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**HUMAN PRAXIS, ALTERNATIVE THINKING, AND
HETEROGENEOUS CULTURE – ZYGMUNT BAUMAN’S
REVISIONIST THOUGHT¹**

*What is of primary concern is how to adjust society to individual needs,
not the reverse; how to extend the range of freedom of individual choice;
how to provide room enough for individual initiative and non-conformity.*
Zygmunt Bauman, *Modern Times, Modern Marxism*

Introduction

On the basis of the decision of the Minister of Higher Education, Henryk Jabłoński, taken on the 25st March 1968, Zygmunt Bauman together with five other academics – Bronisław Baczko, Leszek Kołakowski, Maria Hirszowicz-Bielińska, Stefan Morawski, and Włodzimierz Brus – was expelled from his post at the Warsaw University. All these revisionist intellectuals were regarded by the officials as a significant threat to the communist rule. They were officially accused of inciting students to oppose the government during the March events. As far as Zygmunt Bauman is concerned, Nina Kraśko notes: “Because of his origin, position in the scientific life in Poland, active role in the Communist Party, and an identification with Marxism, Bauman became a particular object of an offensive campaign conducted by the media and politicians. His name occurred in press as the generic name; it was

¹ This research was funded by the National Science Centre in Poland on the basis of the grant awarded after obtaining a doctoral degree, based on the decision No DEC-2014/12/S/HS2/00391.

written with small letters and in plural”² (Kraśko 1995: 33; see also: Tester 2004: 79-81; Davis 2008: 18). In fact, before March 1968 Bauman had a remarkable authority among the intellectuals and the wider public. He held a position as a chair of the Department of General Sociology at the Warsaw University. He wrote several books and articles and was a founder and an editor-in-chief of the Polish journal “Sociological Studies”. Moreover, for a several years Bauman supported – more or less zealously – the Polish United Workers’ Party. Before he started his work at the Warsaw University he had served in the organs of state security (Edemariam 2007). In the light of all these facts, the evolution of his thought toward revisionism and the recognition he had gained among other representatives of this intellectual current, had brought upon him considerable enmity of the Party (J. Bauman 1988: 195, Davis 2008: 18, 19). Taking this into account, Bauman decided – like many other Poles of Jewish origin – to emigrate to Israel, where he worked at the University of Tel Aviv. Then, in 1971, he accepted a position as Professor of Sociology at the University of Leeds. Meanwhile, in Poland his name was almost completely erased from the annals of science. The academics had been prohibited to refer to his papers for many years. It was in 1991 that Stefan Morawski wrote: “Since Bauman’s forced emigration due to the anti-Semitic campaign in 1968 his work has been almost completely unknown” (Morawski 1991: 280).

The aim of this paper is to analyze Zygmunt Bauman’s social thought before the Polish political crisis of 1968. The first part of the text presents his very early works that reflect his Marxist-Leninist ideas. The stress is put on Bauman’s progressive disappointment with the situation in Poland, too. The second part concentrates on Bauman’s revisionist papers that offer “an anthropological” interpretation of Marxism. It emphasises the characteristic features of his revisionism as well: an emphasis on human praxis, alternative thinking and heterogeneity of culture. The final part includes a summary and analysis of the influence of Bauman’s revisionist’s thought on his works written in subsequent years.

² All quotes from Polish papers were translated by the author of this article.

The road towards revisionism

Zygmunt Bauman started his academic career at the Warsaw University in 1953. At that time he was a loyal member of the Polish United Workers' Party and a follower of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. It is clearly visible in his very early papers (e.g. Bauman, Wiatr 1953: 69-99; Bauman 1955: 168-196). For example, his first published article, co-written with Jerzy Wiatr, titled *On the Historical Role of the Masses*,³ can be seen both as a scientific paper characteristic for the Leninist doctrine as well as a text representative of contemporary propaganda. The authors repeatedly emphasized the positive value of the transformations that had taken place in the post-war Poland. They commended the abolition of the landowning class, the nationalization of the industry, and the cultural revolution aimed at improving social situation of the masses.⁴ It is also worth stressing that this text reflects well their conviction in the key role of the party in realising all these changes. They wrote: "In order to transform the revolutionary activity of the masses into a real revolution that leads to the realization of the aspirations of the masses, the party is indispensable – strong, hardened, and providing party, able to lead the masses in the right direction" (Ibidem, p. 85). In accordance with the Leninist ideology, Bauman and Wiatr pointed out a need to comply with the directions set by the party. Moreover, they strongly opposed these sociologists and philosophers –

³ All Polish titles quoted in this paper were translated into English. As far as some of the titles of Bauman's writings are concerned, I quoted the translations published in: Tester, Hviid Jacobsen 2005: 224-226.

⁴ In accordance with the official doctrine, Bauman and Wiatr stressed the importance of the economic aspect of social life. They wrote: "(...) the exceptional importance of production is related to its deterministic role in the development of society. The history of society-is the history of production. (...) The transformation of the mode of production entails a corresponding change in the whole social life" (Bauman, Wiatr 1953: 70). It is worth comparing this quote with the words that Bauman wrote fourteen years later, in a paper representative for his revisionist thought: "One of the greatest misunderstandings among the current interpretations of Marxist social theory is the attempt to reduce it to a kind of 'economic determinism'. Not only is there nothing particularly Marxist about attempts at simplified, single-factor, genetic explanations of social phenomena, but there is involved a methodological habit most alien to the basic postulates put forward by Marx" (Bauman 2001: 40).

Florian Znaniecki, for example (Znaniecki 1969)—who had stressed the importance of individuals in shaping the historical process. It is not individuals but the rightly organised masses that are the primary source of change, they explicitly argued.

In accordance with Leninist thought, Bauman accepted a historiosophical vision founded on the belief in the succession of socio-economic formations. The aforementioned paper reads as follows: "Changes in the mode of production do not result from a conscious, deliberate decision of the individuals; they occur in an objective way that is independent of the will of their creators—the people" (Bauman, Wiatr 1953: 70). On the other hand, he was convinced that the pace of the changes is, to some extent, a function of human activity. In this contexts Bauman argued that the revolutionary goals would be achieved, only and exclusively, with proper, wise leadership. The most important issue as far as this matter was concerned was that the party had to maintain the closest possible connection with the masses. "When the party loses the bond with the masses"—wrote Bauman and Wiatr—"when it stops to notice the new embryos developed in the masses' womb and is no longer aware of their initiative—the party ceases to be a part of the masses, to be their representative, and in this way it loses its creative strength in history, too. The strength of the party is not only the strength of the right theory, but also the strength of the masses" (Ibidem, p. 94). In the light of this quote, it is worth analysing his first revisionist paper, written in 1957, at the time of "little stabilisation". Bauman pointed out there that the party had broken its relationship with the masses.

This article, titled *Leninism and the Problem of Democratic Centralism* (Bauman 1957)—was the first book by Bauman published in print. The sociologist criticised there the processes that had taken place in Poland in the previous years. He argued that the members of the party had lost both their revolutionary zeal and political maturity. Instead of achieving the revolutionary goals, they had fought for their own positions. The result was a simultaneous political, social, and economic crisis. The main aim of this paper, however, was not to analyze the problems of the Stalinist era, but to indicate the changes that had to be made on the road to "the Kingdom of Freedom" (Walicki 1997). Bauman believed that the processes of destalinization and

democratisation that had taken place in Poland since October 1956 had given hope for a change in the right direction (Brzeziński 2016: 9-21). To make it happen, it would be indispensable to observe strictly the Marxist-Leninist ideology, argued Bauman. His view on that matter was entirely consistent with the revisionist thought. Leszek Kołakowski wrote on the attitude of its representatives as follows: "More than once, especially in the early stages, they invoked Lenin's authority, searching his writings for texts in support of intra-party democracy, the participation of the 'broad masses' in government, and so on" (Kołakowski 1978: 460). Similarly to other revisionist thinkers of that time, Bauman put emphasis on the idea of democratic centralism in Lenin's papers. He stated that the process of democratisation had to be carried out by a strong, centralized, monolithic party. Bauman insisted both on the party to rebuild the connection with the masses and on the masses to subordinate to the party. His diagnoses were presented with a passionate conviction that reflected his hope that the changes leading toward communism would take place.

Over the course of time—and a systematic retreat from the reforms that had been introduced in October 1956—Bauman's hope had been, however, gradually diminished. His own observations on that matter were supported by the empirical research that he conducted. One of them focused on the social structure of the party organization in industrial works (Bauman 1962a: 50-64). The showed that there was a huge difference between the rate of the Party membership between foremen, office workers, engineers, and technicians on the one hand, and workers (especially unskilled) on the other. The members of both groups manifested very different types of attitude as well. Among the former there were mainly "extroverts", oriented towards reaching the goals of the Party, and among the latter there were mainly "introverts", concerned simply with doing their job. These observations contradicted Bauman's contemporary expectations—which were also characteristic of the official Marxists doctrine—that workers would first of all aim towards the social change. Another empirical study focused on the values and standards of the success of youth from Warsaw (Bauman 1962b: 77-90). The research showed that among males aged 18-24 there were mostly those who evinced the "expansive" or "defensive" attitude. The representatives of the former group pursued the goals

that were characteristic of the capitalist society, like, for example, personal career, consumption, high social status etc. The representatives of the latter group aimed toward quality of life, pleasant environment, and security of their position. Bauman underlined that both groups not only had not internalised the values characteristic for socialist ideology, but followed the patterns of consumption, too. The rejection of Marxist standards by those who were brought up after the Second World War and lived in a city with a high level of industrialisation, was a bitter disappointment for the sociologist. With regard to this research, he said in 2001 in a conversation with Keith Tester and Michael Hviid Jacobsen: "Looking back, I suspect that the outcome of our research into the attitudes of Polish youth marked, perhaps not the first, but certainly the most profound of my disenchantments. What I found was not what I and other 'believers' like me hoped to find" (Tester, Jacobsen 2005: 44).

The aforementioned disenchantment with the situation in Poland let Bauman to the reformulation of the foundations of his social thought. His belief in both the Polish United Workers' Party and the Marxist-Leninist ideology had been continually weakened. However, the sociologist had not lost his determination to act towards the improvement of the working class condition within the Marxist thought. Yet, he had entirely changed the way of its interpretation. His very early papers can be described – using his own words—as an example of "a mechanistic" current in Marxist philosophy (Bauman 1964: 546-549). Bauman stated that the representatives of it—for example Karl Kautsky, Georgi Plekhanov, and Nikolai Bukharin—were focused on both exploring the direction of social processes and making people conscious of it. In opposition to this interpretation, Bauman pointed out "an activist" current of Marxist thought. Among its representatives he indicated Vladimir Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Georg Lukács, and Antonio Gramsci. According to Bauman, all of them stressed the role of human praxis. They were convinced the world is as a product of people's actions and they emphasised the role of individual initiative. "(...) this kind of knowledge"—Bauman wrote—"makes human behaviour less, not more predictable. It functions in a manner exactly opposite to the knowledge created by the managerial world" (Bauman 2001: 44). As far as I am concerned, the change in his attitude from his very early papers

to the ones written in the nineteen-sixties of the twentieth century may be interpreted as a transition from “mechanistic” to “activistic” interpretation of Marxist thought. It is the topic of the next part of the article.

Human praxis in the heterogeneous culture

Keith Tester wrote on the characteristic features of the revisionist thought as follows: “Marxist revisionism was harnessed to a commitment to a brand of socialism that argued that actually existing socialism was an ossification of the initial promise of human dignity, and that humanity could only be achieved if this ossification were overcome. In other words the aim of Marxist humanism was not to overthrow socialism but, in tune with the appreciation of paradox, to rehumanise it and, therefore, to make it *more* socialist” (Tester 2004: 63). This trend in Marxist thought interpretation was accompanied by a call for: general democratisation of public life, freedom of speech concerning political reforms and other issues, abolition of the system of repressions etc. Regardless of the differences between the revisionists, they all argued that Marxism would not be reinvigorated without criticism and discussion (Kołakowski 1978: 456-474). Within the last few years of Bauman’s work at the Warsaw University the ideas he promoted were a perfect example of this way thinking. He decided not to leave Marxism, but to revise it in order to locate it in opposition to both the official doctrine and the condition of the actually existing socialism. His aim was to save the ethical core of Marxist thought which he considered a key to social, political, economic and ideological reforms. It should be stressed as well that the sociologist was active in defence of the freedom of speech. An example of this attitude was his support—manifested with other academics—for Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski when they were oppressed as a consequence of the publication of *An Open Letter to the Party* (Kuroń, Modzelewski 1966; see: Tester 2004: 65).

In his retrospective comment Bauman pointed out two main sources of his reinterpretation of Marxist thought in the nineteen-sixties: philosophy of Albert Camus and Antonio Gramsci (Bauman 2008: 231-240). As far as the former is concerned, the sociologist wrote: “Camus’ rebel is a human who says ‘no’. Also a human who says

'yes'. And a human who says each of those words in a way that leaves room for the other one. The rebel refuses to accept that which leaves room for the other one. The rebel refuses to *accept* what is, yet also abstains from *rejecting* it" (Ibidem, p. 232).⁵ Camus' "no" inspired Bauman's view on the issue of the importance of rebellion against both the actually existing socialism and the official doctrine. He began to claim that it is not a human duty to submit to all the norms and rules imposed by the party, but to defy some of them, in order to search for the alternative ways of social or political development (Tester 2002: 63; Davis 2008: 39). Moreover, the sociologist suggested in that time that the belief in the historical inevitability of progress may absolve men and women of the aforementioned duty. He wrote: "Laws of history (...) offer a most effective escape from the guilt of cruelty by stamping the historical inevitability of progress over the distinction between good and evil" (Bauman 2008: 233). Bauman replaced his former conviction founded on the official interpretation of Marxism with the emphasis on the importance of human responsibility. In accordance with Camus' thought, he interpreted the act of rebellion as an act of affirmation with regard to the attempts to strengthen human solidarity (Camus 1953: 28, see: Tester 2004: 46, 47).

It is worth stressing, however, that the conclusions Bauman drew from Camus' writings were inspired significantly by Antonio Gramsci's philosophy.⁶ "I suppose it was from Gramsci's *Prison*

⁵ Camus wrote: "Rebellion cannot exist without the feeling that somewhere, in some way, you are justified. It is this way that the rebel says yes and no at the same time. He affirms that there are limits and also that he suspects – and wishes to preserve – the existence of certain things beyond those limits" (Camus 1953: 19).

⁶ Zygmunt Bauman was one of the many revisionist thinkers that were inspired by Gramsci's ideas. Leszek Kołakowski wrote on that matter as follows: "Although Gramsci's writings do not amount to a coherent theory but, rather, to a vague and embryonic sketch, some aspects of them are clear and original enough to justify the view that they constitute an independent attempt to formulate a Communist ideology, and not merely an adaptation of the Leninist schema. An indirect confirmation of this is the frequency with which seekers of a more democratic and 'open' version of socialism—especially Communists and ex-Communists—turn to Gramsci for inspiration, and also the acute difficulties and resistance that occur when attempts are made to introduce his ideas to Communist parties outside Italy, especially ruling parties" (Kołakowski 1978: 220).

Notebook”–wrote the sociologist–“which I read a year or two after absorbing Camus’ *cogito* ‘I rebel, therefore I am’, that I learned how to rebel armed with sociological tools and how to make sociological vocation into a life of rebellion. Gramsci translated for me Camus’ philosophy of human condition into a philosophy of human practice (...)” (Bauman 2008: 233, see: Bauman 1992: 206, 207). The central message Bauman drew from the work of Antonio Gramsci was that history is, only and exclusively, a product of human praxis. It is shaped by humans and it can also be re-shaped by them. Gramsci questioned the notion of historical necessity and put stress on the need to search for alternatives to the present condition (Gramsci 1971). His philosophy was, therefore, one of the most important inspirations for Bauman as far as his replacement of the “mechanistic” interpretation of Marxist thought with its “activistic” version was concerned (Bauman 1963: 19-34). Keith Tester wrote on that matter: “The lesson of Gramsci’s text was that pessimism is entirely misplaced since the problem the sociologist must confront is not of the order of ‘How is this necessary?’ nor the far more analytical ‘What are the causes of the belief that this is necessary?’ The latter question points to optimism in that if the social causes of the common sense of the inevitable dominance of the actual can be revealed, then it is also possible to uncover and present its utter contingency” (Tester 2004: 57).

Referring to this quote, I would like to stress as well that Gramsci’s philosophy encouraged Bauman to reflect on the nature of the obstacles to the development of human praxis. Following the author of *The Prison Notebooks*, the sociologist put emphasis on commonsensical assumptions. Gramsci defined common sense as “the conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average men is developed” (Gramsci 1971: 419; Bauman 1963: 19-34). *Eo ipso*, common sense discourages people from developing their potential and – in this way – prevents the realisation of socialist ideas. The adoption of this way of thinking by Bauman implicated two main consequences for his social thought. First of all, he pointed out that the role of the intellectuals should be to oppose the schemes and patterns that shape the social reality. The intelligentsia should promote critical and alternative thinking in order to help working class to achieve its

aims. This also meant a need to resist to the politics of the party whenever it imprisons human praxis. Secondly, the interest in the role of common sense had initiated Bauman's in-depth analyses of the role of culture. For a few years before March 1968, culture was his main area of interest. He wrote several articles (e.g. Bauman 1966c: 58-74; 1968a: 19-33) on that matter and two books (Bauman 1966a; 2017⁷). On the one hand he pointed to the structuring properties of the culture, on the other hand, he stressed that culture is a social construct that should undergo transformations (Brzeziński 2017: 6-29).

Among the articles Bauman wrote on culture I would like to concentrate on one, titled *Some Problems of Contemporary Education* (Bauman 1967: 325-337). There are two reasons for this choice. Firstly, in this paper the sociologist returned to the problem of the values and standards of youth, which he had analysed a few years earlier (Bauman 1962b: 77-90). Secondly, this article reflects well his contemporary view on the need to assimilate a critical and alternative way of thinking on the world. Bauman argued in this paper that there was a huge gap between the behavioural pattern transmitted in the process of education and the condition of the actually existing socialism. While the former was deeply rooted in the socialist values, the latter was an obstacle to their realisation. Bauman wrote: "The young man, who in school was brought up to follow the traditions of the romantic heroes, suddenly awakes to find himself in extremely prosaic situations where romanticism is of little use. Being determined to keep strictly to the rules of equality and justice, the young man goes into retreat, helpless in the face of unexpected signs of indifference to human injustice and in the face of other people's strict observance of the differentiations of people's rights and duties" (Bauman 1967: 333). As is clearly seen in the quoted words, Bauman observed a tendency towards egotism, insensitivity and apathy in the Polish society. He argued that men and women are subjected to a process of bureaucratization ever since they start their professional career. Although the quoted words may at first glance indicate that he was an admirer of the process of education in

⁷ The print run of the book *Sketches of the Theory of Culture* was destroyed in a consequence of the March event. The one remaining copy of book was found very recently and was published in 2017.

the socialist societies, it would be a wrong conclusion. The sociologist argued that schools should not promote ideals in abstraction from the wider world. Moreover, he was critical of the fact that educational programs were founded on the belief in the one, objective, and unchangeable pattern of life at the time when society was more and more heterogeneous (see: Bauman 1966c: 58-74). Bauman formulated the following advice as far as this in-coherence was concerned: "The idea of life acceptable to a present-day society must include such elements as multiplicity and diversity, and hence it must recognize relativity in codes of behaviour. To be 'closer to life', educators must consistently and frankly show their pupils genuine features of the world in which they will have to move" (Bauman 1967: 337).⁸ What is more, the educational programs should prepare the youth for assuming responsibility for their actions, stated Bauman. Schools should teach them the ability to be open to new perspectives in both the private and the public sphere. It is easy to notice that the aforementioned proposals were in accordance with his revisionist thought.

As in the example above, most of Bauman's revisionist ideas were presented between the lines of his papers written before March 1968 (see e.g. Bauman 1966b: 145-162; 1966c: 58-74). However, Bauman managed to publish in 1967 in English a paper – *Modern Times, Modern Marxism* (Bauman 2001: 40-52)⁹ – where he presented his revisionist ideas in full extent. On the one hand, he criticised in this text both the positivistic interpretation of Marxism and its materialisation in the form of the actually existing socialism. In this context he discussed such phenomena as: dominance of managerialism, development of bureaucratization, subordination of men and women to arbitrarily designed plans and norms etc. As far as he was concerned, all these processes were a testimony to distortion and contradiction of the ideas presented by the author of *The Capital*. "The interest and significance of human beings consists in their interest and significance for managerial purposes" – wrote Bauman on the consequence of this way of

⁸ Bauman drew in recent years very similar conclusions regarding education: Bauman 2012.

⁹ Page references to this article are from the copy published in: Peter Beilharz (ed.), *The Bauman Reader*, Malden-Oxford: Blackwell, p. 40-52.

interpretation of the Marxist thought (Ibidem, p. 42). On the other hand, he presented there his own revisionist ideas that were contrary to this managerial vision. Instead of emphasising the notion of order and predictability, the sociologist indicated the significance of human praxis. He was focused on the liberation of both creative and social nature of men and women and their ability to materialise socialist values to full extent. It is legitimate to claim that Bauman was determined to act against the mechanisms of alienation (see: Marx 1977), which he believed were characteristic of the actually existing socialism. In accordance with his contemporary interest in the theory of culture, he put stress on its heterogeneity as well. He argued that the managerial approach and the idea of perfect planning associated with it are inconsistent with the contemporary, pluralistic condition (see: Bauman 1966b: 145-162). Instead of focusing on the organisational and structural solutions, he proposed to draw attention to the multiplicity of human efforts directed at a more righteous society. He presented the most important consequence of this reinterpretation of Marxist thought in his remark I have made the motto of this article. Here I would like to quote it within a broader context: "What is of primary concern is how to adjust society to individual needs, not the reverse; how to extend the range of freedom of individual choice; how to provide enough room for individual initiative and non-conformity. (...) What is needed is a kind of knowledge which shows how to 'manipulate the human environment by enlarging the scope of information in human minds', instead of how to 'manipulate human behaviour by modifying the patterns of external situational pressures'" (Bauman 2001: 44).

The aforementioned article was a testimony of how much Bauman departed from the assumptions characteristic for the official interpretation of Marxist thought. A few years before March 1968 he was convinced that not only the Polish United Workers' Party did not lead people towards the communist society but also that the officials were an obstacle as far as aiming towards better future was concerned. He was developing his own, revisionist thought, with emphasis on the concepts of human praxis, alternative thinking, and heterogeneous culture. Bauman had, however, a very limited chance to explicitly express his ideas. His works were strictly censored by the officials, especially since he had manifested his support for Kuroń and

Modzelewski. Since that time he suffered several other difficulties from the authorities, too (Davis 2008: 18). His expulsion from the Warsaw University in the consequence of the 1968 Polish political crises and the following exile were subsequent manifestations of the enmity of the authorities towards this revisionist thinker.¹⁰

Summary

In this paper I presented the evolution of Zygmunt Bauman's socialist thought from Marxism-Leninism to revisionism. I started this analysis by indicating the fact that at the beginning of his academic career he was a staunch believer in the Polish United Workers' Party and an adherent of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Although he was aware of the problems that had taken place in Poland, he hoped that after the Polish October the changes towards a righteous and equitable society will be implemented. His thoughts on that matter were written in his first revisionist paper. In subsequent years, however, the party had retreated from the reforms and—as the research conducted by the sociologist showed—the masses did not want to engage in civil issues. Bauman was deeply disappointed by this state of affairs and it had a considerable impact on his social thought. Instead of becoming an anti-Marxist, however, he started to revise the Marxist thought, inspired by the works of Albert Camus and Antonio Gramsci. In the following years, Bauman developed his un-orthodox ideas that led him to become one of the leading revisionists in Poland. He emphasised the anthropological frame of reference as far as Marxist interpretation was concerned. His hope for change was founded on belief in human praxis and alternative

¹⁰ Bauman was among first scholars who published the analyses of the March events (Bauman 1968b: 5-21; 1969a: 7-23; 1969b: 3-8, see: Brzeziński 2016: 13-15). He emphasized two major differences between the students' revolt in Poland and in other parts of Europe in 1968. Firstly, the protests that took place in the West were highly acclaimed by some commentators and their leaders gained popularity among the publicity. The students in Poland were in a different situation, they were ridiculed, slandered, and persecuted. Not only the government but also the media opposed their demands. Secondly, the students in France, Great Britain, the United States, etc. acted within a pluralistic system; conflicts and tensions within different groups were its characteristic feature. Meanwhile, the protest in communist Poland was something extraordinary. By suppressing this revolt the authorities wanted to show Polish people that there is no place for protests in any communist country.

thinking. Nevertheless, this hope was confronted by the oppression of the state authorities.

Bauman's revisionist ideas did not die after the political crisis of 1968 in Poland, but evolved over the course of time.¹¹ Regardless of the significant changes his social thought undergone, he has been faithful to the Marxist philosophy and he was still revising it (Bauman, Tester 2001). Moreover, the ideas that he drew from the works of Camus and Gramsci were still vivid in his papers. On their basis, Bauman formulated in the nineteen-seventies his theory of culture (Bauman 1973b), concept of utopia (Bauman 1976c), and his view on the critical role of intellectuals (Bauman 1976b). It is easy to find some influence of his revisionist thought—with its emphasis on human praxis, alternative thinking, and heterogeneous culture – in his more recent papers too. As an example, I would like to point out his critique of modernity (Bauman 1987), concept of postmodern ethics (Bauman 1993) and the idea of liquid modernity (Bauman 2000). The most important and far-reaching consequence of his revisionist thought has been, however, his concept of “utopian sociology” (Brzeziński 2015). At the end of this paper I would like to quote his words on that issue: “(...) sociology was and is to me a critique of extant social reality. Sociology is meant to expose the relativity of what is, to open the possibility of alternative social arrangements and ways of life, to militate against the TINA (‘There is No Alternative’) ideologies and philosophies. As an interpretation of human experience laying bare its invisible, hidden or covered-up links, the mission of sociology, as I understood it all along, was to keep other options alive” (Bauman 2008: 238).

¹¹ On the evolution of Bauman's revisionist thought in the years after the Polish political crisis see: Bauman 1971a: 25-51; 1971b: 45-53; 1973a: 9-25; 1974: 129-148; 1976c; 1976a: 81-108; Tester 2004: 82-97.

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ABSTRACT

HUMAN PRAXIS, ALTERNATIVE THINKING, AND HETEROGENEOUS CULTURE – ZYGMUNT BAUMAN'S REVISIONIST THOUGHT

Zygmunt Bauman was one of the leading revisionists in Poland before March 1968. Together with six other academics he was expelled from the University of Warsaw on the basis of the decision of the Minister of Higher Education taken on the 25st March 1968. It should be stressed, however, that at the beginning of his academic career Bauman had been a staunch believer of the Polish United Workers' Party and an adherent of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. In his first revisionist paper, published soon after the Polish October, he criticized the previous policy of the Party and expressed his hope that significant changes will take place in Poland. As a result of Party withdrawal from the reforms, his attitude towards both the communist rule and Marxism-Leninism had been changing. This paper analyses the evolution of his thought towards revisions. It presents the characteristic features of Bauman's revisionism as well: an emphasis on human praxis, alternative thinking, and heterogeneity of culture.

KEYWORDS: Zygmunt Bauman, Marxism-Leninism, revisionism, Antonio Gramsci, human praxis, alternative thinking, heterogeneous culture, March 1968

LUDZKA PRAKTYKA, MYŚLENIE ALTERNATYWISTYCZNE I KULTURA HETEROGENNA – REWIZJONISTYCZNA MYŚL ZYGMUNTA BAUMANA

Zygmunt Bauman był jednym z czołowych polskich rewizjonistów przed Marcem 1968. Razem z sześcioma innymi pracownikami naukowymi został relegowany z Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego decyzją ministra szkolnictwa wyższego z 25 marca 1968 roku. Należy jednak zwrócić uwagę na to, że na początku swej kariery akademickiej gorliwie popierał on Polską Zjednoczoną Partię Robotniczą, a także był zwolennikiem ideologii marksizmu-leninizmu. Swój pierwszy rewizjonistyczny tekst Bauman napisał wkrótce po Październiku 1956 – poddał w nim krytyce wcześniejszą politykę partii i wyraził nadzieję na zajście w Polsce znaczących reform. W konsekwencji odwrotu partii ze ścieżki reform, jego stosunek tak do niej, jak i do marksizmu-

leninizmu, uległ zasadniczej zmianie. Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest analizie ewolucji myśli rewizjonistycznej Baumana. Wskazuję w nim na charakterystyczne cechy tejże, a mianowicie: nacisk na ludzką praxis, dowartościowanie myślenia alternatywistycznego i wskazywanie na potrzebę heterogenizacji kultury.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Zygmunt Bauman, marksizm-leninizm, rewizjonizm, Antonio Gramsci, praxis, myślenie alternatywistyczne, kultura heterogenna, Marzec 1968

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