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REVIEWS

A BOOK REVIEW OF ANNA MULLER'S "THE ROAD FROM DICTATORSHIP TO
DEMOCRACY ON EXAMPLES OF SPAIN AND POLAND",
MADO Publishing House, Toruń 2005, 112 pages.

by Joanna Marszałek-Kawa

In 2004 a remarkably interesting book appeared on Polish book market, written by a young researcher of Gdańsk's circle, entitled *The Road from Dictatorship to Democracy on Examples of Spain and Poland*. This work is a subsequent volume of a publishing series *Poland-European Union-Integration* published under the patronage of Marshal of Senat of the Republic of Poland, Longin Pastusiak.

During Copenhagen Conference, ended 13 May 2002, the European Union member states turned on the green light for a group of ten candidate countries, including Poland. Due to this decision the European Union faced the most extensive enlargement in the history of the European Communities, that on 1 May 2004 became a fact. It needs to be stressed here that the fact of new countries joining the EU structures results in new consequences for the EU (i.a. a need for deep institutional reforms adopting Communities to new

conditions), as well as for concrete candidate countries.

Although this reviewed book belongs to a catalogue of works concerning the integration of young democracies with the European Union, it is exceptional. The author, in a systematic and synthetic way, showing significant knowledge on the subject, presents the process of political system transformation in Spain and Poland. The cognitive knowledge of this work is undoubtedly increased by the fact that a historical and political analysis of Spanish and Polish diplomatic activities on the European, as well as national arena, provide additional arguments proving the similarity of experiences of both countries.

Anna Muller based her research on an analysis of the results of current events. She meticulously studied publications in Polish and foreign libraries, and also in institutions dealing with shaping and propagating the European Union policy. A vast bibliography,

including dozens of titles, may be a proof of that fact. The author studiously attended to described issues, however, it seems that such important events as those concerning the history of Polish political system transitions i.e. August Agreement or the Round Table Talks should be presented more broadly.

In the literature on the subject comparisons of Poland to Spain can be found frequently. It is said that the Polish and the Spanish have similar mentality, they are open and willing to have fun, but at the same time they are extremely heroic and courageous. This courage and stubbornness accompanied and still accompanies those two countries in accession negotiations. The representatives of our countries fought to the end to win the most profitable conditions for our membership in the Communities, being frequently exposed to unfavourable comments and remarks from diplomats of other EU member states. Poland and Spain also possess similar potential – the number of votes in the European Union institutions – which decides of the possibilities to influence the EU's decision-making process. Both countries are joined by similar, difficult historical experience and finally peaceful transition from a proletarian dictatorship to parliamentary democracy in case of Poland, and from General Franco's dictatorship to a parliamentary political system based on monarchy in case of Spain. Anna Muller points to the fact that seeking parallels between Spain and Poland is not a novelty, as scientists and researchers of the XIX century (i.a. Joachim Lelewel), as well as writers (Juliusz Słowacki, Józef Wybicki)

carried out comparative studies. In Poland, at the end of 1980s with the Round Table Talks, the example of Spanish *reconditioning of Franco's dictatorship appears to be an ideal model*¹.

Clear and plain structure of the reviewed book is certainly its advantage. The construction of this work is problem- and chronology-oriented. *The Road from Dictatorship to Democracy on Examples of Spain and Poland* consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusions and bibliography. In cited literature on the subject the author omitted a few important works, i.a. Roman Bäcker' *Totalitaryzm – geneza, istota, upadek*, Ryszarda Skarżyński's *Od liberalizmu do totalitaryzmu*, a book entitled: *Adam Skwarczyński – Od demokracji do totalitaryzmu*, compiled by Daria Nałęcz, a publication by Ryszard Michalski, *Chrześcijańska wizja odrodzenia człowieka. Katolicka nauka społeczna w Polsce przeciwko moralnym skutkom kapitalizmu i totalitaryzmu 1918–1989*, a work of Stanisław Car, *Polska koncepcja autorytaryzmu*, (compiled by Jacek M. Majchrowskiego), or book by Nicola Chiaromonte, *Co pozostaje, Notesy 1955–1971*.

The first part of this reviewed book comprises theoretical thoughts on political system transitions. The author characterises various phases of transitional process, defines differences between authoritarian and totalitarian systems. In subsequent

¹ Anna Muller, *Droga od dyktatury do demokracji na przykładach Hiszpanii i Polski*, Toruń 2005, p. 7.

chapters, Spanish and Polish experiences have been presented. Anna Muller analysis the essence of regime, and also its impact on the character of political system changes. *The Road from Dictatorship to Democracy on Examples of Spain and Poland* definitely lacks a chapter, where a reader could find a deep, comparative analysis of the basis, reasons, conditions, social spirits accompanying the transition from undemocratic regime to a democratic state. Although in the last part of her work the author provides a list of differences (eg. concerning the role of the Church, economic changes projected by central institutions, the origins of regime, and changes started later) and more sparingly, similarities in changes of the political system in Spain and Poland (as Muller remarks *in both cases the transitional process ended in nonradicalism by accession, and in social compromise between two opposing powers*), however, it does not fully satisfy the needs of an inquisitive and interested in the subject reader.

Anna Muller's book is distinguished by proper methodological structure, as the author skillfully uses various sources, including vast resources of the Internet. She applies clear language, though it occurs that long, complicated sentences with many digressions and references are difficult to comprehend. This work also presents very

high standards as far as graphical and editorial aspects are concerned.

The Road from Dictatorship to Democracy on Examples of Spain and Poland is an example of a successful publication that enriches our knowledge on transformations of political systems, as well as on the European integration. Examining Spanish existence in the EU structures may turn out to be priceless in connection with Polish membership in the European Union. Anna Muller's work is a lesson, that would enable our diplomats to avoid unnecessary mistakes and gain the most, wherever it is possible.

This book is an example of monography devoted to an issue of not only historical value. It perfectly places itself among recent scientific work, and furthermore, it introduces new, never before presented elements to Polish literature on the history of transformation, and this fact is of particular importance for researchers.

In conclusion, it has to be highlighted that this work has high standards, is innovative in presenting the subject and written in adequate language. All those factors should make this book useful not only for students of politology, history or international relations, but also it should find itself a place in a bookcase of Polish representatives in the Communities.