



Horyzonty Polityki
2020, Vol. 11, N° 36



Editorial “Post-pandemic Societies”

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all aspects of life – political, economic, religious. It has led to millions of people being infected, a large number of deaths (in early December the number was approaching 1.5 million), severe health consequences for many of those who have survived the disease, and a powerful economic crisis resulting in tens of millions of people around the world losing their jobs. The health care system in most countries has been rocked to its core. Many countries’ introduction of measures aimed at preventing the spread of the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2), especially those that limit the ability to move around in the public sphere and call for social distancing and mask wearing, has caused an explosion of social protests, an increased distrust of both the authorities who have introduced various restrictions and the scientists and healthcare workers who have recommended these restrictions, as well as an unprecedented flourishing of various conspiracy theories. Some of these theories go so far as to suggest that the pandemic is a creation or invention of those holding global power, who are now striving for the total and unprecedented enslavement of billions of people and complete control over all aspects of the lives of individuals and societies. These phenomena are felt particularly acutely in democratic states, which are inherently more sensitive to social tensions. For the pandemic has deepened the already existing crisis not only of democratic-liberal institutions, but also of the entire intellectual “spirit” of this socio-political formation. The most spectacular exemplification of this phenomenon are the events surrounding the United States presidential election, which – in the opinion of some

experts – may lead to a serious crisis in democratic procedures in the country considered the leader of the free world.

The daily problems of social life remain somewhat overshadowed by the political and economic turmoil that is a direct result of the pandemic (whether created or merely reinforced by it). The requirement of maintaining social distancing has to a large extent disrupted the functioning of all social institutions essential for the development of education, culture and religious life. Undoubtedly, the necessity to conduct school classes via the Internet is a particular blow to the whole of society. Apart from the purely economic consequences (difficulties in reconciling parental care with professional work), a reduction in the quantity and quality of social relations, so important for shaping the personality and attitudes of young people, may in particular give rise to a plethora of negative consequences.

The COVID-19 pandemic forces all of us to seriously reflect on what awaits humanity in the coming days, months, and years. Any forecasts should also consider historical experience; after all, *historia magistra vitae*, and this is not the first event of its kind in the history of mankind, nor is it even unprecedented in recent history.

The question we wish to pose concerns the condition of post-pandemic societies, i.e. what the moral, social, economic, political consequences of these events were and will be. What models of societies gave rise to pandemics, and what models could emerge now? Did these tragedies inspire people to seek and create a “better” world or did they strengthen “barbaric” tendencies?

We are convinced that such reflection will allow for the wiser use of our current experiences.

Wit Pasierbek
Piotr Świercz
theme issue editors