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FROM THE EDITOR

In two ways the present issue of our journal is special. For the first time, it is published in English and there are prominent scholars from abroad among the contributors. In the future, we will continue this practice. We hope that this will facilitate making “*Studia Socjologiczno-Polityczne*” a forum for intellectual debates across national boundaries.

The theme of this issue is “new authoritarianism”. It refers to the emergence of hybrid regimes which combine electorally expressed will of the people with the centralization of state power in the hands of the supreme leader and/or in the hands of the ruling oligarchy and with the destruction of the rule of law, the cornerstone of which are independent courts. Such systems have been called by various names, like “controlled democracy” (Peter Anyang Nyong’o), “delegative democracy” (Guillermo O’Donnell), “electoral authoritarianism” (Iler Turan), “illiberal democracy” (Fareed Zakaria). In this issue we have opted for the term “new authoritarianism” to underline both the continuity with the older forms of authoritarianism and the novelty of the current phenomenon, which – unlike “old” authoritarianism – is not based on a naked power but successfully seeks public support expressed in contested elections.

In the present century several states have been moving in the direction of new authoritarianism. They belong to the large category of countries which had departed from dictatorial regimes in not too distant past. There are, however, authoritarian tendencies in old democracies, as manifested in several recent elections in Europe and America.

This does not mean that new authoritarianism represents the future of mankind. There are still strong anti-authoritarian forces, as demonstrated by the defeats suffered by populist authoritarians in recent French and Austrian

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elections, as well as by the massive protests in Poland against the policies of the ruling Law-and-Justice party. It would, however, be reckless to ignore the danger which new authoritarianism constitutes for the durability of democracy.

The papers published in this issue deal with both theoretical questions and with the political experience of selected countries.

Adam Przeworski (New York University) discusses terminological, historical and comparative aspects of the conflict between democracy and authoritarianism. Late Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017, Professor Emeritus of Leeds University), in the contribution written a few weeks before his death, raises the issue of populist-authoritarian tendencies in old democracies, as illustrated by the results of the American presidential election of 2016. Janusz Reykowski (member of the Polish Academy of Sciences and professor in its Institute of Psychology) discusses the role of the circulation of political elites for the authoritarian trends in contemporary politics. Ilter Turan (Professor Emeritus of Istanbul Bilgi University and the president of the International Political Science Association, 2016–2018) presents the interpretation of the Turkish authoritarianism as a consequence of complicated history of modernization of a traditional society. Peter Anyang Nyong'o (Kenya's Senator, former minister and the prominent political scientist) discusses the turbulent history of authoritarianism and democracy in his native country against the background of comparative reflections on democracy and authoritarianism in Africa. Jerzy Jaskiernia (Professor of law at Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce, former member of the Polish Parliament and former minister of justice) deals with the crisis of Poland's democracy following the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2015. Jerzy Wiatr (Professor Emeritus of University of Warsaw, former parliamentarian and former minister of education) presents a comparative analysis of new authoritarianism.

Four of the contributors combine academic careers with high level involvement in politics. Three of them (Peter Anyang Nyong'o, Jerzy Jaskiernia and Jerzy Wiatr) have served in parliaments and in cabinets and one (Janusz Reykowski) played a very important role in Polish negotiated democratization (as co-chair of the political committee of the Polish Round Table Talks in 1989). Hopefully, their contributions show that such combination of roles can help in better understanding of political issues.

Social sciences cannot be value-free, since – as Max Weber has taught us – scholars are members of the society and have their values, which influence the way in which they select and interpret phenomena under study. Contributors to this issue make no attempt to hide their allegiance to the basic values of liberal democracy. Hopefully, this issue proves that such values do not constitute an obstacle to a fully objective scientific analysis.