

Michał J. Zacharias

Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz

Intelligentsia and a *new class*. Political elites according to Jan Waław Machajski and Milovan Djilas

Zarys treści: Milovan Đilas był wybitnym krytykiem i analitykiem tzw. nowej klasy, a więc biurokracji politycznej powstałej w łonie partii komunistycznej. Przed Đilasem najbardziej znanym przedstawicielem bardzo podobnego nurtu w myśli politycznej i społecznej był na gruncie polskim Jan Waław Machajski (1866–1926). Zdaniem Machajskiego w nowym “socjalistycznym” ustroju inteligencja odgrywałaby podobną rolę jak ta, którą Đilas przypisał nowej klasie, a więc rolę elity bezwzględnie dbającej wyłącznie o własne interesy. Porównanie oddziaływania i roli politycznej elit rządzących w “socjalizmie” w ujęciu Machajskiego i Đilasa jest głównym celem autora niniejszego artykułu.

Outline of content: Milovan Djilas was a distinguished critic and analyst of the so-called new class, that is the political bureaucracy created within the communist party. Before Djilas, the best-known representative of a very similar trend in political and social thought in Poland was Jan Waław Machajski (1866–1926). According to Machajski, in the new “socialist” regime intelligentsia would fulfil a role similar to that which Djilas attributed to the new class: the role of an elite looking exclusively after its own interests. The main objective of the author of this article is to compare the impact and political role of governing elites in “socialism” as interpreted by Machajski and by Djilas.

Słowa kluczowe: Jan Waław Machajski, Milovan Đilas, Nikołaj Bucharin, Michaił Bakunin, Lew Trocki, Vilfredo Pareto, “nowa klasa”, inteligencja, elity polityczne w Jugosławii, elity polityczne w PRL, partie socjalistyczne i socjaldemokratyczne

Keywords: Jan Waław Machajski, Milovan Djilas, Nikolai Bukharin, Mikhail Bakunin, Leon Trotsky, Vilfredo Pareto, “new class”, intelligentsia, political elites in Yugoslavia, political elites in the Polish People’s Republic, socialist and social democratic parties.

It is rare for great historical processes to be one-dimensional. Wherever we are dealing with large changes, especially structural ones, we can generally conclude that they are influenced by a variety of factors: political, cultural, social, economic,

or technological. The latter are usually linked with the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. They prompt remarks on the vast, rapid shift in the areas of textile industry, steel industry, metallurgy and means of communication. It took place due to a real flurry of inventions and, related to them, new, previously unknown methods of production.¹

There is, however, no doubt that the Industrial Revolution also included phenomena which were admittedly a result of the impact of new technologies, but certainly reached beyond them. In the various definitions of the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, there is an emphasis on, aside from technological changes, the great transformations in the “economic, social and cultural” relations started “in England and Scotland”; the transformations involved “a transition from an economy based on agriculture and manufacturing or craft, to one based mainly on mechanical factory production on a large scale”.²

In such definitions, a good example of which is the above, we should highlight the emphasis placed on rapid and profound transformations in the system of social relations. This is due to the fact that the new technologies inevitably had to imply stimulating and accelerating the evolution, or indeed, given the speed of this process – revolution in social structures. And so, for example, owners of manufactures or craft workshops either modernised their enterprises by acquiring or gaining access to new means of production or, underestimating the importance of the then new high technologies or else unable to use them adequately, lost their chance and gave way to new proprietors who appreciated and skilfully used them, building modern factories, mines, steel mills, metallurgical works, transport companies, etc.

As a result, this group of owners of new, modernised facilities, seeds of contemporary, mechanised and automated industry, together with the great financiers – the group, which thanks to its size and financial resources was also a *de facto* new social phenomenon, began to create a certain kind of influential *new class*.³ It gained more and more influence on the course of economic, social and political matters, and an increasing significance in cultural life – initially in the UK, and over time also in other Western countries. The existing social systems and structures, consisting of smaller or larger landowners, i.e. the nobility and aristoc-

¹ As early as in 1733, John Kay constructed a weaving device (the flying shuttle). It revolutionised the production process in weaving, as did the so-called spinning jenny in the spinning industry, invented by James Hargreaves in 1764. The beginnings of railway communication involve the construction of the locomotive engine by George Stevenson in the years 1814–1825, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_Revolution (accessed: 15 November 2017). The issue of the Industrial Revolution in the UK naturally boasts enormous literature. It would be difficult to quote it in its entirety for the purposes of a modest article. Let us mention only the work by M. Koczyński, *Ludzie i technika. Szkice z dziejów cywilizacji przemysłowej*, Warszawa, 2009.

² Ibid.

³ Of course, not “new” in the meaning Milovan Djilas gave this group. In this case it refers to the bourgeoisie, which in the 19th century was experiencing rapid growth.

racy, the clergy, the different groups and categories of urban population and no less diverse sections of the rural population⁴ were subject to significant, sometimes rapid changes and transformations. Owing to the industrial revolution, social groups, layers or classes which until then did not exist at all or existed only in seed form began cropping up at an unprecedented rate. Before this revolution began, they had not influenced in any fundamental way the shape of the existing social structures in Europe or in the British colonies in the New World, which in time became the United States of America.

It should be emphatically pointed out that this violent, extremely fast-paced formation of new social layers and classes was one of the particular, significant traits and at the same time consequences of the first, large industrial revolution. The existing social groups, strata and statuses formed over whole centuries, and lasted throughout whole centuries – with smaller or larger modifications, dominating in the system which with regard to Middle Ages could, with some simplification, be called feudal.⁵ Meanwhile, in the process and as a result of the Industrial Revolution, which began in Great Britain, in less than a few decades or, at most, just over a century, the modern⁶ bourgeoisie is created, that is very rich townsmen with large capital and a variety of means of production at their disposal. It is also the time when the intelligentsia⁷ and the large-industry working class emerge.⁸ Inevitably, this will cause quick and sudden transformations, and more importantly the disappearance of feudalism, replaced with a new, capitalist system. This will cause a variety of social, political and cultural consequences. The

⁴ We should bear in mind that the position of peasants in different countries varied. While in the West in the 19th century the rural population was typically free, in the so-called Kingdom of Poland, for instance, the status of the Polish peasant until the 1860s resembled in fact that of American slaves. Abolition of slavery in the United States occurred in 1863, while enfranchisement of peasants in the Kingdom of Poland, combined with the abolition of serfdom and granting personal freedom – in 1864. The situation of the peasants until then was undoubtedly one of the causes of the backwardness of the Polish lands. It has recently been described by Jan Sowa, cf. *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą*, Kraków, 2011; *Wielki inny nie istnieje – to my nim jesteśmy! Z Janem Sową rozmawia Krystian Szadkowski*, www.praktyka-teoretyczna.pl/jan-sowa-krystian-szadkowski-wielki-inni-nie-istnieje-to-my-nim-jestemy (accessed: 18 November 2016).

⁵ This simplification arises from the fact that the classical, traditional definition of feudalism used in historical sciences is different from the Marxist understanding, in which feudalism is a socio-economic formation that follows slavery, and precedes capitalism, details: <https://wikipedia.org/wiki/Feudalizm> (accessed: 18 November 2016).

⁶ Modern in the sense that it drew profits not from manual work in workshops but in factories, where apart from the human factor, machines and gradual automation of the production process became a deciding element.

⁷ The origins of this social group date back to earlier centuries, but as a compact, defined social group intelligentsia developed in the 19th century, mainly in Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe (Russia, Poland), culturally and civilisationally lagging behind the western part of the continent.

⁸ Large-industry, that is employed in large industrial enterprises using machines – unlike manufactures, and working in an increasingly automated production process.

latter should be linked to the emergence of a number of modern ideologies, not irrelevant to the content of this article.

Over time, the role of various ideologies will become, as it were, a product of the gravity of social and political issues, increasingly more noticeable and important with the progress of the Industrial Revolution and the formation of new strata and classes. It will be a natural, logical course for these groups to try and obtain the best material status, prestige and political influence for themselves. They will somehow have to justify, clarify, and articulate their goals and aspirations. In an obvious way this will encourage the formation of various ideologies, as well as friction, tension, conflict of interest and struggle of the new social and political groups – both among themselves, and with the representatives of the disappearing feudal system.

One other phenomenon will be a factor favouring the formation of modern ideologies. After all, among the most sensitive people, those who attempt to think in general social categories rather than solely about their own, narrow, selfish personal or collective pursuits, must have asked themselves the question of how to achieve, in the face of fundamental technological, economic, social, political, and to a large extent also mental and cultural shift, at least a partial reconciliation of the objectives of the different strata and classes, how to shape a system that would be optimal for the most disadvantaged; indeed, that would be best for all social groups whose interests, legitimate in one way or another although usually conflicting, could not be negated.

As a result of all of the above factors, starting from at least mid-nineteenth century, we will deal with the formation of a vast array of ideas, utopias, theories and ideologies; somewhat conventionally, metaphorically paraphrasing a well-known phrase we would see the “beginning of an age of ideologies”,⁹ also ones whose practical application could, or even had to lead to the use of extremely violent, drastic measures. In other words, what the protagonists of this article, Jan Waclaw Machajski (1866–1926) and Milovan Djilas (1911–1995) warned against and criticised. Chronologically their work, particularly Djilas’s, relating also or perhaps primarily to the issues of political elites, is distant from the time of the aforementioned Industrial Revolution. However, this does not change the obvious fact that the problems and dilemmas it initiated were current in the lifetime of both the Polish and the Yugoslavian thinker. It is during the expansion, as well as specific impact, of industrial economy and the system commonly known as capitalist that the contemporary, one could say – “modern”, oppressive political systems began to appear, with time coming to be known as authoritarian and totalitarian; so did

⁹ I am referring to a paraphrase of the famous work by Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, Harvard University Press. Some elements of this way of thinking are also found in the works of the prominent French thinker Raymond Aron (*L’Opium des intellectuels*, Paris, 1955). Cf. the interesting reflections on the subject by the Polish expert Marcin Król, *Koniec wieku ideologii*, www.newsweek.pl/europa/koniec-wieku-ideologii, 44602,1,1.html (accessed: 18 November 2016).

the corresponding elites, which, especially after the victory of communism, fascism and Nazism, should perhaps be placed between quotation marks.

Increasingly common reflections about elites, noticeable mainly since the middle or the end of the nineteenth century, no doubt remained closely linked with the emerging and strongly influential political and ideological currents: democratic, socialist, social democratic, and at the other extreme – nationalist or conservative. Sometimes they were also connected with other currents and trends represented e.g. by anarchists subscribing to the view that the state as such, and therefore governing groups, have no use. On the contrary, they should be destroyed and thus seeds of any exploitation and enslavement would be eliminated. In addition, we should note that some emerging theories or ideologies often negated democracy as such, or some of its aspects, usually those which today we call human rights, closely related to one other, so far not mentioned theory, ideology and political movement: liberalism. In this whole layout of the relations and dependencies, the position of Marxism was rather particular, as a movement which in any case was a fraction of the more widely understood socialism or social democracy. Marxists had clear tendencies towards negating the democratic system as a significant political value, on the other hand their revolutionary views, evolving in the direction of pursuing the dictatorship of the proletariat, in reality a kind of revolutionary political elite completely independent from these or other groups or sections of the society, had to raise objections not only among conservatives, liberals, or democrats, but also reformist socialists and social democrats, as well as anarchists, hostile towards any elites. Representatives of the various conservative and right-wing tendencies stressed the meaning and importance of maintaining the latter, in opposition to many groups and ideological trends and the corresponding movements and political groups listed in this paper.

Right-wing, conservative writers, researchers and ideologists as a rule spoke and wrote about the inevitability of the emergence and existence of wealth and power elites in every regime, every political and social system. In their understanding, a fight with elites would be, colloquially speaking, the proverbial fight against windmills, a fool's errand. The creators of the elite theory representing the above circles were two Italian scholars: Gaetano Mosca (1857–1941) and Vilfredo Pareto (1847–1923). The first claimed that the most important agent of the political, social and economic life is always the power exercised by a minority. Regardless of the degree of democracy in a given system, a minority uses its social position, influences and material resources, and seizes power through manipulation. Indeed, as a result of various circumstances it may lose power, but its place is taken by another minority, replacing it at the helm. Mosca calls any such minority a ruling class, and is the first to describe it as elite. It creates a programme, distributes it in the society and takes over power.¹⁰

¹⁰ *Teoria elit*, [www.eduteka.pl/doc/teoria elit](http://www.eduteka.pl/doc/teoria_elit) (accessed: 22 October 2016; now the text has been removed).

Pareto developed Mosca's views. Using as his starting point the belief about natural inequalities among people, the selection processes in every society, hierarchical system of social relations, diversity in terms of individuals' adaptation to conditions in which they exist, Pareto distinguished elites in every area of life, especially power elites. In his opinion, any power elite is a kind of "a group in some respects granted an advantage over other groups within that same activity".¹¹

In order to operate smoothly, the elite must eliminate weaker units from its midst, those unable to carry out the tasks to which they have been called. Naturally, it must also be open to the influx of "fresh blood", that is individuals who with their capabilities, merits and attributes can substitute the, as we might call them, "losers" and contribute to the elite's efficient actions in accordance with its goals. Otherwise, it undergoes degeneration and usually, often by force, revolution; it is replaced by other governing groups, other power elites. This makes history and politics a "circulation of elites", a replacement of existing elites by subsequent ones. Elites use various ideologies as well as strength, which is the basis for the exercise of power. However, it should be applied with caution, avoiding violence or blind action, which in fact prove the loss of strength and contribute to the subjects' hatred towards their rulers, and ultimately to the loss of authority and the emergence of a counter-elite which uses and fans the flame of social dissatisfaction, and in one way or another acquires power.¹²

There is probably no need to convince anyone that this way of reasoning, *ex definitione* assuming dominance of the stronger over the weaker, had to be alien to Milovan Djilas, especially in the period when he was not yet a member of the communist power centre in Yugoslavia, and so from the start of 1954.¹³ This is even more relevant, it seems, to Jan Waclaw Machajski, less known than Djilas – which is why I will dedicate more time to him in this article than to the Yugoslavian theoretician – but dealing with related issues, and to some extent reaching similar, albeit not identical conclusions (formulated at an earlier date), regarding the formation, functioning and impact on social development of oppressive, despotic centres of power. We could undoubtedly consider Machajski, in his youth a friend of the excellent writer Stefan Żeromski (1864–1925), to some extent the forerunner of the thought which found most complete expression in Djilas's reflections of the *new class*. We could only add that he was neither the first nor the only one.

¹¹ A. Hertz, "Socjologia Vilfredo Pareto i teoria elit", in: id., *Socjologia nieprzedawniona. Wybór publicystyki*, Warszawa, 1992, p. 79.

¹² R. Okraska, *Vilfredo Pareto I jego teoria elit*, adnikiel.republika.pl/pareto.htm (accessed: 22 October 2016), article in the journal *Royalista – pro Patria*, 1997, no. 22–23.

¹³ Previously, Djilas was a communist, one of the leaders and the most important ideologues, theorists and propagandists of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (later the League of Communists of Yugoslavia), cf. M.J. Zacharias, *Idee, utopie, rzeczywistość. Myśl polityczna Milovana Djilasa (1911–1995)*, Bydgoszcz, 2015, p. 13 f.

In 1985, almost thirty years after writing *The New Class*, Djilas will claim that when writing his most seminal work he was unaware that earlier thinkers had also used the term *new class* to describe the same phenomenon. He mentions the likes of the British philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), who had written that communism was a product of an elite, which he referred to as a *new class*.¹⁴

The Russian anarchist and thinker Mikhail Bakunin wrote similarly, except earlier on, criticising Karl Marx and Marxism. He claimed that the system proposed by the creator of *Capital* “will be a hierarchized and strongly centralised organism, in which the ruling apparatus will concentrate in its hands all the productive powers, creating a new, privileged stratum”. He added that “socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality. Freedom without socialism is privilege and injustice. A state shaped this way will exploit”. Any legislation, power and influence of the privileged, “official and entitled” governing as a result of “universal vote”, will lead only to the fact that these people will use their influences “in favour of the prevailing and exploitative minority, and against the interests of the vast, subjugated majority”.¹⁵

In Bakunin’s understanding, such predictions were associated with criticism of the state, as any state, even the most “republican and democratic, even pseudo-popular [...] invented by Mr. Marx, is in fact nothing else than an apparatus directing the masses from above, with the help of intelligentsia, that is a privileged minority which allegedly better understands the real interests of the people than the people themselves”.¹⁶

Similar concerns were voiced by the Russian revolutionary and communist Nikolai Bukharin (1888–1938), already after the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, as in the various Soviet groups still appearing in conditions of relative freedom of expression and action.¹⁷ Bukharin argued that as a result of the existing

¹⁴ Next to Russell, Djilas mentions Nikolai Bukharin and Nikolai Berdyaev as persons who also spoke of the existence, or the threat of emergence of a privileged stratum in the communist system, cf. M. Djilas, *Une société imparfaite. Le communisme désintégré*, Paris, 1969, p. 22; C.L.Sulzberger, *Paradise Regained. Memoir of a Rebel*, New York and London, 1985, p. 135. It would be difficult to state with full certainty whether Djilas indeed knew nothing about the fact that these people had written about a “new class”. He does not develop this thread, mentioning only that these authors were more “prophets than analysts”; Djilas, *Une société imparfaite*, p. 22. We have no other representations which could fully certify whether Djilas’s analysis of the “new class” were in fact the result of his own, original thought, or an extension of concepts created beforehand.

¹⁵ https://pl.wikiquote.org/wiki/Mikhail_Bakunin (accessed: 28 April 2016).

¹⁶ M. Bakunin, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 2, Warszawa, 1965, p. 197. It should be added that the imminent appearance of political elites exploiting the masses in every political system and each state led Bakunin to believe in the need for removing the institution of state, M. Drabiński, *Między Bakuninem a Marksem*, http://www.bakunin.pl/artty_drabinski.htm (accessed: 15 November 2017).

¹⁷ Cf. M.S. Shatz, *Jan Waclaw Machajski. A radical critic of the Russian intelligentsia and socialism*, full text available at <https://libcom.org/history/jan-waclaw-machajski-radical-critic-russian-intelligentsia-marshall-s-shatz>. In its online version, Shatz’s book has unnumbered pages, and therefore we cannot specify a page but can point to the relevant chapters the information comes from. These chapters

educational monopoly of the “upper classes” in the pre-revolutionary society, workers could not perform the necessary functions in the state themselves – technical, organisational or administrative. They were held by the previous intelligentsia, which presents a risk that it can transform into a “new class [...], a new social formation”. The phenomenon of combining the intelligentsia and a part of the communist party elite may occur, including also workers, but only those who are alienated, due to the functions they hold, from the working masses and culturally assimilated by the intelligentsia. As a result, “the emergence of a new class is not out of the question [...] while the working class becomes the exploited class”. To prevent this, it is necessary to educate workers as soon and as widely as possible, eliminating the opposition between those who know and those who do not know”.¹⁸ At this point, it should be noted that the concern that post-revolutionary nationalisation of the economy may bring not so much the workers’ liberation as the emergence of a new class exploiting the proletariat, in this case using the power apparatus, is visible also in the writings of the Polish philosopher, sociologist and social activist, Edward Abramowski (1868–1918).¹⁹

Similar predictions regarding the exploitation and enslavement of broad masses of society were also expressed by thinkers who, like Nikolai Berdyaev (1874–1948), showed socialist tendencies in their youth, going through e.g. a phase of the so-called “legal Marxism”,²⁰ in order to place themselves in conservative positions in their adulthood, in the case of Berdyaev – the position of Christian mysticism. The Russian philosopher claimed that the communist state is a creation of “the era of dictatorship”. This was not only a political and economic dictatorship, but also a dictatorship “over spirit, over conscience, over thought”.²¹ Such wording is

– which is rather unique – have their own Internet addresses. This refers to Chapter 7: Makhaevism After Machajski, <https://library-7-makhaevism-after-machajski> (accessed: 27 May 2016).

¹⁸ Н. Бухарин, *Пролетарская революция и культура*, Петроград 1923, pp. 43, 44, 47.

¹⁹ E. Abramowski, “Socjalizm a państwo”, in: id., *Pisma*, vol. 2, Warszawa, 1924, quoted from: K. Piskała, *Socjalizm jako spisek*, http://numery.praktykateoretyczna.pl/PT_nr6_2012_Roza_Luksemburg/PT6_2012_Dziedzictwo_Rozy_Luksemburg.pdf, p. 386, fn. 19. We should emphasise here with particular strength that Leon Trotsky became a vocal critic of the political bureaucracy of the party, which he called a “caste” after the 1917 revolution in Russia, except that he saw the elimination of the threat posed by this “caste” not in a departure from accomplishing the utopian vision of communism, like Djilas, but quite the contrary – he saw it in the victory of the revolution on a global scale, see L. Trocki, *Zdradzona rewolucja. Czym jest ZSRR i dokąd zmierza*, Pruszków, 1991; id., *Klasowy charakter państwa radzieckiego*, no place and date of publication.

²⁰ “Legal Marxism” was a stream of social thought based on the theory of Marxism, widespread in intelligentsia circles of St. Petersburg and Moscow at the turn of the twentieth century. Its representatives were mainly interested in the economic content of the theory of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, but cut themselves off from the political content of Marxism, i.e. class struggle and revolution. They believed capitalism to be a reformable system, giving in to progressive, peaceful transformations desired by the general public, https://zapytaj.onet.pl/encyklopedia/73570,,,legalny_marksizm,haslo.html.

²¹ M. Bierdiajew, *Źródła i sens rosyjskiego komunizmu*, Kęty, 2005, p. 123.

almost identical with the statements made by Djilas about the communist system presented in *The New Class*.²² Thinking of “socialist” solutions, Berdyaev wrote also that “attempts to materialise heaven on Earth lead to hell on Earth, to releasing the forces of evil, to hatred, mutual carnage, blood, rape and orgy [...]. Never in the history have dreamers’ expectations come true”. Djilas could have endorsed these claims, as a former Stalinist communist, and later a perceptive analyst and critic of communist system solutions;²³ apart from the fact that after breaking with Tito and Yugoslavian communists he professed and proclaimed democratic and socialist / social democratic views and had nothing to do with the conservative, broadly understood Christian social thought.

The social and political thought of Jan Waclaw Machajski undoubtedly fits into the above theoretical trend preceding Djilas’s reflections on the *new class*. The main foundations of this thought were formed while he was exiled by the Tsarist authorities to Siberia,²⁴ at the turn of the twentieth century,²⁵ and were supplemented by later publications.²⁶ For a long time, his person and work were not widely known, as a result of many circumstances: the unavailability of his texts, the condemnation of his views in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, the non-compliance of his theories with the official one, and the often very simplified, in fact simplistic interpretation of Marxism in the Polish People’s Republic and other “socialist” countries. The reception of Machajski’s thought was also not favoured due to more mundane reasons, e.g. the obvious defects of his writing style. As one of his

²² “More than anything else, an essential feature of modern communism is a new class of owners and exploiters [...] It is a particular type of power, which unifies in itself possession of ideas, institutions of governance, and property. In other words, it is a power which has become an aim in itself”; M. Djilas, *Nowa klasa. Analiza system komunistycznego*, New York, 1958, pp. 181, 182. In the future, Djilas would similarly capture the meaning of communism: the essence of each communism is a monopoly rule by the communist party. Communism is about having power, what is more, totalitarian power. Communism sees itself as a system fully authorised by the course of history to change and control not only the dependencies and behaviours of every human being as a political unit, but also what they read, what they like, their free time [...], their entire private time; from: “Djilas on Gorbachev. Milovan Djilas and George Urban in Conversation”, *Encounter* (November 1988).

²³ M. Bierdiajew, *O rosyjskiej rewolucji: Oskarżenie rosyjskiej inteligencji*, part I, <https://konserwatywizm.pl/mikolaj-bierdiajew-o-rosyjskiej-rewolucji-oskarzenie-rosyjskiej-inteligencji-cz-i/> (accessed: 15 November 2016). Djilas presented similar thoughts mainly in his two works: *Une société imparfaite, passim*; and *Of Prisons and Ideas*, Sam Diego–New York–London, 1986, *passim*.

²⁴ Cf. W. Machajski, *Życie i poglądy Wacława Machajskiego*, <http://www.przeklad-anarchistyczny.org/opracowania-historyczne/201-zycie-i-poglady-waclawa-machajskiego> (accessed: 15 November 2017); M.S. Shatz, *Jan Waclaw Machajski: A radical critic*, Chapter 1: Poland and Siberia, <https://libcom.org/library/chapter-1-poland-siberia> (accessed: 27 May 2016).

²⁵ Details: P. Laskowski, *Jan Waclaw Machajski: jasnowidz i prorok*, in: J.W. Machajski, *Pracownik umysłowy i inne pisma*, Warszawa, 2016, p. 12 f.

²⁶ Among others: J.W. Machajski, *Robotnik umysłowy 1911*, Zamość, 2012; J.W. Machajski, *Religia socjalistyczna a walka robotnicza*, <http://lewicowo.pl/religia-socjalistyczna-a-walka-robotnicza/> (accessed: 22 February 2016).

researchers aptly notes, “Machajski writes in a chaotic way, continually mixing plots, he lacks a clear and thought-out structure of arguments, and rhetorical effect is more important to him than precision of expression”. All of this means that even people familiar with “the language of the era and the contemporary socialist or anarchist literature” may have some difficulties digesting the thoughts and arguments of the author of *The Intellectual Worker*.²⁷ He undoubtedly lacks the qualities, precision and literary talent of Djilas.

It seems that some inconveniences related to the research of Machajski’s thoughts and theories are also linked with the fact that they elude straightforward categorisation into a wider intellectual and political tradition. Machajski expressed very specific political and theoretical views and convictions. Paradoxically, we could conclude that at the same time he fitted into and broke out of the thought patterns and preferred forms of action specific to the various offshoots of the socialist movement, and largely also the anarchist movement. On the one hand, he emphatically preached the need to carry out, one could say, “a proletarian revolution”, on the other, which could at least ostensibly seem a perversion – strongly disapproved of and fought against any form of socialism. He claimed that reformists and revisionists following indications of Eduard Bernstein or Karl Kautsky are deeply mistaken when they say and write that evolutionary processes occurring in capitalist states under the influence of social democrats can put an end to exploitation and improve the position of the working class, or more broadly the working masses in general. He condemned Bernstein’s visions of social progress, stating that with the growth of social democracy “in the minds of social democrats as a whole, the ‘ultimate goal’”,²⁸ that is revolution, the victory of socialist political relations moves further away and fades into “the obscurity of the coming centuries”. Marxist revolutionary visions²⁹ melt “without obstacles somewhere in the realm of dreams about the after-life”.³⁰

²⁷ Piskała, *Socjalizm jako spisek*, pp. 380–381.

²⁸ Machajski is referencing probably the most popular of Bernstein’s thoughts: “for what is usually understood as the ultimate goal of socialism, I have very little understanding and interest. The final goal, whatever it may be, is nothing to me; the movement is everything. And by movement I understand the general movement of society, i.e. social progress, as well as political and economic agitation and organisation for causing this progress”; E. Bernstein, *Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft, Die neue Zeit*, Jg. 16, Bd. 1 (1898), H. 18, p. 556, quoted from Laskowski, *Jan Waclaw Machajski*, fn. 7, p. 96.

²⁹ However, it is very rarely remembered that shortly before his death in 1895, one of the “classics” of Marxism, Friedrich Engels, admitted that the revolutionary upheavals he had prophesied together with Marx might not occur at all, and that socialism, instead of “on the barricades” would win “at the ballot box”, which was undoubtedly in line with the general, reformist and revisionist rules of Western socialists from Bernstein’s or Kautsky’s school of thought, cf. K. Marx, F. Engels, *Dzieła*, vol. 22, Warszawa, 1971, p. 522; R. Pipes, *Rewolucja rosyjska*, Warszawa, 1994, p. 275; Laskowski, *Jan Waclaw Machajski*, p. 26.

³⁰ Machajski, *Pracownik umysłowy*, p. 96.

Such statements did not, however, mean support for Marxist ideas. Machajski accuses orthodox Marxists of mistakenly diagnosing the crucial dividing line in the contemporary societies. Taking into consideration Marx's statements in *The Communist Manifesto*, they claim that they are shaped by an antagonism between the working class and the bourgeoisie – represented, after all, by a small group of owners of the means of production in the industry, financiers, and large landowners. According to Machajski, we should speak not only of antagonism “between capitalists and workers”, but also “between the proletarians and the entire ‘republican’ society”,³¹ in reality bourgeois and capitalist. It is this “continuously growing bourgeois society” which is the deadly enemy of the working class.³²

Ostensibly, this distinction between “bourgeoisie” and “bourgeois society” might seem artificial and irrelevant. In reality, as he writes, it was not the case. In his opinion, “bourgeois society” covered not only the aforementioned sections of bourgeoisie, but also other, the newly emerging social strata and groups. Above all the middle class, and, within it, the intelligentsia. Definitions of the latter of course vary, but Machajski does not provide his own, detailed and in-depth. He simply assumes that the members of intelligentsia are people dealing with and living off mental work, the so-called white-collar workers; “an entire army of white-collar workers”.³³ They perform hired labour and, importantly, do not own any means of production.

These two features could suggest that the position of the intelligentsia is the same as the workers', that they are a “white-collar” part of the broadly understood proletariat. However, such approach – claims Machajski – would be fundamentally wrong and inadequate. Justifying his position, he supports it to a large extent with the thought of Karl Marx. We should remember that the Polish thinker criticised and opposed the theories of the author of the *Capital* but in practice he repeatedly used his concepts, terms and theoretical categories. He claimed therefore that the intelligentsia lives off the so-called surplus value, that is from the resources which essentially arise from the sale of manufactured goods after the deduction of labour costs, and remain at the disposal of capitalists. These costs are negligible, as exploiting the workers the bourgeoisie only pays them minimum wages, which allows them to survive at a very low, hunger level. As a result, the bourgeoisie, that is the owners of the means of production, the industrialists, the financiers associated with them, and landowners have huge profits, surplus value, and this value pays for the work of white-collar workers, i.e. the intelligentsia. Under these conditions, the conflicts between the representatives of the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, if any occur, are only – as it could be colloquially said – “family quarrels”, as they are only concerned with the proportions in the division of profit from the

³¹ Ibid., p. 134.

³² Ibid., p. 194.

³³ Ibid., p. 202.

exploitation of workers. Therefore, the position of the intelligentsia has nothing to do with the situation of the latter. The intelligentsia is a separate social group which monopolises knowledge and education, unavailable to workers and more broadly to all the exploited strata. Like the bourgeois, Machajski juxtaposes them with the proletariat and related social groups. As a result, members of the intelligentsia are a part of a general, complex mechanism of exploiting the oppressed classes, a part of the middle class in the “bourgeois society”, “a constantly multiplying group of privileged mercenaries of capital”.³⁴ “[...] *By virtue of the fact that they have consumed [...] a certain amount of surplus value, in accordance with the logic of the thieving regime they acquire [...] the right to [...] retrieve, in the form of remuneration for education, the unpaid products of someone else’s work, the work of the proletariat*” (emphasis in the text). According to Machajski, this contradicts Marx’s thesis that “white-collar workers” live off not exploitation, “off the unpaid product of the proletarian’s work”, but “remuneration for their work”.³⁵ Along with other privileged groups of the “bourgeois society”, members of the intelligentsia inherit from one generation to another “specific knowledge and skills”, which gives them “specific hereditary power”,³⁶ exclusive right and opportunities to earn an education, and hence a high, privileged position in society. “[While] *the remaining millions have a hereditary monopoly [only] on the slave labour of their own hands* [emphasis in the text]”.³⁷

Machajski claims that in political terms the intelligentsia is a growing social force, a stratum aiming for emancipation – financial and political.³⁸ It aims to produce a system which will ensure its material existence and fairly adequate participation in power. It aims to the liquidation of autocracy in Russia, the victory of democracy and parliamentarism in the West, to the reconstruction of an independent Polish state. The latter is sought by Polish socialists and social democrats, with the Polish Socialist Party at the forefront.³⁹ In fact, their parties are to a large extent a political representation of the Polish “white-collar workers”. Regardless of the fact, Machajski writes, “that the reality dispels the shining hope for an outbreak of an independence revolution in Poland”, the Polish Socialist Party “distributes [...] countless pamphlets and articles about the paradise the Republic of Poland would be”.⁴⁰ However, aside from all those lofty slogans, the intelligentsia, in Machajski’s understanding, is only a caste, able to reproduce – as intelligentsia – owing to the resources snatched from the bourgeoisie, which

³⁴ Ibid., p. 197.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 202.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 196–197.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 202–203.

³⁸ M.S. Shatz, *Jan Waclaw Machajski: A radical critic*, Chapter 2: The “New Class”, <https://libcom.org/library/chapter-2-new-class> (accessed: 25 July 2016).

³⁹ Machajski, *Pracownik umysłowy*, p. 156 f.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 165.

are a part of profits derived from the exploitation of the most vulnerable social groups. A group who cares only of its own interests. The “white-collar workers” present in social-democratic parties politically manipulate workers, preventing them from “an attempt at a direct social coup”, as a “final liberation” is supposedly still impossible, “it requires a further political education of the working class [...] social democracy strikes revolutionary chords only where it is necessary to fight for a political freedom”,⁴¹ beneficial for the intelligentsia, but not bringing any benefits to the masses, or more broadly to all exploited strata.

In these conditions, according to Machajski, socialist ideologies, including Marxism, can only be intelligentsia ideologies, in no case can they be workers’ ideologies. Additionally, any socialist movements, directed and instrumentally treated by “white-collar workers”, are only a testament to the peculiar political fraud of the intelligentsia. In the capitalist system, Western social democratic parties, under the influence of Bernstein’s reformists and revisionists, have become specialised in such practices acting in accordance with his aforementioned well-known principle that “the final goal is nothing; the movement is everything”.⁴² However, in Machajski’s optic, Marxists proclaiming the need for a revolution appear as a force which can protect the intelligentsia’s interests mainly within the new, as we would say, “socialist” system of the society. After overthrowing capitalism, the intelligentsia would replace bourgeoisie as the main, fundamental social force, with full political power. “Socialism” would not bring victory and liberation of the working class, because it would abolish only “capitalist exploitation”, resulting from the “private”, eliminated “ownership of the means of production”. This would not be tantamount to the abolition of exploitation in general, as a new, “democratic state-society” would be created, in control of all property, all means of production, and lavishly paying for the “parasitic existence” of the intelligentsia, the “white-collar workers”, as bourgeoisie did before it. In the new socio-political regime, they would become the main stratum living off the enslavement, plunder and exploitation of the oppressed classes. As a result, the “modern socialist”, representing the interests of the intelligentsia “cannot and does not want to put an end to the centuries of plunder and enslavement”.⁴³ “It [would be] utopian if the interest of the intelligentsia, which lives off exploiting the working class and wants to write all its rights into the framework of a class regime, were considered a socialist force, aiming to overthrow this regime. It is this utopia, with all its baggage, which Marxism proclaims to this day, forgetting that it has supposedly rid itself of nationalist superstitions”.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 203.

⁴² Cf. fn. 28.

⁴³ Machajski, *Pracownik umysłowy*, p. 290.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 270. According to Leon Trotsky, certainly relevant in the light of the presented facts, the views of the Polish thinker were dedicated to “critiquing Marx’s economic system” and led to “the unexpected conclusion that socialism is a social system, based on the exploitation

In later years Machajski will confirm this stance, writing that the “socialist revolution, socialist ‘appropriation’” would not eliminate “the age-old enslavement” of workers. Two eternal races, “masters and slaves”, will remain “in the socialist regime”. The former, having the necessary knowledge will “guide and lead”. The latter, as before, will maintain the “lower race status of people able to perform only dirty [...] physical work”.⁴⁵ “In the socialist regime, civilisation and culture remain the monopolist property inherited by the intelligentsia. In the socialist regime, the world of looting finds only a new form of its reign”.⁴⁶

In the end, the above mentioned circumstances mean that in new conditions the intelligentsia would remain a class no less oppressive and exploitative than bourgeoisie before it. After the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, Machajski will express his concern that the masses in the former empire of tsars will be ruled by a ruthless “new bureaucracy”, “people’s bureaucracy”, consisting of “intellectuals and half-intellectuals from the ranks of workers”. Previously they were revolutionaries, “but after the October Revolution they became government officials”.⁴⁷ In all the above mentioned Machajski’s assessments and opinions we can easily notice the concerns, already indicated in this paper, of Bukharin and thinkers who referred to the benefits that a victory of “socialism” could allegedly bring with evident reserve.

In the light of the above considerations, assessments and conclusions, we should ask what, according to Machajski, should be done to bring about the actual liberation of the working class, or more broadly – the labour world, living off hired labour in the predatory capitalist system and with the prospect of existence in a no less predatory “socialist” regime. Socialist parties cannot be counted on, since they are, in accordance with the logic of Machajski’s thought, “however much the orthodox cover it up”, just “parties of bourgeois progress”. Progress itself “will not bring down the class principle”, the class division into the exploited and the exploiters.⁴⁸ It can be done only by a “conscious pursuit by the enslaved masses towards the overthrowing of any ruling classes, progressive or backward”,⁴⁹ including the intelligentsia; overthrowing of the entire bourgeois world, as “the expropriation of a ‘small group of capitalists and big landowners’” (emphasis in the text)⁵⁰ does not withstand slavery, plunder and exploitation. Various socialist teachings, theories etc., mostly Marxist, in essence act as a religion, “as Christianity, which does not build the

of workers by the intelligentsia”, cited from R. Okrasa, *Sojusznicy czy pasożyty (Jan Waclaw Machajski)*, <http://lewicowo.pl/sojusznicy-czy-pasozyty-jan-waclaw-machajski/> (accessed: 15 November 2017).

⁴⁵ Machajski, *Robotnik umysłowy* 1911, p. 84.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁴⁷ M.S. Shatz, *Jan Waclaw Machajski: A radical critic*, Chapter 6: Cracow–Paris–Moscow, <https://libcom.org/library/chapter-6-cracow-paris-moscow> (accessed: 25 July 2016).

⁴⁸ Machajski, *Pracownik umysłowy*, p. 295.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

kingdom of heaven on earth, only reinforces and justifies the predatory regime”.⁵¹ “Sermons of socialist preachers’ do not lead to anything good. “Socialists, especially students of Marx, social democrats, knew and remembered all of this well”.⁵² To eliminate exploitation, a constant, unrelenting struggle of workers is needed for higher wages, strikes, as well as the “secret”, universal “*conspiracy, seeking to transform the so often exploding and so tumultuous strikes into an uprising, a worldwide workers’ revolution*” (emphasis in the text),⁵³ carried out without the participation of the “parasitic” intelligentsia, as “the common economic struggle of physical workers is understood only by the labouring masses”.⁵⁴ Although Machajski never states this expressly, in his reflections, there is a very clear yearning for the construction of a perfect, harmonious world, devoid of any elites – social or political.

In fact, the emergence of such a world would be, metaphorically speaking, equivalent to the construction of “the kingdom of heaven on earth”, in other words, as suggested by Machajski, what Christianity failed to do. According to his friend, Stefan Žeromski, Machajski was an idealist who “did not believe at all in the power of ignorance”. He spins visions “that a well-fed people will arrange its life perfectly, according to these ideal standards which the eyes of a social dreamer can see”. In his theory, everything “is clean and good as the man who invented it, but far from real life [...]. Had he lived in the Middle Ages, he would have started an order or a religious sect. Today, he has founded a social sect”.⁵⁵

However, it should be emphasised that it would be a big mistake to perceive the author of *The Intellectual Worker* as a mere spiritual idealist; another utopian, passing over the real social and political mechanisms, led only by imaginary ideas, thoughts and calculations. In his dreams of creating a world without exploitation and oppression, social implementation or systemic utopias, Machajski to some extent resembled an early Djilas, the thinker and theoretician in whose series of articles and essays published in late 1953 and early 1954⁵⁶ idealistic tones also resonate, to completely disappear after the 3rd Meeting of the Central Committee

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 298.

⁵² Id., *Religia socjalistyczna a walka robotnicza*.

⁵³ Id., *Pracownik umysłowy*, p. 292.

⁵⁴ Id., *Religia socjalistyczna walka robotnicza*.

⁵⁵ S. Žeromski, *W sprawie Machajskiego (1911)*, lewicowo.pl/w-sprawie-machajskiego (accessed: 15 November 2017).

⁵⁶ Cf. *Anatomy of a Moral. The Political Essays of Milovan Djilas*, London 1959 / essays and articles published in *Borba* between 11 October 1953 and 7 January 1954, as well as the essay *Anatomija jednog morala*, published in *Nova Misao*, 1 January 1954. / In one of them, entitled *Is there a Goal /Ima li cilja?*, *Borba* 6 December 1953, Djilas stated what today is obvious: that “socialism and communism” is “the liberation of arduous human labour from any domination, i.e. a constant struggle for democracy [...] All concrete actions that facilitate moving in this direction are beneficial and progressive”, M. Djilas, *Anatomy of a Moral*, pp. 78–79. We can only stress that the mentioned idealistic tones had nothing to do with the “socialist revolution” in the understanding of the “classics” of Marxism or of Machajski.

of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia of 16–17 January 1954.⁵⁷ It should be stressed, however, that accurate and rational evaluations, conclusions and findings are also very clear in Machajski's thought.

Bearing in mind the rationality of Machajski's arguments, it should be noted that the interests of workers, or more broadly, of people and the revolutionary members of intelligentsia indeed often failed to meet, e.g. in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁵⁸ This was the case in the 1870s, when young intelligentsia revolutionaries (*Narodniks, Narodovoltsy*), pursuing fundamental changes, a revolution, with amazement and regret discovered that Russian peasants, to whom they addressed their message, were not interested in revolutionary changes but practical benefits, i.e. expanding their farms: "When it comes to land, we have little of it". But "We'll get the land. Ab-so-lute-ly!" One of the revolutionary agitators with indignation noted down the words of peasants: "we fare better under the rule of the Tsar".⁵⁹ For the most part, Russian peasants, or Russian people, approached any revolutions (in fact, only political revolutions), in this case seeking to overthrow the Tsarist autocracy – which according to Machajski did not bring any specific, practical benefits – with clear reserve.

The above discrepancies were later noticed also by Vladimir Lenin, who thought that "protests on the economic background, which were [by them] conceived as a means of boosting *political* consciousness [emphasis mine – MJZ] transformed into an end in itself". Workers were interested in economic benefits, as peasants before them; according to Richard Pipes, a prominent expert on the history of Russia and the USSR, "fledgling heresy", which Lenin dubbed "economism", as foreign to him as the Western reformism and revisionism in the style of Bernstein and other Western European theorists of regime and politics. Expressing the views of the Russian "social democratic intelligentsia", Lenin feared that the workers movement in his country "stays away from the political struggle, and so from the revolution"⁶⁰ – from the revolution of intellectuals, essentially different from the one considered by Machajski.

⁵⁷ In other words, after eliminating Djilas from active political life. In Polish literature: M.J. Zacharias, *Komunizm, federacja, nacjonalizmy. System władzy w Jugosławii w latach 1943–1991. Powstanie, przekształcenia, rozkład*, Warszawa, 2004, p. 156; id., "Między marzeniami a rzeczywistością. Myśl polityczna Milovana Djilasa na przełomie 1953 i 1954", *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 2010, 3, p. 49; id., *Idee, utopie, rzeczywistość*, p. 172.

⁵⁸ Pipes, *Rewolucja rosyjska*, p. 110 f.

⁵⁹ O.W. Aptekman, *Obščestvo 'Zemlja i volja' 70-ch godov*, Petrograd, 1924, p. 145; Pipes, *Rewolucja rosyjska*, p. 113.

⁶⁰ Pipes, *Rewolucja rosyjska*, p. 283–284. How concerned Lenin was by the fact that Russian workers are interested in their own, current interests, conflicting with the objectives of the Russian revolutionaries, can be indirectly seen in his own words: "Even in Russia, where as a result of economic backwardness of the country, non-Marxist socialism naturally [?] lingered the longest, even in Russia it clearly surpasses revisionism in front of our very eyes", W. Lenin, *Marksizm a rewizjonizm*, www.filozofia.uw.edu.pl/skfm/publikacje/Lenin_04.pdf, p. 4 (accessed: 12 May 2016).

As a result, writes Pipes, Lenin claimed that “in the spirit of the claims of Mosca and Pareto, whose theories of political elites were then in fashion [...], that the proletariat must be led by an elite of the chosen ones for its own good”. In practice, they would be mainly members of intelligentsia, forming a “disciplined, centralised party, composed of full-time, professional revolutionaries, devoted to overthrowing the Tsarist regime”, instilling in the workers a revolutionary consciousness, unknown and alien to them.⁶¹ It was completely contrary to the beliefs expressed by Machajski, who proclaimed that a revolution can be carried out only by the workers themselves, excluding the intelligentsia and politicians, socialist or social democratic, and opposed – one can presume – the formation and existence of any elites, mostly political. According to his reflections, the Leninist concept most fully expressed in the brochure *What to do?* (1902) would inevitably lead to a new, predatory and oppressive system, led by the revolutionary members of the intelligentsia. As he wrote, “the intelligentsia, in the form of the stratum which managed to gain power, has proved many a time the most predatory ruler of slaves, fiendishly smart, and a most ruthless conqueror”.⁶²

Aside from the fundamental conflict of interests, objectives and aspirations of the intelligentsia revolutionaries on one hand, and the masses of workers on the other, another distinct suggestion made by Machajski seems relevant. Namely, that “white-collar workers” treat other workers as a specific, one might say, “cannon fodder”, that they are willing to abandon the latter as soon as they put into practice, with the latter’s participation and help, their own, intelligentsia goals. Indeed, with all respect for, for example, the patriotism and devotion of Józef Piłsudski (1867–1935) in terms of Poland’s independence, would it not be possible to say that the popular and blunt saying that the Marshal “got off of the red tram at the Independence station”, abandoning his old socialist activities and in fact showing total indifference to the economic, existential interests of the working masses, in fact confirmed the merit of the above evaluations and diagnoses of Machajski? So did the perhaps crude and unsophisticated words of Zygmunt Wrzodak, one of the activists of the labour union “Solidarity”, on 28 June 1996 in connection with the system change in Poland started in 1989, that “the pink hyenas from KOR, feeding on the workers, the Church and the homeland, had one goal – to climb to power over our backs”.⁶³

⁶¹ Pipes, *Rewolucja rosyjska*, pp. 284–286.

⁶² J.W. Machajski, *Rewolucja socjalistyczna a walka robotnicza*, [1909] <http://lewicowo.pl/religia-socjalistyczna-a-walka-robotnicza/> (accessed: 22 February 2016). Taking into account the events which took place in Russia after the October Revolution in 1917, we could say that Machajski’s concerns and suppositions proved entirely justified. In accordance with Mensheviks’ concerns that “putting power in the hands of a closed caste of intellectuals – ‘professional revolutionaries’ at the expense of workers will lead only to dictatorship”, cf. https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Co_robic%3F (accessed: 22 November 2016).

⁶³ Różowy Salon, www.ivrozbiarpolski.pl/indeks.php?page=rozmowy-salon (accessed: 23 April 2016).

It is at least doubtful that the founders and leaders of this organisation would deliberately aim only to pretend to help workers, in 1976 and later on, persecuted by the Polish authorities, still communist at the time, indifferent to their suffering. However, there is no doubt that the neoliberal model of systemic transformations, adopted in Poland in 1989 and in the following years, threatened the vital existential interests of the working masses – the workers and employees of the State Agricultural Farms. Employees who in fact were also workers, except agricultural ones. State Agricultural Farms were closed down, and their employees were often left destitute.⁶⁴ Fast elimination was also the fate of numerous industrial plants, interestingly not always fit only for closure. Unemployment grew rapidly, and people living on very low, sometimes hunger wages – mainly among workers of large industries and employees of former State Agricultural Farms – if they found employment at all. Noticeable contradictions between them and the leaders of the new, democratic Polish state, mainly from intelligentsia background (to recall Machajski's words, a typical “democratic state-society”, except that it did not have a “socialist” form, but once again a capitalist one), deriving from, and once associated with – paradoxically! – the workers' “Solidarity”, were therefore clear. Definite abandonment of workers by the political activists, hailing mainly from intelligentsia, could only justify and confirm in full Machajski's theses from many decades before. This, moreover, gradually began to produce specific political effects, leading the masses of people who were marginalised after 1989 to challenge the accepted course of system transformation.

As a result, the American researcher David Ost is undoubtedly right when he writes that “an excess of economic liberalisation threatens political liberalism”. One cannot rely solely on the market, disregard social issues, trade unions, labour contracts and relations. Such conduct “[only] forces people to look for alternatives. So when hard pro-market parties turn out to be the same ones that defend political liberalism and fundamental civil rights”, “those who are looking for alternatives [mainly in the sphere of economic conditions of life], lean towards parties attacking political liberalism as evil and promise swift action of ‘strong individuals’ who will save the nation”.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Cf. *Państwowe Gospodarstwa Rolne – sukces czy niewypał?*, www.polskieradio.pl/39/156/Artykul/1045712, *Państwowe-Gospodarstwa-Rolne-sukces-czy-niewypal* (accessed: 2 November 2016).

⁶⁵ Ost's statement from 16 January 2016, referring to the rule of the Law and Justice (PiS) party after the elections of 25 October 2015, wyborcza.pl/magazyn/1,124059,19483788,david-ost-odebrac-pisowi-niezadowolonych.html (accessed: 15 October 2016); Polish observers made similar comments after the victory of PiS in the last election: “We have a politically instrumentalised revolt of people from a young working class, which has been coming for years, not hiding at all. The [pre-PiS] authorities did not believe in the revolt, and so they did nothing to prevent it”, P. Demirski, *Tragedia komiczna*, interview by J. Żakowski, *Polityka*, 17/3056, 20–26 April 2016, p. 30. These phenomena are discussed in detail by David Ost in his extensive earlier work entitled *Kłęska Solidarności. Gniew i polityka w postkomunistycznej Europie*, Warszawa, 2007.

The prominent researcher of political and social thought Andrzej Walicki similarly assesses the system transformations in Poland, writing about “throwing itself” “from vulgar socialism to vulgar capitalism”⁶⁶ and opining “that in many cases we had to do with a fulfilment of Jan Waclaw Machajski’s predictions that intelligentsia, that is ‘holder of mental capital’ would use labour movement instrumentally, as a tool for their own interests”.⁶⁷ One could add that it was, in essence, what young intelligentsia “socialists-revolutionaries” wanted to do in Russia, followed by Lenin and his Bolshevik comrades, for the most part also members of intelligentsia. In both cases, it turned out that at the end of the revolutionary processes and transformations – each of its own type – power held by the “white-collar workers” emerges. It appears in accord with Machajski’s research intuition. An intuition which arose before the advent of communism and its collapse.

The belief that power expresses primarily their own interests and opposes those whom it allegedly represents, is visible in both Machajski’s and Djilas’s ideas. Which does not mean, however, that their beliefs were identical. The crucial difference comes down to the fact that when writing about the threat of a new, ruling group, oppressive and predatory, Machajski strongly emphasises its intelligentsia roots. To Djilas, it is mainly a political, party and state bureaucracy. The former political “friend” of Josip Broz Tito is much more vocal than Machajski on the fact that it may consist of representatives of various social groups – workers, peasants, petite bourgeoisie, as well as intelligentsia. In addition, the analysis of intelligentsia in Machajski’s work is static in character – this group simply appears in a period of social development, the historical process of the nineteenth century, but why, as a result of what factors – it is not clear. The author of *The Intellectual Worker* shows it somewhat vaguely, not highlighting in detail the evolution of this stratum, not emphasising in full the shifts it had experienced. In fact, it is limited mainly to stating its existence and the ominous of the role the group plays. Djilas dynamically presents the emergence of the ruling stratum in communism. *The new class* emerges gradually, in the process of transforming old revolutionary leaders into the aforementioned political party bureaucracy. Djilas highlights the historical, social and political conditions for its formation. Reaching to the genesis of this layer, he argues that it was spawned by a specific situation, i.e. the need for industrialisation in Russia, a backward country, in which the only force able, as a result of the lack of strong bourgeoisie, to face this task was a group of professional subversives, forming a kind of a party which was “revolutionary”, “industrial” and “anti-capitalist” at the same time. It was its leaders that became the forerunners of Djilas’s *new class*.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ A. Walicki, “W odpowiedzi na ankietę Stowarzyszenia Studiów i Inicjatyw Społecznych”, *Przegląd*, 6 November 2003, p. 3.

⁶⁷ Id., *Od projektu komunistycznego do neoliberalnej utopii*, Kraków, 2013, p. 281.

⁶⁸ M. Djilas, *Nowa klasa*, p. 23 f.; Zacharias, *Idee, utopie, rzeczywistość*, p. 193 f.

Another difference arises from the fact that in Machajski's understanding intelligentsia can protect their interests well in both capitalism and "socialism". For Djilas, party bureaucracy is just a new power elite: the power elite of the communist state. It is new in three senses. Firstly, it is formed in place of old, traditional ruling classes. In the previous socio-political formations, with capitalism at the forefront, bureaucracy as a *class* did not exist. Secondly, the *new class* is a group which gains a monopoly of power in every field: political, economic and ideological.⁶⁹ This situation is to a very large extent exceptional. In the bourgeois societies so far – proclaims Djilas – individual classes and their emanations, that is political parties, always had to settle for only partial participation in power. Bourgeois formation had never seized political power as a certain whole, not to mention the possibility of combining it with total economic and ideological power. Thirdly, it is also important that in Machajski's terms the intelligentsia stratum is a product of a specific, existing society, in this case capitalist, while for Djilas the *new class* is created after the revolution, after eliminating capitalism and, most importantly, has yet to create a new "socialist" society.⁷⁰ A society which does not yet exist. This is a clear reversal of the existing, traditional development trends, that is the emergence of class and social divisions and within the framework of the existing, rather than planned and later created, systems and regimes. For Machajski, the society exists first – dominated by the bourgeoisie, and only later does the intelligentsia class appear. Conversely, Djilas has the class, i.e. political party bureaucracy, come first, which only then does "joyfully" begin the "building" of a new regime and a new "socialist" society.

It is also important that Machajski appears as a thinker who in his theoretical writings and reflections immediately condemns intelligentsia, and finds no words of appreciation or understanding for them. For him they are always a group fighting solely for their own interests, mainly at the expense of workers, with whom they try to create various temporary alliances, treacherous without exception. He does not allow the thought that intelligentsia could be motivated by any altruistic motives, that they could ever think of the common good.⁷¹ For Djilas, the condemnation of the *new class* will take place only gradually. Before elimination from active political life, the author of *The New Class* and *The Unperfect Society* proposed that actions of the party's political bureaucracy

⁶⁹ See fn. 22.

⁷⁰ Cf. Zacharias, *Idee, utopie, rzeczywistość*, p. 195 f. Djilas writes that "the new class eventually formed only after the seizure of power", which represented a significant difference as compared to the situation "in ages past", Djilas, *Nowa klasa*, p. 46.

⁷¹ Machajski, *Pracownik umysłowy*, passim; "just when under the pressure from workers the old government made even the slightest concessions for the intelligentsia, out of these true worker comrades emerged a layer, formed in advance, of intellectuals with the highest census and took over government positions, creating a power far stronger, far crueller from the previous tyrants", id., *Religia socjalistyczna a walka robotnicza*.

had a positive side too, that they were beneficial to the revolution and the new “socialist” society.⁷²

Ultimately, when reading and analysing the content of Machajski’s and Djilas’s works in the parts dedicated strictly to intelligentsia and the *new class*, one might conclude that we are dealing, from a certain point of view, with characters sketching out completely different worlds, different realities. On the one hand, we have a thinker who, when writing about “white-collar workers” limits himself to presenting a more or less in-depth description of the existing human existence in the political and social dimension formed by this stratum, and on the other – an analyst of the actions of party leaders, who in fact belong to a reality dominated by a kind of social and political engineering, and act in accordance with the mechanisms of its logic. They want to create, and do create, a new “socialist” society: excellent in theory, but in fact a system compatible only with the interests of the ruling stratum. Machajski’s intelligentsia does not have aims which are quite so “ambitious”. They just want to secure their material and political goals as well as possible, and gain social prestige. They do not dream of, to use the words of Aldous Huxley, constructing *a brave new world*.⁷³ This applies to both revisionists and Marxists. In terms of Machajski’s prophecy, visions and “teachings” of the latter are only – to say it colloquially – “a sham”, intended to fool and take in the dopey, gullible simpletons; a kind of religion for the poor in spirit and reason. Machajski argues that what we could call “the brave new world” could arise only out of workers’ effort, without the involvement of the intelligentsia.

We should bear in mind that Machajski wrote a vast majority of his works before the victory of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Therefore, he accentuates the role of intelligentsia mainly as a class living off exploitation, visible, he believes, in the capitalist system. However, the oppressive, authoritarian nature of this power, albeit noticeable, in his approach is more a possibility than tangible reality. In this case, predictions clearly dominate over analysis and criticism of this aspect of the potential power of intelligentsia in the future. Knowing the practices of communists from personal experience, Djilas could stress the oppressive nature of the power of the *new class* at least as strongly as its role as an exploitative group. In his opinion, the oppressive power of political party bureaucracy is totalitarian in nature, which Machajski does not mention, not least because the concept of totalitarianism was not created until 1920s, that is after the majority of his works were written.

One more issue should be highlighted. Machajski and Djilas differ in their perception of the disappearance of the privileged social stratum, the political

⁷² Such suggestions clearly occurred even in the aforementioned Djilas’s essays and articles from the turn of 1954, cf. “The Importance of Form / Važnost oblika”, *Borba*, 8 November 1953, in: M. Djilas, *Anatomy of a Moral*, pp. 53–57.

⁷³ A. Huxley, *Brave New World*, a novel published in London in 1932. One of the most famous dystopias in the literature of the 20th century.

elite. Machajski writes about them in his highly utopian arguments about the universal, working class revolution, carried out on terms different from those which the Marxist “classics” disseminated in their theories. In Djilas’s writing, after his initial fascination with the revolution, Marxism and Stalinism, the containment or eradication of unwanted phenomena, in this case the rule of the *new class*, is linked with his overall social and political theory. It should be noted here that after leaving active political life, Djilas will express a very ambivalent attitude to all utopias. In his work *Of Prisons and Ideas* he will write that utopian ideas are common in the Western civilisation and as such have some positive, beneficial effects. However, it is possible only when – Djilas makes a significant, original distinction – utopian systems are *total*, that is when they are comprehensive systems, aiming to clarify and improve all aspects of human existence. In Djilas’s understanding, total utopian systems are such utopias which allow the existence and expression of other utopias, other systems of thought and action, another world of values, other totalitarian utopias, giving rise to – one could say – a natural “competition” of different ideas, values and assumptions, contributing to the progressive improvement of fortunes, gradual reformation of the imperfect, but at the same time the only societies which can at all exist. But next to such utopias, i.e. total utopias, presenting a comprehensive vision of human existence and methods of its improvement, we encounter utopias which are *total and totalitarian* at the same time. The latter exclude the possibility of existence of other utopias, other systems of values and, as in the case of communism, they are only the starting point for the creation of excellent in principle, but in reality flawed, closed, oppressive regimes, which bring only exploitation and enslavement.⁷⁴

Such utopias allegedly enable the creation of a final form of government, constant and inviolable, “perfect”, but in practice compatible not so much with the general social interests, but the objectives and interests of the *new class* – the political bureaucracy of the party. According to Djilas, it must be contrary to the logic of any reality, since all forms, institutions, social and political organisations, as well as the corresponding legal and constitutional rules are relative, they are transitional phenomena. This means that in fact there are no infallible theories that could determine and define distant, prospective goals which would allegedly become the culmination of complicated social, historical processes. Djilas stresses that regardless of what eminent philosophers wrote about in the past, not least Hegel and Marx, and – we might add – at the end of the twentieth century also Francis Fukuyama, human activities do not lead to the finalisation of history in the form of realising a final aim, an ultimate, unshakeable form of government.⁷⁵ There is no “end of history”

⁷⁴ M. Djilas, *Of Prisons and Ideas*, p. 54 f.

⁷⁵ “...the ultimate goal can only be achieved by achieving specific goals. For example, [once] the goal was power [...] Now it is democracy [...]. But neither power nor democracy is the ultimate goal. What will be the ‘ultimate’ goal, after tomorrow, after [achieving] democracy? Probably its abolition, as a result of further [...] development. And then? And then again? Indeed, there is

as in Fukuyama, no “final point of history’s ideological evolution”.⁷⁶ In the end, Bernstein’s old principle, already mentioned in the text, which says that movement is everything and goal is nothing, can characterise Djilas’s thinking perfectly.

With this in mind, we could say that, according to the Yugoslavian thinker, the collapse and removal of the *new class*, and with it the communist system, follows from the nature of things, and is only a matter of time. It is only a political construct, at the heart of which lies the communist utopia (let us add: total and totalitarian at the same time). Like every other utopia, it does not reach the originally intended objectives and contains elements of imminent disintegration. Its fall will be a simple consequence of the fact that human populations “are subject to the law of life”, i.e. selection and implementation of such a system, such a regime that guarantees the optimal use “and application of the world’s production capacity” in accordance with the growing, diverse needs of individuals, nations and societies, at the same time tearing down everything which prevents such growth, which stands in its way, including obsolete social political, or proprietary relations, and most of all exclusive and isolated systems and ideologies, also the communist system, not only incapable of development, but also an obstacle to this development. As a result, in Djilas’s understanding the gradual decline and collapse of communism as an ideology and practice results not so much from the aspirations and actions of its opponents, but from an objective necessity, determined by requirements and circumstances beyond the subjective.⁷⁷ Their impact is strengthened by the internal evolution of the communist system, in which new groups, new social layers come into being, with specific, local middle classes.

New intra-systemic social layers require neither totalitarian ideologies, nor an “ideal society” in the communist fashion. Their only pursuit is raising their standard of living in every aspect of existence. Under these conditions, the internal dynamics of the development of a society formed under the communist system becomes an important decay power of this system.⁷⁸ With this in mind, we could state that

no ultimate goal as a concrete action. What exists is a concrete development through contradictions – not as a purpose, but as a necessity”, id., *Is there a Goal*, pp. 75–79.

⁷⁶ F. Fukuyama, „Koniec historii”, in: *Czy koniec historii?* Konfrontacje 13, ed. I. Lasota, New York–Warszawa, 1991, pp. 7–36.

⁷⁷ Cf. M.J. Zacharias, “Nova klasa i raspad komunističkog sistema u delima Milovana Djilasa”, in: *Jugoslovensko-poljskio dnosi u XX veku. Zbornik radova*, eds. M. Pavlović, A. Začmiński, D. Bondžić, Beograd, 2015, pp. 260–261. According to Djilas, societies, whatever they might be like, arise “spontaneously”, “unprompted”, over long periods of time, and “not in the offices or assemblies” of the party. “State violence” is not able to ensure the creation of “paradise” in accordance with “‘scientific’ fictions” of communist leaders. They only led to the creation of a reality full of various contradictions. As a result, the existence and functioning of the “new class” have become an essential cause of the disintegration of communism, its breakdown and self-destruction. “Communism, claims Djilas, has defeated itself”, M. Djilas, “Kraj u bedi i sramoti”, in: id., *Pad nove klase. Povest o samorazaranju komunizma*, Beograd 1994, pp. 320–325.

⁷⁸ Id., *Unesociétéimparfaite*, p. 284 f.

the dark, extremely pessimistic descriptions and analyses of the *new class* did not prevent Djilas from looking into the future with growing optimism. Few social and political writers or thinkers were able to diagnose the essential weaknesses of communism with such accuracy and precision as early as in the 1950s, and to predict that this system would collapse under their weight. The events of the 1980s and 1990s fully confirmed the predictions of the Yugoslavian theoretician, at least with regard to the countries of Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe.

However, we should emphasise one more difference in the thinking of Machajski and Djilas. Unlike the author of *The Intellectual Worker*, the latter shows no trace of the idea that it would be possible to form an order in which there would be no place for any political elites. Djilas does not develop this thread, however his line of thinking clearly indicates that, just as only imperfect societies can exist, so it is possible – what is more, necessary – to have only flawed, defective elites. Both, devoid of utopian and totalitarian accretions, will not “build” perfect governing systems, but will become a trigger for evolutionary shifts, for gradual improvement of human fortunes, and for reformation of societies imperfect by nature.⁷⁹

These days such views may seem a bit naïve, too optimistic, devoid of deeper foundations. It is hard to believe in a gradual, positive evolution in an age in which the world, at least since the outbreak of the crisis in 2008, has been sinking into chaos and crisis – economic, financial, social, political. However, we should remember that Djilas presented most of his optimistic views about the fall, the distribution of oppressive regimes and inefficient systems, as well as the possibility of gradually reforming societies during the so-called Golden Age of Capitalism, which the three post-war decades were deemed to be, until and including the early 1970s,⁸⁰ as well as at the beginning of the dominance of globalisation, neoliberalism, and informatisation, when both positive and, more importantly, adverse effects of their impact could not yet be predicted. Meanwhile, the “Golden Age of Capitalism” brought tremendous economic and social growth for the West, domination of the large and stable middle class, not without reason considered the main pillar of democracy, and what is strongly linked with all that – the development of consumer society and the construction of a welfare state. It was therefore justified to think, following the example of Milovan Djilas, that the world, or at least its western part, were developing properly and optimally. The rivalry of superpowers and the Cold War, dangerous themselves, did not have a negative impact on the economy of Western States at the time (on the contrary!), and did not necessarily lead to pessimistic conclusions.

⁷⁹ The work cited in the previous footnote is devoted to this issue. *The Unperfect Society. Beyond the New Class*, New York, 1969.

⁸⁰ About the “Golden Age of Capitalism” cf. J. Fourastié – *Les Trente Glorieuses ou, la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975*, Paris, 1979; E. Hobsbawm, *Wiek skrajności. Spojrzenie na krótkie dwudziestestulecie*, Warszawa, 1999, p. 241 f.; T. Judt, *Powojnie. Historia Europy od roku 1945*, Poznań, 2008, p. 383 f.

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Michał J. Zacharias, professor, Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1990–2007), since 1999 associated with Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz (earlier known as the Academy of Bydgoszcz, and, earlier still, the School of Pedagogy in Bydgoszcz), currently employed in the Institute of Political Sciences at the University. His publications include: *Idee, utopie, rzeczywistość. Myśl polityczna Milovana Đilasa (1911–1995)* (Bydgoszcz, 2015), and *Komunizm, federacja, nacjonalizmy. System władzy w Jugosławii w latach 1943–1991. Powstanie, przekształcenia, rozkład* (Warszawa, 2004) (michal.j.zacharias@gmail.com).