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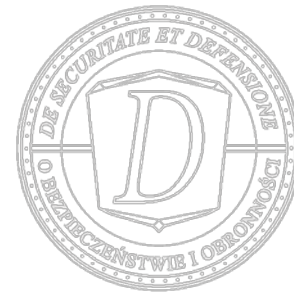
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PATRIOTISM IN THE FACE OF MODERN THREATS

ABSTRACT: Patriotism as a socio-political attitude having its expression in love of the homeland and the nation, inextricably linked with the willingness to make sacrifices for the common good, repeatedly evolved over the centuries, while at the same time often distorted and deformed for the need of existing ideology. Currently, there is a crisis of patriotic-defense values as well as a kind of collapse of patriotic attitudes of Poles. The cause of the state of affairs is the largely advancing globalization processes that make human the citizen of the world and giving almost unlimited possibilities in the socio-political system. In the face of the recent worsening diffusion of cultures, a sense of their own identity, culture and patriotic awareness becomes crucial, allowing for nurturing the values fundamental to our nation and its secure survival.

KEYWORDS: patriotism, defense, the patriotic-defense values, patriotic attitudes, threats

PATRIOTYZM W OBLICZU WSPÓŁCZESNYCH ZAGROŻEŃ

ABSTRAKT: Patriotyzm jako postawa społeczno-polityczna mająca swój wyraz w umiłowaniu ojczyzny i narodu, nierozzerwalnie związana z gotowością do ponoszenia ofiar dla ich ogólnego dobra wielokrotnie ewoluowała na przestrzeni wieków, będąc jednocześnie niejednokrotnie wypaczoną i deformowaną na potrzeby istniejących ideologii. Obecnie obserwuje się kryzys wartości patriotyczno-obronnych jak również swoisty upadek postaw patriotycznych Polaków. Przyczyną zaistniałego stanu rzeczy są w znacznej mierze postępujące procesy globalizacyjne, czyniące z człowieka obywatela świata i dające mu wręcz nieograniczone możliwości

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w układzie społeczno-politycznym. W obliczu nasilającej się w ostatnim czasie dyfuzji kultur niezwykle istotne staje się poczucie własnej tożsamości, kultury i świadomości patriotycznej, pozwalające na pielęgnowanie wartości fundamentalnych dla naszego narodu i jego bezpiecznego przetrwania.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: patriotyzm, obronność, wartości patriotyczno-obronne, postawy patriotyczne, zagrożenia

INTRODUCTION

The essence of patriotism is closely connected with the basic form of social life, which is nation. Creating of nations has generated the need to care for the common good and sometimes required sacrifice and giving up one's own interests. Thus, patriotism has always been identified with the love of own homeland, respect and devotion to its culture and heritage, as well as attention to its interests and the sense of relationship with the past. However, each historical period has built its own model of patriotism, giving it a distinct look, and sometimes even deforming its meaning. Over the centuries, it often happened that the ruling classes under the banner of patriotism promoted hatred and enmity, formed hotbeds of conflict, thus depriving society aspirations of national liberation.

Despite the centuries of tradition and historical heritage handed down to us by many generations of our ancestors, we can easily notice a kind of crisis of both values and patriotism. Therefore, we should consider what patriotism is for us, for the Poles? How was it shaped over the centuries-old history of our nation? Do we express our traditional patriotic values in our attitudes and the celebration of national holidays? Can we see the ability to protect and nurture Polish patriotic values? Making the analysis of the above-mentioned problems, the aim of the authors of this article, beyond the manifestation of the essence of patriotism and changes in its meaning and expression that have taken place over the centuries, is to attract attention of the reader to contemporary threats he had to face and above all, an indication - in the belief of the authors - the equitable solutions to a given state of affairs, for the protection of Polish values, traditions and culture. The article is based largely on a review and critical analysis of the literature, as well as observation of contemporary phenomena, trends and social behaviour. It is a specific attempt to halt the trend of global cosmopolitanism to remind countrymen about their origins and nation-state values, cultivated zealously by our ancestors for hundreds of years, that helped to survive in spite of wars and loss of independence to the present day.

THE ESSENCE OF PATRIOTISM

In the Middle Ages, St. Augustine defined patriotism as the love for one's homeland, and he put its welfare over personal interests. In contrast, St. Thomas Aquinas, in his deliberations, went a step further, equating patriotism with continued love for their parents and families, as it

is the homeland immediately after the Creator, that the man owes most, parents, origin, language, culture, tradition, ethnic separateness or beliefs. It is the homeland that determines the biological, intellectual, moral and spiritual shape of man, as well as its individual and social dimension. Therefore, according to Aquinas, in specific cases, such as armed conflict, the superiority of the love of country above the love towards parents must be recognized, and obedience to leaders of the country as more binding than obedience towards parents⁴.

The stormy history of the Polish state has developed many different angles, forms and concepts of patriotism, usually dependent on the moods amongst the citizens or resulting, from the political situation of the country.

The patriotism of early Middle Ages was due mainly to the contemporary political elite: knights, clergy and the ruler himself together with his entourage. Such patriotism manifested fidelity to the king, by state defense against raids of hostile tribes, awareness of the common origin and the Catholic faith. It was built on the ground of chivalric ethos and Christian values.

Renaissance patriotism bore the hallmarks of any changes associated with that period. The role of the Polish language and literary works written in it were appreciated, establishing political-military alliances, the value of learning and education, developed art and religious tolerance were appreciated, the first proposals for reform of the state appeared. Patriotism of this period is based on the value of antique – humanism and education, cultivating with the national values and a sense of cultural identity.

Noble patriotism was associated with the fall of the royal power due to the growing rank of gentry democracy. The growing power of the nobility, forcing more and more new privileges has led to the erosion and degeneration of the traditional ideas of Polish patriotism. The apparent solidarity and concern for the common good and verbal manifestation of patriotism were not confirmed in pro-social activities. Application of the *Liberum Veto* led to the later partitions of the country which has failed to prevent attempts to reform the state and the establishment of the Constitution of May 3.

Romantic patriotism was Polish patriotism without Poland. The state disappeared from the map of Europe for 123 years, but only ethno-cultural dimension of nation testified Polishness. It was a time when patriotic values experienced a kind of purification and intensification, and state awareness and loyalty have become national symbols of particular importance. A quest to recover the lost independence was given priority, which served armed deeds – the November and January Uprisings, fighting alongside Napoleon, as well as literary works, poetry and painting expressing longing for a lost country and encouraging the hearts of Poles to fight ‘for our freedom and yours’⁵.

Independence surges disasters causing repression, meant that it was decided to look for other ways for restoring political sovereignty. The main goal was the organic work assuming

⁴ K. Chałas, S. Kowalczyk, *Wychowanie ku wartościom narodowo-patriotycznym. Elementy teorii i praktyki*. Vol. II. *Naród, Ojczyzna, patriotyzm, państwo pokój*, pp. 38-39.

⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 41-43.

socio-economic reforms, the universality of education, scientific work, appreciating the work of farmers and workers and their activation, creating its own industry and trade on an international scale. Positivistic dimension of patriotism and the diffusion of their works by Polish writers and poets.

The beginning of the twentieth century was associated with the creation of two competing concepts of patriotism. The first of them – Legion created by Jozef Pilsudski advocated regaining and maintaining independence through armed action, the resurrection of Polish multiethnic society, political realism, striving to achieve a balance between the neighbouring countries, the emphasis on education and upbringing and also physical education, the acceptance of authoritarian rule. The second - the national democracy associated with Roman Dmowski preached the supremacy of national interest above ethical values, loyal defense of the country on the way to competition with other countries, the supremacy of good people on democracy, revival of Polish society and even instrumental use of religion for political purposes.

Home Army patriotism is connected with the period of World War II and the events that took place shortly afterwards. An essential element of this kind of patriotism was striving for independence and sovereignty, and selfless service to the nation, faithfulness to tradition and Christian values, opposition to the ideology of totalitarianism and socialism, also solidarity, ethos containing the slogan “God, Honor, Country”. After the war, patriots of this period were recognized by the new authorities as the most dangerous enemies of the emerging socialist state. The result was a further extermination of particularly valuable parts of Polish society⁶.

Socialist patriotism contained traditional patriotic values such as the love and respect for the motherland, solidarity with the people or submitting the good of the country above own interests. It was also an open attitude, manifested in the respect and recognition also against other nations, and particularly friendly and based on the international associations of working class. However, these values subordinated socialist ideology aiming at the socialization of the individual, the excitation of responsibility for the level of development of the whole society, as well as a sense of the need to participate in the multiplication of common heritage. The implementation of these assumptions were conducive to the threat of a military nature from NATO and the need for reconstruction from the devastation caused by another war. This is reflected in the common conviction of the need to prepare the society as a whole to defend the homeland and take individual responsibility for its safety⁷.

Solidarity patriotism is the last viable concept of patriotism on Polish soil. It was generated by the activities of social workers’ movement “Solidarity”. It sought above all to defend the dignity of workers, establishment and dissemination of trade unions, multitude, peaceful political reforms, appealing to Christian values and opposition to totalitarian communism. In

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 45-46.

⁷ *Vide* T. Bieniasz, T. Siuda, *Problemy obronności w systemie szkolnym*, Warszawa 1978.

time, its foundation eroded and the accepted compromises at the round table never led to the settlement of the communist authorities of their reign⁸.

MODERN THREATS TO PATRIOTISM

Modern patriotism, though including all the traditional values of Polish patriotism, is clearly different from the above mentioned classification. Today's society has serious problems with expressing patriotic feelings, even though in their minds they are still rooted. In addition disturbing condition of our country is conducive to the further erosion of patriotic values. Failure of state institutions, experiencing injustice that results from the imperfect legislative system and political unethical behavior interfere with the need to identify with their homeland. This situation deepens the lack of a clear concept of building the national community and defining the idea of Polishness.

An additional element disturbing the modern sense of patriotism are the advancing globalization processes and a kind of fascination with the West - its culture, technology and modernity. Imitation of the prevailing there trends, coincides with the contempt and disregard for their culture and individuality, as well as marginalizing the national heritage and tradition and history. This state of affairs has a negative impact on the young generation of Poles traveling abroad. Certain cultural differences manifested in behavior and the way of thinking are often a source of embarrassment rather than pride.

The current patriotism is experiencing a kind of crisis. On the one hand, a large part of society feels the need to express their Polishness by custom, religion, history, way of life, on the other hand, they treat it as a provincial relic, which is the subject of irony or embarrassment. The basis for this state of affairs may be poor Polish position on the international arena or the aforementioned unfavorable economic situation and the country's economics. They generate a growing dissatisfaction among citizens and even frustration, leading to a sense of disintegration of national community, and reduction of esteem as citizens⁹.

Patriotism, like other social phenomena is dynamic in its character and is subject to change under the influence of socio-historical transformations. These changes do not exclude the possibility of further cultivating of the virtues and patriotic traditions. Meanwhile, they determine the face of new and multidimensional national and patriotic values, giving them supra-historical aspect.

The turbulent past and centuries-old customs of our nation cannot be separated from contemporary reality as well as the present civilization, culture and the nature of which we ourselves are part, including the products of our intellect. Also, the process of education of each generation needs establishing and appealing to history, cultural and civilizational past

⁸ K. Chałas, S. Kowalczyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

⁹ J. Kłoczowski (ed.), *Patriotyzm Polaków. Studia z historii idei*, Kraków 2006, pp. 284-287.

and combining them with current events and situations of political, social, economic or even military processes¹⁰.

Contemporary determinants of patriotic and defense education can be categorized in two ways:

- a) „according to the areas of people’s lives: social, political, economic, ecological, military, educational, other.
- b) according to the degree of generality (scope and impact on people’s lives): global, regional, local (national), personal”¹¹.

Today we can easily observe a kind of crisis that undermines its sphere of patriotism and defense of Polish society. This state of affairs is the result of a series of interrelated significant events, among which one should mention political transformation, erosion of values and morals, the degradation of standards and political principles, regress on the field of education (which is the result of reforms in its place), unemployment as well as disturbance of social stability¹².

The biggest threat to the patriotic values are two currents. The first of them – national nihilism – expressed in persistent pursuit and multiplying material goods, aversion to any national values and breaking ties with the home country. It is therefore renunciation of history, culture and traditions of their home, alienation from the national community, as well as negating the homeland as autotelic value. The second – cosmopolitanism resulting somewhat from nihilism, provides that a person is a citizen of the world and thus refers to a man belonging to the human race. It manifests itself in the treatment of their own people as well as other countries as an instrument for achieving personal aspirations.

An important determinant of patriotism is also the problem of the Americanisation of the country and the increasing share of national wealth owned by foreign companies. This raises legitimate concerns of citizens both adults and the youth about the destruction of national identity and sovereignty of the country.

Equally troubling process with a negative impact on the shape of patriotic attitudes of Poles are schematic, covering not only the process of teaching and education but also a way of celebrating and remembering anniversaries, national holidays and events conditioned by the history of the country¹³. Inappropriate selection of patterns and patriotic forms combined with the inadequacy in the ways of their implementation, maladjustment of these forms to the needs, situations and social expectations, can breed a kind of crisis in the field of education and patriotic defense. Therefore, the effectiveness of this type of education depends primarily on the educational objectives of the entity becoming a reality. It is not just about teachers and

¹⁰ R. Rosa, *Współczesne determinanty wychowania patriotyczno-obronnego*, [in:] R. Kalinowski, J. Kunikowski, L. Wyszczelski (ed.), *Wychowanie patriotyczno-obronne. Tradycje i współczesność*, Siedlce 2004, pp. 89-90.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

¹² G. Wierzbicki, *Uwarunkowania w kształtowaniu postaw patriotyczno-obronnych*, [in:] R. Kalinowski, J. Kunikowski, L. Wyszczelski (ed.), *op. cit.*, Siedlce 2004, p. 179.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 180-181.

educators, but also parents and carers, engaged in the educational activity. Unfortunately, their awareness of the implementation of these tasks is minimal, while it is they who must create for the pupils the opportunity to express the activity, make choices and decisions and take responsibility for it. Proper selection of educational measures, appropriate targeting pupils, as well as reports linking educators and students, parents and children combined with imitation and identification of regularities determine the future shape of the social and moral faces of the youth.

Apart from the existing universal values, noteworthy is the fact of the presence of the new, specific structures, systems and classification of values. They lead to the devaluation and marginalization of patriotic attitudes towards the fulfillment of personal ambition, career or success.

Contemporary identity crisis affects not only the youth, but extends to the whole of society. The reason for this state of affairs are continuous and dynamic changes in the environment around us. Their diversity covering all areas of human life, ranging from ecological through cultural and technological and to socio-economic, causes serious problems in effectively adapting to them¹⁴.

Consequently, there is no doubt that moral and intellectual repair of the whole nation becomes necessary, the return to being directed not only by the interests of the individual, but also the local and national ones as well, to allow for a more dynamic educational processes to keep pace with the reforms, structural transformation and economic development. It is also important to organize educational conditions conducive to such activity for the children in their family houses, that contribute to the moral, intellectual and social development, and hence to greater awareness and the patriotic-defense preparedness of the youth.

The only possible solution to the situation seems to be the positivist concept of organic work, assuming making a joint effort to rebuild a strong sense of Polishness and procreation of beliefs of particular national traditions. Implementation of this idea should be initiated by the elites of culture, art and science, to eventually reach the furthest layers related to national values. Every citizen should have its own, deep vision of their Polishness, containing the most important elements of contemporary specificity of the nation. It must be built based on traditional ideas of freedom, solidarity, tolerance, justice and morality and sublime events, which are part of the heritage of generations.

The terms of elementary ideas deeply rooted in Polish history and tradition demonstrates how seriously lacking of basic features of the spirit of Polishness contemporary society is. Poles no longer see their state as the common good of freedom and independence which their ancestors fought for. They have lost their sense of justice and morality, especially in the public life. The belief in the freedom of citizens, to ensure which a number of institutions and laws were established, has left them.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 181-182.

Only realizing all the injustices afflicting our nation and those who must be opposed at every day can be a starting point for repair homeland. Patriotism identified with attachment to the land is the basis for the existence and proper functioning of the state. The fate of a nation devoid of the spirit of Polishness will become indifferent to the majority of the population. Spreading the idea of Polishness is a necessary condition to initiate reform of the state¹⁵.

Without a doubt, the above mentioned crisis of the universal and traditional values and civic duties imposes the need to give considerable attention to the education of the younger generation, in particular in the field of patriotic-defense education¹⁶.

SUMMARY

Patriotism has changed over the centuries. Since ancient times, it was identified with the family and love towards it. The slogan “God, Honour, Fatherland” with the passage of time, was becoming more and more important. In the Middle Ages it was identified with the former ruling elite: knights, clergy, and with the king. The country was defended by the knights who had their ethos, based on these three assumptions.

The history of our State showed that irrespective of political and social outcome, cultural influences and cultural transformation, ideas most important for the public do not change. Despite the extermination of Polish officers during World War II by the Soviet Army and devotion to the sovereignty of the Soviet Union, independence and love for their homeland was still present in the Poles. They were still trying to fight for free and democratic Poland, which was reflected in the rise of Local Government Independent Trade Unions ‘Solidarity’ in the 1980s.

However, the current situation makes us think that the priorities important to the previous generation, have a chance of existing nowadays among young Poles.

The relation of the public, especially of young people, to the political situation in our country, restructuring of the Polish Army, changing the curriculum in schools, informing about life in a seemingly safe country, make it possible to talk about the deficit of patriotism.

Young people have become citizens of the world, for whom career and material goods are most important. They do not look for role models and authority figures in the history of their country, they cease to identify with them. One can observe the erosion of social values, which directly implies regression of patriotic consciousness.

Attitudes, including the pro-defense attitudes, and thus the love of the motherland, affect not only personal predispositions but also the social environment – school, family and friends. At this point, special attention should be paid to the values and family traditions, but also to the ideals and values conveyed by educators and teachers in educational institutions.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 288-291.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 183.

Attitudes and behaviour of adults during the holidays and national celebrations should serve as an example to follow.

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