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Ritual as an inseparable component of political propaganda: a politological analysis with account being taken of certain anthropological elements

Abstract

The study deals with political propaganda considered as a space for the performance of rituals and ritual behaviours. Such an approach allows for investigating that phenomenon from another perspective than so far proposed by classical propaganda research schools. Special categories of the analysis include the symbolic sphere and conventionality, while emphasis is placed on researching propaganda within politically significant structures. The article provides information on how the phenomenon has been analysed with the use of anthropological research categories.

Key words: #ritual #propaganda #political anthropology #symbolism

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Introduction

Propaganda is one of those terms which require a precise explanation before any reflection thereon is undertaken and before it is used in the fight for power. Many a time too many simplifications and compromises have been effected, which have led to drawing hasty conclusions or misunderstanding of the situation. After all, propaganda is merely a manipulation directed by the authorities in order to influence the masses and control their thoughts. Of course, the form of propaganda may look like that, though it is worth to make it clear from the start that it does not have to be so. Promoting any idea is the art of seducing the crowd and making it undertake such behaviours as are intended by the disseminator. The referent, as every other artist, will use various means and methods to achieve the intended purpose without necessarily employing cheap and treacherous tricks. There is a choice of an assortment of techniques referring to the fundamental needs of the audience; the message may be also based on its sense of belonging and identity.

The subject of this work is primarily the ritual which constitutes and inseparable element of realising political propaganda, though an important part of the analysis is the presentation of the sphere of symbols as underrated by most theoreticians of propaganda.¹

The main purpose of the analysis is an attempt to grasp and locate the ritual in the political reality, and then determine

¹ Some representatives of the social and psychological school of propaganda turn attention to the effect of symbols on the masses, though their deliberations concern mostly attitudes, susceptibility or identity and the issue of symbolism in its building. Therefore, the symbol is a means to reach the goal rather than the main element of the analysis.

the function it performs in the propaganda process. An additional assumption is to present the value of the ritual for the structures as a politically significant category.

In light of the proposed thesis we ought to answer the question what novelties have been brought in by the analysis of the presence of ritual in the propaganda process and how important it is for the political processes. In order to look at this research problem more closely one should first analyse the substance of ritual and propaganda, and then grasp their relationship and investigate the connection between anthropology and politology.

The main subject of the analysis of political propaganda, what it is and how propaganda activities influence various political actors. Propaganda – a category that will be more in depth discussed further on in this work – constitutes a special type of communication between the actors of social life. For the purposes of this article, propaganda is conceived as an element of the political theatre, and the term is used in the context of research on political communication. The analysis is underlain by: (1) a specific, ritual method of communicating in the political sphere; (2) the importance of ritual for building a political reality; (3) the importance of ritual for the effectiveness of political propaganda.

The presence of ritual during communication processes is merely one of the components, an element that directly affects the effectiveness of propaganda activities and triggering of a specific response in the audience. Most frequently it incites obedience, though may be a means for agitating the crowd, which will become ready to challenge the reality in order to instil a new social or economic order.

Propaganda

The term propaganda, nowadays associated mainly with political communication, derives from the Italian verb *propagare* and means to propagate, publicise. The word was originally used in the context of breeding plants and gardening.

The notion of propaganda was transferred to the area of social sciences or humanities upon the establishment of a missionary organisation *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*. It was set up for educating missionaries and propagating faith throughout the world.²

The start of the operations of this institution has been recognised by researchers as the beginning of the use of the word propaganda with such meaning as we know nowadays. Certain theoreticians indicate that the term denotes not only disseminating but also explaining, so it may be considered that propaganda carries not only information but also explains the functioning of the world.

Such understanding of the word designates the essence of the phenomenon and almost wholly renders the function of propaganda. It is used by social and political actors to disseminate information in such form which allows them for a comprehensive explanation of the reality.

Assuming that propaganda in fact both disseminates and explains one can [easily] adopt a thesis that it is but a form of communication with both elements of information as well as persuasion.³ It seems that such a perspective makes up a core of all directional definition which I shall cite further on in this work.

² Guilday (1921): 478–494.

³ Jowett, O'Donnell (2012): 1.

The informational nature of propaganda is revealed in sharing ideas, publicising a certain current, worldview or simply in transmitting certain data. Much more complicated is the factor of persuasion which is responsible for attaining the intended effect: make behave in a specific way with the use of concealed or open forms of pressure.

When the pressure is open and constitutes merely encouragement of the masses to assume certain attitudes, it may be called pure persuasion. However, when actors tends to operate beyond the consciousness of the audience, deliberately using misleading information and employing deceitful practical tricks, malicious depreciation or tendentious ridicule we may already speak about manipulation.⁴

It would be advisable to expound on the relationship between manipulation and propaganda as it is a frequent practice to use those two terms alternately. First of all, such practice is a result of the fact that propaganda is “demonised”, which means it is negatively valued. B. Dobek-Ostrowska, J. Fras and B. Ociepka suggest that such a perception of this phenomenon has been produced by experience and later the memory of the totalitarian routine.⁵

Many people, when using the term propaganda, still continue to point a finger at Joseph Goebbels, seeing him not only as a master of propagating certain ideas but also manipulation, that is creating successful illusions. However, propaganda is not always like a puppet show produced by a talented schemer behind the political scene. It may be effected by a well-known activist, who is not ashamed of his views and cries them out openly, or corporations, whose message

⁴ Karwat (2014): 76.

⁵ Dobek-Ostrowska, Fras, Ociepka (1999): 5.

is obvious – they want to persuade the audience to buy their products or use their services. Such an example of propaganda clearly shows that it does not have to be always manipulative and frequently uses tested forms of persuasion.

The previous paragraph opened up the gate to a complete definition of the term propaganda, which continues to be potentially misunderstood. The doubts I would like to dispel concern primarily the myth of the political nature of propaganda. It is much easier to meet persons professing different views who mutually accuse themselves of using propaganda than a man who would disclose the same mechanism in the case of a corporation. For instance, the operation of McDonald's restaurants is not based exclusively on marketing, that is making use of public opinion polls and on this basis creating cohesive opinions, but on producing new narrations and building a reality that the customers are to believe in – that is propaganda.⁶ McDonald's is no longer a restaurant network but a specific way of thinking combined with promoting a certain lifestyle. The situation of this restaurant network explicitly shows that not only politics is an area where propaganda is realised: it may be also business or the sphere of ethics and religion.

Before passing to the definition of propaganda and areas of its research, we should present the constituent features of propaganda, that is such elements that invariably characterise it. S. Kuśmierski and A. Frydrychowicz distinguished elements which evidence unrepeatability of the phenomenon of propaganda and allow its recognition.

⁶ The authors explain the concept of marketing as an activity based on what people think, whereas propaganda consists in creating what people are to think without prior examination of their opinions and feelings; Bajomi Lazar, Horvatch (2013): 220–223.

Any definition of propaganda, regardless of the research tradition, contains the following: (1) a teleological element signifying intentionality of propaganda; (2) a reference to the etymology of the word concerning propagation or explanation; (3) a character of the disseminated contents referring to the use of various means of propaganda, e.g. doctrines, views or ideas; (4) a description of human personality and how it is manifested; (5) the means used in order to attain the intended effects, such as symbols, slogans, as well as communication media; (6) the terms indicating in whose interest propaganda activities are undertaken.⁷

Having made the complete specification of the notion of propaganda, I shall now pass to quoting the most popular definition, namely that propaganda is “the activity, or the art, of inducing others to behave in a way in which they would not behave in its absence.”⁸

To present a more clear picture I shall try to distinguish perception of the phenomenon with respect to the research tradition of various schools dealing with the broadly conceived subject of propaganda. Psychologists pay special attention to the attitudes and psychological mechanisms governing the activities of the audience, psychological methods which may facilitate controlling the masses, the laws of psychological processes, surveys of the needs of the recipients, problems of personalising communication, as well as people’s susceptibility to propaganda messages.

Under the impact of propaganda individuals behave as if their responses were a result of their own decisions.

⁷ Frydrychowicz, Kuśmierski (1980): 41–43.

⁸ Fraser (1957): 1.

The masses may be made to behave alike, though each individual seems to believe that they follow their own judgments.⁹

Representatives of political sciences take a totally different approach to the phenomenon of propaganda. First of all, they present it in terms of its impact, pressure or as a tool utilised in the struggle for political power or keeping it.

is the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols.¹⁰

Propaganda is seen as a phenomenon of influencing people's opinion also in matters of public nature in a free from coercion and non-violent manner.¹¹

The classical tradition of propaganda, based on praxeology, presents it in the most universal light, placing emphasis on formulation and systematisation of propaganda recommendations and resolving the criteria of efficient activity and communication.

Propaganda denotes not only ideas, views and theories, but also their dissemination, explaining them with a given system of means, forms and methods. From such viewpoint, propaganda is a process made up of several components playing different functions,

⁹ Biddle (1931): 283–295.

¹⁰ Laswell (1927): 627.

¹¹ Szulczewski (1972): 51.

the subject of propaganda, its addressee, the means, forms and methods.¹²

The last of research schools is the sociological or social one. J. Ellul is considered to be its most important author; he defined propaganda as follows:

“Propaganda is a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated into an organization.”

Ritual

The term “ritual” is nowadays used in relation to various activities. It is said that people ritually go to church and to shopping malls, that there are daily rituals of beauty. The word is also used to denote celebrated feasts or rites, certain stages that are experienced in life, e.g. initiation at a summer camp as well as any major activities that constitute social reality. Numerous examples of how ritual is understood show a phenomenon that is inhomogeneous and complex in its substance: as a matter of fact it embraces both the sacral and the secular sphere, various types of conventions and non-recurrent behaviours. In order to determine what exactly ritual is one should first outline all configurations ascribed to them by numerous anthropologists, sociologists and politologists. Although there have been very many conceptions concerning ritual, each of them is worth considering: those that (1) present

¹² Pozdniakow (1978): 18.

ritual as an inseparable part of the religious life of a community; (2) constitute a passage from one stage to the next one; and (3) are responsible for the regulation of conventional and symbolic behaviours in the secular sphere. Expanding on those three categories it will be possible to try to grasp ritual as an element that is constantly present on the political scene.

D.I. Kretzer defined ritual as an analytical category which allows to place the world and experience in many consistent structural frameworks.¹³ The representation of ritual presented by that anthropologist is fairly broad, as a consequence of which at the first glance this description seems not to picture much. I think that the second definition formulated by the same researcher will be able to outline the essence of ritual more clearly: it is an activity swathed in a web of symbols, structured and celebrated at the times and in places that are emotionally opulent.¹⁴ I shall follow such an understanding of ritual throughout this chapter, though at the same time I shall make an effort to show that each of the concept of rituals, regardless of school and tradition, contains within the most important traits presented by Kretzer: structure and symbolism.

The word ritual derives from Latin *ritus*, meaning rite, ceremony. Such an approach is visible in the works of the majority of anthropologists conducting research in the 19th and the early 20th century. Such an understanding of ritual was pioneered by Emil Durkheim, who in his renowned work *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* noted that religious practices were characterised by an interesting dichotomy. According to Durkheim, rite was of a “sacred” nature..

¹³ Kertzer (2010): 20–22.

¹⁴ Ibidem: 9.

The sphere of belief is the sphere of *the sacred* and *the profane*, two opposites that divide the world and at the same time are mutually interdependent.¹⁵ What is sacred owes its status to having been endowed by people, while the order of the sacred forms the sphere the profane.

Interdependence between the world of the sacred and the profane was also noticed by R. Firth, who used the word ritual to describe the relationship between faith and action. He presented religious ceremonies as combining people's beliefs and desires through a constantly repeated procedure.¹⁶ Firth also classified ritual ceremonies into those connected with the cult of gods, funeral and totemic ceremonies. The first one consists in addressing deities in the form of an supplicatory prayer combined with a sacrifice. It is worth noting that the sacrifice may be offered in various forms, though it has one purpose, namely to thank for divine blessings and express hope for experiencing more. Funeral ceremonies are held in order to bid farewell to the deceased and thus make one's own further existence easier. Totemic ceremonies, although dedicated to various kinds of deities, differ from those connected with the cult of gods since they are first of all characterised by a much greater extent; they constitute the theory and the practice connected with the classification of phenomena taking place in the natural environment. They regulate the organisational principles of mutual relations taking place between people and indicate how they can be used and combined with human needs.

The above classification of rituals is connected with their perception in terms of the religious value they carry, as well

¹⁵ Durkheim (1995): 34.

¹⁶ Firth (1965): 204.

as in the context of the functions rituals play in primitive communities. The principal similarity which may be noticed when comparing rituals according to Firth and Durkheim consists in having been presented them by both as inseparable elements of culture. It should be remembered that the role of sacred rituals is not only to worship gods but also regulate social relations through the appointment of the sacred and its appropriate celebration, embracing also acts connected with integration taking place in a given group.

Ritual described as a ceremony connected with the sacred sphere explicitly shows that actions within meanings are responsible for community dynamics, at the same time responding to the needs of people in a given structure. Apart from regulating group relations through integration and shared celebration, rituals are also responsible for community experience and development of each of its members. Very important for the functioning of primitive people are so called rites of passage, which help become a fully-fledged member of a structure.

According to Arnold van Gennep, human life consists in passing from one age to another, from a given occupation to a new one. Regardless of the group, the very fact of existence imposes the need to pass from one social situation to another and from one community into a new one. The French ethnologist emphasises that human life may be compared to a series of phases, the beginning and end of which forms a closed whole.

Before I get to the heart of the matter I would like to make a small digression. The series of changes, each of which ends the previous stage of life can be distinguished not only in primitive communities. I have in mind here all types of social revolts, revolutions, counterrevolutions, depositions and

restorations, which lead the community to going through a new experience, which some time later becomes outdated and is ousted by another.

Special ceremonies are explicitly present in each of the past stages. Where the division of changes is clear, those changes are accompanied by the influence of the sacred and the profane.

In his work, Van Gennep offers special attention to rites of the threshold. Their structure consists of the rites of exclusion from the old world, rites celebrated during the transitory stage, and rites of inclusion into a new world. Turner, who in his work was inspired by van Gennep's research, underlines how important for rituals is the stage of passage, which imparts a mystical character on man. In many cultures, it is believed that rites of passage are accompanied by the presence of supernatural beings, and the persons that participate therein are protected by their powers.¹⁷ Also in this place I would see a series of analogies to political events, for example during protests people start to believe in their inviolability as if they were actually protected by a certain power.

The last aspect of religious rituals that I would like to consider is reference to the notion of *Communitas* formulated by Turner, which means a moment in time and beyond. In the duration of this community stage, society becomes a homogeneous whole rejecting alike status and contract.¹⁸

Passing to the discussion of rituals extending totally beyond the religious sphere it is worth noting that ritual does not lose any of its original importance. Quite on the contrary. It finds its reflection in secular situations, where it is responsible for

¹⁷ Turner (2010): 121.

¹⁸ Ibidem: 146.

regulating interactions between individuals. A definite sequence of procedures allows interlocutors freely to take part in the discussion and makes none of them surprised by the behaviour of the other, and at the same time each of them knows how to read them as well as how to act and respond.

When discussing secular rituals we shall operate on two variables of convention and repeatability as well as symbolism, mindful of the fact that a ritual behaviour is not the same as a symbolic act, that is the proper ritual.¹⁹ In the latter, stress is placed on meaning, whereas in the former the discussion concerns behaviour. When we talk about behaviour we have in mind daily rituals such as breakfast, going to school as well as such activities that we repeat and which are more important for our lifestyle.

As regards the sphere of meanings, rituals can be seen during an oath taken by students at school, legitimisation or overthrow of a political authority. Also taking part in elections is a symbolic act, which for a part of the society is of special significance. Citizens growing up in the sense of duty towards the state and the nation believe that it is natural to go to the polls and decide who they would like to see in power.

Swarming in commercial temples also constitutes a kind of ritual, not us a ritual behaviour connected with routine but arousing from the symbolic sphere. Visiting numerous shops is connected not only with physiology and the need to buy the basic necessities for dinner, but illustrates the 21st century cult of consumerism, and in the extreme cases also hedonism. Even such trivial examples as shopping around may be considered ritual.

¹⁹ Piwowarski (1893): 7.

The key to understanding ritual is to read its practicing as a duty: both religious and secular meaning of ritual show it as an activity that is right for the functioning and maintaining social structure. In ceremonials, rituals are performed to put the society in order and express the needs of its members, who feel that a given manner of celebrating is necessary for further successful development.

Being secular acts, rituals and ritual activities make use of well-known rules and schemes than man needs in order to properly interpret the reality and respond to it.

Duty is a rule that regulates the society, is capable of understanding it and keep it in reins. Both the rites of primitive tribes and advanced communities, funeral ceremonies are accompanied by sorrow. Actually, it has always been so – fallen soldiers and victims have been mourned, funeral ceremonies have been enveloped by the sea of tears and sorrow. This sentiment has not been killed even by the commercial nature of contemporary funerals.

For the needs of the further part of the article I have assumed that the term ritual may be ascribed to any conscious human activity in the symbolic sphere or in reference thereto. It may have a secular or religious character; it expresses individual or collective desires, needs and emotions on the basis of the professed axiology or hierarchy of priorities.

The significance of ritual in the political sphere

Politics is one of many areas that is expressed through symbolism.²⁰ Therefore, a relationship of politics with ritual is inescapable. The relationship of politics itself with the sphere

²⁰ Kertzer (2010): 11.

of arbitrary meanings is interesting all in itself. People have always manifested their feelings towards the authorities, while the authorities expressed their emotions to the crowd. It concerns not only revolts and uprisings, but also the formation of social relations, for example the struggle of the commoners against the aristocracy. In the times of the early Roman Republic, the commoners left the city and refused to serve in the army in order to force the aristocracy to make political concessions. It happened as many as three times – in 494, 499 and 287 before Christ.²¹ Refraining from military service was of a ritual character as it was a response to the prevailing social relations. Resistance was a symbol of the wish to change the status quo in a given concrete structure.

B. Szklarski states that *homo politicus* gained his alter ego as *homo symbolicus*.²² With this thesis he manifested that a significant value for man are not only acquired material goods but also a quest for his own identity and place in politics, which he expresses by commemorating events of substance for unity. The above example of Roman citizens also shows that people not only want to commemorate but also manifest their feelings on the public arena using available strategies of behaviour, growing attached to symbols and electing whom they are going to serve. It is worth having another look at religious rituals, this time in the context of the political scene. Going to church can tell a lot about political preferences of people, first of all as it shows their attachment to certain specific values, and secondly, because the clergy, who by any means can influence the behaviour of their congregations, may also directly and indirectly make at least some of the church goers

²¹ Flraig (2013): 14.

²² Szklarski (2008): 7.

vote for the candidate enjoying their support and being their acclaimed friend of the Church.

Revolts against the authorities and expressing one's own political opinion through concrete actions only confirm the thesis that rituals lead to specific interpretations of political relations.²³

The relationship of political propaganda with ritual

Ritual is capable of creating a political reality and thus seems to be a convenient tool for enforcing one's will in this area. Just like a symbol constitutes an element of the propaganda process by being included in the contents of a propaganda message. Ritual constitutes an information and persuasive element, namely it informs about a certain desirable behaviour and at the same time persuades that it plays a key role.

Propaganda may be used as an instrument to maintain certain actions and regularities as well as keep social order; therefore, propagandists may employ the rituals available in the set of social behaviours in order to fortify their position. At the beginning of People's Poland the swearing-in of Bolesław Bierut as the President involved employment of the ritual of taking an oath. It was a replication of solemn political ceremonies connected with the initiation of successive terms of office by the Presidents of the Second Polish Republic.

Also the means with which political actors are able to realise propaganda may be ritual: listening to a radio programme or watching TV news we constitute a part of the media ritual, in which the presenter assumes the function of the master

²³ Kertzer (2010): 127.

of ceremonies and the audience forms the structure he leads.²⁴ The contents hidden in the propaganda message is manifested in symbols and references to meaning that are known to a certain group; in the case of primitive tribes it may refer to the entire structure, while in advanced societies to smaller social units, such as e.g. the electorate of a given party or an interest group.

Another aspect binding propaganda and ritual is the formation of political views by both categories. The role of the former is to create a possibility for existence and then realisation of ritual in such a way so that it is accessible for a much greater audience. Television, radio and contemporary social websites broadcast the ritual thus making it accessible for a broader audience.²⁵ A considerable role in preparing the audience to receive information is played by the channels through which it gets to so numerous recipients: it may be a leading comment, information on the news ticker, or facial expressions and tone of voice of the anchor.

Also politicians may present their opinions on a given event or behaviour before it actually takes place. A very rare practice among politicians is to refuse to shake hands with the opponent, though if such situation does happen it may suggest that the interlocutor is not sufficiently important or that there is hostility between the politicians.²⁶

The role of ritual is to provide a narration and explain the political situation faced by the recipient of propaganda. Saluting soldiers, both in totalitarian regimes and in democratic systems, manifest respect for their superiors, the dignity of their service and its ideals. The case of the military

²⁴ Stachyra (2013): 9.

²⁵ See also: Rothenbuhler (2003).

²⁶ Szymczyk (2018): 145.

is very interesting from the viewpoint of this work – on one hand it may concern the delimitation of the political reality in which the army and its behaviour plays a significant role (which happens mostly in totalitarian regimes), and on the other shows the structure of the organisation and its dynamics, and ritual behaviours as a response to the social requirements of respecting a given hierarchy.

Propagandist setting of the reality through rituals

Maintaining a given social order, with simultaneous resilience allowing for adjustment to fast and unexpected changes, determines adaptability of a political system. Working out a response to the forthcoming changes may be guarantee by the appropriate use of propaganda features in rituals.

The striving at ritualization in political life is manifested in proper celebration of a given event. In the eyes of the recipient, a worthy and interesting political event is the one which makes him believe that he takes part in a memorable historic moment. For instance, in democratic nations such a role is played by elections, which from a purely formal viewpoint are only a set of procedures aimed at achieving a specific purpose. The significance of elections is stressed by both the Constitution and the Electoral Code of the Republic of Poland. Of course, the highly formalised contents of those documents describing the electoral process, is not the only factor determining the prestige of elections. The significance of the ritual of elections is built additionally through its form.

A feast of democracy, as elections are quite universally called, is characterised by several specific features. First of all, the Constitution explicitly provides that democratic power

is subject to the principle of term of office. This cyclical solution seems natural for the correct course of the democratic process as it allows citizens to exercise control over those holding the reins of power. Additionally, it embodied the traits of ritual, the repeatability of the process manifested by a sequence of election dates make people (*homo politicus*) accustomed to the political reality. However, before the time of resolutions on the political scene comes, the election day is preceded by an electoral campaign which prepares the society for the forthcoming event. The beginning of the campaigning game takes place upon the announcement of the election date. Depending on the type of elections, those who hold top offices in the state proclaim the beginning of the period in which candidates may vie for the vote of their electorate. This period most forcefully makes the citizens aware of the power of the democratic ritual of elections. During the heat of the campaign politicians perform a number of acts that are characteristic for this moment. The campaign ceremonial includes electoral rallies, at which postulates of individual candidates are presented. A special book of that time is the electoral programme. This seemingly simple document plays a key role in communicating with the electorate, and also serves as a point of reference for political opponents. The efforts of the candidates cumulate on the day of the elections, which ends the campaign. The end of electoral excitement seemingly heralds peace for electoral committees, but the cycle will go on repeating itself.

At this moment it is worth having a look at the role of both issues discussed in this article. In the definition of propaganda presented above ritual occupies a special place as it represents the practical use of the system of propaganda and political communication. Therefore, before it becomes a carrier

of social and political propaganda information, it has to meet certain standards ensuring effectiveness of the message. The attainment of the goal embodied by elections, which are still perceived as a propaganda ritual, is closely correlated with the functions performed by both propaganda and ritual. The matrix for considering the convergence of the functions of propaganda with the functions of political ritual will be a direct reference to the concept proposed by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska,²⁷ in which she enumerates the following functions of propaganda:

- Integration function;
- Adaptation function;
- Information and interpretation function;
- Disinformation function;
- Denunciation function.

Ritual fulfils the first three of the above mentioned functions: ensures the homeostasis of the system integrating public opinion through the use of the political ceremonial to consolidate the existing order.²⁸ Controlling fear and ensuring stability is characterised by repeatability of the rules that are applied. For example, the ritual cyclicity of elections determines the rules of the political game. Additionally, rituality enables adjustment to new socio-political criteria; legitimisation and de-legitimisation of authorities takes place amidst confirmatory ritual or protests negating the *status quo*.²⁹ More-

²⁷ Dobek-Ostrowska (2007): 207–208.

²⁸ In practice, social integration does not have to be the main goal of political ritual; certain social groups may use ritual to increase their power over the rest.

²⁹ Rycan (2009): 73–76.

over, ritual also performs the communication function which fortifies social bonds. It not only informs, but also provides data which make it possible to interpret the surrounding reality in line with the applicable social standards. Potentially, it may also provide information concerning the future, prognostic assumptions for the goals of the group for the forthcoming years.³⁰

The other two functions, that is disinformation and denunciation, are elements of so-called black,³¹ which was used on a broad scale mainly during World War II and the subsequent cold-war period. In the present international situation and also the internal situation of a state it is hard to imagine any authority³² to employ ritual defamation of opponents. Of course, in extreme situation Orwellian séances of hatred may take place to show one's superiority over the arguments of opponents. A common characteristic of propaganda and ritual is that in the case of both a moment of apparent consciousness occurs, as a result of which the thoughts of the propagandist become shared by the masses.

The shaping of political reality with ritual is generally present in political life in Poland, although it should be noted that democratic rituals are universal for each state with the same system of government. Apart from democratic elections, manifestations of propaganda activities may be seen *inter alia* in:

- The legislative process
- Street manifestations
- State celebrations

³⁰ Watson-Jones, Legare (2016): 44–45.

³¹ Dobek-Ostrowska, Fras, Ociepka (1999): 34.

³² An example may be North Korea.

Summing up, as a matter of fact ritual in the world of politics cannot exist without having features of propaganda. What is more, it becomes a significant element of the propaganda system affecting every person who actively exercises their civil rights. The common features of propaganda and ritual include rational and extra-rational elements of both categories. A common characteristic of propaganda and ritual is the occurrence of apparent consciousness, as a result of which the assumptions of the propagandist become shared by the masses. A paradox in propaganda activities consists in that it is addressed to a group, whereas its effects are directed at individuals. On the other hand, individuals readily play their roles in rituals, even though they are aware that their participation will not directly contribute to the attainment of the assumed goal. Crowd awareness usually operates according to the will of the propagandist.

Conclusion

The significance of ritual in building political reality as well as in propaganda in a large measure a result of its substance. Rituals are visible wherever individuals wish to express their attachments to the symbols that are meaningful to them. Those are in turn an inseparable part of politics, which is expressed through symbolism. The presented analysis of symbols forms but a small fragment of research on the anthropological conception of propaganda. It should be considered how could the work of constructing a potential propaganda strategy by decision-makers look like. Without doubt, they would think about what values are important for the audience which they plan to reach and how they would respond to a given message.

Discussing all types of protests we may draw a conclusion that ritual is not only a response to propaganda, but additionally is also one of its channels. The response to the meanings manipulated by all types of decision-makers constitutes additionally a means, a way through every idea is disseminated. Aware of the fact that the success of a message depends also on the media which communicate it we can also predict that the response of individual recipient groups will be of key importance for the effectiveness of propaganda.

Seeing that ritual can keep various societies within schemes with which they are familiar the authorities have a chance to utilise the learned behaviours employed the available constructs as well as establishing new ones. All of us will probably agree that it is easier to keep up a system than to take down the old one and establish a completely new one, though the French revolutionists succeeded to dismantle the political order.

The French Revolution is a special example of how a myth sneaked into the people's minds and has been constantly repeated in books and stories. Can we, therefore, speak about the propaganda of the French Revolution? Decidedly yes, since it has been constantly promoted as an example of a civic protest against the bourgeoisie, against the bloody rule of the first and the second estate. Can we say about the French and their protesting successors that they use the opportunity to express their will with the use of political rituals? Absolutely. After all, do the leaders of all great revolts utilise rituals to incite rebellious moods in societies? Once again the answer is yes.

When studying propaganda one can have in mind only one of two available options: to help political actors in carrying out propaganda or to protect societies from yielding to it.

Regardless of the motives followed by researchers, the knowledge about the existing sphere of symbols and how it is used to exert influence is very important. It helps to answer the question how to cope with a human society especially when it is divided into numerous structures. Each of them follows a given axiological order and – what is particularly evident in this century, a media bubble – some people read Newsweek, others read Rzeczpospolita, they watch Fax or CNN, which only favours development of individual mental tendencies which constitute part of a propaganda strategy employed by certain media. It is them and the politicians that are associated with them tell us how we should behave and think, and indirectly what rituals we should celebrate, for instance what flag to hand out and how to behave vis-à-vis another person in the street.³³

³³ For example, when one sees a militant of the anti-fascist movement or a nationalist, even if they behave the same, depending on political option a response of another man would be different.

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