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## **Between Modernization and Enslavement: The Historiosophical Implications of Two Approaches to the Social Divisions in Real Socialism**

**Abstract:** The purpose of this chapter is to review and discuss conceptualizations of social divisions in real socialism. Namely, I will compare a neo-Marxist approach to social stratification with a neo-Weberian ones. The examples of the works made in Marxist tradition are concepts of Milovan Djilas and Michael Voslenski, whereas Leszek Nowak's non-Marxian historical materialism can be interpreted as continuation of neo-Weberian tradition. This comparison will be made according to the following criteria: the position of party apparatus, the manner of explication, the status of political sphere and the vision of historical process. The compared concepts lead to different historiosophical and theoretical implications present in the empirical works which silently assumed a given approach. In the neo-Marxist approach, the very coming into existence of real socialism is discussed in terms of modernization processes, that is, the necessity to 'catch up with' the historical delay of Central and Eastern Europe. In the version of neo-Weberian approach presented here, it is assumed that the basic interest of the political authorities is to gain domination over the rest of a society and that real socialism occurs as a result of the dominance of power over property in the societies of Eastern Europe.

**Key words:** classes, modernization, non-Marxian historical materialism, real socialism, nomenclature

### **Introduction**

The discussion of social divisions formed after 1945 in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is subject of interest of social sciences: theoretically oriented sociology or political sciences. However, such discussion and application of particular concepts have yet been largely avoided in empirical research on the state apparatus and the Polish United Workers' Party in the Polish People's Republic. Let us take a look at this quotation:

The Polish United Workers' Party is a one-of-a-kind organization in the history of Poland. It was a mass social organization – at the peak of its power, it had over 3 million members and candidates. It had units – basic party organizations – [...] in all major workplaces, cities, and gminas. It also produced an ideology which was fed to the members and the general subdued population, owned schools of various levels, and published and edited journals, posters, and leaflets. First of all, the party was the core of the power system of the Polish People's Republic, and its highest bodies constituted a 'super-government' which supervised the legislative bodies,

government, state administration, the army, and the police, as well as the vast economic administration.<sup>1</sup>

In the aforementioned quote, both the Polish United Workers' Party and the party apparatus within it are called an 'organization', a (legal) 'owner' – but only of schools and journals – and its central links are the 'core of the power system'. The author emphasizes, first of all, the institutional features of the power system, but he does not refer to any concepts of social stratification which are used in social science. We can maybe understand his cautiousness because, just as ideas may have an impact on social life, so scientific concepts influence scientific research in the form of the theoretical and historiographical assumptions which are usually tacitly made and which determine the further course of empirical studies. I agree even more though, with Dariusz Jarosz who, in 2009, noted that “as regards the social history of the Polish People's Republic, the most important negligence is the lack of in-depth studies of power, especially of the communist party. For now, we do not know who 'they' were, in the social sense.”<sup>2</sup>

This chapter, then, would best be described as a small contribution to the discussion on the social stratification created in real socialism and on the social status of 'them'. In the article, I would like to, first and foremost, analyze the long-term implications of the used (or tacitly assumed) theoretical approaches to social divisions in real socialism. For that purpose, I compare Djilas and Michael Voslenski's classic conceptualization of social divisions in socialism, identified with the Marxist tradition, with Leszek Nowak's approach, which can be viewed, to an extension of the Weberian tradition. The comparison of those two approaches is

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- 1 Dariusz Stola, “Partia i jej finanse” [*The Party and Its Finances*] in: *PZPR jako machina władzy* [*The Polish United Workers' Party as Power Machinery*], ed. Dariusz Stola and Krzysztof Persak (Warsaw: ISP PAN 2012), p. 27. The term “usually” does not, however, mean always; two authors of articles in the quoted collective work, Andrzej Friszke and Maciej Tymiński, discuss Milovan Djilas's, Jacek Kuroń's, and Karol Modzelewski's concepts of social divisions, see: Andrzej Friszke, “Próba portretu zbiorowego aparatu partyjnego” [*An Attempt at a Collective Portrait of the Party Apparatus*] in: *PZPR jako machina*, pp. 55–56; Maciej Tymiński, “Nomenklatura regionalna: działanie systemu na poziomie lokalnym (1950–1970)” [*The Regional Nomenclature: the Operation of the System on the Local Level (1950–1970)*], in: *PZPR jako machina*, pp. 99–118. There are no such references in the joint publication *Władza w PRL. Ludzie i mechanizmy* [*Power in the Polish People's Republic. People and Mechanisms*], eds. Konrad Rokicki, Robert Spałek (Warszawa: IPN 2011).
  - 2 Dariusz Jarosz, “Historiografia dziejów społecznych Polski w XX wieku po 1989 r.: perspektywy i możliwości badawcze, metodologia” [*The Historiography of Social History of Poland in the 20th Century, After 1989: Research Perspectives and Possibilities, Methodology*], in: *Spojrzenie w przeszłość, t. 2: Wiek XIX, XX* [*A Look Into the Past, V. 2: The 19th and 20th Centuries*], eds. Paweł Skibiński, Agnieszka Przeszowska, Jakub Brodacki, Klaudia Grabowska, Michał Szczepański, Michał Zarychta (Warsaw: Muzeum Historii Polski 2009), p. 224.

made according to the following criteria: the position of the party apparatus, the manner of explanation, the status of the political sphere, and the vision of the historical process. Let us clarify them closely.

1. *The position of the party apparatus.* Allows for a description of the main social interests and bases of social power of the party apparatus, as well as the contradictions of real socialism.
2. *The manner of explanation.* One can distinguish between explanatory monism and eclecticism. In the 'explanatory monism', a scholar refers to a uniform developmental mechanism, model, or set of rights. Explanatory eclecticism, on the other hand, admits the influence of dependencies of various kinds (e.g., psychological ones, which operate on the individual level; economic ones, which operate on the supra-individual level; or ideological ones, which operate in the sphere of social consciousness). No hierarchization is made and the scope of the application of the regularities is not defined. An eclectic approach is inherently multivariate, while a monistic approach can be both uni- and multivariate. The condition of the multivariate version of monistic approach is a theoretically conscious and clear hierarchization of factors.
3. *The status of the political sphere.* The last criterion is the status of the political sphere – whether it is the basic realm of social life or whether it can be reduced to economy.
4. *The vision of history.* I distinguish between anti-teleological and teleological concepts of history. The teleological vision of a historical process presupposes that there is a maximization of one or a few parameters – usually identified, in a given historiography, with certain positive values, such as progress, freedom, or welfare – in the course of history. The anti-teleological vision of the historical process *a priori* excludes the possibility of the identification of the goal of the historical process.

The comparison will make it possible to reconstruct the theoretical and historiographical implications of the concepts of social stratification assumed in the compared concepts.

## On the Two Approaches to Social Stratification

In social science, there are, in principle, two classical concepts of social stratification: Weberian and Marxist, as well as some attempts at reconciling the two positions.<sup>3</sup> Max Weber assumed that there were three axes of social divisions: class, status group, and party:

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3 We could also say there appeared a theoretical approach in which Marx's and Weber's concepts are treated as complementary: *A Weber-Marx Dialogue*, Robert Antonio, and Ronald M. Glassman, eds. (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985); Michael Löwy "Figures of Weberian Marxism," *Theory and Society*, vol. 25, no. 3

Whereas the genuine place of classes is within the economic order, the place of status groups is within the social order, that is, within the sphere of the distribution of honor. [...] 'Parties' reside in the sphere of power. Their action is oriented toward the acquisition of social power, that is to say, toward influencing social action no matter what its content may be. In principle, parties may exist in a social club as well as in a state.<sup>4</sup>

In comparison to Karl Marx, Weber's definition of class was narrower. An individual's class is, he argued, determined by the possession of goods, as well as skills and competences which can be exchanged on the market and determine that individual's opportunities in life. An individual's belonging to a status group is determined by the unequal distribution of education, prestige, and authority. Finally, an individual's political situation depends on how many positions there are in the administration of the country for the members of the winning party after the elections. The size of that pool is the basis for the division into those who can potentially be appointed by the winning party to administrative positions and those who cannot be considered for them. The ratio between the two sets determines the level of political conflict.

Despite its undeniable advantages for historical research, the Weberian approach lacks uniform criteria for distinguishing social divisions in economy, politics, and culture. Weber defines class by referring to material features (the relations of possession), status groups – by referring to consciousness-related features (lifestyle, prestige), and parties – by referring to institutional characteristics (the influence on appointments in the administration).

Within the more uniform Marxist approach, fundamental social divisions are looked for in the socio-economic realm, and the basic criterion for social divisions is the possession of the means of production. That approach, however, leads to economic reductionism because all conflicts and social divisions must be derived from the economic realm understood metaphorically as the basis of social life, over which there are social consciousness and the superstructure of political and legal institutions.

In the first half of the 1990s, such major sociological journals as *International Sociology*, *Sociology*, or *Acta Sociologica* initiated wide-ranging discussion on the usefulness of the concepts of class and class analysis in social science. Leading sociologists such as Clem Brooks, Terry Nichols Clark, Mike Hout, Seymour Martin Lipset, Jeff Manza, Jan Pakulski, Michael Rempel, and Aage B. Sørensen<sup>5</sup> took part

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(1996), pp. 431–446; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition," *New Left Review*, no. 3 (2000), p. 117.

4 Max Weber, *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 1048.

5 Terry Nichols Clark, Seymour Martin Lipset, "Are Social Classes Dying?," *International Sociology*, vol. 6, no. 4, (1991), pp. 397–410; Aage B. Sørensen, "On the Usefulness of Class Analysis in Research on Social Mobility and Socioeconomic Inequality," *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 34 (1991), pp. 71–87; Mike Hout, Clem Brooks, Jeff Manza, "The Persistence of Classes in Post-Industrial Societies," *International*

in the discussion. However, like many similar scientific debates, no unambiguous conclusions were reached. Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters's book *The Death of Class*, which can be viewed as a summary of that discussion, can be neatly summed up by the following statement:

With the declining commitment to Marxism, the collapse of Soviet communism and the waning appeal of socialist ideologies in the West, class is losing its ideological significance and its political centrality. Both the right and the left are abandoning their preoccupation with class issues. The right is turning its attention to morality and ethnicity while the critical left is becoming increasingly concerned about issues of gender, ecology, citizenship and human rights. This rearrangement of political concerns coincides with a shift in intellectual fashion and a growing scepticism about the compatibility of class models with contemporary social reality.<sup>6</sup>

Those authors distinguish between the 'class theory' and 'class analysis.'<sup>7</sup> According to them, class theory is characterized by four features: economism, solidarity, behavioral and cultural linkage, and the ability to undertake collective actions. In economism, it is assumed that classes are social sets which appear in the economic sphere of social life; the criterion of the division is the attitude towards property. Social solidarity presupposes the possibility of indicating objective criteria of belonging to a class and of class boundaries. The dependence between behavior and culture presupposes that belonging to a class determines preferences, children's upbringing, health, education, and the choice of life partners. Belonging to a class is the basis of collective activities in the economic and political spheres, which can transform the structure of a society.<sup>8</sup>

Class analysis allows for multivariate social stratification and does not assign a greater significance to class divisions than to ethnic, political, religious, or gender ones.<sup>9</sup> For that reason, the authors distinguish three basic varieties of societies<sup>10</sup>:

- a class society oriented towards economy, divided into patterns of domination and conflict among the interest groups which appear in the economic sphere"<sup>11</sup>;
- a class society oriented towards bureaucracy, dominated by a state governed by a single party or a bureaucratic elite;
- a status-group society in which social divisions stem from the cultural realm.

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*Sociology*, vol. 3 (1993), pp. 259–277; Terry Nichols Clark, Lipset, Michael Rempel, "The Declining Political Significance of Social Class," *International Sociology*, vol. 8 (1993), pp. 293–316; Jan Pakulski, "The Dying of Class or Marxist Class Theory," *International Sociology*, vol. 3 (1993), pp. 279–292.

6 Jan Pakulski, Malcolm Waters, *The Death of Class* (London: Sage 1996), p. 1.

7 Pakulski, Waters, *The Death*, pp. 9–10.

8 Pakulski, Waters, *The Death*, p. 10.

9 Pakulski, Waters, *The Death*, p. 15.

10 Pakulski, Waters, *The Death*, p. 25.

11 Pakulski, Waters, *The Death*, p. 25.

It is worth noting that the quoted authors limit the applicability of the concept of class to modern societies with market economies.<sup>12</sup>

Fifteen years after the publication of *The Death of Class*, Chris Lorenz, among other researchers, confirmed the thesis of the fall of the use of class divisions in historiographical works. He claimed that “it is not uncommon to connect the spectacular rise of ethnicity/race and gender as a codes of difference with the same spectacular fall or (even ‘death’) of class as a code of difference in history and in the social sciences, especially after 1990.”<sup>13</sup> Lorenz admits that the popularity of class as a key concept in historiography fell because of the influence of many factors, including:

- the fall of communism after 1989 and the subsequent crisis of Marxism,
- the increase of the popularity of liberalism as a political philosophy, ideology, and world view,
- the stabilization of social peace in Western democracies,
- criticism of class as a Eurocentric concept,
- the appearance of other historiographical concepts, such as civil society, culture, gender, or race, which appear to be more suitable for describing both modern and historical societies.<sup>14</sup>

According to Lorenz, the core of class analysis is a combination of four features: essentialism, relationalism, objectivity, and antagonism. The basic indicator of belonging to a class is having (or not) the means of production. That characteristic presupposes relationality because belonging to a given social class means entering a network of social relations between owners and direct producers. That structural relation entails antagonism between two classes. Another characteristic of class relations is their objectivism – classes exist independently from individual or social consciousness which can describe them correctly or falsely. The objective existence of classes and the conflict of their interests lead to an essentialist view of history in which class struggle is the main driving force of history, responsible for its dynamics and ultimate goal.

As I have mentioned before, after 1989, the applicability of class analyses of capitalist societies was placed into question. Similar doubts were expressed with respect to the applicability of class analysis to real socialism societies in which Marxism played the role of an ideology, and the system itself was perceived as a direct embodiment of the Marxist utopia and the realization of the ideal of a classless society. The abolition of private property was understood as the disappearance

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12 Pakulski, Waters, *The Death*, pp. 3–4.

13 Chris Lorenz, “Representations of Identity: Ethnicity, Race, Class, Gender and Religion. An Introduction to Conceptual History,” in: *The Contested Nation. Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories*, eds. Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2008), p. 46.

14 Lorenz, “Representations,” pp. 46–52.

of the basis of all social inequalities. However, it soon turned out that the alleged abolition of social inequalities of one type, characteristic of a capitalist society, leads to the appearance of new social divisions based on other factors. What is more, the new divisions become more oppressive and unjust than those in a capitalist society. This raises a need of the use of adequate theoretical tools for the conceptualization of a real socialism that has also transnational value.

In social science, we can distinguish three basic approaches to the application of a class perspective to real socialism systems. It is assumed that class approach can be: (i) inadequate for the analysis of the social structure of real socialism, (ii) adequate for the analysis of those type of societies, and (iii) the condition for its potential application is modification of the given class approach.

### **On the (Non-)Applicability of the Class Perspective to the Analysis of Real Socialism**

One example of such a stance could be David Ost, who argues against the use of class perspective in the analysis of real socialism in the following way: “Class was always a notion serving to understand capitalism not a socialism. Maybe a class language was identified with communism but class analysis was never helpful in research of communist society.”<sup>15</sup> In note 16 in his book, the author laconically makes the statement that “Most researchers with ambitions to employ class analysis had to discover a new class or, against common sense and lack of private property or means of production, argue that the ‘state capitalism’ that existed in Eastern Europe was a kind of capitalist system.”<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, in his book, Ost does not present many arguments against the application of class analysis or any real perspective on real socialism. Therefore, the reader does not know what theoretical tools are preferred by the author with regard to the analysis of that system. Ost uses a rather imprecise concept of a state-party. However, interestingly – and contrary to the sociologists mentioned earlier – Ost argues that a class approach only became heuristically useful again in 1989 because it was only after this time that social inequalities characteristic of capitalist societies appeared in Eastern and Eastern-Central Europe.

### **The Marxist Conceptualization of the Social Stratification of Real Socialism**

Class analysis and class perspective have been used for describing real socialism for a long time. In this chapter, however, I would like to reconstruct Djilas’s and

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15 David Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Post-Communist Europe* (Cornell: Cornell University Press 2006), p. 54.

16 Ost, *The Defeat*, p. 88.

Voslenski's views according to the four mentioned earlier criteria: the position of party apparatus, the manner of explication, the status of political sphere, and the vision of historical process.

*The social position of the party apparatus.* According to Djilas, the party apparatus in a communist society transformed into a new class with a social role similar to that of bourgeoisie in a capitalist system: "The new class derives its strength, privileges, ideology, and even the whole customs-related side of life from a new, concrete, and unique form of ownership, namely, collective ownership. The new class administrates and manages that ownership 'in the name of' the nation, 'in the name of' the society."<sup>17</sup> Voslenski comes to similar conclusions with the use of Vladimir Lenin's definition of class. In his view, the authorities in Soviet society constituted a separate social class "distinguished from other groups of the Soviet society by its (dominant) position in the system of social production, by its relation to the means of production (having them at its disposal), by its (leading) role in the social organization of work, and by the size of the appropriated part of social wealth."<sup>18</sup>

*The manner of explanation.* Both authors, despite Marxist orientations, represented eclectic manner of explaining some of the phenomenon in the history of real socialism. One such phenomenon is the party purges in the 1930s. Djilas differentiates between the state administration and party apparatus of which is the core of the new class:

A communist revolution does not devour those children who are needed for further activity – for industrialization. The revolutionaries who understood the revolutionary ideas and slogans literally and naively believed they would be realized are usually killed. The group which has understood that a revolution can only ensure power to it in accordance with the communist social and political principles, that is, as an instrument for the future transformation of the society by means of industrialization, is victorious.<sup>19</sup>

Voslenski claims that conflicts in the Soviet communist party can be explained by remembering the pre-revolutionary beginnings of the party, that is, the genesis of the new class. It was then that a new party of professional revolutionaries – which gained power in the country in October 1917 – came into existence. Leadership at two levels was formed at that time. The higher level consisted of members of the Leninist old guard, that is, people who joined the party even before 1917. The lower level consisted of Stalin's nomenklatura. In the 1930s, the old guard was eliminated by the nomenklatura.<sup>20</sup> The rivalry between the

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17 M. Djilas, *The New Class. An Analysis of Communist System* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1957), p. 53.

18 M. Wosleński, *Nomenklatura. Uprzywilejowani w ZSRR (Nomenclature. The Privileged Ones in the USSR)*, (Warszawa–Wrocław: Vist 1986), p. 12.

19 Djilas, *The New Class*, pp. 35–36.

20 Wosleński, *Nomenklatura*, p. 17.



party leadership shaped in Lenin's times and Stalin's nomenklatura derived from the contradictions between the group which wanted to construct a classless society and the group which only wanted to maintain power at any cost. Consequently, "all those who had preserved true faith in Marxism and the possibility of constructing a truly socialist society were eliminated."<sup>21</sup> The same process took place in other countries:

That three-stage process is characteristic not only of the Soviet Union, but also wherever that type of a regime is formed. The party apparatus of such a regime contains the germ of a new ruling class: the apparatus overtakes power, forms new governments, and rapidly transforms into a new class. As purges are conducted, the first representatives of the ruling class are replaced by upstarts. The course of the events is the same everywhere, which proves that we are dealing with a law of history.<sup>22</sup>

It is noticeable that although they rely on Marxist thought, both authors explain the phenomenon of purges in an idealistic manner, by referring to social consciousness: the literal versus sophisticated understanding of the idea of a revolution or conflict between those who were motivated by the idea of a "construction of a classless society" and those who wanted to "keep power."

*The status of the political sphere.* Traditionally, the Marxist view expressed by the analyzed authors presupposes a reduction of the political sphere to the economic one. According to Djilas,

to divest Communists of their ownership would be to abolish them as a class. To compel them to relinquish their other social powers, so that workers may participate in sharing the profits of their work – which capitalists have had to permit as a result of strikes and parliamentary action – would mean that Communists were being deprived of their monopoly over property, ideology, and government.<sup>23</sup>

The social consciousness of the new class does not reflect its class situation either, because it is:

prone to self-deception and being as unconscious of its own nature as possible. Every private capitalist or feudal lord was aware of the fact that he belonged to a special, easily distinguished social category. He usually believed that the goal of that social category was to ensure welfare for human kind, and that without it, there would be only chaos and general destruction. A communist, a member of the new class, also believes that the society would become backward and completely destroyed without his party.<sup>24</sup>

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21 Wosleński, *Nomenklatura*, p. 37.

22 Wosleński, *Nomenklatura*, pp. 37–38.

23 Djilas, *The New Class*, p. 45.

24 Djilas, *The New Class*, p. 68.

*The vision of history.* Djilas assumes a teleological view of history in which a communist party plays the role of a new social class. Its rise to power and its transformation into a new owners' class was, in a sense, a historical necessity:

The countries which were not yet industrialized, particularly Russia, were in an entirely different situation. They found themselves in a dilemma; they had to either become industrialized, or discontinue active participation on the stage of history, turning into captives of the developed countries and their monopolies, thus doomed to degeneracy. Local capital and the class and parties representing it were too weak to solve the problems of rapid industrialization. In these countries revolution became an inescapable necessity, a vital need for the nation, and only one class could bring it about – the proletariat, or the revolutionary party representing it. The reason for this is that there is an immutable law – that each human society and all individuals participating in it strive to increase and perfect production. In doing this they come in conflict with other societies and individuals, so that they compete with each other in order to survive.<sup>25</sup>

In the author's words: "The reason for this [communist revolution – K.B.] is that there is an immutable law – that each human society and all individuals participating in it strive to increase and perfect production. In doing this they come in conflict with other societies and individuals, so they compete with each other in order to survive."<sup>26</sup> Djilas's views can be classified as belonging to a certain variety of the theory of modernization, in which industrialization is seen as a historically necessary process which takes place in a different way in the West and which is delayed in the East.

## A Neo-Weberian Approach to the Social Stratification

Although engaging in terminological disputes is always controversial, insofar as Leszek Nowak presupposes a tri-axial social division, we can consider his non-Marxian historical materialism as a kind of extension of the neo-Weberian approach or kind of generalization on Marxian historical materialism led to acknowledge three main divisions emerged in politics, economy, and culture.<sup>27</sup> In this text, I make such a conceptual stipulation.

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25 Djilas, *The New Class*, p. 11.

26 Djilas, *The New Class*, p. 11

27 See: Krzysztof Brzechczyn, "From Interpretation to Refutation of Marxism. On Leszek Nowak's non-Marxian Historical Materialism," *Hybris*, no. 37 (2017), pp. 141–178; I have made an attempt at paraphrasing Weber's concept of a revolution in: Krzysztof Brzechczyn, "Rozważania wokół Weberowskiej teorii rewolucji" (Reflections on the Weberian Theory of a Revolution), in: *Ratio, Religio, Humanitas*, ed. Edward Jeliński, Zbigniew Stachowski, Sławomir Sztajer (Poznań: Humaniora 2015), pp. 119–130.

*The social position of the party apparatus.* From this perspective, it is assumed that certain social minorities appear in three spheres of social life – politics, economy, and culture – and which take over control of the material and social means of a certain type (coercion, production and indoctrination).<sup>28</sup> In the economy, the relation with the means of production leads to a division into classes of owners and direct producers, in politics – into classes of rulers and citizens, and in culture – of priests and followers. The dominant classes in particular spheres of social life have separate types of social interests which are also realized in different ways. The rulers' class wants to maximize the regulation of power, the owners' class – profit, and the priests' – spiritual authority.

A cumulation of class divisions is possible; hence, apart from class societies (with three separate classes), supraclass societies can also exist, in which one social class controls more than one realm of social life.<sup>29</sup> Real socialism is viewed as a social system in which the class of triple-lords has the means of coercion, the means of production, and mass media at its disposal. In Nowak's view:

that minority, then, does not deserve the curt name 'party apparatus', which diverts one's attention from the material sources of its rule toward the organizational paraphernalia and ideological clothing; instead, it should be called the class of triple lords: rulers-owners-priests. [...] The old owners only decided about their own enterprises. The power of the class of triple lords is even greater in the realm of economy, in which they make macroeconomic decisions on a global scale, using an economy which has been centralized for that purpose. They also shape consumption by way of administration, decide who is to be given work and who is to

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28 The full presentation of this theory is in: Leszek Nowak, *Property and Power. Towards a non-Marxian Historical Materialism* (Dordrecht, 1983); Nowak, *Power and Civil Society. Towards a Dynamic Theory of Real Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

29 For a complete classification of societies, see: Brzechczyn, *O wielości linii rozwojowych w procesie historycznym. Próba interpretacji ewolucji społeczeństwa meksykańskiego [On the Multiplicity of Development Lines in a Historical Process. An Attempt at an Interpretation of the Evolution of the Mexican Society]*, (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM) and some extensions: Mieszko Ciesielski, "Problem kumulacji podziałów klasowych we współczesnym kapitalizmie. Próba interpretacji teoretycznej" [Problem of Cumulation of Class Division in the Modern Capitalism. An Attempt at Theoretical Interpretation], in: *Jednostka w układzie społecznym. Próba teoretycznej konceptualizacji* eds. K. Brzechczyn, M. Ciesielski, Eliza Karczyńska (Poznań, 2013), pp. 131–152; Tomasz Zarębski, „Struktura klasowa społeczeństw hydraulicznych. Próba parafrazy teorii Karla Augusta Wittfogla w aparaturze pojęciowej niemarksowskiego materializmu historycznego” [Class Structure of Hy Karl August Wittfogel's Hydraulic Societies in Notion Apparatus of non-Marxian Historical Materialism], in: *Jednostka w układzie społecznym. Próba teoretycznej konceptualizacji* (Poznań, 2013), pp. 207–221.

be refused work, choose who is to be promoted, give access to desirable goods and services, holidays...<sup>30</sup>

Nowak notes, in the realm of politics, the responsibility for decision-making by the administrative apparatus was separated from decision-making by the party apparatus. It is also important to point out that the minority which calls itself the party apparatus also has world view-ideological power. He admits: "And then there is the Church – a real Church, with its spiritual masters, dogmatists, and heretics, and, most importantly, such possibilities of shaping minds as no Church has ever had, anywhere. No Church in history, anywhere, has had monopoly on the press, radio, television, movies, youth and children's organizations, education system, even sports..."<sup>31</sup>

*The manner of explanation.* In the model of a political society, it is assumed that there are two classes: rulers and subjects. The mechanism of political competition forces a typical ruler to expand his or her scope of influence. Those rulers who, for various reasons (ideological, characteristic, a lack of competence, etc.), do not do that will either be eliminated from the power structure or will learn to increase their power. The global effect of rulers' individual actions is the increase in the scope of power regulation, which results in citizens' protests. After their suppressing, the rulers controlled all the spheres of social life and there are no remaining autonomous fields or social niches which can be subdued. That state, however, is not the end of the operation of the mechanisms of political competition, which continue to force a typical ruler to increase the scope of regulation. Competition for power continues at the cost of the areas of social life subordinated to other rulers. In the long run, that brings about a threat of the destruction of the whole system of power. In such a case, periodical purges, which lead to the elimination of the surplus of the candidates for power, weaken the level of political competition and stabilizes the hierarchy of power. A freeing up of social spheres from control of purged rulers, allows to control them anew by the remaining rulers who survived purges. It is one thing to have political purges functioning as a social mechanisms which alleviates the pressure of political competition, but another thing to ideologically rationalize those purges as a search for the 'enemies of the people', an 'aggravation of class struggle', and so on.<sup>32</sup>

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30 Leszek Nowak, "Głos klasy ludowej: polska droga od socjalizmu" [*The Voice of the People's Class. The Polish Road from Socialism*], in: Nowak, *Polska droga od socjalizmu. Pisma polityczne 1980–1989* [*The Polish Road from Socialism. Political Letters 1980–1989*], ed. Krzysztof Brzechczyn (Poznań: IPN, 2011), pp. 57–58; abbreviated version in: Nowak, *Property and Power*.

31 Nowak, "Głos," p. 58.

32 Cf.: Achim Siegel, *Der Dynamik des Terrors im Stalinismus: Ein strukturtheoretischer Erklärungsversuch* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus 1992); Siegel, "Ideological Learning Under Conditions of Social Enslavement: The Case of the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s," *Studies in East European Thought*, vol. 50, no. 1 (1998), pp. 19–58.

*The status of the political sphere.* In non-Marxian historical materialism, politics is understood not only as a realm which can have a reciprocal influence on social life but also as an independent sphere of social life in which we can distinguish three levels: material, institutional, and consciousness related. At the material level, there are the means of coercion, such as weapons, prisons, and the means of surveillance. A social community can be divided into those who have these means at their disposal and those who do not, that is, into rulers and subjects, respectively. The rulers, who have the means of coercion at their disposal, are interested in maximizing social control, while the subjects are concerned with maintaining their autonomy.<sup>33</sup>

Rulers are always organized into institutions which augment the relations between the rulers' class and the citizens, as well as the hierarchy of influence within the rulers' group. From all the historically given systems of the organization of power (forms of government) that system becomes common which, at a given technological level of the means of coercion and with a given rulers-subjects power structure, ensures the greatest increase of power regulation to the rulers.

The third level of the political moment is constituted by social and political consciousness. That system, from historically given systems of ideas, becomes common in a given state, and is then preserved, which is the most effective method of legitimizing the system of political institutions and making individuals (rulers and citizens) fulfill their social roles.

Real socialism is unique in that one social class (the party-state apparatus) takes over the control over the means of coercion, production, and indoctrination. For that reason, various phenomena considered to be the 'absurdities' of planned economy were not caused by the 'unreasonableness' of the rulers, weakness of political culture, political errors, or distortions of the idea of socialism. Rather, they were structurally determined by the realization of the political interest (the solidification of power) of the party-state apparatus. The dynamics of real socialism, then, resulted from the contradictory political interests of the state apparatus and the rest of the society.

*The vision of history.* Such a view on the issue of social divisions corrects the vision of the process of modernization which is not understood in a linear manner, either in Marxist or liberal historiography. Both doctrines consider civilizational variables – such as the development of cities and industry, science, technology, and education – to be the main factors of social life.

However, in the light of non-Marxian historical materialism, class divisions of various kinds, in pre-modern societies, were combined: political, economic, and spiritual. In the feudal system, peasants depended on feudal lords within the framework of the institution of personal, land, and court serfdom. The condition was a combination of political (administrative) and economic power.<sup>34</sup> From the

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33 The full version theory of power, see: Nowak, *Power and Civil Society*.

34 For more information on that topic, see: Brzechczyn, *O wielości*, pp. 107–109.

point of view of this concept, modernization can be understood as the consequence of a separation of social divisions. In economy, it was manifested by the disappearance of forced labor for the sake of wage labor, which took place when a capitalist work relationship became more common within the framework of the feudal system. With regard to the change of the power system, the owners' class and the direct producers' class (on one hand) and the class of owners and of rulers (on the other) limited the possibility of owners resorting to coercion when solving conflicts with direct producers and stimulated technological progress which, in the existing social conditions, became one of the main methods of the multiplication of owners' profits. Modernization – understood in that way – finished when the most of social product was produced within the framework of capitalist ownership relations, and when the process of the division of power, ownership, and spiritual authority was completed in the public sphere. Therefore, in non-Marxian historical materialism, the process of modernization – which I describe here in a very brief and fragmentary manner – was not a historical necessity.

In historiographical practice, a criterion is selected (technical progress, respect for human rights), and various societies are compared by evaluating the degree to which that criterion is satisfied in them. If that criterion is also a positive value in light of the accepted ideological doctrine, then the criterion of historical development becomes the criterion of progress, and the compared societies are more or less progressive. For such a procedure to be valid, it should fulfill two conditions. First, that criterion should not be selected *ad hoc* but should belong to a class of variables considered in the theory of the historical process. Second, the thesis that a given society is, in some respect, ahead of other societies should result from the assumed theory of historical processes which presents developmental mechanisms. As argued by Nowak:

it is inadmissible to have a procedure in which the establishment of that function-criterion takes place prior to the construction of a theory of historical processes, that is, when the criterion of development is established first, and then it is alleged that all societies behave in such a way that the variables characterizing its internal state realize the indicated direction of changes. No society is put on the altar of the 'Moloch of progress' by anyone – the developmental nature of the forms of government of societies is but a characteristic of the processes which take place in those societies: they do not take place in a certain way in order that a direction of development invented by someone be preserved, but rather they take place – or do not take place – in a direction defined by the mechanisms of development.<sup>35</sup>

In the case of Russia, where the state was the greatest owner of land, the processes of modernization defined in that way were disturbed. That led to two attempts

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35 Nowak, *U podstaw teorii socjalizmu*, vol. 2: *Droga do socjalizmu. O konieczności socjalizmu w Rosji* [*The Road to Socialism. On the Necessity of Socialism in Russia*] (Poznań: Nakom, 1991), p. 8.

**Table 1.** A comparison of the Marxist and neo-Weberian conceptual frameworks of social stratification

<b>The Marxist concept of social stratification (Djilas, Voslenski)</b>	<b>The neo-Weberian concept of social stratification (Nowak)</b>
<b>The social position of the party apparatus</b>	
The party apparatus is a collective owner of the means of production, the basic social interest of which is the maximization of the surplus product.	The party apparatus is a rulers' class which gains control over economy and culture. Its basic interest is the maximization of political control.
<b>The manner of explanation</b>	
The interpreted cases are characterized by explanatory eclecticism. The taking over of power by communists in Russia and East-Central Europe is explained by referring to economic mechanisms (the necessity of modernization), but the political purges in the 1930s in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and in the 1940s and 1950s in 'people's democracies', are explained in an idealistic manner, and said to have resulted from the rivalry between Bolsheviks – who believed in the ideals of the revolution – and opportunist and cynical members of the nomenklatura class – who gained more power in the 1930s.	The interpreted cases are characterized by explanatory monism. The genesis of real socialism and its further evolution are explained in a uniform manner. The appearance of socialism resulted from the inequality between rulers and owners, which led to the taking over of the means of production by the rulers' class. The further evolution of real socialism is explained by referring to the mechanisms of political competition and to the contradictory interests of the rule of triple lords and the rest of the society.
<b>The status of the political sphere</b>	
It is reduced to the economic sphere and deprived of independent meaning.	It is understood as the basic sphere of social life, which has a material, institutional, and consciousness-related aspect.
<b>The vision of history</b>	
A teleological vision of history is assumed, in which modernization is conceived of as a fundamental historical necessity.	An anti-teleological concept of history is assumed, in which the processes of modernization are not the default aim of history, but a result of the balance of social classes (mainly of the rulers and owners) which existed in Western Europe but not in Eastern Europe.

at the totalization of that society. The first took place during the reign of Ivan the Terrible, when boyars were deprived of land in the most fertile areas of the country. The second occurred during the reign of Peter the Great, when the rulers tried to create state industry and manufacturers. Without the stage of free market, capitalism in Russia turned into state capitalism with a high degree of economic interventionism. Two political revolutions in 1917 accelerated the totalitarization of that country. The new Bolshevik power took control of economy and culture, a process which ended when agriculture was collectivized and the last group of private owners (farmers) were eliminated.

## Summary

To sum up, the two conceptual frameworks of the social stratification of real socialism are compared in the Table 1 below.

The concepts of social stratification compared in this chapter – authored by Djilas/Voslenski and by Nowak – presuppose different theoretical and historiosophical implications. In the concept of a ‘new owners’ class’, it is assumed (albeit implicitly) that the basic interest of party apparatus is to maximize its economical profits, and the very coming into existence of real socialism is discussed in terms of modernization processes, that is, the necessity to ‘catch up with’ the historical delay of Central and Eastern Europe. In Nowak’s concept, it is assumed that the basic interest of the party apparatus is to enslave the society politically and that real socialism occurs as a result of the dominance of power over property in the societies of Eastern Europe.

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