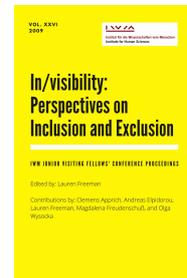


Populism in Poland: In/visible Exclusion

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IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conference Proceedings, Vol. XXVI © 2009 by the author

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This paper attempts to answer a general question, namely, what exactly does populism in Poland mean?[1] In the 2005 parliamentary elections, the spectacular victory of parties that were described in the public discourse as populists, as well as their coalition and announcement to build the new IV Republic of Poland, surprised many scholars. These events provoked me to research this topic in order to understand why what happened happened. Even though there are more examples of populism in Poland, this paper illustrates only those actors who have played a significant role in Polish politics after 1989, and particularly, those who were active in 2005: Stanislaw Tyminski and Lech Walesa; the Self-defence party; the League of Polish Families and Law and Justice and their leaders; as well as the Catholic movement, *Radio Maryja*. My empirical research was predominantly based on a qualitative analysis of primary sources, namely, the programs and papers of political parties, national newspapers, as well as statements of party leaders, and interviews that were conducted with various members of political parties.

The paper is divided into four parts. The first part clarifies the concept of populism and specifically, its relation to democracy. The second part illustrates selected examples of populism in Poland since 1989 and shows why populism has become so successful. The third part emphasizes the role of populism in the government (between 2005 and 2007) and also aims to answer the question of whether populism is a country – specific issue. The fourth and final part of the paper attempts to draw some conclusions about populism in Poland.

The Meaning of Populism

Populism is a phenomenon that is difficult to conceptualize, partly because it is extremely context dependent.[2] Nevertheless, the literature suggests some common features of populism. An essential characteristic of populism emphasises “the people” as the whole and their unity as constituting the ultimate value for the country. Yet, the glorification of

the people is not synonymous with the meaning of the people. "People," in the context of populism, can signify any and all of the following: citizens, the majority, common people, "victims," the poor, the sovereign, and the nation.[3] Paul Taggart made an effort to clarify the concept of "the people" by introducing a term "heartland," which represents an idealized conception of the community and reflects the values and beliefs of "ordinary" people. The *heart* and *home* become symbols through the language and the style of populists. In other words, "the heartland is made as a justification for the exclusion of the demonized." [4] It is a construction of an ideal society, unlike utopian conceptions, and this "shared belief in the virtues of the heartland unites populists." [5] The difference between the two terms is as follows: for ideologues, an ideal society is based on intellectual calculation and future considerations, whereas for populists, the heartland is based on emotions and "it sees populists casting their imaginative glances backwards in an attempt to construct what has been lost by the present." [6]

The glorification of the people goes further because it "is tinged with the belief that the people are not just the equal of their rulers; they are actually better than their rulers." [7] Populism also means "the belief that politicians are synonymous with corruption, while true wisdom and purity resides squarely with the people." [8] In other words, populism says something about the relation between the people and those in power. The definition that clearly sums up the core considerations is presented by Cas Mudde: "[Populism is] a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into *two homogenous and antagonistic groups*, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite," and which argues that *politics should be an expression of volonte générale*(general will) of the people ." [9]

To define populism as an ideology is not universally accepted. The main criticism against doing this is based on three arguments. First, one suggests that populism is seen as a protest and negation; however, negating, populism does not result in a positive vision. Second, one can say that populism is an empty discourse. Third, treating populism as an ideology means to situate it on par with democracy, conservatism, fascism, etc., meanwhile, populism is an "empty shell," as some authors argue. [10]

However the above-mentioned three arguments can be respectively rejected [11] for the following reasons. With respect to the first argument, despite the fact that populism is based on the negation, it also contains positive promises to look after the people (it constitutes the heartland). With respect to the second, by studying populist discourse, it becomes clear that the meaning of such concepts as democracy, popular sovereignty, the people, and the common will cannot be understood as purely empty rhetoric. [12] Finally, Mudde dissolves the third problem – the emptiness of populism – by introducing to the problem of populism Michael Freeden's concept of a "thin-ideology:" a concept that has traditionally been used in the context of green parties and feminism. Freeden introduced a new notion of ideology as "a restricted core attached to a narrower range of political concepts;" [13] as such, the concept can easily be attached to very different ideological positions.

Ideology is understood as conceptual map of the political world and it is regarded as an important form of political thinking that merits examination in its own right, and not just as a poor relation of political philosophy.[14] Ideology contains a core structure of tightly interrelated concepts and it is closely linked to political action and mobilisation. The role of ideology is to link political thought and political action. Thus populism can be easily applied by leaders, parties, and movements. Populism, whose tool is rhetoric, can be simply transformed from a strategy (a plan of action, usually short-term, to win, for example, support and voters) into an ideology. In addition to the goals stated above, this paper also attempts to highlight the division line between strategy and ideology in the Polish case.

“Populism,” says one commentator, “is like a chameleon.”[15] It is neither left nor right; rather, it can easily be appropriated by both sides of the political spectrum. *Qua* chameleon, populism responds to the decline of the electoral support for politicians, the increase in electoral abstention, the volatility of the electorate, the growing fragmentation of the party system, the emergence of *ad hoc* social movements unrepresented by traditional political organisations, and to the emergence of single-issue and/or radical parties. Populists appeal to “the populist democracy where nothing is more important than the ‘general will’ of the people.”[16] The phenomenon of populism and its relation to democracy can be better understood when we conceptualize democracy as a construction of two pillars.[17] One pillar, the popular one, is an expression of popular will and of choice. It is embodied in the free association of citizens, free elections, or free expression of political views.[18] In this sense, democracy is the power of the people. The second pillar, the constitutional one, is formed, for example, by the independence of the judiciary and by autonomous institutions like central banks, agencies, etc. The problem of modern democracy concerns imbalance of those two pillars and the fact that “they are also growing apart in practice.”[19] When democratically elected elites govern on the basis of constitutional rules and institutions, while disregarding “the voice of the people,” then populists oppose the idea of liberal democracy, namely, that the political majority should be limited in important ways by constitutional constraints.[20] In other words, the imbalance of the two pillars usually gives rise to a fertile ground for populist appeals. The paradox of the situation lies in the fact that from one side, democracy itself is calling for a popular voice. On the other side, politicians “give populism a try” in order to broaden their electoral appeal. This is to say, democracy as a political system of the balance between the constitutional and popular pillars is indeed open to populist appeals.

To complete the description of populism, two additional elements are necessary: populist rhetoric and leadership. Populist rhetoric is a powerful tool used by populists. Populist rhetoric refers not only to making empty promises (this would be just demagoguery, but populists say more than demagogues). Populism opposes elites and institutions and is seen as having anti-capitalist, anti-Semitic, anti-urbanist, and anti-modernist, features. As such, populist discourse is based on negation and expressiveness and its strongest element is emotion. Populists frequently appeal to fears and related promises in order to adequately protect the “people” from real (and more often, made up) threats. Populists not only accuse political elites of abusing their position of power instead of acting in the interests of the general public, but they go even further to argue that there is a conspiracy

of elites against the people.[21] Such a conspiracy is opposed to the populist heartland. In this respect, since populism appeals to simple rules that are derived from the “common wisdom of the people,” its rhetoric is often embellished with references to local tradition and culture (as opposed to the alleged “cosmopolitanism” of the elites), and it is usually linked to nationalism. While today, we see the decline of nationalism in its traditional sense as the consequence of industrialization and integration, it seems that populism replaces nationalism. Populism, however, is not equivalent to nationalism.[22]

Moreover, populist rhetoric is moralistic (although populists themselves tend to be immoral) and it is in possession of truth (since populists know best). Studying populism requires one to study and to understand populist discourse. Today, populists are often difficult to identify because frequently the political rhetoric used by mainstream politicians also has populist elements – i.e. empty promises and an anti-establishment character. To have populist rhetoric, however, does not necessarily make someone populist. By the same token, not every charismatic leader is a populist. This brings us to the second important characteristic feature of populism. Populists need a charismatic leader, one who most often has an authoritarian, dictatorial, and paternalistic predisposition. This refers to one who claims to communicate directly with the people – being from the people him- or herself; who uses demagogic slogans; stirs up various resentments, anxieties, and hopes; and who proposes simple (“quick fix”) solutions to difficult social and political problems. The charisma of populist leaders makes populist rhetoric powerful and successful. Although some scholars argue that the role of leadership “facilitate[s] rather than define[s] populism,”[23] the present argument assumes that the role of the leader is crucial for populism. Having said that, we can now move to the empirical domain and discuss some Polish examples.

In the Name of Excluded

Populism in Poland first emerged during the presidential campaign in 1990.[24] This was the first direct and general election of this type in Poland since the 1930s. One month before the presidential election, Stan Tyminski – who was unknown at that time and living in Canada where he had his own business – decided to participate in the election. He won such surprising support in the first round of elections that in the second round, he became the main rival of Lech Walesa, the leader of the Solidarity Movement, and one of the most well-known people in Poland at the time. How did this happen? After 1989, the Solidarity Movement, which was important during Communism, was losing support on account of its internal problems. The political scene at the time was divided and many parties disappeared as quickly as they emerged. Economical problems (i.e. hyper-inflation), together with the transformation processes (both on political and economical level) caused important problems in Poland. Tyminski entered the public scene by using public feelings to his advantage and by exploiting the dire political and economical situation. He is described as a precursor to populism.[25] This is not only because he introduced new campaign strategies and techniques that were heretofore unknown in Poland, but also because he applied a new form of direct communication with the

electorate. The people were at the centre of his campaign. He appealed to Poles, to the Polish nation, to patriots, and to common people, and in particular, he appealed to those who felt excluded.

Tyminski's relationship to the people was also close because he presented himself as an outsider of the establishment. He was neither affiliated with post-communists, nor was he linked to the post-Solidarity camp. Challenging the Round Table negotiations[26] from the position of an outsider, Tyminski distanced himself from the past and from the newly established political elite who, supposedly, were a part of the "network." The concept of the "network," introduced by Tyminski himself, was general enough to include the new political elite as well as other groups and institutions. The common practice of including anybody into the network eventually worked against Tyminski, for eventually people were included, who were explicitly opposed to Tyminski's candidature. The network, therefore, was not only against Tyminski, but it was also against the people who supported him. Furthermore, Tyminski strongly underlined the contrast between "us" and "them" by using simple language to speak directly with and to the people. Many elements of his campaign were borrowed from the American presidential campaigns that are often described as populist.[27] Tyminski's case shows that by using populism as a strategy – that is, by appealing to popular feelings, exploiting the political and economical situation, as well as the existing political system – it was possible to play an important role in the presidential election in Poland in 1990, despite the fact that he did not have the support of leading political forces.

In the end, Lech Walesa, who won the election, based his presidency on the constant "conflict" with all political classes that opposed his political concepts. Populism was present during and also after his presidential campaign in 1990. Walesa appealed to all Poles and to the Polish nation who fought against the Communist regime. His appeal was not a populist one before 1989, although some authors argue that Solidarity was a populist movement.[28] His appeal did, however, become populist when Walesa decided to participate in the presidential election. Then, in responding to political attacks (mainly from his rival, Tyminski), he constructed the enemy: everyone who was against the liberal transformation and who questioned the Round Table Agreement. As such, Walesa was an example of neoliberal populism.[29] Later, once he became President, he argued that he was democratically elected and, therefore, the only true representative of the people. As president, Walesa treated parties as instruments and did not respect them. When the new democratic institutions limited his power, they were considered to be obstacles and he used them instrumentally. He was known for his direct language, which was oftentimes rude and lowbrow. He often used (and even overused) symbols of Solidarity, religion, and the Polish tradition to his advantage. He considered himself to be an unquestionable leader of Poles, and indeed, to be a tribune of the people. At bottom, Walesa was pure charisma, and he used populism in a strategic way.

Populism was visible not only on the level of individuals. On the Polish political scene in the 1990s, many new parties and social movements emerged. One in particular that emerged in 1990 was the peasants' movement: Self-defence of Republic of Poland (*Samoobrona RP*, SRP). Initially, this movement only represented farmers, but very soon,

it expanded its appeal to other social groups that were disappointed with the transformation: namely, to the unemployed, pensioners, and to some sectors of public administration. The Self-defence movement began a trade union in January 1992, and established itself as a political party in June 1992. This combination of a trade union, a political party, and an informal movement made it easy for Self-defence to be present in different political and social dimensions. The movement, together with its leader Andrzej Lepper, became notorious for its radical protests against the establishment (in the form of roadblocks and protests organized in front of the governmental building, etc.). The party only entered parliament in 2001 and with significant support (10.2 percent). This was mainly due to its many promises to fight unemployment (that at that time reached 20 percent) and on account of its anti-establishment rhetoric which questioned mainly the economic transformation process which had great scepticism regarding EU integration.

The populist nature of the party is visible in the party program, which states that the party is “the only one in Poland, which speaks in the name of all people.”[30] It defends “pure and unemployed people, honest and enterprising, but disadvantaged by the economical system.”[31] The party credo was “all of them have already ruled and robbed this country, so now it is only us who can guarantee that this robbery will come to an end.”[32] The main enemy of the party was Leszek Balcerowicz, a prominent Polish economist and Minister of Finance (1989-1991), who introduced an economic plan for rapidly transforming a communist economy (that previously had been based on state ownership and central planning) to a capitalist market economy. In spite of its unquestionable positive effects, this so called “shock-therapy” also brought about difficulties, particularly for the agriculture sector. As a result, Self-defence’s famous slogan became “Balcerowicz must go!”

It is difficult to locate the party on the traditional political spectrum (which is a characteristic feature of populism). Although the party was described as a national left agrarian party, it declared itself to be “the third way” between socialism and capitalism; that is, it appealed to the right electorate, criticized liberalism, and moreover, described itself as a socio-liberal party. The unquestionable leader, Andrzej Lepper, committed spectacular acts of civil disobedience and used strongly populist messages, with which he managed to gain nationwide publicity and strong support in rural areas. Lepper understood that democracy is based on representation and on civil society. He used these mechanisms in order to introduce populist democracy onto the political scene. The open appeal to populism in the party program and the charismatic, populist leadership makes Self-defence the only party on the Polish political scene to have used populism as an ideology. They can, therefore, be described as the “Populist Party” *par excellence*.

Another party that must be discussed is the League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*, LPR). This party emerged in 2001 as a combination of a number of Catholic nationalistic parties that contested feminism, gay rights, abortion, and euthanasia, all of which they perceived to be moral threats to the traditional Polish family, and thus, to the nation. The program was mainly based on radical right elements – viz., on a Catholic-nationalist vision of Poland – while populism, in their definition, appeared as the enemy of the heartland of Christian Poles. The enemies who were defined in party rhetoric but

also in party papers (*Racja Stanu*) were: (i) the establishment, which was corrupt and immoral, and which was described as the “network” created during the Round Table talks which was designed to control the nation’s wealth; (ii) the European Union, where the EU was presented as a “devil,” and as a “centralized, socialist super state;” and (iii) liberalism, which was seen as a threat to Catholic values and to the national tradition. The party was strongly promoted by an ultra Catholic radio station, *Radio Maryja*, which will be discussed below. The party leader, the young Roman Giertych, began to achieve recognition and he owed his growing popularity to his famous membership in the Orlen Commission,[33] which was widely publicized in the media.

The aim of the Commission was to examine the “corruption networks of politics and economy;” it also became a key element of the League’s program during the next elections in 2005. Roman Giertych’s leadership was evaluated on the basis of its link between the party and the All Polish Youth (*Młodzie? Wszepolska*, MW). It was an organisation frequently accused of fascist tendencies. The other organization that was established by Roman Giertych was an informal youth organization of the League. These young members came to be a committed group of Giertych supporters when he began his political career in the party. The hierarchical structure of the organization, based on a strong nationalistic and authoritarian ideological framework, allowed for Giertych’s authoritarian leadership. After 2005, his leadership became recognized. Thus, the League of Polish Families – that was based on tradition, religion, patriotism, and the insistence on the role of the nation – locate the League on the right of political spectrum. The party applied populism as a thin-centred ideology and for this reason, should be described as populist radical right party.

The Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwo??*, PiS) is a particular example of populist transformation, from populist strategy to populist ideology. Law and Justice was established in 2001 by the twin brothers Lech and Jaroslaw Kaczynski, as the successor to the Centre Agreement Party (*Porozumienie Centrum*, PC), which, in 1990, was also created by Kaczynski brothers. Law and Justice was a conservative party with an anti-communism and anti-corruption agenda. It borrowed the concept of the “network” from Stan Tyminski and the League of the Polish Family and the party developed this concept further by defining “network” as a deal between the ex-communist elite, big business, and the media. According to Jaroslaw Kaczynski, “this [network] is mostly the system of economic interests, which has influenced on what has happened in Poland, also in the political sense. And those interests are often inconsistent with the general interests of development of Poland.”[34] With time, the idea to protect the common people from the influence of the “network” was included in the party platform. The key instrument was lustration, namely, the vetting of communist secret police collaborators.

An important part of Law and Justice is that the party changed from the relatively unknown elitist party (PC, and initially PiS) to the mass and populist party. Initially, populism was used as a strategy to realize Kaczynski’s idea to create a large centre-right party. However, together with the changes to the structure of the party, it broadened its public discourse and began to speak in the name of “the people,” against “the network,” and it included populism in the program, which evolved into its ideological concept. This was most visible during the 2006 local elections, which were organized under the banner

“Close to the people.” The party aimed “to create a social order in Poland, in which good is good, and bad is bad.”[35] Law and Justice introduced the concept of an ideal world of the Fourth Republic of Poland in which “there will be law and order...because this is in the interests of ordinary Polish citizens. And Law and Justice is a party of ordinary Polish citizens.”[36] Thus, the party is an interesting case because by applying a populist strategy to establish the large centre-right conservative party during following years, the party had moved populism away from this strategy toward thin ideology. It should be described as the populist radical right party.

The story of Polish populism would not be complete without discussing *Radio Maryja*, the ultra-Catholic radio station, founded in 1991 by the charismatic and controversial Father Rydzyk. It was later transformed into the media group: TV “I persist” (*Trwam*), newspaper “Our Daily” (*Nasz Dziennik*), and two other foundations. Today, radio is not only the media consortium, but also a strong religious movement that supports Father Rydzyk and his station (6% listeners in 2001, around 2.1% in 2007). Radio is a complicated case, due to its mixture of religious and populist appeal. The Radio mobilizes excluded and disappointed people and guarantees them a place in both the community and in the heartland. Father Rydzyk promised changes, provided help, and reconstructed integrity; he did not provide for the elite, who, according to him, cheat and deceive the common people. Father Rydzyk has defined what unemployment, corruption, criminality, and other transformation problems mean to the Polish people. At the same time, he knew who was really guilty, namely, the left establishment which was comprised mainly of post-communists, liberals, the post-solidarity elite, and who were easily called “the network.” This group could have also included Jews, Masons, European Union and others (for example, compare the radio broadcasts from 2000-2005). Father Rydzyk is an extremely charismatic person. His charismatic power also depends on the fact that he is a middle-man between the common people and God. Of course, one who speaks in the defence of Catholic values and in the name of the people is not necessarily a populist. However, one becomes a populist when, in the name of Catholic values, one creates an enemy and, in the defence of the people, one manipulates their fears and uses them as political instruments. This is the case for *Radio Maryja* and its direct involvement in the political activities. The radio supported the successful emergence of the League of Polish Families in 2001, and later the Law and Justice Party, as well as the populist coalition of 2005-2007.[37] *Radio Maryja* uses both manipulation of fears and populism as its strategy and as a political instrument.

The story of Polish populism shows that populism is not a new phenomenon in Poland. Rather, it has been present on the Polish political scene since 1989. Lech Walesa, Stanislaw Tymimski, Andrzej Lepper, and Father Rydzyk propped their populist slogans on transformation and modernisation circumstance. Roman Giertych and Father Rydzyk were particularly oriented against the European Union. Each leaders and party that was a subject of this research constructed the enemy and fears in reference to the Round Table Agreement. The heritage of communism, the significance of the Solidarity Movement and its symbolisation, as well as the historical role of “the people” and “the nation” are also important factors in understanding the populism in Poland. During the transformation

that brought many economical, political and social problems, these symbols and historical events were used by populists as tools in their rhetoric, namely, to speak in the name of those who are excluded.

Populism in Poland – Polish Populism?

The above picture of populism in Poland shows that populism is based on negation and exclusion. In the literature, it is often argued that the rise of populism is a specific post-accession phenomenon, which is due to increased expectations with respect to EU membership and fatigue from long-lasting economical problems. Although the accession process allowed a spectacular victory for the Self-defence Movement and the League of Polish Families in 2001, and for Father Rydzyk to strengthen its “electorate,” the post-accession factors played a secondary role in the Polish populist way to the power. In 2005, the parliamentary campaign was dominated by the populist appeal against the whole establishment that was presented by populists as a part of the network. Populists referred to the Round Table Agreement that was, in their opinion, the crucial element of the network establishment. All of this makes populism in Poland *the* Polish phenomenon.

Moreover, the Polish story is not only the successful story of populism in opposition. The 2005 election campaign led to the domination of the political scene by populist parties which, after a very long discussion, set up the coalition (Law and Justice, Self-defence and the League of Polish Families) on May 2006, which was supported by *Radio Maryja*. The nature of populism in the government was based on three fundamental elements.[38] First, the anti-establishment populists used their slogan when they were in the opposition: their appeal to fight against unemployment, bad privatisation, and corruption. They called for lustration, and they constructed the consistent and logical chain of events. The populists knew the reason why such problems appeared in Poland: it was on account of “the network.”

In 2005, the unifying principle behind the populist coalition was their assertion of non-participation in the successive governments of the III Republic of Poland (established in 1989). They aimed to wipe out the entire “old” political class and to replace it with a new one. They extended this “class struggle” to those whom they saw as being co-responsible for the corrupt practices of “post-communism.” The populists, however, decided who was corrupt and who was not. They aimed to create the IV Republic of Poland where “everybody will be equal.” This concept was close to the idea of the heartland. Second, populists in the government were against constitutionalism and procedural democracy. They aimed to institutionalize populism. Since, as populists, they believed in the primacy of the people’s will over the rule of law, they claimed populist democracy, meaning democracy of the people. Thus, during the coalition period (2005-2007), as well as later when Law and Justice governed alone (for a few months in 2007), they frequently questioned the role of the Constitution (which was allegedly “post-communist”) and the Constitutional Tribunal, together with notorious violations of parliamentary procedures and attempts to marginalize the role of the opposition in the legislative process. Third, they were against everybody who was against them. Everyone who was not with the government was excluded.

Populists, therefore, adopted the idea of the unity and purity of the nation, in contrast to a nation dominated by a corrupted elite, which left little room for respecting minority values and lifestyles. The idea of “moral revolution” aimed not only to end corruption, but also to embrace the ideal of a religiously uniform Polish nation (gathered around *Radio Maryja*), with a strong strain of xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and homophobia. In its search for the heartland, Polish populism evolved in the direction of the radical right. The role of liberalism as a common enemy was also significant. Seen as a threat to the Polish tradition and nation, liberalism was pictured according to its Western political, social, and culture influence. Polish populists understood liberalism as a social, and not as an economical, value. Thus, it is interesting that they did not oppose liberal economy as such (except from Self-defence, until 2005). In other words, the two most characteristic features of post-2005 public life were the domination of populist rhetoric – hate speech and xenophobia – and the populists’ threat to democratic order.

Populists in Poland aimed to include, under the common idea of the IV Republic of Poland, those people who were “excluded by the establishment” during the transformation process. The real project, however, was to exclude the old elites in order to attain absolute power. The project ended with disaster and during the 2007 election, the main concept of the party was excluded by the majority of Poles. As a result, the Self-defence Movement and the League of Polish Families did not enter the parliament. Although Law and Justice achieved more support in 2007 than in 2005, they were not able to establish the coalition and turned into the opposition, since populism can be successful only as the opposition.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to determine what populism in Poland means. Should we describe populism in Poland in general terms, or as a country specific phenomenon? What is the relation between populism and democracy? This brief story of populism in Poland stresses different forms of populism. Slavenka Drakulic rightly observed that populism in Eastern Europe refers to the desire of people to have what they were supposed to have.[39] The Polish story indeed shows that after 1989, a considerable part of society either saw themselves as victims of the post-communist transition, or believed that the direction in which Poland was heading after the collapse of communism was fundamentally wrong. Moreover, the rapid economical and political transformation created a sense of loss of economic security for some groups of people. These groups were often nostalgic about the former times of the paternalistic welfare state, despite often being anti-communist. Such people often shared the conviction that the Round Table agreement helped the secret service agents and the communist elite of the People’s Republic of Poland, not only to escape their just punishment, but also to translate their political influence into economic clout. This was the core argument of the network theory. Polish populists highlight all of these problems, to which they add the problem of Polish identity with respect to tradition and Christian values. All mentioned independent leaders and party leaders used populism as a strategy, but not only that. In the case of the Self-defence Movement, populism was an ideology. The League of Polish Families applied

populism as a thin ideology, namely, the populist radical right party. The same thing occurred in the case of Law and Justice, however, this party illustrates how populism, initially employed by the party as a strategy, can be implemented as the thin ideology.

The Polish story of populism is the story of historical divisions that were deeply rooted in society: communism versus opposition, later post-communism versus post-solidarity movements (which themselves were divided). One may speak about Polish populism because the populist foundation is based in history. However, populism in Poland is not only the sign of the past (although its rhetoric is based on the “unfinished” history); rather, it also responded to some of the problems of democracy. Populists in Poland did not introduce any alternative to democracy. Although they were against the constitutional pillar of democracy, they based their legitimacy on a democratic system. Populists, elected by the people, governed in the name of the people, and for the people. In the populist opinion, liberal democracy was unattractive and dangerous to the Polish nation and tradition. Their designs of the constitutional framework aimed to improve the system, thereby strengthening the popular pillar.

Democracy is considered to be a system for the people, which is to say that it has a two-fold role. First, it is the popular pillar, which means to take politics to the people; and second, it has the constitutional role of bringing the people into politics. For this reason, populism – “the voice of the people” – is an important and integral element of a democratic system that has both positive and negative effects. The Polish story confirms this.

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Notes:

1. This paper is a brief review my PhD studies on populism in Poland.

2. Wysocka 2007.

3. Szacki 2003: 28-35.

4. Taggart 2000: 96.

5. *Ibid.*, 62.

6. *Ibid.*, 95.

7. Shils 1956: 101.

8. Taggart 2002: 76.

9. Mudde 2007: 23, also 2004: 541, my emphasis. Cas Mudde perfectly unites historical approaches, his definition is also applicable to different cultural and political systems, in his study he analyses populist parties in Western and Eastern Europe. Most importantly, his definition relates to the modern democracies.

10. Mény and Surel 2002.

11. Cf. Canovan 2002.

12. Cf. Westlind 1996, Canovan 1999, 2002.

13. Freedon 1998: 759.

14. Freedon 1996: 76ff.

15. Taggart 2002.

16. Mudde 2007: 23.

17. E.g., Canovan 1999: 2-16, Mény and Surel 2002, Mair 2002: 81-83.

18. Cf. Shils 1956, Kornhauser 1960, Dahl 1998.

19. Mair 2002: 83.

20. Cf. Smilov and Krastev 2008: 7.

21. Ul? 1996: 64 but also others *e.g.* Shils 1956, Taggart 2000, Szacki 2003.

22. I am very thankful Cornelia Klinger for this valuable remark.

23. E.g., Mudde 2004: 548.

24. It is important to note that populism has been present in the Polish history. First in the 19th century as agrarian populism, next during the interwar period (1918-1939). Although some features of communism are convergent with populists, these phenomenon differed from each other and we can speak about populist features in communism but not about populism *per se*. Importantly, the communist system contributed to the emergence of populist tendencies after its collapse but this is not a subject of this paper. Moreover, in the complicated political and economical circumstances during transformation, part of the society considered that an unclear agreement was made between communists and Solidarity during the Round Table Agreement. It became publicly known as the concept of the network and was very much used by populists.

25. Nalewajko 2004: 58.

26. In 1989, a peaceful agreement was made as an effect of the Round Table negotiations that took place between communists and Solidarity opposition. Next, the new government announced to draw a think line on what has happened in the past and to dissociate the first post-communist government from the communist past. Political opponents of such policy claimed that the government was presented unwillingness to carry out historical settlements, lustration and decommunisation and did not want to agree for the participation by post-communists in the Polish politics and economy. Very soon Poland was divided between those who supported such option and those who were against.

27. Populism in America is often described as a political style . (Ware 2002: 101-119).

28. Cf. Goodwyn 1991.

29. Weyland 1999.

30. Self defence Program 2003.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Lepper 2005.

33. The Orlen Commission was a parliamentary investigating commission on various transaction involving ORLEN S.A. (state-owned petroleum company). In July 2005 Giertych served as a member and vice-chairman of the Commission.

34. Kaczynski 2005.

35. PiS Program 2006.

36. *Ibid.*

37. For more about the coalition see also: Wysocka 2008.

38. Cf. Kucharczyk and Wysocka 2008.

39. Slavenka Drakulic presentation: *New Europe Strikes Back. Should We Worry about the Rise of Populism in the East?* In: the Institute for Human Sciences, 18 November 2008, Vienna.

Preferred citation: Wysocka, Olga. 2009. Populism in Poland: In/visible Exclusion. In: *In/visibility: Perspectives on Inclusion and Exclusion*, ed. L. Freeman, Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conference Proceedings, Vol. 26.