

Leszek Kolakowski, [Hope and Hopelessness](#)

[1968 declares the [clinical death of Marxist revisionism](#) in Eastern Europe. From that moment, Communism ceased being an intellectual problem and became merely a question of power.

[On Party Ideology](#): We are talking about [Lie with a capital L](#). By systematically destroying historical memory and manipulating all information, [the regimes destroyed the very criteria of truth](#). A person whose memory has been nationalized and passed into state hands, and is therefore perfectly manipulable, are entirely at the mercy of their rulers; they have been robbed of their identity.

In a political system pervaded by obsessive secretiveness and with an incredible number of build-in barriers blocking the flow of information [which of the brutalities are in fact ordered by which leader is](#), however, almost impossible to verify and indeed, [the question is not very important; whoever initiated them, they served the same purpose of perpetuating the oppressive power system](#).

[The belief that socialism in its present form is totally inflexible](#) and can only be destroyed at one fell swoop, and therefore that no partial changes are in essence changes in its social nature, [easily lends itself to defeatism, justifying opportunism and pure knavery](#).

The reformist position is understood as [an idea of active resistance](#) exploiting inherent contradictions of the system.

[The growth of police methods of rule is the result not of increased resistance, but, on the contrary, of its absence](#). The best way to counteract prosecutions is massive committal. I am thinking of a reformist orientation in the sense of a belief in the possibility of effective gradual and partial pressures, exercised in a long-term perspective, a perspective of social and national liberation.

To what extent a movement for reform is possible depends to a considerable degree, though of course not completely, on the extent to which society believes that it is possible. Thus in the countries of socialist despotism, [those who inspire hope are also the inspirers of a movement which could make this hope real](#).

Adam Michnik, [A New Evolutionism](#)

Revisionists and neopositivists counted on positive evolution in the party, coming from above, to be caused by the rational policies of wise leaders, not by incessant public pressure.

Revisionism was terminated by the event of March 1968. I think the revisionists' greatest sin lay not in their defeat in the intraparty struggle for power (where they could not win) but in the character of that defeat. It was the defeat of individuals being eliminated from positions of power and influence, not a setback for a broadly based leftist and democratic political platform. The revisionists never created such a platform.

Much like the revisionists, the **neopositivists** believed in having concessions and rights 'granted' from above rather than in organizing pressure from below. They sought harmony, not conflict; they cared for order, seeking agreement with the party, and sought to avoid imputations or oppositional attitudes.

One must choose between the point of view of the oppressor and that of the oppressed. When the crunch comes, both revisionism and neopositivism, applied consistently, must inevitably lead to taking up the point of view of the regime. In effect, any solidarity with workers on strike, with demonstrating students or dissident intellectuals, put into question the revisionist tactic of seeking *etente* with the party. **When the conflict becomes open, both of these groups find themselves swiftly deprived of one essential factor: influence on power...**

New Evolutionism is based on the following considerations:

1. The framework of the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' (that the use of Soviet troops was a reality);
2. Faith in mass actions by the working class and students which have on several occasions forced the government to make spectacular concessions;
3. The Catholic Church, which consistently resists pressure from the government and defends Christian principles as well as the principles of the Declaration of Human Rights, has necessarily become a place where attitudes of non-conformity and dignity among the people can mingle;
4. Build up a democratic opposition which must be constantly and incessantly visible in public life, must create political facts by organizing mass actions, must formulate alternative programs;
5. In search of party pragmatist who can be partner of the democratic opposition, with whom it will be possible to reach a political compromise;
6. BUT the people of the democratic opposition should not place excessive hope in 'reasonable' party leaders, or give in to arguments that 'one should not make things more difficult for the current party leadership because the next one may be worse.' The democratic opposition must formulate its own political goals and only then, with those goals in hand, reach political compromises. EVERYTHING ELSE IS AN ILLUSION.
7. The intelligentsia's duty is to formulate alternative programs and defend the basic principles. In searching for truth, or... by living in dignity, opposition intellectuals are striving not so much for a better tomorrow as for a better today.

"A policy of conciliation makes sense only if both sides take it seriously. Otherwise, conciliation turns into capitulation, and the policy of conciliation into a march towards political self-annihilation.

"In my opinion the only policy for dissidents in Eastern Europe is an unceasing struggle of reforms, in favour of evolution which will extend civil liberties and guarantee a respect for human rights."

Adam Michnik.

Vaclav Havel, *Power of the Powerless* and *Living in Truth*

On Ideology: 'One need not believe all these mystifications, but **one must behave as if one did, or at least put up with them tacitly, or get along with those who use them.** But this means living within a lie. **One is not required to believe the lie;** it is enough to accept life with it and within it. In so doing one confirms the system, gives it meaning, creates it...and merges with it.' (Janos Kadar: Those who are not against us are with us!)

Havel's greengrocer: a person 'declares his loyalty in the only way the regime is capable of hearing: that is, by accepting the prescribed ritual, by accepting appearances as reality, by accepting the given rules of the games... In doing so, however, **he has himself become a player in the game, thus making it possible for the game to go on, for it to exist in the first place**'.

'The worst thing was **the devastated moral environment. We are all morally sick,** because we all got used to saying one thing and thinking another... All of us have become accustomed to the totalitarian system, accepted it as an unalterable fact and therefore kept it running... **None of us is merely a victim of it, because all of us helped to create it together.**'

'**The crucial line of conflict** did not run between the rulers and the ruled, but rather through the middle of each individual, for everyone in his or her own way is both a victim and a supporter of the system.'

'**The Power of the Powerless**': It is, becoming evident...that a single seemingly powerless person who dares cry out the word of truth and to stand behind it with all his or her person and life, has, surprisingly, greater power, though formally disfranchised, than do thousands of anonymous voters.

'I favour **"anti-political politics"**: that is, politics not as the technology of power and manipulation, of cybernetic rule over humans or as the art of the useful, but politics as one of the ways of seeking and achieving meaningful lives, of protecting them and serving them... Yes, anti-political politics is possible. Politics "from below". Politics of people, not of the apparatus. Politics growing from the heart, not from a thesis.'

'Consciousness precedes being'.

Vaclav Havel

George Konrad, [Antipolitics and the Power that Be](#)

The greatest act on behalf of freedom is [to behave toward everyone as though we were free men](#) - even toward those whom we fear. If we act that way with them, they will think we are not really afraid of them.

We have to do without democratic political institutions, and so we do without them. Whether or not we give a name to our friendly get-togethers is unimportant. If they have no name, they can't be banned. [We have no Solidarity \(like in Poland\), but we can still have solidarity, which can't be suspended. Friendship can't be outlawed.](#) Our organizations are networks of sympathy; we have no headquarters and no leaders, so it is harder to touch us. We are crafty, cautious game; we don't make it any easier for the hunter to bag us.

[Antipolitics](#) is the emergence of independent forums that can be appealed to against political power; it is a counterpower that cannot take power and does not wish to. [Power](#) it has already, here and now, [by reason of its moral and cultural weight.](#)

Antipolitics and government work in two different dimensions, two separate spheres. In Antipolitics, [people form a network that keeps watch on political power](#), exerting pressure on the basis of their cultural and moral stature alone, not through any electoral legitimacy. That is their right and their obligation, but above all it is their [self-defense](#).

In contrast with the secrecy of the leadership, [antipolitics means publicity](#); it is a power exercised directly over society, through [civil courage](#), and one that differs by definition from any present or future power of the state.

Antipolitics prefers qualitative competition to silly quantitative questions about the who is stronger. Who is stronger is really of no interest. For the antipolitan, [it is more interesting to know whether a community produces an intelligent and honest portrait of itself, not how much technical power it commands.](#)

'I know of no way for Eastern Europe to free itself from Russian military occupation except for us to [occupy them with our ideas.](#)'

George Konard

M. K. Gandhi and [Satyagraha](#)*

Where there is [righteousness in the heart](#),
there is beauty in character.

When there is beauty in character,
there is harmony in the home.

When there is harmony in the home,
there is order in the nation.

When there is order in the nation,
there is peace in the world.

Hymn quoted in M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.

*Satyagraha / "The Power of Truth":
Satya is Truth and agraha is Force.

Milan Kundera [The Book of Laughter and Forgetting](#)

The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.

Aung San Suu Kyi and Freedom from Fear

It is power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it.

It is not enough merely to call for freedom, democracy and human rights. There has to be a united determination to persevere in the struggle, to make sacrifices in the name of enduring truths, to resist the corrupting influences of desire, ill will, ignorance and fear.

What is precious is the courage acquired through endeavour, **courage that comes from cultivating the habit of refusing to let fear dictate one's actions**, courage that could be described as 'grace under pressure' – grace which is renewed repeatedly in the face of harsh, unremitting pressure.

Daily acts of courage help to preserve man's self-respect and inherent human dignity.

Concepts such as truth, justice and compassion cannot be dismissed as trite when these are often the only bulwarks which stand against ruthless power.

A person enters a race or buys a lottery ticket because he believes it's possible to win. So also if someone were to ask me whether I believe we can win in our fight for democracy, I should reply honestly, **'Yes, we can'**, and because I believe we can, I have chosen to take part.

*'Don't think about whether or not these things will happen. Just continue to do what you believe is right. **One's responsibility is to do the right thing.**'*

Aung San Suu Kyi