

## **Communism, Solidarity, and the crisis of modernity**

For a long time numerous cultural developments, such as migrations, tourism, use of new technologies, mass culture, subcultures and youth emancipation, women emancipation, demographic processes, and other, have attracted historians' attention and have been examined within the framework of "transnational experience". Moreover, certain historical periods have been interpreted beyond the narrow timescale of political history. Therefore, the period after 1956 is perceived in a wider context of east central Europe's participation in counterculture and youth cultures of the "global 1960s", while the year 1968 specifically is thought of as a part of the worldwide generational revolt.

It then comes as a surprise, that, with a few exceptions, the "global 1980s" are still missing from advanced historical studies. It is even more striking that, for, as existing research points out, the integration of communism with global economy intensified with time. The project is thus aimed at filling this gap, indicating similarities between the Polish revolt and the workers' protests in western Europe of the 1980s. Tony Judt described "Thatcherism" as a system which "stood for various things: reduced taxes, the free market, free enterprise, privatization of industries and services, Victorian values, patriotism, the individual". If we look carefully at the late 1980s in Poland – the hardships of late communism and the beginnings of peaceful transformation – one can spot similar tendencies in economy, society and politics.

Advanced "globalization" of late communism would be a key factor contributing to the crisis of "communist modernity". Economic integration forced the communist regimes to make concessions – the creation of the Solidarity Union or perestroika would not have been possible in the 1960s, as opposed to the 1980s, when the communist states could not longer disregard global capitalism. The 1980s communist states, believing in the capacity of "communist modernity" to powerfully transform, switched to the market capitalism, gradually introducing some liberal economic reforms. Last but not least, the shipyard alone, from where the protest originated, is an interesting case study, since the shipyard workers' jobs and the maritime industry have been part of global economy from the beginning.

Such international context appears to be missing from the existing approaches to the Polish strike of 1980. Historical studies on the origins of the Solidarity usually give less attention to socio-economic and cultural developments, presenting in fact political history, i.e. focusing on the birth of opposition and social resistance. Sociological studies, in turn, use the term "modernity" only incidentally. The greatest weakness of these studies lies in the lack of explanation of how the theory of "social disobedience" within the elitist opposition movement before 1980 combines with the mass movement, not abiding by any political structure, nor, at least initially, with any political program. How was it possible that the protest of only a few activists, mainly members of intelligentsia, transformed into the mass protest?

The project objective is to construct a theory of "communist modernity" as a new analytical tool for historical study of the year 1980 in Poland, Solidarity movement, late communism, and 20th-century Europe, based on a wide empirical material – sociological sources and party documents. Using the example of the August 1980 strike, I examine in what sense the events of 1980 were a discourse on the project of "communist modernity". The project's research database consists of the statements of participants in the 1980 protest and the documents written by decision-makers of the communist party. In 1981 the Gdańsk branch of the Polish Sociological Association held a writing contest for recollections of the August 1980. A team lead by a sociologist Marek Latoszek obtained over two hundred accounts, of which the majority were recollections of the protest participants. In turn, the Archives of the New Records in Warsaw and several national archives in large Polish cities contain analyses of the social moods and causes of the 1980 protest elaborated by the party experts and decision-makers.

Zygmunt Bauman noted that in communism "audacious dream of modernity was pushed to its radical limits". Social engineering, large-scale technologies, transformation of natural environment appeared to be the hallmarks of many systems striving for modernity, the communist states, however, remained the most radical in their aspirations. If Bauman's observation is valid, the modernity agenda might have been the basis of the social contract between the people living in communism and the communist authorities. Were the party decision-makers in the "Gierek's decade" (the 1970s in Poland) aware of the risk of incorporation into the capitalist global economy when taking out western loans for new businesses? May the unusual popularity of Solidarity in western countries be seen as a kind of working-class and social democracy nostalgia for modernity? How was modernity in late communism understood – like in stalinism, as a radical project for the future or, rather, as a return to the past solutions?