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BARRIERS OF EFFECTIVE POLITICAL RIVALRY IN POLAND (AFTER 2010)

Introduction

The stability of a democratic system depends to a great extent on the subjective feeling of citizens that the institutions creating it, despite numerous shortcomings and errors, are better than the institutions that could replace them¹. That conviction, if well based, constitutes a certain cultural capital of democratic societies and facilitates efficient rule and rational relationships between the society and political elites. Having accepted a broad understanding of the concept of institution², one has to admit that a similar logics of legitimation should be applied not only to law and formal organizations but also to some fixed patterns of behavior in the sphere of public life, in which political debate plays an important role. The communication between the subjects of power is at the same time the communication of the power with the public; thus it provides characteristic canons of a proper political debate. Consequently, they co-create the rules of informal communication among the citizens on political issues and simultaneously determine communication standards of the feedback between the public and the governing bodies. The repetitiveness of the conventional determinants that appear in formal debates results in the “ritualization” of reciprocal interactions in both areas (between the actors of the political scene and also between the power and the public), which impairs the possibility to reach such significant values for democracy as compromise, cooperation or just rational discussion. The article aims at the analysis of the reasons of the antagonistic style of the political life in Poland, especially after the crash of the president’s plane in Smolensk in April 2010. The author presents at least four general determinants of the conflicting interactions on the contemporary political scene: the lack of a rational and constructive criticism on the part of the citizens, the lack of the tradition of political consensus, the structure of the political scene and the high stake of the game and

¹ J. Linz, *Kryzys, załamanie i powrót do równowagi*, [in:] J. Szczupaczyński (ed.), *Władza i społeczeństwo*, Vol. II, Wydawnictwo Scholar, Warszawa 1998.

² V. Lowndes, *Instytucjonalizm*, [in:] D. Marsh, G. Stoker (ed.), *Teorie i metody w naukach politycznych*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2006, pp. 96-100.

also the object of the dispute. They all result in the fact that the majority of conflicts in Polish politics are discussed in the moral and axiological sphere and are not content-related.

1. A critical or captious citizen?

Social assessments of democracy, at least in the area which seems to be crucial from the point of view of the above generalizations, lead to the conclusion that the ways of critical assessment are not constructive in nature. Throughout the whole period of transformation till the present moment, there have been more people unsatisfied with democracy, and “bad methods of governing” and “quarrels between parties”³ have been considered as the most common reasons of such a state of affairs. On the other hand, in the last decade almost 30% of the society has invariably shared the opinion that arguments between political parties are an abnormal phenomenon in a democratic system, and nearly half of the respondents in 2009 considered arguments between the government, the parliament and the president as “undemocratic”. There is no doubt that the intensification of such negative assessment does not result from the negation of the conflict itself, but first of all it is the effect of the rejection of the way the dispute is lead on the political level. Politics has always been the rivalry of different identities; however, one should bear in mind that every relationship in politics can be transformed into antagonism that may result in the rejection of one party of the conflict from the common symbolic *universum*⁴. Antagonism enters into political interactions through the language used in the discourse. That is why, the way of debating is decisive as regards the functionality or dysfunctionality of a dispute and it mainly depends on the subject of discussion.

The critical attitude to democracy and to the way of leading disputes by political elites that has been observed for a long time does not result in any significant consequences apart from political passiveness. Since 2005, in all subsequent elections (the parliamentary and presidential elections and the ones to self-governments or to the European Parliament) Poles have chosen the representatives of the parties that they blame for a high level of conflicts in politics. In 2006 as many as 72% of the respondents of the CBOS (Polish Public Opinion

³ *Blaski i cienie demokracji w Polsce*, Komunikat CBOS, BS/57/2006, URL: www.cbos.pl.

⁴ Ch. Mouffe, *Introduction: Schmitt's Challenge*, [in:] Ch. Mouffe (ed.), *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, Verso, London 1999, pp. 4-5, See also: Ch. Mouffe, *Polityczność. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej*, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warszawa 2008, p. 32.

Centre) were convinced that the politicians were conflicted and divided to a greater degree than before the parliamentary elections that took place a year before⁵, and in 2010 the percentage of people stating that the level of aggression in politics was higher than that five years before, amounted to 76%⁶. Moreover, the spectacular cases of recent months: on the one hand the interactions between the so called “defenders of the cross” in front of the Presidential Palace and the supporters of removing it and, on the other hand, the celebrations of the 30th anniversary of the Gdansk Agreement in the shipyard meeting hall show that the culture of rational dispute is also nonexistent on the social level. Negative evaluation of the political communication does not form the mechanism of the enforcement of responsibility⁷, as the citizens keep complaining and criticizing without the application of any universal and sound criteria of their assessment. Most frequently, we have to do with a “captious” citizen and not a “critical” one that is well informed in political processes and highly involved in changes⁸.

2. Model of harmony, model of consent

Several authors concerned with the issue of political rivalry predicted the fact that a rivalry full of political conflicts would be a typical feature of the process of post-communism democratization and that they would be more intensive and violent than the ones in stabilized democracies. They would result from the instability of the party system and a high stake of the political game⁹. Poland, as a young democracy, is not free from the problems and hazards that may weaken its legitimization. The authors of the works on the formation of the political class in Poland in the late 1980s and in the 1990s point at the existence of the so called “disagreement syndrome“ among the political class, which had (and probably still has) its sources in a divergent, and sometimes exclusive, perception of consensus, which is treated by political elites as something unrealistic, futile or harmful¹⁰. Włodzimierz Wesołowski presents several crucial elements of the “disagreement syndrome“. According to him, they are: a fundamental intransigence (the rejection of the possibility to enter the relationships with

⁵ *Opinie o życiu politycznym i zamierzeniach PiS*, Komunikat CBOS, BS/62/2006, URL: www.cbos.pl.

⁶ Blamed for the aggression in public life: PiS (67%), PO (41%), SLD (4%), PSL (2%), all parties equally (16%), See: *O agresji w polskim życiu politycznym*, Komunikat CBOS, BS/156/2010, URL: www.cbos.pl.

⁷ Which is one of the „pillars of trust” for Piotr Sztompka, see: P. Sztompka, *Zaufanie. Fundament społeczeństwa*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2007, pp. 198-206.

⁸ R. Markowski, *Co po demokracji? O innowacyjnych metodach partycypacji*, „Res Publica Nowa”, 19.05.2010, URL: <http://publica.pl/teksty/co-po-demokracji> (accessed: 15 January 2011).

⁹ P. Mair, *Party System Change*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1997, pp. 175-198.

¹⁰ K. Jasiołkowski, *Konsens i konflikt w poglądach elity politycznej*, [in:] W. Wesołowski, B. Post (ed.), *Polityka i Sejm. Formowanie się elity politycznej*, Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, Warszawa 1998, pp. 62-64.

parties that are “historically compromised”, asymmetry in legitimization (one’s own legitimization is “valid”, while the legitimization of the others is completely rejected or partially questioned), the obstinacy and tendency to use clichés by Polish politicians (which impedes a positive argumentation), a strong party egoism and egocentrism of the leaders (which results in “fight for power without any programme targets”) and also collective and individual ambitions and artificially exaggerated identities¹¹. According to Chantal Mouffe, contemporary politics is in fact a “nest of antagonism” (in the sense suggested by Carl Schmitt, a German political philosopher,) in which every political relationship is a relation of a friend versus enemy (*frontal struggle between enemies*)¹². In such a model, different identities are treated as alien ones, and that imposes directly the way of political communication.

On the other hand it seems, that the normative basis of the society (Poland is not an exception here) supports such a way of conflict solving on the political scene. Several investigations¹³ show, that we are a “society working its way up”, which is – among others – proved by our attachment to the so called (material) “scarcity values” which must mean a smaller popularity to such values as tolerance, individual’s autonomy and compromise. We often tend to refer to such traditional authorities as family, religion and nation but at the same time we are susceptible to irrational argumentation: conspiracy theories, political myths, etc¹⁴. It seems, that in the context of a high level of the institutionalized distrust (both horizontal and vertical¹⁵) and – on the political level – of the suspiciousness that influences the reciprocal interactions of the most important subjects, the “disagreement syndrome” gains in power and deconstructs the agenda of the political and social dispute. That also results from the fact that the basic model of unity that is accepted in politics is the model of the imposed and enforced unity whose aim is to impose a dogma, a not a model of unity negotiated in the course of argumentation aiming at agreement¹⁶. The axiological conflict concerning fundamental and integral values constitutes the dominating model of dispute in Polish politics. That can be seen both in the debates that concern issues of significant social causes and consequences (the

¹¹ W. Wesołowski, *Rozumienie polityki wśród polityków*, [in:] W. Wesołowski, I. Pańków (ed.), *Świat elity politycznej*, IFiS PAN, Warszawa 1995, pp. 132-136.

¹² Ch. Mouffe, *Introduction...*, p. 4.

¹³ *World Values Survey 1981-2008*, Computer file, v.20090901, URL: www.worldvaluessurvey.org (accessed 15 January 2011).

¹⁴ M. Ziółkowski, *O imitacyjnej modernizacji społeczeństwa polskiego*, [in:] P. Sztompka (ed.), *Imponderabilia wielkiej zmiany. Mentalność, wartości i więzi społeczne czasów transformacji*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa-Kraków 1999.

¹⁵ P. Sztompka, *Zaufanie...*, p. 337.

¹⁶ A. Chmielewski, *Dwie koncepcje jedności. Interwencje filozoficzno-polityczne*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Branta, Wrocław 2006, p. 28.

Treaty of Nice debate) and in ones that from today's perspective can be treated as unimportant (the debate on the installation of missile shield in Poland¹⁷ or the debate on introducing the euro¹⁸). However, as it was stated by Juan Linz and David Ost, the probability to reach a compromise in a rivalry that is based on the conflict of values is much lesser than in the case of a rivalry based on the conflict of interests¹⁹. The first one most frequently becomes a zero game²⁰.

Thus, a question arises what agreement model is plausible and what real function it should have in politics. It is obvious that a common agreement, a unity of opinion and a certain political homogenization cannot be the targets. Consent in politics should be perceived in a constructive way: as a skill of political subjects to build areas where co-operation between the parties of possible conflicts could develop. That is why a competence in initiating disputes that concern interests and not values (where preparation to a discourse is not required) should be a measure of the consensual potential in politics.

3. The politics after the plane crash

A specific way of debating in public, in which citizens participate through mass media, creates a certain social norm that determines the standard of discussions on political issues. The norm, to a great extent, socializes politically the citizens and creates barriers for a compromise or an action that is based on interests. In present-day contemporary politics, which is mediatized and personalized, the members of political elite play the role of opinion-makers and their activities become a legitimizing argument for the public. Thus, critical assessment of mutual interactions on the political scene results in the dissatisfaction in democracy itself. The analysis of the reports from public opinion surveys in the last decade that regarded the mutual perception of the electorates of the presently most prominent two parties lead to the conclusion that the antagonistic behavior on the political scene has an impact on the conflict on the social level and the year 2005 (the failure of the expected PO-PiS coalition) can be considered as the moment of a radical polarization among the supporters

¹⁷ M. Nicpoń, R. Marzęcki, *Debata w mediach a racjonalność poglądów i zachowań politycznych*, [in:] M. Niezgoda, M. Świątkiewicz-Mośny, A. Wagner (ed.), *Komunikowanie w zmieniającym się społeczeństwie*, Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, Kraków 2010.

¹⁸ M. Nicpoń, R. Marzęcki, *Nieracjonalność argumentacji w politycznym sporze o euro*, „Annales UMCS Sectio K: Politologia”, 2009, vol. XVI, 2.

¹⁹ D. Ost, *Kłęska „Solidarności”: gniew i polityka w postkomunistycznej Europie*, Wydawnictwo Literackie Muza, Warszawa 2007.

²⁰ J.J. Linz, *Kilka myśli o zwycięstwie i przyszłości demokracji*, [in:] P. Śpiewak (ed.), *Przyszłość demokracji: wybór tekstów*, Fundacja Aletheia, Warszawa 2005, p. 377.

of both parties ²¹. It is worth analyzing the mechanisms of the mutual strengthening of the antagonism.

On the one hand, it is the politicians themselves who create a relationship that is destructive and conflicting, and on the other, the structure of the political scene and the “target” the biggest parties want to reach that favor the bipolarity, and consequently lead to a conflict of a zero-sum game. The change happened in 2005. The traditions of the political dispute in the first decade of the Republic of Poland III cannot serve as an example of the behavior pattern in which consensus is supported. Moreover, for the last five years neither of the two dominant parties that fought for the electoral victory (high stake) has had the interest in conducting a policy that aimed at reaching a compromise. The subsequent disputes (over the motorways, the organization of Euro 2012, the health service, etc) were conducted with the use of the same logics of argumentation, which was axiological and not technical in nature. Even the debates with a particular “technical potentials” (on the missile shield, the introduction of euro) show, that they could be “irrationalized” because this provided media visibility²² which was beneficial from the point of view of the debate participants. Such a mechanism, which makes the maintenance of that model advantageous, becomes a “driving force” of the politics and public debate (the same rules are adopted by non-politicians: journalists, experts, authorities, etc).

At present – after the president’s plane crash in Smolensk in April 2010 – one should take into consideration one more factor that impedes technical discussions. Now, it is not only the interest and the will of particular subject and the dualistic structure of the political scene but also the object of the dispute that determine the antagonism. The uniqueness and significance of the crash and its complicated consequences that are still visible (the presidential campaign and elections, the investigation and its results, the contradicting interpretations of the crash results, etc) resulted in the situation where the latest political discourse became almost completely a dispute on values; it is a conflict of exceptive

²¹ I am referring here to the survey of the CBOS on the alternative votes of the supporters of both parties and their negative electorates in 2001-2010. In fact, until 2005 PiS was the first alternative for PO voters (over 45%); similarly for PiS voters the number was almost 40%. The conclusion is confirmed by the analysis of negative electorates. Until the parliamentary elections in 2005 the declarations rejecting the possibility of voting for a party other than PiS/PO reached the level of 2% . After the presidential election, a dynamic increase of the antagonism can be observed . The percentage of respondents that reject the possibility to vote for the other party increased in both cases to 10-11%, and in 2007-2010 it went as high as 60%.

²² M. Kochan, *Pojedynek na słowa. Techniki erystyczne w publicznych sporach*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2007, pp. 15-17.

axiological orders which does not aim at beating the political opponent, but on his public delegitimization²³.

4. Real election campaign

The form of the campaign before the presidential election of 2010 was difficult to predict. In the public debate- immediately after the plane crash - hopes and expectations appeared as regards the metamorphosis of the hitherto dominating way of making politics, especially concerning the relations between the politicians of PO and PiS. They were expressed – which is not a surprise – by the esteemed authorities of political life as well as the hierarchs of the catholic church. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the ex-prime minister, stated bluntly: *I would like very much that this event should change Polish politics. However, as an experienced man I know that it is not easy and I am not very hopeful. Yet, I hope that the mediocrity that exists in Polish politics, when facing that great tragedy, will be removed for at least some time*²⁴.

Jerzy Buzek, the chairman of the UE Parliament, stated: *I hope the language of the campaign will change and will not remind the one used five years ago. This is probably the expectation and wish of all Poles*²⁵. The Warsaw metropolitan, archbishop Kazimierz Nycz asked a following question to the people also out of the political circles: *When we reflect upon that event -to what extent will changes occur in our thinking, acting, in the content and form?*²⁶. Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz joined in the same tone: *May high personal culture, mutual respect and dialogue not be utopian concepts but the determinants of Polish social and political life*²⁷.

Tragedies experienced by people, both in the individual and collective sense, may have an impact on the change of their way of thinking and behavior. There was a question that seemed significant and was extremely frequently asked in the first weeks after the plane

²³ In such a discourse, topics that require some technical involvement (e.g. tax changes in 2010 or chaos in PKP Polish Rail) are marginal.

²⁴ T. Mazowiecki, *Musimy przejść ten okres, strawić w sobie*, URL: http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/Wiadomosci/1,80708,7758900,Tadeusz_Mazowiecki__Musimy_przejsc_ten_okres_strawic.html (accessed 15 January 2011).

²⁵ J. Buzek, *Jerzy Buzek liczy na kulturalną kampanię prezydencką*, URL: <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/wid,12210475,drukuj.html?ticaid=1bb1f> (accessed 15 January 2011)

²⁶ K. Nycz, *Zostawili nam testament*, URL: http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/Wiadomosci/1,80708,7866051,Miesiac_po_tragedii__Abp_Nycz__zostawili_nam_testament.html accessed 15 January 2011)

²⁷ S. Dziwisz, *W trosce o dobro wspólne*, URL: <http://www.dziennikpolski24.pl/pl/aktualnosci/malopolska/1016947-w-trosce-o-dobro-wspolne.html> (accessed 15 January 2011).

crash: Will the potential change come true as regards the behavior and way of thinking among the 361 MPs of the PiS and PO, the parties that had conflicting relationships since 2005? The representatives of the Jarosław Kaczyński's election committee stated that the changes were to be permanent. Their candidate himself expressed that conviction in his on-line message to the Russian people : *There are moments in history, that can change everything*. However, there was a factor that limited the credibility of that statement as the same arguments were used in the past, (e.g. J.Kaczyński slogan "Peace, not war!" at the party congress in Krakow in late January and early February. Now, the unprecedented character of the situation was to legitimize the change.

From today's perspective a precise analysis can be conducted and the conclusion may be that the events of April 2010 did not remove the barriers on the way to effective, i.e. rational political rivalry. However, the answer to the question *whether and to what extent the rules that govern the interactions between political opponents will change* could have been given much earlier, before the results of the elections. In order to do this, it was not enough to concentrate on the messages of the candidates or the members of the election committee given when they played their official roles or functions. A closer observation of the real interactions between the conflicting parties – disregarding the official language of the election campaign – would have enabled making correct hypotheses on the directions of trends in Polish politics in subsequent years. This is also a suggestion concerning the investigations on current politics. A set of cases given below – their order is in accordance with the progress of the campaign – makes it possible to reach conclusions that were confirmed by Jarosław Kaczyński, on the night of the 4 June 2010, when the second round of the elections was completed: *We have suspended this issue for the time of the campaign; we must find the true answer, in every aspect: the moral, political and the legal one as well*²⁸.

Case 1: Parliamentary debate on the government measures taken after the Smolensk plane crash (29 April 2010)

The MPs of all parliamentary clubs and groups participated in the debate. One of the most interesting moments of the debate was the exchange of arguments between the Prime Minister, Donald Tusk and the PiS Mp, Wojciech Szarama. The debates gives impression – apart from the obvious fact, that all circumstances of the crash have to be clarified sooner or

²⁸ *Zespół parlamentarny PiS ds. katastrofy smoleńskiej*, URL: <http://www.pis.org.pl/article.php?id=17462> (accessed 15 January 2011).

later – that both parties of the interaction formulate mutual accusations in a more or less concealed way.

W. Szarama:

So far, I have the impression that there has been some information chaos. The information that we are given, sometimes from the officials, happen to be contradictory, imprecise and do not meet the social expectations, the expectations of Poles to receive the answers to the simplest questions²⁹.

D. Tusk:

One must be exceptionally malicious to assume that, for example, the prime minister knows the exact time of the crash but does not inform the public about it. And if he does not give this information, it means that he wants to hide something. The problem of the time of the crash is an example how important it is to be patient while waiting for the communiqué that is reliable; it is not the case – as it may seem – that the truth is obvious³⁰.

Case 2: Looking for the person responsible for the choice of the delegation members to go to Smoleńsk (29 April – 2 May 2010)

The dispute that took place mainly in the media, concerned first of all the decision on the presence of the commanders of all types of troops on the board of one plane. The strategy of all the parties of the conflict consisted in avoiding the responsibility and the attempts to blame the political opponent. The conflict parties were, among others: Witold Błaszczkowski (the vice-head of the BBN/the National Security Bureau), Jacek Sasin (the vice-head of the President's Cabinet), Elżbieta Jakubiak (the then PiS MP) and Bogdan Klish, the Minister of Defense. Especially the arguments of the first three speakers were discrediting in nature and, consequently, seem to increase the political conflict.

E. Jakubiak:

It was not rational, and it should have been. Especially in the case of commanders, army officers, the minister of defense. It is not like among civilians, somewhere in the Cabinet³¹.

J. Sasin:

Either the minister knew and does not want to admit it or he did not, which would mean that the minister has no idea what is going on in the army³².

²⁹ Parliamentary minutes, URL: www.sejm.gov.pl (accessed: 15 January, 2011)

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ E. Jakubiak, *Poranek Radia TOK FM*, A radio programme, 30.04.2010.

W. Waszczykowski:

*If I were the head of the Ministry of National Defense, I would have more honor. The minister should resign*³³.

Case 3: the PO politicians' allegations of the "crash appropriation" by the PiS (30 April – 1 May 2010)

The allegations were sometimes formulated directly and sometimes in a less direct way. However, they always suggested the PiS politicians try to monopolize the mourning and make use of the tragedy in the political struggle. The other party used the same argument in a strategy of retaliation: it is *you* who play a political game. The case is exemplified by the statements of the head of the PO parliamentary club a PiS MEP.

G. Schetyna:

*This is appropriating the Smolensk tragedy. Every family of the victim has the right to say such a thing. But it is only Jarosław Kaczyński, who does it. It is not right. From the very beginning the PiS has been presenting the crash not as the tragedy of 96 people, but mainly as the tragedy of the presidential couple, the tragedy of Lech Kaczyński and the members of the PiS. They want to make political use of the plane crash. They want to treat the President's death instrumentally, to make him a symbol so that he becomes a natural patron of the PiS. This is an element of the PiS strategy – appropriating the tragedy and using it as a political support*³⁴.

J. Wojciechowski:

*No, Mr Schetyna. It is not the PiS that appropriated the tragedy. It is the tragedy that appropriated the PiS, taking away numerous politicians and activists. (...) Schetyna does not believe in PiS's tears. For them only the sadness of Komorowski, the sorrow of Tusk and Palikot's speechless mourning are honest and true. And perhaps also the spontaneous sobbing of Monika (Kaczyńska). This is real mourning that does not appropriate anything.... And PiS is not frank in its mourning, perhaps it is even enjoying its victims..*³⁵

³² J. Sasin, *Kontrwywiad Radia RMF FM*, A radio programme, 2.05.2010.

³³ W. Waszczykowski, *Kontrwywiad Radia RMF FM*, A radio programme, 29.04.2010.

³⁴ G. Schetyna, *PiS zawłaszcza tragedię*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 30.04.2010.

³⁵ J. Wojciechowski, *Schetyna nie wierzy łzom*, URL: januszwojciechowski.blog.onet.pl (Accessed: 15 January 2011).

Case 4: Mutual blaming for „ineligible” methods of running the election campaigning (9-10 May 2010)

In the case of both candidates the form and content of the reproach was similar. It consisted in stressing the fact that in the media debate the opponent run the campaign in an unbecoming way. The term referred to the moment, place and the form of action. Such a dispute may be surprising to observers as every action in the course of a campaign should be treated as a method of election campaigning. B.Komorowski was criticized for his web chat during his visit to Moscow (Elżbieta Jakubiak), J.Kaczyński was imputed dishonest intentions and accused of striking a political deal in his Internet “Message to Russian friends” (Andrzej Halicki, a PO MP)

A. Halicki:

I have an impression of falsity and dishonest message. In fact, this is an electoral message to Poles³⁶.

E. Jakubiak:

Today it seems, that the candidate’s Web chat is shown everywhere and actually I do not know in what character he went there. As a president ad interim, a presidential candidate or a speaker of the Parliament³⁷?

Case 5: The appeals to the political opponent to plead guilty (11 May 2010)

Such appeals appeared already on the day of the plane crash, and their point was that „the one who criticized us should apologize now..” They were made numerous times by publicists, journalists and also by the citizens that were asked by TV reporters. The theme that demands expiation is still present in the statements of the PiS politicians and often dominates the relationships with the politicians of other parties (mainly of the PO). Such argumentation closes discussions and reduces the opportunities to change the negative interaction. The statement of Paweł Kowal, the then PiS MP, serves as a good example:

P. Kowal:

It was not right that in Poland someone was called a Russophobe to be presented as a black character. This is not a wise solution. (...) The ones who called Jarosław Kaczyński this way and did it in public in western newspapers should admit their blame. But they should have done it before, as there were no reasons to call him this way³⁸.

³⁶ A. Halicki, *Poranek Radia TOK FM*, A radio programme, 10.05.2010.

³⁷ E. Jakubiak, *Siądmy Dzień Tygodnia*, A radio programme, 9.05.2010.

³⁸ P. Kowal, *Poranek Radia TOK FM*, A radio programme, 11.05.2010.

Case 6: Interview with Władysław Bartoszewski (5 May 2010)

Władysław Bartoszewski, a great authority for many people, an honorary member of the PO candidate's election committee commented bluntly in the *Der Standard*, an Austrian newspaper, the methods used by Jarosław Kaczyński in his campaign. One should wonder, whether the words were adequate to the situation and what the consequences of such statements might be. The journalist's question was: "Were you surprised that Jarosław Kaczyński, the twin brother of the late president candidates in the elections?" "In his answer, W. Bartoszewski, the ex-minister of foreign affairs said:

*If Jarosław Kaczyński – and it has already started – uses this great loss as an argument in the election campaign, I will have to say that I am as much against pedophilia as necrophilia of any kind*³⁹.

Case 7: Talk between Kazimierz Kutz and Elżbieta Jakubiak (7 May 2010)

And finally – although more examples could be provided- a conversation in a TV studio between the PO and PiS MPs⁴⁰. There were allegations on the part of the PO that PiS makes use of the tragedy in the political struggle; that it manipulates by presenting Jarosław Kaczyński as its only victim and that PiS's activities and Kaczyński's better results in pre-election surveys result in the weakening of the Polish currency. All the arguments appealed to emotions, aimed at discrediting and stigmatizing. On the other hand, PiS blamed the PO politicians for the lack of empathy towards the ones who are authentic in their mourning; that they are aggressive towards their political opponents and they are not worthy of discussing with. The common denominator of both parties is a strong trend to discredit the opponent him/herself and his/her views and argument. Thus, the argument of power seems to be the most efficient argument. The question is: "has anything changed?" The fragment of the TV debate mentioned above may make us think on political change:

Journalist: So what do you expect from the PiS? (the question is to K.Kutz, but it is answered by E.Jakubiak)

E.J.: *Disco-pole or short films with a pig on the table. Don't expect such a thing from us, Mr Kutz.*

³⁹ W. Bartoszewski, *Wie wenn man Klestil in der Kapuzinergruft bestattet hätte*, URL: <http://derstandard.at/1271376023255/Wie-wenn-man-Klestil-in-der-Kapuzinergruft-bestattet-haette> (accessed 15 January 2011).

⁴⁰ *Fakty po Faktach TVN24*, A TV programme, 7.05.2010.

K.K.: *I wish, you didn't say such things.*

E.J.: *This is you offer to the Polish people*

K.K.: *In my opinion, the point is that we should start talking about what Poland will be in the nearest future*

E.J.: *So let's talk about education, Silesia, the shipyard sthat that you have closed down....*

K.K.: *So don't interrupt me, I don't interrupt you.*

E.J.: *It's you, who keep on interrupting me all the time.*

Conclusion

The destructive character of the conflict in Polish politics is determined by factors that are cultural in nature (routinized and ritualized interactions), structural (the support for particular parties, significant target at stake – the election victory and the prospect of forming a government independently) and situational (the object of the dispute). One should also mention the elements that strengthen the durability of the factors listed above. They are: the weakness of the social control over the political elites, their insufficient moral and intellectual level and the interest on the part of mass media to show attractive news. The recognition of all these mutually interwoven determinants will make it possible to give correct answers on questions concerning the causes and the character of the conflicts on the Polish political scene.

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Summary

The patterns of political interactions, when applied for a long time, may preserve models of relationships between the politicians and citizens. The article presents the determinants of the antagonistic style of making politics in Poland with a particular consideration of the situation after the presidential plane crash in Smoleńsk in April 2010. There are at least four such factors: the lack of a rational and constructive criticism on the part of the citizens, the lack of the tradition of political consensus, the structure of the political scene and the subject matter of the disputes. The theses given in the second part are illustrated by the examples of statements made by politicians in the election campaign of 2010.