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EMANCIPATION OF THE NOMENCLATURE AS A CATALYST FOR THE BREAKUP OF THE SOVIET UNION

1. The definition and genesis

'Nomenclature' is a concept that best characterised Soviet political culture, especially from the time of Leonid Brezhnev until the break-up of the USSR, and even now it constitutes an integral part of the political culture of the Russian Federation. This Latin term refers to an appointment (nomination) or a list of names. In the Soviet bureaucratic system this concept was given a new meaning: an index of persons in positions and positions approved by higher authorities; the nomenclature did not cover the whole bureaucracy, but only a part of it dealing with key (decision-making) jobs in the party, state and economic apparatus (a 'higher-level' in the party-state hierarchy)[1]. In practice, however, the nomenclatures of different levels existed and operated depending on which party instance decided on staffing of the posts; they formed a system of so-called nomenclature recruitment of staff (based on party recommendations as a method of their appointment), transforming organs and state services into 'apparatuses'[2].

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1 Хевеши, М. [Chiewieszy, M.] 2004. *Толковый словарь идеологических и политических терминов советского периода*. [*Glossary of ideological and political terms of the Soviet era*.] Moskwa. Michaił Woslenskij gave a similar definition of nomenclature but he did not narrow it to the most prominent persons and positions in the state; Восленский, М. [Woslenskij, M.] 2005. *Номенклатура*. [*Nomenclature.*] Moskwa, pp. 82–83.

2 See Chmaj, M. Sokół, W. ed. 2002. *Mała encyklopedia wiedzy politycznej*. [*A small encyclopaedia of political knowledge*.] Toruń; *Wielka encyklopedia powszechna PWN*. [*Great Universal Encyclopedia*.] 2003. Warszawa: PWN, vol. 19.

In the nomenclature structures, apart from the 'apparatuses' resulting from nominations and initiating decision-making processes, Olga Krysztanowskaja distinguished 'committees' – coming from elections, dealing with public policy and seemingly legitimised[3]. Stanisław Ehrlich – concentrating primarily on the Polish characteristics of this phenomenon – briefly defined nomenclature as a monopolistic centre and a decision-making network of the Communist Party, including it in so-called 'patronage' systems in which group ties are based on patron-client arrangements[4]. In turn, Włodzimierz Marciniak briefly defined the (party) nomenclature as a historical form of organisation of political rule[5]. In general, the nomenclature is one of the types of social relations. In the literature this term also defines – due to the lack of a better name – the whole Soviet ruling class.

The genesis of the nomenclature dates back to the 1920s – that is to the beginning of Joseph Stalin's expansion of the administrative staff, whose numbers increased more than fivefold in 1928–1939[6]. Mikhail Woslenskij noted that the leader of the Bolshevik revolution, Vladimir Lenin, invented a professional revolutionary organisation and the head of the party apparatus, Joseph Stalin, invented the nomenclature[7]. Similarly, Stanisław Ehrlich said that the date of the consolidation of the nomenclature was the period of abandoning the New Economic Policy (1928) and the start of collectivisation[8]. Mikhail Woslenskij conducted an interesting analysis of the size of the Soviet nomenclature in 1959–1988, concentrating on the years 1959 and 1970 (censuses). The size of this social group did not change significantly at

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3 Крыштановская, О. [Krysztanowskaja, O.] 2004. *Анатомия российской элиты*. [*Anatomy of the Russian elite*.] Moskwa, p. 104.

4 Ehrlich, S. 1995. *Wiążące wzory zachowania. Rzecz o wielości systemów norm*. [*Binding patterns of behavior. The thing about the multiplicity of systems of standards*.] Warszawa, p. 270, 275. Ehrlich's definition is the starting point for his structural analysis and constructivist model of the 'temple of power'. The author presented its hierarchy: (the roof) First Secretary, Political Bureau, Central Committee; (columns) divisions – of security, economy, party apparatus (the most important), civil party apparatus, the army; (the landing) the mass of basic members of the party organisation, *ibidem*, pp. 280–283.

5 Marciniak, W. 2004. *Rozgrabione imperium. Upadek Związku Sowieckiego i powstanie Federacji Rosyjskiej*. [*The plundered empire. The fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of the Russian Federation*.] Kraków, p. 108.

6 Хевеши, М. [Chiewieszy, M.] 2004. *Толковый словарь идеологических и политических терминов…* [*Glossary of ideological and political terms…*].

7 Восленский, М. [Woslenskij, M.] 2005. *Номенклатура*. [*Nomenclature.*], p. 82.

8 Ehrlich, S. 1995. *Wiążące wzory zachowania*. [*Binding patterns of behavior.*], pp. 271–272.

that time. According to the author's calculations, the higher nomenclature consisted of approximately more than 100 thousand, and the lower one of more than 150 thousand people; in addition, over 300 thousand people were industry, construction, transportation, communications and agriculture managers; over 150 thousand – managers of scientific and educational institutions; thus, the total nomenclature amounted to 750,000 people, but according to Mikhail Woslenskij, we should also include the family (statistically four people) in this balance; thus the new 'courtly class' in the USSR was made up of 3 million people – 1.5% of the country's population[9]. Olga Krysztanowskaja defined the numerical status of the CPSU Central Committee nomenclature as 400 thousand people: the higher nomenclature, i.e. the nomenclature of the Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee ranged from 800 to1800 people, the nomenclature of the Central Secretariat included a list of 14–18 thousand positions, the accounting and control nomenclature amounted to 250 thousand people, the remaining part was the nomenclature of lower level party (regional, national, urban) committees[10].

Already in the 1930s the nomenclature class began to live its secret life which was different from the existence of ordinary citizens. The nomenclature enjoyed a privileged position in the system of distribution of goods and services (separate socio-livelihood infrastructure) under conditions of their general shortage. Gavril Popow called the management mechanism of socialist processes, based mainly on administration methods, the Administrative System[11]. A feature which distinguished the nomenclature from the usual bureaucracy was its secrecy (a list of positions, persons and privileges), and especially since the Brezhnev era, the lack of control over it. The composition of the nomenclature basically reflected the real relations of power in the country, so power ministries were significantly (over) represented in its ranks. Olga Krysztanowskaja described the approval procedure for a nomenclature

[9] Восленский, М. [Woslenskij, M.] 2005. *Номенклатура*. [*Nomenclature.*], pp. 151–156.

[10] Крыштановская, О. [Krysztanowskaja, O.] 2004. *Анатомия…* [*Anatomy…*], p. 17.

[11] G. Popow, 1989. *Z punktu widzenia ekonomisty. O powieści Aleksandra Beka „Nominacja"*. [*From an economist's point of view. About Aleksander Bek's novel 'Nomination'.*] In: *Fenomen Stalina*. [*Stalin's phenomenon*.] Translated by M. Kotowska. Warszawa, pp. 86–87. Popow explained the livelihood privilege of the nomenclature; in his view, in order to increase the efficiency and preserve the power of the members of the managing apparatus, the Administrative System tried to relieve them of all material concerns. The system guaranteed them the maximum of goods – an apartment, a holiday villa, special buffets, but not to turn them into 'aristocracy', but because the System had no other choice: the better the needs of the managing apparatus and its families are met, the greater their attachment to the System, *ibidem*, p. 91.

job; the nomenclature approval process consisted of three stages: support (recommendation), approval and appointment (nomination)[12]. Power based on the nomenclature had at its disposal a variety of resources, of which the most important were 'personnel reserve' and 'administrative resource' (*adminriesurs*) – the entirety of the means and methods for the implementation of tasks allowing it to control all political processes in the country and constituting a fundamental attribute of totalitarian society[13]. According to Krysztanowskaja, describing the method of recruiting the elite in the Soviet period, the recruitment (incorporation) to the ranks of power was held by both the system of elite education, and social activities, which in the case of success led young people to the lower levels of the nomenclature hierarchy – where their career began[14].

2. The premises of the evolution and emancipation of the nomenclature

The departure from Lenin's idea of a permanent (world-wide) revolution in favour of Stalin's concept of a 'revolution in one country' meant abandoning the vision of communist, classless and stateless society. Changes in the strategy of the global realisation of communism boiling down to the need to develop an economic – raw material and industrial – base (the so-called primary socialist accumulation), which was to be the starting point for future communist expansion, heralded the construction of a superstate with its institutions, including a coercive apparatus, that is a totalitarian and exceptionally oppressive state – on a scale so unprecedented in the history of mankind. The management of this state was entrusted to a class of administrators (apparatchiks and bureaucrats), which was created on the basis of the Bolshevik monoparty and which in time became known as the nomenclature.

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[12] At the beginning a relevant organ (e.g. the Council of Ministers) *applied* to the CPSU Central Committee to consider three or four candidates, The CC department in charge of the field *supported* one of the candidates, next the Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee (if it was a nomenclature of the Political Bureau) *approved* the candidate and finally a proper body *appointed* (in the case of the Council of Ministers) or *elected* (in the case of the Supreme Council) the recommended person and published the decision; Крыштановская, О. [Krysztanowskaja, O.] 2004. *Анатомия…* [*Anatomy…*], p. 106.

[13] See Крыштановская, О. 2004. [Krysztanowskaja, O.] *Анатомия…* [*Anatomy…*], p. 107.

[14] *Ibidem*, p. 109.

After Stalin's death – on the wave of thaw, the departure from extreme totalitarianism and repressiveness, this group gradually started to become independent from the supreme central power, the staffing of which was the result of the consensus of the upper nomenclature levels organised in informal industry and regional clans. This process lasted until the disintegration of the USSR. The process of emancipation of the Soviet nomenclature implied a number of other subprocesses and phenomena, taking on special significance in the context of the impossibility of fulfilling the assumptions of communism due to the more and more difficult, hidden, utopian nature of this ideology.

The Communist renegade-dissidents undertook a task of the explanation of the changes in the Soviet model of power. Milovan Dżilas, coming from Yugoslavia, created a 'new class' theory developed later by Mikhail Woslenskij[15]. It was an interpretation of the totalitarian system, centred on the privileges of the nomenclature and not referring the process of its consolidation to de-totalitisation (a process that took place in the Soviet state after Stalin's death). It must be noted, however, that the Soviet system, by its very existence, played an 'educative' or 'disciplining' role in relation to Western capitalism, since paradoxically, it indirectly forced democratic regimes to modify their social policy in order to prevent excessive communist influence among workers and intelligentsia. In the 1960s, under the conditions of the Soviet Union and the United States abandoning the policy of 'confrontation' in favour of the policy of 'coexistence', visions of society of the future – theories of convergence (of systems becoming similar) became fashionable in the West as alternatives to the Marxist theory of social development. According to their

[15] See Dżilas, M. 1958. *Nowa klasa. Analiza systemu komunistycznego.* [*The new class. An analysis of the communist system*.] Translated by A. Lisowski. New York; Восленский, М. [Woslenskij, M.] 2005. *Номенклатура*. [*Nomenclature.*] The origins of the concept of 'new class' can be seen already in Trotsky, who concocted fashionable at the time *ex-post* analogies between the Bolshevik Revolution and the French Revolution (The article of 1935 'The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism'); Trotsky saw the emancipation of the bureaucracy, but he did not categorise it as a separate class, but saw in it a caste that expropriated the proletariat politically and introduced brutal despotism; later, he accused Stalin of acting in the interests of the bourgeoisie; Kołakowski, L. 2001. *Główne nurty marksizmu*, cz. III: *Rozkład*. [*Mainstreams of Marxism, part. III: Disintegration.*] Poznań p. 229, 233. In the opinion of the 'Trotskyist left', the Soviet Union's reapproachment in the mid-1930s to democratic Western states (including the USSR;s accession to the League of Nations) also testified to the factthat the Soviet elite began to imply bourgeois features; Figes, O. 2007: *Szepty. Życie w stalinowskiej Rosji*. [*The whisperers. Private life in Stalin's Russia*.] Translated by W. Jeżewski. Warszawa, p. 196.

assumptions, social development (evolution), determined by scientific and technological progress, will in the future lead to the emergence of a new social system that will be neither capitalist nor socialist, but will be a wholly new system, but preserving some features of each. As a result of the convergent development of industrial and post-industrial societies, the ideological struggle will cease; socialism or communism will become superfluous at the moment of fulfilling their function – to modernise underdeveloped societies, they will be democratised and liberalised[16]. The theory of convergence can also be found in the theory of consumer society by one of the authors of the US strategy against USSR, Walt Rostov. Still, it is difficult to imagine the systemic convergence of capitalism and socialism (or communism) in any other way than external, superficial appropriation – i.e., technological rather than structural one – that is, pertaining to deeper aspects of socio-political life.

The technocratic concept of a 'managerial revolution' created by American ex-Trotskyite James Burnham in the early 1940s is less optimistic and less futurology bent, but also belongs to convergence theories. On the basis of the observation and analysis of communism and fascism, he argued that a great revolution had taken place or would take place in all states, as a result of which power would be taken by a new class of managers. It would seize the means of production, but not by changing ownership, and deciding on their use (separation of ownership and disposal). Managers will gain control not only over manufacturing forces but also over the management of the state itself. They are professionals, bureaucrats, policy managers, and therefore the privileged class because of the place in the decision-making process. According to James Burnham, the first revolution of managers was the takeover of power by the Bolsheviks in Russia. The continuation of managerial expansion was the triumph of fascism in Italy and Germany, as well as the New Deal policy in the United States (1930s). In the 1970s Polish outstanding philosopher Leszek Kołakowski argued with the concept of James Burnham, stating that this theory did not fit the Soviet realities. Kołakowski argued that post-revolutionary Russia was governed by the political bureaucracy, not the managers of industry. The latter, however, were an important part of society and their various groups might have, through their influence, co-shaped some of the decisions of the supreme authorities, particularly with regard to their own sphere of activity, but fundamental decisions, including industrial investment, export and import decisions, were made by political oligarchy

[16] Olszewski, H., Zmierczak, M. 1994. *Historia doktryn politycznych i prawnych*. [*History of political and legal doctrines*.] Poznań, pp. 359–360.

as political decisions. According to the Polish philosopher, Burnham's supposition that the Bolshevik revolution was another case of the process of transfer of power to managers as a result of advances in technology and work organisation is not convincing[17]. However, in my opinion, the technocratic genealogy of a large part of the Soviet political oligarchy, such as Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin (USSR Prime Minister in 1964–1980) cannot be questioned. In turn, Burnham's definition of the Bolsheviks' victory in Russia as a triumph of a managers' revolution can be contradicted by significant shortages of professional technical and economic staff who organise industrial production, which caused great economic problems in the first decades of the USSR existence. But Burnham thought managers were not attached to ideology, but to the management process itself. They gain power by using various ideologies formulated by intellectuals unconscious of the true essence of the whole process, and exploit workers and young people – deceptively convinced that they are fighting for their goals.

Convergence theories were the subject of harsh criticism in the socialist world because they defied the Marxist paradigm of socio-historical development, anticipating the inevitable transition from communism to socialism (retrogradation) and the rapid twilight of the ideological era. The Marxist criticism most often emphasised the propaganda and sabotage function of convergence concepts[18]. In the Brezhnev era, theories of convergence were considered the greatest ideological heresy because they sabotaged the process of forming 'Soviet man'[19]. They also questioned the dogma of the ultimate inevitable victory of the socialist regime[20].

According to the above considerations it can be assumed that during the Brezhnev era in the USSR a process of irreversible emancipation of the nomenclature was initiated. In the social dimension, it meant its

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17 Kołakowski, L. 2001. *Główne nurty marksizmu*, cz. III: *Rozkład*. [*Mainstreams of Marxism,* part. III: *Disintegration.*] Poznań, pp. 198–199.

18 Witold Morawski described the currents of criticism (including capitalist criticism) of the convergence theory; Morawski, W. 1975. *Nowe społeczeństwo przemysłowe. Analiza i krytyka koncepcji* [*New industrial society. Analysis and criticism of the concept.*] Warszawa. Indirect criticism can be found in the collection of articles by Soviet sociologists: Wesołowski, W., Stelmach, W. eds. 1977. *Klasy i warstwy w społeczeństwie radzieckim. Studia teoretyczne – badania empiryczne.* [*Classes in Soviet society. Theoretical and empirical studies*.] Warszawa.

19 Вишневский, А. [Wiszniewskij, A.] 1998. *Серп и рубль. Консервативная модернизация в СССР*. [*Sickle and ruble. Conservative modernization in the USSR.*] Moskwa, p. 183.

20 Хевеши, М. [Chiewieszy, M.] 2004. *Толковый словарь идеологических и политических терминов…* [*Glossary of ideological and political terms…*].

aristocratisation, in the economic dimension – the unofficial decentralization of management of the economy, and in the political dimension – *de facto* the abandonment of the 'ideological catechism'. At the interface of these three processes, two phenomena took place: the technocratisation of the nomenclature (that is, the enhancement of the role of managerial staff in economic and political planning), which was, in a sense, the result of the enforced communist urban-industrial modernisation; and the formation of informal industrial, regional and departmental interest groups (pressure groups)[21]. Three basic interest groups emerged: the military-industrial complex, the fuel and energy complex and the agrarian-industrial complex. The American Sovietologist, Martin Malia, explained the technocratisation of the party apparatus by the necessity of transferring the industry managing staff – technical intelligence – to full-time party and political jobs as a result of the massive Stalinist purges of the 1930s; Kosygin's career is a classic example of this[22]. Brezhnev's biography was certainly part of so-called hunger for personnel[23]. Already in the Brezhnev period more than 70% of the higher nomenclature had technical education[24]. On the other hand, aristocratisation means here the inheritance of the socio-economic status. According to Jarosław Bratkiewicz, during the period of power of Nikita Khrushchev the Soviet system entered the aristocratisation phase[25]. However, the genesis of status aristocratisation of (privileged) social groups dates back to the 1930s, the external manifestation of which was, among others, the restoration in the army and other services of uniforms differentiated by rank. Moreover, workers aristocracy appeared – a class of 'white collars' characteristic of capitalist countries – managerial staff and skilled workers. An institution of work leaders (udarniks) was Bolsheviks' own invention; they were new heroes who were to be a model for a new society and their status – including

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21 On the typology of interest groups in the USSR during the pre-perestroika period see Перегудов, С., Лапина, Н., Семененко, И. [Pieriegudow, S., Łapina, N., Siemienienko, I.] 1999. *Группы интересов и российское государство*. [*Interest groups and the Russian state*.] Moskwa, pp. 44–53 and 60–69.

22 Malia, M. 1998. *Sowiecka tragedia. Historia komunistycznego imperium rosyjskiego 1917–1991*. [*The Soviet tragedy: A history of socialism in Russia, 1917–1991*.] Translated by M. Hułas, E. Wyzner. Warszawa, p. 389.

23 Zołotowskij, J. ed. 2004. *Rosja. XX wiek. Od utopii komunistycznej do rzeczywistości globalistycznej.* [*Russia. The twentieth century. From communist utopia to globalist reality*.] Translated by P. Burek. Kraków, p. 126.

24 Marciniak, W. 2004. *Rozgrabione imperium*. [*The plundered empire.*], p. 69.

25 Bratkiewicz, J. 1991. *Wielkoruski szowinizm w świetle teorii kontynuacji*. [*Great Russia chauvinism in the light of the theory of continuation.*] Warszawa, p. 128.

the material status – began to differ significantly from the status of ordinary workers. These corrections and revisions of the Marxist principle of social equality became a symbol of new Bolshevik aesthetics, unofficially rejecting material and status revolutionary egalitarianism and ennobling selected classes and social groups[26]. Of course, the 'new aristocracy' could come into being only in the context of the semi-officially forming nomenclature system. Włodzimierz Marciniak noticed the nomenclature's desire to 'capture' prestigious professions. According to this author, the transition from the nomenclature to higher 'status' social groups was visible especially in the second and third generations of the nomenclature; from the mid-fifties of the twentieth century there was a continuous process of transition of the nomenclature progeny ('boyar children') to the intellectual spheres of professional activity, such as science and art, and work related to trips to the West, for instance foreign trade[27].

The nomenclature aristocratisation process was connected with the informal decentralisation of management of the economy, which was the response of the authorities to the increasingly clear specialisation and still growing stratification of the Soviet population within the production process. It was, however, of an extensive nature – due to the horizontal extension of the nomenclature base, i.e. the multiplication of the ministries – and thus the vertical channels of the socio-professional promotion. Vladimir Łapkin and Vladimir Pantin emphasized that in the early 1960s there were about twenty trade and trade-republic ministries in the USSR, while in the early 1980s, the number of central ministries approached a hundred, but there were also nearly eight hundred republic ministries[28]. The depreciation of the ideological aspect in the nomenclature's identity was dictated by its awareness of belonging to the elite. The strengthening the social status of this class

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26 Australian author Sheila Fitzpatrick gave an example of the instructions that Grigoryi Ordzhonikidze, the then heavy industry commissioner, gave to directors and engineers of industrial plants: 'The white collar and the clean shirt are necessary work tools for the fulfilment of production plans and the quality of products'; Fitzpatrick, S. 2012. *Życie codzienne pod rządami Stalina. Rosja radziecka w latach trzydziestych XX wieku*. [*Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary life in extraordinary times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*.] Translated by J. Gilewicz. Kraków, p. 119.

27 Marciniak, W. 2004. *Rozgrabione imperium*. [*The plundered empire.*], p. 49.

28 Лапкин, В., Пантин, В. [Łapkin, W., Pantin, W.] 1991. *Что остановилось в эпоху застоя?* [*What stopped in the stagnation epoch?*] In: сост. Т. Ноткина [Notkina, T.] ed. *Погружение в трясину: Анатомия застоя*. [*At the bog: anatomy of stagnation*.] Moskwa, p. 163.

meant in fact its ideological illegitimisation[29]. The Kremlin's politics seemed to refer to the ideology only for external use – in the interest of the Soviet Union's authority in the world communist movement – when in fact it actually began to be the effect of a game (cooperation, competition and combat) of various forces within the nomenclature system. The ideology, in spite of its increasingly facade role, was, however, an important factor in internal stabilization – a cell integrating the multinational empire.

In the Soviet system, objectively diversifying at the elite levels and undergoing informal pluralisation in the name of achieving greater efficiency and rationality, the vertical rank of its management was falling. The nomenclature's attempts to increase system efficiency through making it structurally more flexible was not an end in itself. The nomenclature intended to create a system framework to protect its position and privileges, and a less rigid system would, by nature, be more resilient to shocks. The unpredictable 'voluntarism' and 'subjectivism' of Khrushchev's time as a strategy of power were replaced by pragmatic 'stabilisation' – as a result of, among others, the growth of so-called socialist rule of law (increasing the role of law in social life at the expense of reducing the spontaneous repressiveness of the system)[30]. Włodzimierz Marciniak pointed to the pursuit of the 'ruling class' not only to create a mechanism for the inheritance of social positions but also to develop new rules for its legitimacy as the reason for the rise of the role of law as a determinant of relations and social behaviour. According to this author, the whole period of Brezhnev's rule was characterised by intensive search – in individual and family terms – for such new legitimacy[31]. Then the political and managerial circles could proceed to unofficially and behind-the-scenes satisfy the most elementary human needs, namely, possession of material goods[32]. The assimilation of this canonical ideological antithesis of the Soviet system by the nomenclature was identical with the preference of realist socialism today rather than ideal communism in the

[29] Marciniak, W. 2004. *Rozgrabione imperium*. [*The plundered empire.*], p. 49.

[30] See Walicki, A. 1996. *Marksizm i skok do królestwa wolności. Dzieje komunistycznej utopii*. [*Marxism and the leap into the realm of freedom. The history of the communist utopia*.] Warszawa, p. 497.

[31] Marciniak, W. 2004. *Rozgrabione imperium*. [*The plundered empire.*], p. 49.

[32] See Pipes, R. *Natura ludzka i upadek komunizmu*. [*Human nature and the fall of communism*.] In: Nowak, A. ed. *Rosja, komunizm i świat. Wybór esejów*. [*Russia, communism and the world. Selected essays*.] Translated by A. Nowak, Sz. Czarnik, pp. 183–195; Pipes, R. 2000. *Własność a wolność*. [*Property and freedom*.] Translated by L. Niedzielski. Warszawa, pp. 320–324.

future[33]. This led to close relations or even symbiosis of the nomenclature class and the so-called second economy (formally illegal entrepreneurship and trade, governed by various mafias and related to power structures) – that is the black market, which was tolerated as a non-state, bottom-up (civic) mechanism for correcting supply and distribution failures in the command and control economy. In the ranks of the Soviet elites there was a growing tendency for the commercialisation of the system. The nomenclature could no longer be satisfied only with the right to use luxury consumer goods to which it was entitled due to the privileged societal status, and launched the first phase of covert self-enfranchisement – the corporate privatisation of the pillars of the system, that is the bureaucracy and the party (the state apparatus). It aimed – as Włodzimierz Marciniak put it – 'to convert political privileges into capital and property'[34]. However, this property cannot be understood according to the logic of a democratic state of law (where a legally regulated market of property operates), but according to the nomenclature logic of the 'bureaucratic (administrative) market', in which greater ownership – although non-legal (illegal) – was politically conditioned (due to the held power), often as a result of a specific barter between various legal and illegal groups of influence in the Soviet nomenclature system. These groups had access to a certain type of resources – administrative, political or material ones, which they traded on a barter basis.

Martin Malia's observations are an accurate diagnosis of the relations between the party and the nomenclature. He noted that at the time of Stalin's death, the party had 6.9 million members and became the party of the nomenclature increasingly dominated by the managerial elite of the state; this new character of the party, which brings to mind the structure of a corporation, was initially overshadowed by its total subordination to Stalin and the custody of the secret police; when Khrushchev was overthrown the party had 11.75 million members and had already become a fully nomenclature party, a corporate organisation of the managerial elite[35]. The American researcher named the CPSU 'the almighty corporation of the nomenclature establishment' and explained the conservative tendencies in its ranks noting that the establishment, and in particular the milieu of professional apparatus activists, was reluctant to participate in constant

[33] Ахиезер, А., Клямкин, И., Яковенко, И. [Achijezier, A., Klamkin, I., Jakowienko, I.] 2005. *История России: Конец или новое начало?* [*History of Russia: the end or the new beginning?*] Moskwa, p. 558.

[34] Marciniak, W. 2004. *Rozgrabione imperium*. [*The plundered empire.*], pp. 48–49.

[35] Malia, M. 1998. *Sowiecka tragedia*. [*The Soviet tragedy.*], pp. 384–385.

(Khrushchev's) campaigns and reorganisations. Its purpose was rather the stabilisation and peaceful enjoyment of power and associated privileges[36]. It should be explicitly stated that the terms 'party' and 'nomenclature' are neither identical nor interchangeable; the latter has a seemingly, statistically, narrower range. However, as has already been pointed out, the nomenclature in practice embodied the party-controlled decision-making network of the state, and therefore the non-party (but recommended) people involved in the decision-making process.

The nomenclature transformation of the Soviet elite was another (the second) (after the Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation), though unofficial (reprehensible from the perspective of the official ideology) stage of the process of the de-totalitisation of the USSR. The Soviet system was no longer a Stalinist omnipotent regime of universal mobilisation, it had been transformed into a stabilised bureaucratic corporatism. Włodzimierz Marciniak – probably following Russian researchers – has adopted the term 'bureaucratic corporatism', defining it as 'advanced procedures for reconciliation of group interests with the central political authority'[37]. Andrzej Walicki was very apt to point out that Khrushchev's anti-Stalinism aimed at reducing the repressiveness of the state while accelerating its 'march to communism'; in turn, Brezhnev's epoch was characterised not only by a partial retreat from the 'construction of communism', but also by a qualitatively new phenomenon – the pursuit of marketisation, and therefore *de facto* of de-communisation, more and more evident among the executives. According to Walicki, this trend had to be masked in order to save the ideological legitimacy of the system, but nevertheless paved the way for undermining and overthrowing the system that took place earlier than it could have been expected[38].

On the basis of the above observation it can be concluded that in Brezhnev's era the Soviet system was in a post-utopia phase and with difficulty and under the ideological mask generated more and more not only dialectical but also mundane contradictions. Thus, the systemic (negative) nonconformism of the nomenclature changed into the non-communist (proper for Brezhnev's 'real socialism') universal conformism[39]. The ideological content of the system was

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36 *Ibidem*, p. 386.

37 Marciniak, W. 2004. *Rozgrabione imperium*. [*The plundered empire.*], pp. 79–80.

38 Walicki, A. 1996. *Marksizm i skok* [*Marxism and the leap*] …, p. 501.

39 Andrzej Walicki used the concept of 'systemic nonconformism' dividing it into 'negative' (material aspirations of the nomenclature members and their connections with the 'second economy') and 'positive' (attempts and proposals for systemic reforms

contested by the nomenclature. It was in a sense a nonconformist attitude, which later became conformist, because in fact virtually all Soviet society escaped ideological criteria.

3. The emancipation of the nomenclature in the context of modernisation processes

The emancipation of the Soviet nomenclature took place on the wave of objective global modernisation processes – occurring in the ideological, economic, technological and social spheres. Despite being one of the two superpowers and geopolitical centres, in the 1970s the USSR was on the periphery of the world system as far as its economy and social development were concerned. The doctrinal ideologisation of Soviet economics, the lack of market mechanisms – bottom-up and freely creating the economic flexibility of the system, the failure to follow technological trends (IT revolution) became the cause of the fact that the Soviet Union lagged behind the capitalist world. In fact, the entire history of the USSR is the story of the 'catching-up modernisation' manifested in cyclical campaigns of reforming of the system. When the Bolshevik party took over power in the Russian Empire it was an agricultural country – with a 70% share of the rural population, with a traditional mentality. Strenuous modernisation (industrialisation and urbanisation), initiated by Stalin and implemented by means of administrative coercion methods, was often superficial and could not be organic or deeply penetrate the social fabric. The modernisation revolution in the USSR which was a key element of the gigantic project of social engineering – that is of the formation of 'Soviet man' was taking place without a revolution in the mentality (i.e. in thinking)[40]. The full internalisation of modernisation processes by Soviet society could not end within a few five-year periods (as expected by the leadership of the state), and was, in fact, going on for decades – basically until the end of the USSR. Nevertheless, at the end of the 1980s, the Soviet Union achieved the status of an industrial empire with the 70% urbanisation level, but it was at a time when the most developed capitalist states had been in the post-industrial age for at least a dozen of years.

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proposed by parts of the lower, mostly intellectual nomenclature) to describe the practices of the Soviet nomenclature class that contradicted the official ideology; A. Walicki, *Marksizm i skok* [*Marxism and the leap*] …, pp. 497–498.

40 See Вишневский, А. [Wiszniewskij, A.] 1998. *Серп и рубль.* [*Sickle and ruble.*]

Soviet industrial centres became incubators of technocratic nomenclature elites, which were often transferred to the parallel political operation in party apparatus, which was the result of many-year elimination of the consequences of the former Stalinist purges of personnel. After some time nomenclature pragmatic technocrats were ready in to abandon the Marxist ideology which constrained the country's economy doctrinally. Due to the significant limitation of the repressive functions of the system introduced in the mid-1980s in the period of Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika*, the Soviet inhabitants of cities – next to the liberal part of the technocratic nomenclature and dissident opposition – became the major protesters against the communist ideology, wanting to obtain democratic subjectivity, which was denied to them within the political practice of the system[41]. On the other hand, for a large part of the nomenclature democratisation created the possibility of enfranchisement on state or party property. The disintegration of the Leninist rule of so-called democratic centralism (the absolute subordination all of lower state structures to central authorities) was conductive to this process. This disintegration led to a separation of the ideological division of the Communist Party from its administrative and economic division, in which in the group of the reformist pragmatic nomenclature (Boris Yeltsin's team) became a major force demanding the full democratisation of the system. The entourage of Yeltsin, who became the leader of Russian democrats, soon spoke out as a Russian Republican counter-elite against the Soviet centre represented by Gorbachev, encouraging the management and nomenclature of other union republics to adopt a similar attitude.

An important issue determining the attitude and strategy of the nomenclature was the identity. The Soviet identity in general was a synthesis of two loyalties – both to the centre and to the parental periphery (a union republic or a region), that is, it reproduced the classic imperial identity formula. Double loyalty could be noticed in the leadership of the union republics, which, recognising the Kremlin's political sovereignty in the USSR, defended with determination the economic interests of their provinces against the centre's dictatorship[42]. Specific dialectics appeared here, on the one hand,

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41 Hardt, M., Negri, A. 2005. *Imperium*. [*Empire*.] Translated by S. Ślusarski, A. Kołbaniuk. Warszawa, p. 299.

42 Ihor Sundiukow and Jurij Szapował illustrate it on the basis of Ukraine; Сюндюков, І. [Siundiukow, I.] 2003. *Імітація. 'Застій' та його українські творці*. [*Imitation. 'Stagnation' and its Ukrainian creators*.] In: Івшина, Л. [Iwszyna, Ł.] ed. *Україна incognita. Дві Русі*. [*Ukraine Incognita. Two Russias*.] Kijów; pp. 390–395; Шаповал, Ю. [Szapował, J.] 2003. *Дві річниці – одне відзначення. Петро Шелест і Володимир*

the identification with the powerful Soviet empire and, on the other hand, the rise of national consciousness – on the level of local particularism and patriotism, mainly among the leaders of the union republics. In the period of *perestroika* and systemic reforms introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev, as well as the increasingly well visible deep economic crisis of the USSR, the emancipation of the nomenclature was also taking place at the nationality level. The republican nomenclature, although identifying itself with the Soviet empire, began to speak out in its critique of central authorities from their national positions, entering on the wave of *glasnost* policy (transparency) into a tactical alliance with the national intelligentsia in their union republics. The Soviet Union as a whole was not ethnically defined (although a project of building the Soviet nation was being implemented there), but ethnicity was institutionalised and codified at the level of its constituent parts – the union republics, the autonomous republics and the lower levels of the administrative-nationality division[43]. This dialectical phenomenon constituted the basis of all regional nationalist particularities and prepared the nomenclature of the union republics for the role of the elite of independent states – formed after the dissolution of the USSR.

In the face of the crisis of the central power, the structural contradictions inherent in the Soviet system emerged as factors deconstructing the imperial space. It is worth mentioning the concept of Vladimir Kaganskij – Russian geographer representing the so-called school of the administrative market – who presented the Soviet space in the form of a model of the administrative-structural mechanism of the disintegration of the empire[44].

Щербицький як типажі номенклатури УРСР. [*Two anniversaries – one celebration. Petro Shelest and Volodymyr Shcherbytsky – as typical figures of USRR nomenclature*.] In: Івшина, Л. [Iwszyna, Ł.] ed. *Україна incognita. Дві Русі*. [*Ukraine Incognita. Two Russias*.] Kijów, pp. 376–389; see also Yekelchyk, S. 2009. *Ukraina. Narodziny nowoczesnego narodu*. [*Ukraine. The birth of a new nation*.] Translated by J. Gilewicz. Kraków, p. 227.

43 Brubaker, R. 1998. *Nacjonalizm inaczej. Struktura narodowa i kwestie narodowe w nowej Europie*. [*Nationalism reframed. Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*.] Translated by J. Kuczyński. Warszawa – Kraków, pp. 36–37.

44 Каганский, В. [Kaganskij, W.] 1995. *Советское пространство: Конструкция и деструкция*. [*Soviet space: construction and destruction*.] In: Чернышев, С. [Czernyszew, S.] ed. *Иное. Хрестоматия нового российского самосознания*. [*Other. Handbook of new Russian consciousness*.] vol. 1, *Россия как предмет*. [*Russia as an object*.] Moskwa, pp. 89–164. Available at: http://old.russ.ru/antolog/inoe/kagan.htm [Accessed: 10 July 2017]. Włodzimierz Marciniak widely refers to Vladimir Kaganski's model; Marciniak, W. 2004. *Rozgrabione imperium*. [*The plundered empire.*], pp. 91–100, 169–182.

The basic value of this theoretical approach is the presentation of the USSR as a conglomerate of regions – i.e. hierarchical-territorial segments (e.g. units of various levels of the administrative division) and functional ones (e.g. party structures, authority bodies, industrial complexes, and pressure groups identified with them). These elements formed the structural whole of the Soviet empire, overlapped by traditional administrative-nationality and ethnic-religious divisions, which in turn catalysed 'self-propelled' centrifugal tendencies and eventually became the main cause of the USSR implosion – in the context of the total structural crisis of the system. The extraterritorial communist centre imitated its own hierarchical structure of political power in the spatial division of the state; to accomplish field tasks it set up a whole range of truly self-contained and narrowly specialised cells whose place and rank depended on their role in the administrative hierarchy; thus, the imperial space was divided according to administrative logic and in violation of natural, historical and cultural divisions; the individual cells contained many random and often hostile elements; this led to the formation of the division of the Soviet imperial space, parallel to administrative regulations and determined by conflicts and contradictions with a traditional background. In the USSR, hierarchical and territorial relations interpenetrated; every level of the party-official hierarchy had its own territorial counterpart and every element of geographical space sought to gain a political status. These hierarchical-territorial and functional segments were regions, which were territorial and administrative structures aspiring to gain a political status. In addition to the regions or in the regions, there could be counter-regions, i.e. regions of a lower administrative level – inhabited by national or religious minorities (e.g. Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria). They became the area of traditional (ethnic and religious) conflicts. In turn, functional regions were subjected to direct control of the centre of the state, and its possible weakening could lead to stronger regionalisation (autonomisation), which further accelerated the disintegration processes. Within the regions in which party structures constituted their functional skeleton, the main functions of the state were carried out, bureaucratic tendering took place, the bureaucratic market started cooperation with the 'black market' (the so-called second economy), the most important interests of various population groups concentrated.

The USSR was a structure composed of subjects-regions almost self-sufficient (politically and economically) in the situation of the weakening of the central authority, and its disintegration took the form of regionalisation, understood as the process of obtaining sovereignty by the regional structures of the Soviet space, in the process of which also functional components of the

state became autonomous. The regionalisation meant the institutionalisation of regional structures outside the state. It used the elements of the Soviet space and gave them the possibility to survive in the situation of the crisis of the centre. The regionalisation was a form of the transformation of the USSR by dividing it into many territorial and functional regions. No republic was a ready-made state, and all new state organisms were formed on their territories as a result of a complex process of linking regions-republics with the functional components of the Soviet empire. The territorial and political emancipation of the regions, visible in their quest to maintain or raise their political status and to introduce the regional reorganisation of the space, was connected with the shrinking of the size of the shared resources. Central authorities did not realise at all the degree of readiness of the Soviet space for disintegration. This process was determined more by the organisation of the structure of the Soviet space than the motives and actions of specific persons. In the course of the region's rivalry with the centre and its subsequent awkward counter-offensive, the regions managed to take over many central economic and political powers that ensured them real sovereignty in the late 1980s. In this way new sovereign states were formed on the territorial-administrative base of the Soviet union republics as a result of many years of consolidation of various local fragments of the Soviet imperial space. Therefore, the thesis that the breakup of the USSR took place as a result of the nomenclature revolution – aimed at central structures, as a result of the nomenclature consensus of Soviet regional elites, seems justified and rational.

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Emancipation of the nomenclature as a catalyst for the breakup of the Soviet Union

Summary

In December 1991 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics broke up. Researchers of this problem have classified factors that led to the break-up of the USSR. There are several groups of such causes: ideological, political, social, economic, nomenclature or national ones. The essence of this article will be the presentation of the emancipation of the Soviet nomenclature at various stages of the history of the USSR till the final stage of this process – the disintegration of the Soviet empire. The emancipation of the nomenclature was one of the manifestations of the multi-faceted modernization of the USSR and its collision with the communist doctrine as an ideology. Various attempts to reform the Soviet Union, marking epochs in its history, confirmed the utopian character of Soviet communism in the ideological dimension. The failed reforms of the communist system contributed to the emergence of various interest groups within the growing Soviet nomenclature. These groups were fiercely competing for power, and in that situation the maintenance of the nomenclature consensus, which bound the Soviet empire, became very difficult. The last attempt to reform communism and the USSR – *perestroika* – weakened the central authority enough to lead to the strengthening of particularism of the nomenclature. As a result of this complex process, a large of the Soviet nomenclature gained independence from the centre, and by entering into alliances or by concessioning national and democratic movements in union republics, it gained democratic legitimacy and joined the disassembly of the Soviet Union.

Emancypacja nomenklatury jako katalizator rozpadu Związku Radzieckiego

Streszczenie

W grudniu 1991 r. rozpadł się Związek Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich. Badacze tej problematyki dokonali klasyfikacji czynników, które zadecydowały o rozpadzie ZSRR. Można zatem wyróżnić kilka grup takich przyczyn: ideologiczne, polityczne, społeczne, ekonomiczne, nomenklaturowe czy narodowościowe. Istotą tego artykułu będzie przedstawienie emancypacji radzieckiej nomenklatury na poszczególnych etapach historii ZSRR i finału tego procesu – dezintegracji imperium radzieckiego. Emancypacja nomenklatury stanowiła jeden z przejawów wieloaspektowej modernizacji ZSRR i jej kolizji z doktryną komunistyczną jako ideologią. Poszczególne próby reformowania Związku Radzieckiego, wyznaczające epoki w jego dziejach, potwierdzały coraz wyraźniej utopijny charakter radzieckiego komunizmu w wymiarze ideologicznym. Nieudane reformy systemu komunistycznego przyczyniały się do powstawania różnych grup interesów wewnątrz coraz liczniejszej nomenklatury radzieckiej. Grupy te zacięcie rywalizowały o władzę i w tej sytuacji utrzymanie nomenklaturowego konsensusu spajającego imperium radzieckie stawało się bardzo trudne. Ostatnia próba reformowania komunizmu i ZSRR – *pieriestrojka* – osłabiła władzę centralną na tyle, że doprowadziła do umocnienia się nomenklaturowych partykularyzmów (branżowych i regionalnych). W wyniku tego złożonego procesu znaczna część nomenklatury radzieckiej uzyskała niezależność od centrum, a wchodząc w sojusze lub koncesjonując ruchy narodowe i demokratyczne w poszczególnych republikach związkowych uzyskiwała demokratyczną legitymację i przystępowała do demontażu Związku Radzieckiego.

Эмансипация номенклатуры как катализатор распада СССР

Резюме

В декабре 1991 года распался Союз Советских Социалистических Республик. Исследователи данной проблематики произвели классификацию факторов, обусловивших распад СССР, на основе которой можно выделить несколько групп таких факторов: идеологические, политические, обществен-

ные, экономические, номенклатурные и национальные. Суть данной статьи заключается в представлении эмансипации советской номенклатуры на различных этапах истории СССР и завершения данного процесса – дезинтеграции советской империи. Эмансипация номенклатуры представляло собой одно из проявлений многоаспектной модернизации СССР и её конфликта с коммунистической доктриной как идеологией. Отдельные попытки реформирования Советского Союза, определяющие этапы его истории, всё более выпукло подтверждали утопический характер советского коммунизма в идеологическом измерении. Неудачные попытки реформирования коммунистической системы приводили к появлению различных групп интересов внутри всё более многочисленной советской номенклатуры. Эти группы вели ожесточённую борьбу за власть, и в сложившейся ситуации – сохранение номенклатурного консенсуса, сплачивающего советскую империю, становилось всё более трудным для реализации. Последняя попытка реформирования коммунизма и СССР – перестройка – ослабила центральную власть настолько, что привела к усилению номенклатурных партикуляризмов (отраслевых и региональных). В результате этого сложного процесса значительная часть советской номенклатуры обретала всё большую независимость от центральной власти, и, вступая в различные союзы или концессируя национальные и демократические движения в отдельных союзных республиках, добивалась демократической легитимности и приступала к демонтажу Советского Союза.