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The leading idea and the Congress preparations

Sociological congresses are lately organised in Poland every three years. They refer to the first meeting, one in 1931 in Poznań where Florian Znaniecki invited 60 scholars associated with sociology. The second congress was held in Warsaw in 1935, and for the next one, one had to wait 40 years (The congresses history by Antoni Sułek on the website of the Zielona Góra congress – www.zjazd-pts.uz.zgora.pl). The next congresses started to be held more and more often, and the number of members during the last few ones oscillated around a thousand.

The last congress was held in 117 thousand population Zielona Góra, situated 70 km from the Polish and German border on the area of Zielona Góra University. The Programme Committee was responsible for the Congress substantial preparations, a Committee which was established in May 2006 by ZG PTS. Professor Janusz Mucha became the chairman, Janusz Mucha – PTS member for many years, editor-in-chief of Sociological Studies, Sociology Institute director of Mining and Metallurgical Academy (AGH). Firstly, the Committee pointed out the leading problems and the Congress's title, that is: *Something that connects us, something that divides us*. The committee chose the subject matter of two plenary sessions, four symposiums, and announced the regulations of introducing the suggestion topics of thematic groups and special sessions. 80 similar suggestions were raised in the regulation fixed time, suggestions of which 60 were qualified by the Programme Committee for execution. The Organization Committee was responsible

for the organizational tasks, a Committee consisting mainly of Sociological Institute of Zielona Góra University research workers. The University celebrated its 13th existence anniversary in the year of the 23th Congress. Professor Czesław Osękowski, the rector of UZ supported the Congress organization materially and financially in the form of facilities for the conference and full equipment. The main financial Congress source consisted of the fees contributed by the members (about 62%), financial support acquired from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (about 16%). The last part of the financial means was received from UZ (9%), the city of Zielona Góra (7%), and sponsors (6%).

The Congress website started from November 2006, a website where one could find essential information for Congress members, abstracts of all planned speeches, the Congress programme, Zielona Góra maps, the campus map with marked conference points and their photos. The website is still active, and is going to function up to September 2008. After the Congress one could see also the congress photos on it. One can find also the archives – short elaborations of all previous congresses and the photo of Polish sociologists meeting of 1935. The Congress service was maintained by e-mail: from the application filling and automatic reservation in the Congress members base, through mailing and list making, one of members reserving single Congress options. The Organizational Committee was in constant electronic contact with the webmaster and the Programme Committee Chairman.

The Congress course

The president of RP Lech Kaczyński took part in the Congress opening, the president gave a speech where he referred to the wonderful cards of Polish sociology, to its achievements in the inter-war period of Florian Znaniecki and Bronisław Malinowski who were working abroad. He mentioned the deceased in July 2007 Maria Hirszowicz – his sociology lecturer. He also recalled the person of Stanisław Ossowski naming him an authority, one who went beyond the given knowledge discipline. He recognized the status of Polish sociology referring to Jan Szczepański who chaired ISA in the sixties and Piotr Sztompka in the period 2002 – 2006. The President talked about the absence of sociology at Polish universities and its coming back after 1956, about the critical relations of sociologists toward the surrounding reality and the published elaborations in the sixties, ones which were read and criticised by the present authorities. The President continued his speech saying that the same situation took place in the eighties, and added that after the transforma-

tion period sociologists had to face the reality, one which was unprecedented. Never in the world has one tried to establish the market system as a result of a political decision.

There were also vital, though in some cases controversial, theses in Piotr Gliński's, the PTS chairman, speeches. He pointed out that in the past the discipline of sociology seemed to be an elite science field, for young people with great intellectual expectations, and, what is more, one could study it only at a few universities. Today, one can study sociology at 80 higher schools, and as it often happens with mass events, it is accompanied by the decrease of its quality, in the very case, the quality of education level. Presently, universities are not very often able to carry out the accepted programme, and one can find a graduate who hardly knows the names of Ossowski or Znaniecki, and for sure does not differ between Dilthey and Durkheim. He did not state his opinion but asked whether the situation is simply negative. Additionally, he noticed the conditioning of the happening: democracy of higher education, the costs of extricating oneself out of the civilisation collapse, one which was the result of communism, but, at the same time, he also pointed out the cultural and social conditioning, processes like technicalization, materialism, commerce and consumerism. The listeners were moved to a high extent by the speech part concerning the fall of intelligence ethos of the sociologist profession. Piotr Gliński said: It seems not to be a tragedy in itself that we less and less name ourselves the intelligence elite, which once was the most essential for us because it differed us from the world of 'dumps' dictatorship', but the thing that is even worse is that we lose more and more the contact with the intelligence ethos, and we became unable to introduce the truly intelligence values to the world of, forgive me to say that, 'dumps' democracy', obviously, I do not want to give an offence to anyone and I do not refer to social mass – as sociologists describe it, but to the very elite who tries to rule our democracy or even usurps the right to lead the mass.

The PTS talked about the change of the professions performed by sociologists, about their participation in the non-governmental organisation basis creation in the beginning of the nineties. He pointed out the dangerous matters of: ethics level decrease, about plagiarism and little interest in the problem matter of the environment. He considered lack of Poles in the international and European research grants and lack of substantial synthesis and works of younger generation to be a weakness of Polish contemporary sociology.

The definition: 'dumps' democracy' resulted in some controversy among the participants, and the President of RP decided to give a speech at the end of the inaugural session, a speech referring to three mentioned issues mentioned by P. Gliński. Firstly, he said that never had he heard such a critical evaluation of one's

own environment when taking part in congresses of various professions. Secondly, he pointed out that the contemporary leading elites are of intelligence origin and disagreed with the fact of describing them as dumps' government. Thirdly, he said that it seems to be a myth that Polish people do not take part in international scientific life.

The Rector of UZ, the President of Zielona Góra City Janusz Kubicki and Vice President of ISA Michael Buravoy also took part in the inaugural session. The last one mentioned his contacts with Polish sociology, sociology which fulfilled its ideas through the works of William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki: "Polish Peasant in Europe and America", as well as works of Włodzimierz Wesołowski on social classes. He talked about his interests in the transformations in the Middle Europe after 1989 and the participation of intellectuals in shaping the direction of the history course. M. Buravoy noticed that the presence of the President of RP is a sign, contrary to what Piotr Gliński says, that sociologists in fact do have some influence on the authorities and that both: the authorities and sociologists take part in the political debate.

The main plenary session which was held directly after the inaugural session was entitled: 'The Commonwealth and Political Culture', and the participants such as Andrzej Waśkiewicz (UW), Marek Czyżewski (UŁ) and Rafał Drozdowski (UAM) mentioned, one by one, the category of commonwealth as a question of normative democracy theory, Polish democracy version, and spontaneous breakdown of the commonwealth idea. The session was prepared and led by Mirosława Grabowska (UW) and Grażyna Woroniecka (UW, WSiiE TWP in Olsztyn).

The second plenary session was held in the afternoon and was entitled "Better Ones and Worse Ones' in Polish contemporary society. The papers were prepared by Kazimierz M. Słomczyński and Krystyna Janicka (both IFiS PAN, UZ), Elżbieta Tarkowska (IFiS PAN) and Ewa Rokicka (UŁ). The first paper concerned the dichotomy in the social structure, and the differences deepening in Poland, the motto of it became the words of the Gospel of St. Mathew saying that the one who possesses shall receive more, and the one who possesses just a little shall lose it. The second paper concerned the description of Polish poverty. In the third one the author depicts the risk of social inequality heritage in Europe. The conference was prepared and chaired by Wielisława Warzywoda-Kruszyńska (UŁ) and Jarosław Górniak (UJ). In the evening of the same day, the conference, nine special sessions and three poster sessions started.

The second day of the conference started with four parallel symposiums. One of them concerned the borderlands and migrations in contemporary Europe. The symposium was prepared by Maria Zielińska (UZ) oraz Sławomir Łodziński (UW).

The next symposium was dedicated to surveys and comments. The social roles of sociologists, their influence on social self-awareness, and the shape of the current political debate were discussed during the symposium. Jan Poleszczuk (UW) made a speech on the commonwealth of knowledge and communication rituals. Michał Wenzel (CBOS) pointed out the cognitive role of the dynamic researches, whereas Stanisław Jedrzejewski (KUL) mentioned the research on media and consumer consumerism. The third symposium, one prepared by Kaja Gadowska (UJ) and Cezary Trutkowski (UW), concerned the relations: unit and community. Grażyna Skąpska (UJ) pointed out the question of constitutional community, Marek Ziółkowski (the professor of UAM, vice-speaker of IV term RP Senate). The fourth symposium, one organised by Barbara Fatyga (UW) and Tomasz Szlendaka (UMK) concentrated on the issues concerning consumerism and lifestyle. Barbara Łaciak (UW) elaborated on the presented and applied models in the period of transformation, Wojciech J. Burszta (SWPS) prepared a speech on 'wasting' the contra-culture of the 40 years ago period, whereas Arkadiusz Karwacki (UMK) underlined the questions of models and consumerism conditioning among people with limited capitals and possibilities.

The rest of the day consisted mainly of thematic groups conferences, and also special and poster sessions. In the frame of the accompanying events one could also take part in two meetings with the authors of works recently published. There was a meeting with Piotr Sztompka dedicated to the novel *Trust – the Social Basis*, edited by the Publishing House "Znak", the meeting was run by a journalist of a television station TVN Grzegorz Miecugow. Lech Szczegółka – a political science specialist of the UZ Sociology Institute – ran a meeting with David Ost, a meeting dedicated to his novel *The Failure of "Solidarność"*.

When analysing the questions discussed during the thematic groups conferences and special sessions, one can notice the fact that the discussed topic of five of them concerned media – mainly the Internet and network pictures, four times one discussed the migrations issues, three times - the problems concerning the woman's role in the contemporary society, the same number of times - problems on local Poland and city sociology, two times - the corporation functioning problems. One could find also a discussion on traditional sociological issues (social classes, norms and values problems, civil society, issues on social exclusion, social research methodology).

The greatest number of participants concentrated on the inaugural session and the Congress summarizing one. There were about from several dozen to 100 participants of the symposiums. There were also several up to several dozen participants of the thematic groups and special sessions, however, there was one excep-

tion. The thematic group concerning the backstage sociology operations with the authority professor Andrzej Zybortowicz (UMK) gathered the most numerous number of participants; the spectators estimated that there were about 450 participants. The conference was held in the UZ assembly hall instead of the prepared smaller one on the grounds of the numerous questions of local and all-Poland media, as well as of Congress non-participants. One could notice a great interest in the speeches concerning business relations of one of the owners of a huge commercial television station with the secret service. As one could expect, it initiated a very lively and emotional discussion. The arguments 'for and against' were prized alternatively with applause. The support of the discussion was pole-like, from the ones who discredited the reader (lack of scientific speech character, satisfying the hidden political interests, infringement of methodological norms), to the ones who underlined the importance and legal force of the issue (disclosing the mechanism which may contribute to the understanding of Polish transformation). The conference of the very group lasted longer than expected, and was very attractive for the participants – some preferred to be late at the planned banquet than resign from taking part in the discussion.

There were about twenty six thematic groups and two special sessions on the third day of the Congress from the morning to the noon. In the afternoon, the conference of the last plenary session was held in the assembly hall full of participants, the session so-called the Round Table was entitled *In the Direction of Social Life Forms*. The session organiser Włodzimierz Wesołowski (the PTS Chairman in the period 2001-2004) invited Barbara Fatyga, Andrzej Rychard, Paweł Śpiewak, Michel Wieviorka and Piotr Sztompka – in the role of readers.

Plenary sessions, four parallel symposiums and thematic groups conferences were, in the substantial sense, considered the main points of the Congress. Additional forms of Congress participation consisted of special events, such as PTS unit meetings, poster sessions, academic circles, meetings with the authors, films on social issues presentations. European session of the sociological associations with participants from Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine and Hungary was held during the Congress for the first time. The Congress guests consisted of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the International Sociological Association (ISA) – Professor Michel Wieviorka and Michael Buravoy. There were also guests from Bulgaria, Canada, Germany, Russia, Slovenia, the USA and Great Britain. They created mainly three English speaking groups, ones which were prepared by Jolanta Perek-Białas (UJ) with Andreas Hoff (University of Oxford), David Ost (Hobar and Williams Smith Colleges New York) and Juliusz Gardawski (SGH).

What should be highlighted is the great participation in the Congress of students and sociology doctorate candidates, and, as well the fact that about 50 of them worked as volunteers. The youngest ones made $\frac{1}{4}$ of all participants. The students had their own thematic group dedicated to the city sociology and the presentation of fourteen scientific meetings from different universities and cities.

One of the Congress's attractions seemed to be the fact that it was held during the Zielona Góra Days, traditional Vintage, because during the WW2 there were vineyards around Zielona Góra where there was wine production. Today, the city and the Vineyard Owners Association have been trying to restore the wine tradition in the city and the nearby area, as well as intending to establish the status to the produced wine as a local product. The 'entertaining' part of the Congress consisted of a banquet and the cabaret 'Hrabi' performance, of which programme was specially prepared for the Congress: something that connects and divides the world of women and men.

The PTS Chairman Piotr Gliński delivered summary and the closing formula. He said he was very grateful to the participants and organisers, and highlighted the wonderful atmosphere during the Congress. Several participants were pleased with the organisation and the great and kind atmosphere. The leaders of thematic groups, in their Congress reports, pointed out the very good substantial level of the speeches and discussions, and depicted the fact that the meeting participants talked about their inspirations for further scientific searching. Presently, one works on the preparation of the after-congress elaboration, of which subscription was paid by more than 500 Congress participants. The Congress publications of some thematic groups are also being prepared. They seem to be a continuous form of the discussed issues record, and let's hope, a form which will allow us a reference to the submitted questions, and will stand a chance for thorough considerations, and maybe will become an inspiration for some question solutions.