of the constitution adopted after the severance of ties with Spain. The country bogged down in anarchy and its political system was shaken by numerous rebellions and coup d'états. Within two years 1838–1840 thirty uprising and revolts broke out. Forty heads of state stepped into and out of office in the first 20 years of independence. Only two of them relinquished power in a peaceful manner. Rigging local and national elections became common practice. The lost war with the USA, in which Mexico lost 51% of its territory, was the ultimate symptom of the crisis of institutions in the Mexican State (Łepkowski 1986: 222–33; Sinkin 1979: 5).

The struggle for the abolishment of supra-class structures was the focal point of history of Mexico in the XIXth century. The reforms of Benito Juarez 1855–1857 should be interpreted from such a perspective. It is in this period that the jurisdiction of church courts was curtailed, the law safeguarding the freedom of press passed, activities of Jesuit order banned and the church legally obliged to administering sacraments to the poor and burying them without any charges. In 1856 the Lerda Law provided for the sale of estates belonging to the church and non-religious associations and civic groups. Although the law was intended to stimulate the growth of the middle class, the sale involved not only church estates but also the so-called *ejidos* – that is common land used by Indian villages. Yet, ignorant of real value of land, the Indians sold it for a farthing, being accustomed only to their natural economy in which money did not have wide circulation. Consequently, Lerda's reforms did not contribute to the growth of the middle class. The groups which benefited from them were principally land speculators and the oligarchy of landowners, which before the 1910–1917 revolution accounted for 1% of the total population of the country and accumulated 85% of the cultivated land. The protracted civil war and the struggle with the French intervention were the price Mexico had to pay for Juarez-Lerda reforms.

The liberal reforms of 1855–1857 can be understood as abolishment of the supra-class social structure. The sale of land belonging to the church meant transformation of class of priest—owners into single class of priests. As a result of this process a class society emerged, however, in authoritarian version. During his rule, Díaz ended long-lasting conflict with church and received support of landowners, which in exchange for political support in expropriation of Indian communities from lands resigned from playing autonomous political role. This stabilisation of political rule in Mexico was occupied, however, by economical polarisation of society. When Mexico gained independence Indian communities possessed about 49% of lands. When Díaz's dictatorship fell down in 1910 only 5% of Indian communities their possessed lands. Before revolution the great landowners forming 1% of society possessed 85% of arable lands (Katz 1986: 48).

*The Collapse of Real Socialism in Poland*

The collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe will be analysed using the example of Poland – the country in which the resistance to the socialistic system had the largest scope and which pioneered the process of change in central Europe in 1989 (Siegel 1997).

After 1989 there occurred a complete collapse of the monopoly of the Marxist ideology of the PZPR (Polish United Workers' Party). The restoration of the plurality of political views has created conditions in which it is difficult to characterise the Polish society as the system of the tripartite class rule.

The most important change, however, that is the emergence of new authoritarian social structures at the shadow line between the state-run economy and former party-state apparatus as well as on the shadow line between the Roman Catholic church and the political system now taking shape. These are the factors, which are bound to affect the long-term evolution of the Polish society.

In the domain of economy, ideologically motivated obstacles to the development of free enterprise have already been completely dismantled. Yet, the structure of private ownership emerging after 1989 has been influenced to a large extent by the former socialistic structures, in which the economy was subordinated to the political interests of the ruling party. The so-called 'enfranchisement of *nomenklatura*' (former *appartchiks* – members of PZPR's apparatus) should be interpreted from such a perspective. The 'enfranchisement of *nomenklatura*' is a social process defined as "the transfer of current political privileges resulting from the position in the administrative hierarchy of the power apparatus into economic capital" (Strzałkowski 1994: 349).

In the political domain there occurred a complete restoration of political and ideological pluralism combined with democratisation of the political system. On the one hand, this process took place as a result of the introduction of democratic procedures into the communist party (which in the meantime changed its name into social democracy as it used to be called at the beginning of the XXth century) and, on the other hand, as a result of introduction of political elite of the former anticommunist opposition into the official ruling structures Brzechczyn (1993a). A new phenomenon in the political domain has been the emergence of the so-called 'religious state', which is characterised by the growing involvement of the Roman Catholic church in political life of the country. The influence of the church is based on the increasing spiritual dependence on the church of the right-wing parties having their origins in the Solidarity movement. Both of those two parallel social processes will be presented below.

In order to fully understand the peculiarities of the emergence of capitalism by means of appropriation of the national economy by the party-appointed officers, or the *nomenklatura*, one should first analyse the standard process of development of private property. A typical entrepreneur encounters three selection thresholds, first of them

being the capital indispensable to start the operation of his enterprise. Only an individual who overcomes this obstacle, that is who will save the money, borrow it from his acquaintances, win it on the lottery etc. can do business on his own.

Since the owner–beginner has in most cases a very modest capital, he belongs to the social stratum of petty owners. His personal talents for successful investment, risk-taking as well as pure luck determine whether he will increase his wealth and advance to become a member of the stratum of middle owners or, alternatively, whether he will remain a petty owner for ever. The advancement from the first stratum of owners to the second one is the second threshold of selection.

And again, correct economical judgements and decisions determine exclusively whether our owner will clear the third selection threshold and enter the stratum of large owners or, alternatively remain a middle owner for ever. In the system of liberal democracy the relation between owners and the political power boils down principally to relations between large owners and the political power. The first two selection thresholds, having been based on purely economic mechanisms, have to be cleared by the owners on their own, without any support from the political power.

The path to capitalism followed by the *nomenklatura* shows a number of peculiar abnormalities. First of all, the first selection threshold is missing altogether, and this is the most important one, since its clearance is a precondition of entering the ranks of the class of owners. After 1989, some members of the party–state apparatus gained control over state-owned means of production using exclusively their political influence, that is without investing any financial capital (even completely negligible in comparison with the appropriated property). Secondly, as a rule, members of the *nomenklatura* succeed in dodging the second selection threshold, which is supposed to decide to which stratum of the class of owners they will belong – the petty or the middle one. Owing to their political position, they have taken control of such capital, which will give them the advantage over petty owners and ensures that they become the middle owners at the very outset. The dodging of the second threshold results not only in the acceleration of the whole process in comparison with the standard path of advancement, but it also determines its profoundly pathological character. This is because in the initial stage the owner learns how to do business from his own mistakes. Threatened by the financial loss he learns to make correct economic decisions as well as takes investment risks in order to overtake his competitors. The *nomenklatura* owner who does not command such skills in his later business activities will always depend on the state and on his connections with the state-owned sector of the national economy.

Based on numerous press articles and academic research, one can get an insight into the operation of the so called ‘*nomenklatura* companies’ (e.g. Łoś & Zybertowicz 2001: 165–72; Skarżyński 1990; Staniszkis 1991; Tittenbrun 1992: 142–63). Shareholders of such companies are recruited from among the ranks of the officers of the state apparatus. Having invested negligible financial capital they gain actual control of large chunks of state property. By concluding contracts with a state-owned

enterprise the *nomenklatura* company took control of some state-owned premises, which was disguised as a lease or transfer of property rights. The state property thus controlled could include office or warehouse space, know-how and even whole production lines. By operating in the same line of business as the mother company the *nomenklatura* company intercepted some of the latter's orders, contracts and customers, which also implied the profits. In most cases, however, the *nomenklatura* companies acted only as parasitic intermediaries without being involved in actual manufacturing process. Their profits were made on the were drawn from serving as a middleman between state-owned enterprises which formerly maintained direct contact with each other. *Nomenklatura* companies created thus a path of transfer of capital from state-owned to private-owned sector of the economy. Such a transfer could not have been possible if the individuals responsible for it had not been able to command sufficient political influence to safeguard the security and stability of the whole process.

The above-described process became particularly widespread in the years 1988–1991. According the report of the Supreme Chamber of Audit (NIK) only in the period between 1 January 1989 and 15 November 1989 as many as 1539 *nomenklatura* companies were established (Skarżyński 1990). All in all, there were three thousand enterprises of this kind operating in Poland in 1989 (MK 1989). The companies' shares were in hands of members of the lower and middle levels of the party–state apparatus. The above-mentioned SCA (NIK) report confirms the claim that members of different levels in the *nomenklatura* participated in such enterprises on a massive scale. In the managing boards of the 1539 cross-examined *nomenklatura* companies there were 703 top managers of factories, 304 middle-level managers and 304 accountants general, 580 company presidents, 80 PZPR officials, 57 city mayors, 9 voivodes or their deputies, 38 directors of departments in Voivodeship Offices (Skarżyński 1990).

The appropriation of public property by the *nomenklatura* could not have taken place without the silent approval of the political elites tracing their roots to the Solidarity movement. Financing of presidential campaigns such Solidarity politicians as Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Lech Wałęsa by some *nomenklatura* companies is symptomatic of the extent of the *nomenklatura* connections (Kowalczyk 1990: 3). The process of profiteering from privileged political positions in order to accumulate capital and become private owners can be observed also among the elites of the Solidarity movement. However, the latter phenomenon is far less common than the appropriation of state property by the *nomenklatura* and the Solidarity camp owed its influence to other factors.

It is due to peculiar features of process of emergence of capitalism through the appropriation of public property by the *nomenklatura* that the close connections between people who occupy positions in the hierarchy of power and people who hold positions in the economy are not severed when the latter cease to be member of power hierarchy. To the contrary, such connections not only continue but even grow. This

process of self-reproduction of the system of ties and interdependencies between the domain of politics and the domain of economy also influences rules of operation on the market which seem to permanently favour establishment capitalists (that is those who influence or exercise political power) and hampers the process of growth of ownership in a standard manner. Moreover, the system of ties hinders the standard way of capitalism formation and creates ground for corruption.

Another feature characteristic of the period of transformation in Poland are the phenomena occurring on the shadow line between the spiritual and the political domain of social life in Poland. Since this is a problem of very delicate nature and has not yet become a subject to more profound empirical studies and theoretical analyses what shall be presented here is bound to be only a tentative outline of the problem which is aimed at pinpointing social mechanisms operating currently in Polish society rather than a presentation of empirically supported statements.

As was mentioned before, three separate levels can be distinguished in the structure of political life: material, institutional and the level of social consciousness. In order to function, a party must dispose of certain material means such as offices, telephone lines, fax machines, lecture halls etc. The party must also have a certain organisational structure extending across the country and all social groups. Finally, the party must have a political program, which addresses the needs of the electorate.

The restoration of political life in Poland took place simultaneously on all the three levels. Since the process of de-communisation and screening for secret police agents did not take place in Poland, the social democratic party, which traces its roots directly to the PZPR had at the very start an enormous advantage over the right-wing parties tracing their roots to the Solidarity movement. First of all, social democracy got hold of part of the property left by the PZPR, which was considerably diminished, but nevertheless significant enough to give it a lead before any right-wing party. Moreover, social democracy maintained the PZPR organisational structure extending across all the country as well as the core of its ideology. Social democracy also had connections with the business circles tracing their roots to the old *nomenklatura*, which provided financial support in election campaigns as well as financial aid from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Right-wing parties received no support of that kind. Therefore, the Catholic Church became their natural ally. The Church could lend its buildings for meetings and lectures, the Church also had the whole network of parishes, which could be used as channels of distribution of leaflets and posters. In addition to that the Church had a recognised ideology, the Catholic social teaching, which the right-wing parties could fall back on, in case they failed to come up with appealing political programs of their own.

The support provided by the Church to right-wing parties has increased their political appeal, which is very important in a situation of very strong competition on the political scene. As far as the ideological sphere is concerned, the right-wing

parties do not need to arduously work out their own political programs. Relying on the Catholic social teaching, they seem to offer a very appealing program to reach their potential electorate. As was mentioned before, the parties can also take advantage of the extensive network of parishes in order to distribute leaflets and posters. And last but not least, what helps them to curry favour with the electorate is the official and unofficial commitment of Church officials and Church means of spiritual production for promoting right-wing groups and their candidates. A characteristic phenomenon which seems to best characterise the involvement of the Church in the political life of the third Republic of Poland was the practice of 'giving tips' to the believers by the clergy while delivering sermons about the candidates their parishioners should support.

What are the advantages of this state of affairs from the perspective of the Church? The church hierarchy seems to be the stronger partner in this alliance. Programs offered by right-wing parties include elements ranging from vague proclamations of support for the Catholic social teaching to the programs envisaging the creation of a religious state (The Catholic State for the Polish People). As such they no doubt reflect the growing influence of the Church in the sphere of politics.

First of all, the Catholic Church is the sole denomination guaranteed to play a major role in the official life of the country. All anniversaries of historic events and state holidays usually take the character of church–state holidays. Elements of Catholic rites have become part of the official ceremony in the army, obligatory for all soldiers, no matter what their actual religious affiliation is. Frequently, the demands of the Church such as introduction of religious instruction into schools or the ratification of the concordat are met and implemented with no respect given to the procedures of a democratic state. In a few cases the city councils of some Polish cities proclaimed Catholic saints as the city holy patrons. Sometimes Church officials play the role of mediators in disputes between local communities and their authorities (and often local authorities themselves suggest choosing Church officials for mediation). All this proves that certain social institutions in Poland still malfunction, and the Church, which takes over part of their functions, is perceived as a state-like institution. Therefore, the supremacy of the Catholic Church over other denominations (e.g. Protestant or Orthodox) is growing. Other denominations cannot exert such influence on state authorities because they have smaller number of believers (Ramet 1991: 260–1).

To sum up the above section, it can be said that the collapse of the triple rule system in Poland does not lead to class balanced society, but initiated development of two new authoritarian social structures. The first structure grows on the shade-line between property and political power and the other – on the shadow-line between culture and politics. The initial authoritarian structure came into being as the officials of the PZPR abused their political position in the hierarchy of power in order to accumulate capital, appropriate public property and establish terms of trade which would favouring them in the state-run economy. The necessary condition for

emergence of *nomenklatura*-type ownership is social support forced by the political system.

The other authoritarian structure comes into being as a result of the alliance of certain a section of political elites with the Roman Catholic Church. The alliance with the Church is an important argument for the group of politicians tracing their roots to Solidarity in the time of tough competition with the postcommunist camp which has ties to the *nomenklatura* owners. This alliance gives the Church ample opportunity for participation in public life of the country, and thus it strengthens the sphere of spiritual influence of the Church. This structure can be compared with an authoritarian social structure in a theocratic version. In this case, support provided by the Church to the right-wing parties is a precondition of political influence of these parties among the electorate.

The dynamics of social development in years 1993–2001 made the two structures mutually strengthen each other at the expense of civic society (that is of the social structure consisting of three separate classes). The fear that the economy may be dominated by the *nomenklatura* induced part of the electorate cast their ballots for those who opposed such danger most vehemently, that is political parties connected with the church (mainly AWS – Solidarity Electoral Action). On the other hand, the fear of clericalisation of the state made a considerable part of the electorate cast their votes for the most powerful opponents of a clerical state, that is political parties connected with the *nomenklatura* business circles and the direct inheritors of the PZPR (mainly SLD – the Alliance of Democratic Left).

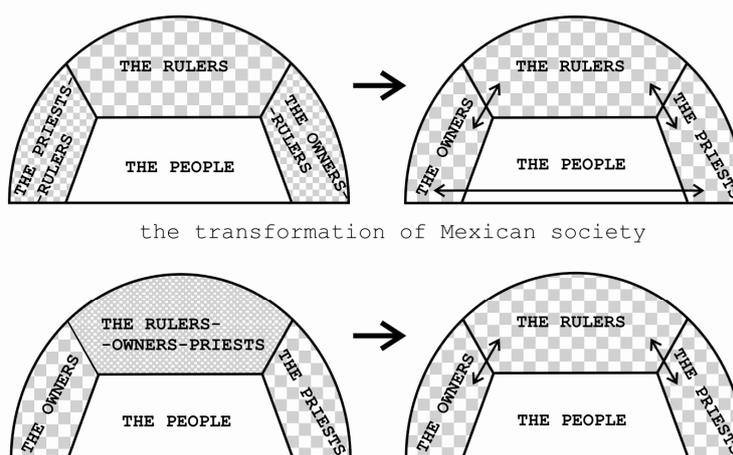


Figure 5 Transformation of Mexican and Polish society

## VI. Conclusions

The societies in Poland and Mexico (or, to put it in wider terms: the societies in Latin America and Eastern Europe provided that the presented models of social structure of these countries properly grasp social systems emerged in these geographical regions) were both supra-class societies. In Poland, real socialism was the system of triple class rule in which one class had control over the means of production, coercion and spiritual production. Apart it, one should also distinguish a single class of priests (Roman Catholic Church) and the class of petty owners (peasants and artisans). Slightly less cumulated class divisions were in Mexico. There, beside the single class of rulers existed two double classes of owners–rulers and priests–owners. In the course of the XVIIth century the class of owners–rulers was transforming into single class of owners staying in class alliance with rulers. Moreover, both societies were dependent on external decision making forces: Mexico on Spain and Poland on the Soviet Union, both of whom actively contributed to the rise of supra-class social structures in the subordinated countries.

In the first phase, social transformations meant that the subordinated supra-class societies changed into independent supra-class societies. In Mexico, however, the direct transition from the supra-class society into a balanced class society was not possible. After gaining independence by Mexico, the double class of priests–owners became stronger and class of owners even transformed into the double class of owners–rulers. Abolishment of these supra-class structures occurred during Juraez's reforms. As their consequence, the class society in authoritarian version emerged. At that time – as the history of this country showed – parliamentary democracy, if introduced, takes on degenerated forms or it might disappear altogether. The reason for that is that parliamentary democracy is viable only in a society with balanced class structures and never alongside supra-class or class structures in authoritarian version. Therefore, one may put question on future of parliamentary democracy in Poland, which is shaped by authoritarian structures combining political and spiritual rule and economical and political domination.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall Francis Fukuyama came forward with his celebrated proposition about the 'end of history'. He claimed that the only ideological opponent of liberal democracy vanished with the fall of communism. The introduction of liberal parliamentary democracies in Eastern European countries was to crown the progress of history because – as Fukuyama argued – this system was to bring the greatest degree of equality and prosperity to the largest number of people. Political experience of Latin American countries shows, however, that parliamentary democracy is a very fragile political system. Its functioning and, what is more, its stability depends on the social contexts in which it exists. Therefore, it is not a pointless to ask about the future of Eastern Europe. The recent examples of Albania, Belorussia, post-soviet societies of Central Asia and to some extent of Ukraine (Brzechczyn 2003) show that it is possible to halt (if not to push back) the processes

of democratisation. Is it reasonable then to expect that the parliamentary democracy may be heading for a crisis if not wholesale degeneration in Poland and on a wider scale all over Eastern Europe?

The answer to this question depends on whether authoritarian social structures will dominate social life in Poland and exert its negative influence on functioning of the parliamentary democracy. There are many facts indicating that democratic system in Poland does not satisfy Western standards (Brzechczyn 1997, 1998a). Political class efficiently blocked lustration which like in Eastern Germany and the Czech Republic revealed the links of public figures with communist secret police. In the consequence, politicians openly involved in scandals and rockets still take part in public life without any obstacles. Electoral law gives advantages to big political blocs. What is more, these kind of legal regulations are applied to elections on the local level. Till the present day the reprivatisation is postponed in Poland and the privatisation of the national property does not lead into emergence of an independent class of owners which would be able to balance the influence of the state apparatus. This process has a form of distribution of shares among many small shareholders, which fits social interest of the class of rulers because petty owners are unable to control the state.

There is a chance that civilisation factors, which have not yet been precisely analysed within the framework of non-Marxian historical materialism, may also influence the situation in this region. First of all Latin America and Eastern Europe have different types of economies. South America relied on agrarian economy, while Eastern Europe is based on industry. The demands of modern global economy may shorten the transition period in Eastern Europe. Moreover, factors of social nature such as social consciousness, education, personality types and culture, may also play a role. And last but not least, the inclusion of Poland into larger structures of civilisation, that is the European Community and the NATO alliance may have a bearing on the future of the democratic system in this country. If these factors fail to overcome authoritarian influences, they may considerably weaken them and shorten the time of their existence. In any case, it seems justifiable to say that, contrary to what Fukuyama professed, the history of Eastern Europe has not ended yet, and many challenges are still ahead.

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