

# **Personalism or instrumentalism? Grassroots authoritarianism and the escape from freedom in socialist and post-socialist cities**

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## **Abstract**

This article aims to examine certain socio-psychological factors that foster the “escape from freedom” in countries after state socialism, with a particular focus on the case of Russia. At the same time, the study concentrates on the characteristics that may impact on the emergence of sustainable democracies. In this context, the concept of solidary personalism is considered to be crucial for providing grassroots democracy within a society, which, in return, may impact the development of democracy at the national level. In contrast, the cases of the cities in Central and Eastern European countries under state socialism are regarded as examples of the emergence of grassroots authoritarianism, resulting in mass support of the policies and practices of violence committed by the totalitarian regimes. This legacy persists in Russian cities after state socialism, but, at the same time, the need to rethink the very essence of democracy goes far beyond the boundaries of the post-socialist world.

**KEYWORDS:** city, moral climate, state socialism, instrumentalism, personalism, grassroots authoritarianism, escape from freedom

## **Introduction**

Many academics and politician describe the 20<sup>th</sup> century as “the age of social catastrophe” (Gellately 2007). Totalitarianism, or the political system in which the state holds total authority over the society and seeks to control all aspects of public and private life wherever possible (Conquest 2000), had its origins in the collapse of the elite structure and normal modes of government of much of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe as a result of the First World War, without which surely neither Communism nor Fascism and Nazism would have existed except in the minds of unknown agitators and eccentrics. The main lesson that should be learned from that is more likely about the very essence of democracy. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many people believed that the time of mass murders

and tortures had passed away, and democracy, which was regarded merely as a set of the distinctive political procedures and institutions, would guarantee respect for human rights and dignity. However, in practice, these procedures and institutions could not prevent the emergence of the totalitarian regimes; moreover, as in the cases of Germany in 1933 or Czechoslovakia in 1948, they were used by Nazis and Communists to seize power. At the same time, the policies of mass genocide would never have been put into practice without mass grassroots support. According to Erich Fromm, these processes are rooted back to the “escape from freedom”, meaning a set of socio-psychological conditions that facilitate the rise of totalitarianism (Fromm 1969). Consequently, to prevent a society from engaging in an escape from freedom, it is necessary to consider democracy not only as a set of political institutions and procedures, but, in a broader sense, as a way of living that fosters respect for human dignity and the Reverence for Life (Schweitzer 2009).

This article aims to discuss some socio-psychological characteristics that are crucial for the emergence of this way of living. Accordingly, the first part provides the discussion of the concept of solidary personalism<sup>1</sup> regarded as crucial for the emergence of strong and sustainable democracy. The following section considers the cases of the cities in Central and Eastern European countries under state socialism as examples of the emergence of grassroots authoritarianism that resulted in mass support of the policies and practices of genocide. The next part focuses on the question of how this legacy persists in the post-socialist cities in Russia and what are the possible ways of overcoming that. The main findings and the questions that remain unresolved are presented in the final section as concluding remarks.

## **Democracy, solidary personalism and the Reverence for Life**

Democracy is usually regarded as a form of government in which all eligible citizens participate equally (either directly or indirectly through elected representatives) in the proposal, development and creation of laws. It encompasses social, religious, cultural, ethnic and racial equality, justice and liberty (Dunn 1994). However, this inevitably raises

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<sup>1</sup> The term “solidary personalism” was first introduced by Bojan Žalec (cf. Žalec 2010). For an outline of its meaning in English, see Žalec 2011a. In Žalec 2011b, p. 105–6, we find the following definition of personalism and its opposites, nihilism and instrumentalism: ‘Nihilism is a condition of an individual, of a group, of a society, of culture in which experiential and intellectual horizons everything is levelled. A nihilistic subject cannot honestly experience one thing or being as more valuable than the other. As nihilism is practically impossible, it usually transforms into some kind of instrumentalism. Instrumentalism is an attitude that does not regard a particular person as a goal, but at best just as a means. On the contrary, for a personalist, every person is always the goal. The main aim of a personalist is the flourishing of every person.’ The aim of adjective “solidary” is to emphasise the relational and participatory nature of a person: ‘Persons are essentially relational beings and must be treated in their concrete situation and historical perspective. By solidarity, I mean not just a kind of economic solidarity but mutual participation of persons on their lives including all their aspects. The central moment of such solidarity is intellectual solidarity (cf. Hollenbach 2003), the participation on the experience of the other (Žalec 2011a: 32)’. However, in contrast, it is crucial that we recognise that there are limits of inter-personal solidarity: ‘Solidarity – participation in the life of the other – can however be only partial. The belief that we can reach total participation is dangerous and destroys approaching of the other as the other ... and provides contexts for instrumentalisation and manipulation’ (Žalec 2011: 106).

the following question: Can democracy be effective and sustainable in case when it is not based upon some ethical foundations?

It seems that the need of cultivating respect for human dignity may be regarded as crucial for promoting equality, justice and liberty regarded as the fundamental principles of democracy, within a society. In this context, social norms that foster solidary personalism may considerably foster the development of democracy, first of all, at the grassroots level. Consequently, a democratic political system may be strong and sustainable only when it is based on the ethical principles that produce solidary personalism, or a condition that presupposes the flourishing every person in a society (Žalec 2011). In Immanuel Kant's sense, solidary personalism encompasses acting as if one's maxims should serve at the same time as the universal law of all rational beings (Blackburn 2008). Therefore, every person, regardless of his or her social, cultural or religious backgrounds, is always regarded as a goal. From the perspective of solidary personalism, equality, while being regarded as a background of the sustainable development of a society, is inevitably interlinked with solidarity considered as the mutual participations of persons on their lives including all their aspects. A personalist's point of view inevitably presupposes that persons are in principle equal regarding their right to cultivate their singularity or individuality (Žalec 2011). Consequently, it produces the need for a realistic anthropology based upon the renouncement of the idea that humans can (and may) control everything. Regarding the concept of humans as masters of nature, we produce the background of further destruction of the natural environment, whereas in reality, the human society is merely a constituent of that environment. Therefore, the principle of Reverence for Life may provide an ethical framework for cultivating a solidary personalism within a society.

According to Albert Schweitzer, 'ethics is nothing other than Reverence for Life. Reverence for Life affords me my fundamental principle of morality, namely, that good consists in maintaining, assisting and enhancing life, and to destroy, to harm or to hinder life is evil' (Schweitzer 2009: 147). According to James Brabazon, Reverence for Life means that the only thing we are really sure of is that we live and want to go on living (Brabazon 2005). In fact, this is something that we share with everything else that lives, from elephants to blades of grass – and, of course, every human being. Therefore, we are brothers and sisters to all living things, and owe to all of them the same care and respect that we wish for ourselves. Albert Schweitzer believed that ethical values that could underpin the ideal of true civilisation had to have their foundation in deep thought and be world and life affirming. He therefore embarked on a search for ethical values in the various major religions and worldviews accessible to him, but could not find any that were able, unequivocally, to combine ethics with life-affirmation. In his search for an answer to the problems posed by what was to him the obvious decline of Western civilisation, Albert Schweitzer was not prepared to give up the belief in progress, which is so much taken for granted by people of European descent. Rather, he sought to identify why this "will to progress" was seemingly going off the rails and causing the disintegration of European civilisation. This situation can probably be explained by the fact that progress became the goal by itself, whereas, from a solidary personalist's point of view, progress could be fruitful only in the case if it would be merely a mean to reach the goal of maintaining, assisting and enhancing life.

In this context, solidary personalism is often regarded as an opposite of nihilism, or a condition of an individual, group, society, culture that is based on levelling everything. However, as in practice nihilism is impossible, it usually is transformed into some kind of instrumentalism, meaning the attitude that does not regard a particular person as a goal, but, at best, merely as a means (Žalec 2011, 2014).

The instrumentalist attitudes are most obvious with regard of equality, which is usually considered as one of the principal constituents of democracy. From the perspective of instrumentalism, equality means levelling every person and denying his or her right to cultivate their singularity or individuality (cf. Žalec 2011a). Every person is regarded (at best) as a mean to reach the goal prescribed by some political and/or ideological dogmas. In practice, this inevitably provides an obstacle for the development of democracy within a society.

### **Grassroots authoritarianism under state socialism: urbanisation and the emergence of the authoritarian personality in the “egalitarian cities”**

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, countries throughout Central and Eastern/South-eastern Europe were hurled headlong into a social experiment aimed at abolishing social inequality throughout the world. The basis of this experiment was Marxist-Leninist ideology, which cannot be, however, regarded merely as an outcome of the Marxist theory. In practice, however, there is no single definitive Marxist theory. Marxist analysis has been applied to diverse subjects and has been misconceived and modified during the course of its development, resulting in numerous and sometimes contradictory theories that fall under the rubric of Marxism or Marxian analysis. For example, Marx’s earlier writings, especially the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, addressed the issues of person’s alienation in the capitalist society, and later this inspired many scholars and social scientists in developing the ideas of Marxist humanism (Campbell & Meynell 2009). The Soviet-style Communists, however, presented a worldview and method of societal analysis that focused merely on the issues of class struggle and societal conflicts, and thus emphasised violence as the only possible way to abolish social inequality worldwide. In this context, a person was considered just (at best) as a mean to reach this goal.

In this context, the question about differences between the Soviet-style Communism and Nazism remains a subject of discussion by many academics and politicians,<sup>2</sup> some of whom argue that there is no essential difference between the two. Both were the example of a movement that generated a totalitarian regime and victimised people horribly. However, some academics and politicians affirm that there is a significant difference, as the communist movements (at least in principle) fought for noble goals, while in the case of Nazism the declared values are already unacceptable (cf. Žalec 2013, 2014). Nevertheless, it can be seen that in the value starting points there are essential

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<sup>2</sup> For their comparison in the light of Kierkegaard’s thought see Bellinger 1992, also Žalec 2014. For more detailed understanding of Bellinger’s approach, see also Bellinger 2001 and 2010.

similarities. In both cases, a group of people was stigmatised as incurably bad and was subjected to horrible, in fact, genocidal violence (cf. Žalec 2014).<sup>3</sup> In Nazi Germany, a person was regarded (at best) as a mean to reach the goal of the world domination of the “master race”. If any person or group of people (for instance, religious, ethnical or racial group) did not correspond to the Nazis’ model of the “new world order”, they were to be exterminated. In this context, Nazism presented the extreme form of instrumentalism. In the case of Soviet-style Communism, any person and/or social group that were regarded as “class enemies” were excluded from the society, mostly by imprisonment and physical extermination. Therefore, like Nazism, Communism presents an extreme form of instrumentalism.

Both the Nazis and the Communists were persistent in introducing the new patterns of personality formation. The Nazis proclaimed that they intended to preserve or restore the old man, but in fact that was an idea to create a “new man”, as these efforts were underpinned by the conservative utopia based on Social Darwinism. The Nazis idealised a pre-Christian German past, which was presented as being full of glorious victories. Consequently, a “racially pure” Aryan was ordered to be physically strong and rid himself of the very idea of love towards a being. On the contrary, the Communist ideal of a “new man” was produced by the revolutionary avant-gardism. In fact, the Marxist-Leninist movement was initially oriented to implementing unprecedented social innovations (Albert & Hahnel 1981) which may be regarded as the radical form of modernity resulted from the “Enlightenment project” (in contrast, the Nazis aimed to eliminate all forces that had led to modernity). The formation of a new man, then, was strongly interlinked with the idea of humanism.<sup>4</sup> However, at the same time, the Communists argued that this goal justified any means of reaching it. As a result, despite the opposite ideological tenets, both Nazism and Communism aimed at producing an authoritarian personality.

Proposed shortly after the Second World War, the theory of authoritarian personality (Adorno et al. 1950) may help us in explaining the model of personality formation under the totalitarian regimes. It may be regarded merely as a model; otherwise, as Slavoj Žižek (2006) noted, it may produce stigmatisation, while one person is regarded as more “authoritarian” (or, in the initial sense, fascist) than another one. It would be possible to regard the authoritarian personality just as an explanatory model while not referring to the real persons. Nevertheless, the central traits of the authoritarian personality were emphasised by the Communist leaders as being crucial for providing the only one possible model of government.

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<sup>3</sup> Genocide can (thus) also be constructed and characterised as a form of extreme mistrust: ‘Genocide is an extreme form of mistrust because it means that mistrust to a particular social group is cultivated to such a degree that solely the physical existence of this group is perceived as a danger that cannot be afforded’ (Žalec 2012b: 136).

<sup>4</sup> One may refer, for example, to the well-known diary *Reportáž psaná na oprátce* (Notes from the Gallows) written by Julius Fučík, who was part of the forefront of the Czech anti-Nazi resistance and an active member of Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. After being imprisoned and tortured by the Nazi Gestapo and prior to his execution he finished his diary by making an emotional appeal: ‘Mankind we loved you – be vigilant’ (Antologie ideologických textů 2008).

However, the emergence of the authoritarian personality traits was underpinned not only by the official ideology, but by the reality of the everyday life under state socialism (Pickvance 2002). This term is used in reference to the economic systems of communist states because of the dominant role state planning played in their systems (Ellman 1989).

The everyday reality of state socialism was impacted heavily by under-urbanisation meaning the growth of jobs outstripped the growth of population (Szelenyi 1996). The fact that the Marxist-Leninist movement was distinctly urban-oriented is relevant to understanding the nature of the subsequent urbanisation that occurred in most of the Central and Eastern/South-eastern European countries under Communism. This social experiment was probably rooted back to the idea of the City of the Sun, which was initially proposed by Tommaso Campanella. The aggressive pursuance of economic development via industrialisation was largely responsible for an explosion of urban growth aimed at creating the “egalitarian city” (Weclawowicz 2002). According to Tosics (2003), the neglected role of urban rent and other market mechanisms during socialism meant a lower level of socio-spatial segregation. Szelenyi (1996) suggests that socialist cities were characterised by less diversity (especially regarding services), less inner-city density resulting from liberal use of space in planning, and less marginality (as social extremes were less common). He argues that the experience of urbanity under socialism may be considered as a result of under-urbanisation. However, Smith (1996) argues against the idea of a distinctly socialist city, although he agrees that there certainly were sections of the city that were distinctly socialist. Older cities, Moscow or Prague for example, were only partially changed while using the existing infrastructure and built environment (Gentile & Sjoberg 2006; Smith 1996). However, as all Central and Eastern European countries had suffered due to the Second World War, there was a need to reconstruct many cities; for example, Warsaw had practically been razed to the earth during the 1944 uprising. At the same time, there were entirely new cities (often built up around a particular industry) that developed under socialism and might be considered to be distinctly socialist. For example, Szczepański (1993) argues that, while establishing the new socialist city of Nowa Huta, the Communist authorities considered it to be a contrast to the neighbouring “bourgeois” Krakow, because urban planning under state socialism was subject not only to the state socialist economies, but, at the same time, to the ideological constraints of the system.

Nowa Huta thus may be considered as an example of a distinctly socialist city, meaning a single-enterprise city defined as a city where 30 per cent of the population is employed in one enterprise (Iyer 1997). In practice, the socialist way of living resulted in a culture of “job for life”. This culture was underpinned by state-owned mono-industries as large paternalistic employers embedded in hierarchical organisation model that left local dwellers with little capacity for action. The development of mono-industrial cities and towns entirely depended on decisions made by the central government. As a result, the idea of dependence was deeply rooted in the perceptions of local dwellers (Turnock 1997).

The extensive development of the centrally planned economy, in the manner of the dawn of the industrial era, attracted many low-skilled workers from the countryside

who were forced to move in the cities because of the collectivisation of their lands. As a result, defined by the shared perceptions of how moral issues should be addressed and what morally correct behaviour is (Victor & Cullen 1988; Novikov 2003), the moral climate within many urban neighbourhoods produced conformity with the hegemonic underclass norms. These norms were underpinned both by the official ideology and by everyday practices of interpersonal and social interaction.

The Communists purported to rule in the name of the urban working class (proletariat), while initially claiming to have created socialist states that were “dictatorship of the proletariat” (Fitzpatrick 1993). The nominally favoured class status of proletarians was a guarantee to provide an opportunity for social advancement. For example, the fact that one’s parents were “proletarians” was regarded as crucial upon his or her application for a privileged position within the ruling class of *nomenklatura* (Djilas 1983). The image of the *true* proletarian was widely propagandised as a pattern of personality formation under state socialism. The traits of a true proletarian include authoritarian aggression, anti-intellectualism, superstition and stereotypy, power and toughness or, in other words, the characteristics defined as the central traits of the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al. 1950).

In contrast, due to the rigid informal mechanisms of social control, it was very difficult to differ from the predominant majority of people within the homogenous urban neighbourhoods in which everybody knew about everybody, and everybody knew that. Urban newcomers often experienced an identity crisis, or feeling of being marginalised, while being caught between rural and urban populations. They were not fully a part of either group and, unless insulated by the emotional support system of a cohesive sub-community, they ended up having an emotionally stressful life (Milgram 1970). To deal with that, new urban inhabitants often restored principal traits of face-to-face social relations. These processes inevitably awaken a strong sense of community (Freudenburg 1984), and the only way to avoid stigmatisation was thus to look like the predominant majority of people from a modest education and social background (or, according the official propaganda, the “true proletarians”). As a consequence, underclass norms became widely accepted within the socialist cities. For instance, criminal activities were often recognised as not so dangerous for the social order in comparison not only with the overtly expressed disagreement with the authorities, but even with a hidden doubt about the legitimacy of the Communist ideology and policies. Criminals were often regarded as “ours” both by authorities and their neighbours, unlike “politicals”, who were condemned even for assumed activities against the Communist regime (Kleyman 2011). As a result, corruption in the form of bribery under state socialism was common, primarily due to the paucity of goods and services on the open market. Theft of state property was also common and often was not even considered to be a crime. The authorities gradually took a tolerant attitude toward a slack work ethic and a growing black market second economy. Popular culture within the socialist cities often glorified the life of criminals; for example, words and phrases originating in the labour camps have been becoming part of the Soviet/Russian vernacular since the 1960s and 1970s (Amalrik 1970).

Based, first of all, on the sense of personal unworthiness (Ember & Ember 2004), the underclass norms inevitably impacted on the emergence of the extreme forms of

instrumentalism based on the principle of “enforced equality” (Flew 1986). The interplay between the elements of the culture of poverty and Marxist-Leninist ideology inevitably resulted in grassroots authoritarianism.

As “grassroots” tends to mean from the bottom, something defined as grassroots is organised from the base of the social group or community. The concept of grassroots democracy is widely discussed among scholars and social scientists. Grassroots democracy is often considered to be the political process being driven by ordinary citizens in a bottom-up manner (Ball & Dagger 2004). It may be that they are people who are affected by something, are concerned by something or simply want to make the world a better place. In this context, grassroots democracy is impossible without solidary personalism based on the sense of the Reverence for Life. At the same time, so far little is said about grassroots authoritarianism (Kleyman 2012), which may be described as an outcome of the moral climate within a particular group that is characterised by a populist envy, strong belief in state power and intolerance towards any form of “Otherness”.

These processes have considerably impacted the post-socialist societal transformation, and the cases of Russian cities provide an intriguing backdrop for examining these processes.

## **The “escape from freedom” in the cities after state socialism: the case of Russia**

Under state socialism, Russian cities were regarded as a model for planning socialist cities throughout Central and Eastern/South-eastern Europe. After the demise of Communism, however, the spread of capitalism *tout court* within them has been increasingly interlinking, unlike in the most of the post-socialist European countries, with the attempts to restore the main elements of state socialist ideology and policies (such as, for example, the Iron Curtain). These processes are underpinned by Putin’s persistence in introducing the model of state capitalism based on the Chinese experience in combining the market economy with the main characteristics of the Communist regime (Åslund 2007; Rutland 2008). However, the central question is whether this development is merely an outcome of the official policies.

As it seems, the facts provided below may help the researcher in answering this question. In 2008, half of the respondents, aged from 16 to 19, agreed Stalin was a “wise leader” (Walker 2008). According to the Levada Centre, about 60 per cent of Russians have two seemingly incompatible images of the former dictator in their minds: the cruel tyrant who annihilated millions of people and the wise statesman who led the Soviet Union to prosperity (Ruvinsky 2012).

The results of these polls demonstrate that many of the young people living in the Russian cities regard violence and genocide as a norm. In this context, it is possible to discuss the escape from freedom (Fromm 1969) in the post-Soviet Russia.

Erich Fromm distinguishes between freedom from (or negative freedom) and freedom to (positive freedom). The former refers to emancipation from restrictions such as social conventions placed on individuals by other people or institutions. In contrast,



freedom to means the use of freedom to spontaneously employ the total integrated personality in creative acts. As Fromm argues, this necessarily implies a genuine connectedness with others that goes beyond the superficial bonds of conventional social intercourse. In this sense, freedom to is inevitably interlinked with solidary personalism (Funk 2000).

In Fromm's sense, after the demise of state socialism, Russia experienced negative freedoms. In the early 1990s, the team of the reformers supported by the President Boris Yeltsin had a clear idea of how to build the market economy in Russia. These actions were motivated by the firm belief in the "invisible hand of the market" (Samuels 2011), which would inevitably produce democracy, while reconciliation and coping with the totalitarian past was neglected. In other words, market reforms were regarded as a goal by itself, whereas a person was considered to merely be a means to reach this goal. As a consequence, the totalitarian instrumentalism was replaced with the economicist instrumentalism in its extreme forms. Of course, in comparison with the totalitarian instrumentalism, the economicist instrumentalism is *mild*, because, at the first glance, individual's freedom is not restricted. However, in fact, this means becoming freed not only from authority, but from any ethical regulation. As a result, "freedom from" inevitably leaves people with feelings of hopelessness. As freedom from is not an experience we enjoy in itself, Fromm suggests that many people, rather than using it successfully, attempt to minimise its negative effects by developing thoughts and behaviours that provide some form of security. These are as follows:

1. Authoritarianism: Fromm characterises this as containing a sadistic element and a masochistic element. The authoritarian wishes to gain control over other people in a bid to impose some kind of order on the world; they also wish to submit to the control of some superior force, which may come in the guise of a person or an abstract idea.

2. Destructiveness: Although this bears a similarity to sadism, Fromm argues that the sadist wishes to gain control over something. A destructive personality wishes to destroy something it cannot bring under its control.

3. Conformity: This process is seen when people unconsciously incorporate the normative beliefs and thought processes of their society (in the case of modern Russia, it is Putin's beliefs and thought), and experience them as their own, which allows them to avoid genuine free thinking, which is likely to provoke anxiety (Funk 2000).

Interlinked with the failure of the shock therapy of the 1990s, which, in return, resulted in the economic default in August 1998, these processes probably fostered Putin's seizure of power in August 1999. This was caused, among others, by the characteristics of Russia's urban network. While 73.86 per cent out of the total population of Russia are currently urban dwellers, 619 out of the total number of 1100 Russian cities and towns represent the legacy of the mono-structural socialist urban economy (Levintov 2013). The single-enterprise, mono-functional cities, which in the Soviet era were regarded as models to develop a socialist city, were hit the hardest by the shock therapy of the 1990s, because their economies were based on a single industry (Molodikova & Makhrova 2007). In the socialist era, the process of proletarianisation, which was most obvious in these cities, did not nevertheless produce the extreme forms of poverty, because the

authorities supported widespread universal social welfare, though modest in comparison with the Western welfare states of that time. However, the rapid and chaotic capitalisation produced tremendous impoverishment of low-skilled workers in these cities (Gerber 2005), and, as a result, the widespread of poverty and criminal activities were underpinned by the hegemonic underclass norms, which in the Soviet era were regarded as an inherent part of the predominant proletarian culture. At the same time, these semi-criminal norms prescribe the way of living and running business of the “new Russians” or business elite emerged as a result of Russia’s chaotic capitalist transformation (Afanasyev 2001). For example, many entrepreneurs thought that a successful business (and, then, a better life) is simply not attainable through legitimate means (Kleyman 2011), and this sense is also may be regarded as an inherent part of underclass culture (Devine & Wright 1993).

The ways of the escape from freedom (more precisely, from the negative freedom) within the mono-industrial cities were thus determined by the long-standing traditions of grassroots authoritarianism. Deeply rooted in the perceptions of local dwellers, the idea of dependence on the decisions, which were made in the capital city of Moscow by a strong authoritarian leader (Neshchadin & Gorin 2001), finally, determined the scenario of the development of Russia at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Fromm’s findings, however, may provide a theoretical framework not only for understanding the factors crucial in providing grassroots support of the current authoritarian stream in the official policies of Putin’s Russia, but also for searching for the ways out of the current situation.

Of course, it is impossible to propose simple and straightforward methods of solving the problem of grassroots authoritarianism within the former socialist cities. By its very nature, this problem is manifold. First, it is not possible to regard the mono-industrial city as a distinctly “socialist” phenomenon. Instead, it may be examined as a subtype of a “specialised city”, meaning a city that is specialised in certain activities (Artioli 2013). However, the main difference is that the specialised cities under state socialism had a strong support by the government for their development and that the support was due to political reasons, not to economic reasons.

Therefore, in many respects, post-socialist mono-industrial cities face problems similar to those increasingly challenging the development of specialised cities in most developed countries, such as, for example, Detroit in the USA (Taylor 2013). Consequently, the need to diversify the local economy cannot be regarded merely as a problem of post-socialist cities. At the same time, the Russian experience shows that the elements of grassroots authoritarianism are less characteristic of the cities featured with cultural diversity, which thus provides openness to the innovative ideas and practices (Englund 2012).

However, the difficult task of diversifying the specialised economy cannot be successfully performed merely in terms of purely monetary methods; otherwise, this inevitably produces economicist instrumentalism. For example, identity-building and place-branding strategies are often regarded in terms of the adoption of an entrepreneurial attitude to local and regional development (Evans et al. 2011; Pasquinelli 2013). However, in fact, in increasingly globalised world these strategies inevitably include the aspiration for

universally valid ethics, which, should be developed and established through the dialogue between all concerned parties' (Žalec 2012a), while being based on cultivating, first of all, respect of human dignity and reliance upon grassroots democracy. For example, many people in Russian cities do not believe in their ability to change anything in their lives, and think that it is not possible to overcome the strong and long-standing authoritarian stream of Russian history. In reality, however, identity-building and place-branding strategies may address just the opposite examples. In fact, under the authoritarian stream at the local level in Russia there was always an undercurrent, sometimes strong, of a sense of solidary personalism and the Reverence for Life. For instance, the case of the medieval Veliky Novgorod republic provides an example of strong and sustainable traditions of grassroots democracy. Much later, *zemstvo*, or local self-government instituted during the great liberal reforms of the 1860s, succeeded in solving in the proper way many problems of general education, medical service and public welfare. This experience may be regarded as a starting point in emerging grassroots democracy in Russia that, in return, would entail flourishing every individual in the sense of solidary personalism and the reverence for life (Kleyman 2012).

## **Concluding remarks**

The case of Russia probably demonstrates that the negative freedom based on economicist instrumentalism inevitably entails the widespread of positive attitudes towards violence instigated by totalitarian regimes. However, this scenario can be regarded as not only the "Russian" problem (or the problem of other countries after state socialism).

The Netherlands avoided living under the totalitarian regime established by the domestic political forces, but the deeply rooted democratic traditions of this nation were severely challenged in May 1940, when the country was invaded by Nazi Germany. Many Dutch people demonstrated their faithfulness to these traditions, while they organised, for example, the general strike in Amsterdam in February 1941 to protest against the discrimination of the Jews. The strike in Holland was one of the few cases throughout Europe when the non-Jewish population openly protested against the genocide of the Jews, and this strike was cruelly suppressed by the SS troops. However, collaboration with the Nazis in the Netherlands was not uncommon (Kronemeijer & Teshima 2000), though many collaborationists were not fanatical believers in the Nazi ideology. Moreover, most civil servants and police officers began their careers before May 1940, i.e. in the independent and democratic Netherlands. Therefore, their main duty was initially to protect civil rights, freedom and human dignity of every person who lived in this country. Nevertheless, after the German invasion many of them started to help the Nazi administration to arrest Jews (and all of those who did not agree with the Nazis) and send them to the concentration camps. Their escape from freedom was more likely motivated by a desire to succeed in their careers or to prosper financially under the Nazis. Every political system, be it democracy or totalitarianism, was regarded by them just as a means to live a prosperous life, and, consequently, democracy for them meant nothing but a set of some formal procedures. The fact that democracy is a form of governance fostering, first of all, human dignity and the reverence for life was sadly neglected by them.

The case of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century provides just the opposite example. Nelson Mandela, who had become the first chief executive elected in a fully representative democratic elections, focused on dismantling the legacy of apartheid through, first of all, racial reconciliation (Battersby 2011), and, in fact, this meant interlinking democracy with solidary personalism. In post-socialist Czechoslovakia (and, after January 1993, in the Czech Republic) the presidency of Václav Havel may also be regarded as a case of interlinking the transition from totalitarianism to democracy with positive freedom aimed at flourishing every person (Keane 2000).

These issues, however, should be examined in a broader context. The culture of the “global city” (Sassen 2001), with its emphasis on hedonistic overconsumption and economicist instrumentalism, is becoming predominant in the post-modern world. The global crisis of the late 2000s and early 2010s may be regarded not only as an economic downturn, but, at the same time, as the crisis of that culture, which increasingly emphasises the need of the “right to the city” (Lefebvre 1968) and “cities for people, not for profit” (Brenner et al. 2011). The basis for the further studies on grassroots democracy interlinking with solidary personalism might thus be around more focused examination of these issues in the context of the crisis of the global city’s culture and searching for the (possible) ways out of the current situation.

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## **POVZETEK**

Namen članka je preučiti nekatere socialno-psihološke dejavnike, ki spodbujajo “pobeg iz svobode” v državah po državnem socializmu, s posebnim poudarkom primera Rusije. Hkrati se študija osredotoča na značilnosti, ki lahko vplivajo na nastanek trajnostnih demokracij. V tem kontekstu je koncept solidarnega personalizma pojmovan kot ključnega pomena za zagotavljanje neposredne ljudske demokracije v družbi, ki lahko vpliva na razvoj demokracije na nacionalni ravni. V nasprotju s tem pa so mesta v državah srednje in vzhodne Evrope, ki so živela v okvirih državnega socializma, primeri pojava ljudskega avtoritarizma, ki je botroval množični podpori politik in praks nasilja totalitarnih režimov. Ta zapuščina se je v ruskih mestih ohranila tudi po državnem socializmu, vendar pa je treba hkrati premisliti tudi samo bistvo demokracije, ki sega daleč čez meje v post-socialističnega sveta.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** mesto, moralna klima, državni socializem, instrumentalizem, personalizem, ljudski avtoritarizem, pobeg iz svobode

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